

*Reading at Work member Magnus Smyly shares his personal views on attending the HMRC Service of Celebration at Westminster Abbey on 23 September 2014.*

In the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral, London under the central dome is the tomb to its architect Sir Christopher Wren. Its inscription in Latin ends "LECTOR SI MONUMENTUM REQUIRIS CIRCUMSPICE." This translates as "Reader, if you seek his monument – look around you."

On 23 September 2014, a couple of miles upstream along the River Thames at noon, around 1,700 people gathered in Westminster Abbey for "A SERVICE TO CELEBRATE THE WORK OF HER MAJESTY'S REVENUE AND CUSTOMS."

As the Dean of Westminster Abbey shared in his address – see link below (1) – we are all indebted to HMRC for its work for the world we take for granted so easily all around us: our roads, our schools and hospitals – in short, our civilised society. It is entirely appropriate to celebrate the good work of HMRC as much as other part of Government.

And so we gathered to celebrate the work of HMRC through hymns, testimonies, readings and acts, like the processing of the HMRC Royal Charter through the Abbey to the High Altar. It was a memorable occasion for me for not only being the largest gathering of HMRC that I have ever attended but also for being a poignant reminder of the noble purpose of HMRC to the nation.

For those wondering whether the Abbey is a suitable venue for such a celebration, I am reminded that HMRC is indeed Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and her Majesty is the head of the State Church of England (whether we agree with that or not). It was fitting venue to celebrate and honour our work, and for those of us of Christian belief, to do so before God as well.

Further background and the words can be found in the order of service through the link above, but this closing blessing with its words so apt for our day to day work at times, fittingly ended the service before we left the Abbey to serve HMRC and our nation afresh:

*"Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen."*

Amen indeed.

(1) Available online here: <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/press/news/2014/september/abbey-celebrates-work-of-hmrc>

*The views expressed above are those of Magnus Smyly in a personal capacity and not of HMRC.*

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