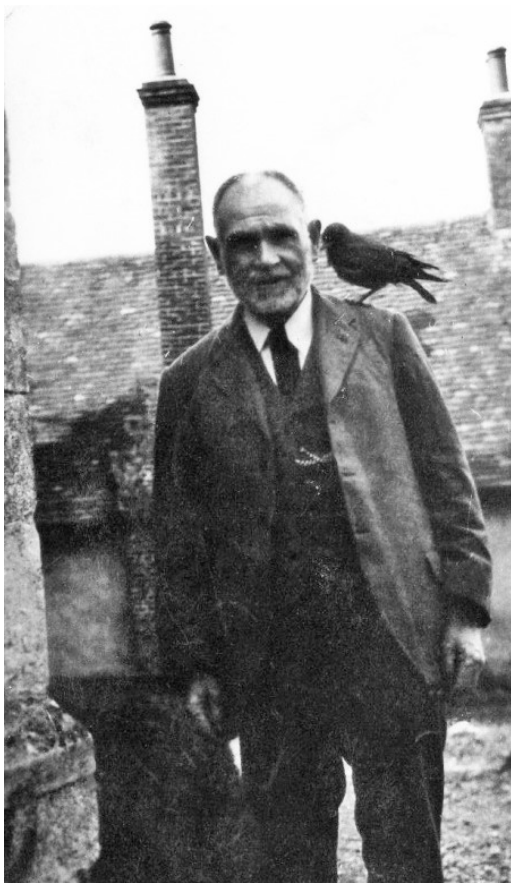


## The Tame Jackdaw at the Cloisters

Ewelme News, Aug-Sep 2015

In the Village Archive is an account published in 'The Field', on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1929, under the title 'The Story of the Jackdaw' carefully recorded by the late Mrs Poupart in her notebook. The subject is an old verger, described as "a man whose ancestors came to this country in the 15<sup>th</sup> century from France as retainers to the family of the de la Pole". (Oddly, he is not described as coming from Suffolk, thus certainly identifying him as a Winfield, but from France). Whatever his origins, he made a pet of a jackdaw. There is a photograph in the archive of an almsman with a bird perched on his shoulder, but whether it is a jackdaw or a rook it is difficult to make out.



*"To this old verger, a jackdaw, doubtless born and brought up in the tower or precincts, took a great fancy. He had caught it, intending to put it out of the church, but its intentions were otherwise. It attached itself to him, and was with him at all times, either in his cottage or in the church, and would sit, now on his head, now on his shoulder, as he showed visitors round, occasionally condescending to sit on the arm of a stranger, but always returning soon to the old man.*

*He had not had it many weeks before it disappeared one day, to come back a few days later, a sad, dilapidated little bird, with no cheery 'Jack' to say to him, and hardly to be persuaded to take any food. It had evidently been badly served by the people of its own clan. He nursed it back to health and happiness, but again it went off – and alas! This time never to return. It seems that its fellow jackdaws had decided that no punishment could be too severe for such a renegade, as one of their number, who could prefer to associate with human beings to living with its fellows.*

*The old man never saw it again but it was seen by village boys, first being chased and then pecked to death by about 40 other jackdaws. Who can say that this was due to jealousy or to some unwritten law of the bird world?"*

It is thought that the Verger almsman with the pet jackdaw was possibly Henry Stephen Winfield, who died in 1936 aged 73. This would fit in with the appointment in late 1936 of William Cross, who remained the Verger until his death in 1958. John Cleverley responded to the article to say he also had a tame jackdaw when he was growing up in Ewelme. He wrote – "I had a similar bird which used to go everywhere with me, even to school in Dorchester. It used to sit on the school roof and await my emergence at break times and home times. Derek [Robinson] particularly remembered it because it once flew onto his shoulder and messed down his back! Oh dear!"