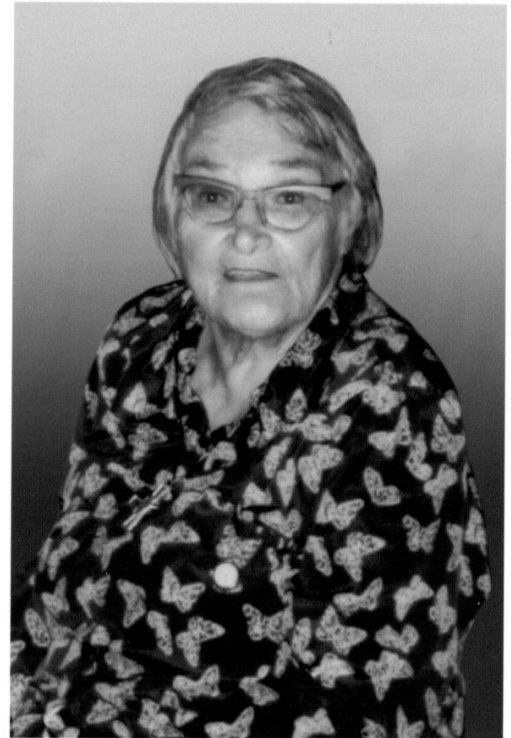


BINDON Joan Vereker (Anglican Deacon)

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From spy centre Bletchley Park in wartime Britain to a life of service in Anglican Churches in London and New Zealand - ending at **St Peter's Church, Onehunga**. Quite a journey!

Born in Essex (15 June 1919) **Joan Vereker Bindon** had family ties to Ireland and New Zealand and, less so and somewhat surprisingly, to India. Her father, Frank Vereker Bindon, born in Madras (now Chennai) in 1877, was the son of John Francis Arthur Vereker Bindon, in turn the son of Irish-born and domiciled Rev. William Francis Vereker Bindon. John seems to have had wanderlust in his veins. When and why he fetched up in Madras is unknown but while there married Madras-born Portuguese woman Rosamund Cordoza. He was 27, she 19. Some time after Frank's birth the John and Rosamund returned to Britain but in the late 1870s or early 1880s, the marriage apparently foundered, and John followed his brother William Henry Vereker Bindon to New Zealand. John died in Waihi in 1908, and William in Taranaki in 1913, both nearing 60.



School mastering ran in the family. The two brothers were teachers and so was Joan's father. Joan broke the mould. Finished high school she was chosen as a British civilian exchange student in Lutheran Pastor Martin Niemoller's parish in Berlin. Niemoller's outspoken opposition to Hitler cost him his freedom and he spent the war years in the brutal Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps, lucky to emerge alive. Niemoller, growing street violence, and anti-semitism in the German capital must have had an enormous impact on the young British observer.

Back in London and speaking German, if not yet fluently, quickly gained Joan a post working in a school teaching English to German refugees. She proved a talented learner herself, soon mastering her new language as she tutored and mixed with the students.

When WW2 broke out, Joan's ability to speak, read and write German became a prized and sought-after asset. Someone tapped her on the shoulder, she found herself employed by the Foreign Office and swiftly dispatched to Bletchley Park the top-secret centre of Allied codebreaking in WW2. Bletchley records show that she worked there 1940-44.

It wasn't long before Joan was a shift leader, overseeing a team of about 25 in Hut 6, almost all of them civilians. Headed by mathematician Gordon Welchman, Hut 6 was tasked with solving German Army and Airforce Enigma machine cyphers. By the time Welchman moved on in the autumn of 1943, the section's total staff numbered 450.



Hut 6 – photographed in 2004

Joan endured the war, as did all Britons, but 1943 was a particularly bleak year for her. Brother John, 21, a cadet in the Royal Engineers after gaining an MA at Sidney College, Cambridge, died in a rock-climbing accident in North Wales on 27 January and in the November her retired father died in London at 66, leaving her mother Barbara, at 62, alone.

Postwar, Joan's life took a new turn, perhaps mirroring her great grandfather's life as a churchman. She began studying for a Diploma of Theology, graduated from King's College, London, in 1947, then returned to Germany, becoming a church worker among women in Bavaria for two years. On return to England, Joan ministered as a parish worker in several Greater London districts 1950-63. And then, New Zealand.

What determined her to start a new chapter/life on the far side of the world is unknown now, but one can guess. Her mother had died in 1961 and she had no other close Bindon ties. But in New Zealand - cousins galore, grandchildren of William Henry and one of them, David, (later Rev Canon David Vereker-Bindon) was studying theology at Auckland University. Perhaps they'd been in touch.

Shaw Savill's 'Southern Cross' landed Joan here in 1964, the passenger sheets listing her as 'vicar's assistant.' She must have arranged a post before she left England because her CV has her ministering as a parish worker in Saint John's Anglican parish, Timaru, 1964-66. Then she moved to Auckland and was dedicated as a Deaconess in 1967. For the next few years animated discussion regarding the difference between 'deaconess' and 'deacon' swirled throughout the New Zealand Anglican Church. The difference was formally dissolved by General Synod in 1970: Statute 298 simply declared that 'Deaconess' included 'Deacon.' That decision of General Synod opened the door for women to be included among the 'ordained' in the NZ Anglican Church. And Joan was one of those 'included.'

From then, until her retirement, Joan was Deacon Assistant, first in the Mangere Mission District (1967-72), then in Manurewa parish (1973-74), and finally at St Peter's Onehunga (1974-78). Joan then retired, her working life over, but continued to have an active pastoral interest and involvement in St Peter's parish during the next twenty years, before formally withdrawing in 1998. She lived her retirement years in Kerridge House, Selwyn Village, Point Chevalier.

Joan Vereker Bindon, a pioneer of the ordained Anglican women's ministry in New Zealand, died 27 December 2003 at 88. She was cremated and her ashes interred in St Peter's Cemetery.

In 2022, three St Peter's parishioners (who knew Joan well during her ministry in Onehunga) when asked to describe Joan and her ministry in three words said: 'quiet, comforting, and genuine'; 'kind, intelligent and not-one-to-suffer-fools gladly'; and 'straight-talker, well-read, and artistic.' A much loved and appreciated deacon-pastor!

Vereker is the family name of the Viscounts Gort of Ireland (named after a town in County Galway). The title, in the peerage of Ireland, was created in 1816 and the second Viscount was Charles Vereker, a nephew of the first. A young woman named Sarah Elizabeth Vereker married Royal Navy officer John Read Bindon in 1806, thus bringing the name 'Vereker' into the Bindon family. The couple gave it to William Francis Vereker Bindon and others in their family. It stuck as a given name. Today, the 9th Viscount Vereker, one Foley Vereker, lives on the Isle of Mann. In New Zealand William Henry Bindon, mentioned above, changed his surname to the impressive Vereker-Bindon before his death and descendants in the Waikato and Auckland carry that hyphenated name today. However, the many offspring of one of William Henry's uncles, who emigrated from Ireland in 1866 and settled in the Bay of Islands and other parts of Northland, retain the simple surname, Bindon. They have often used Vereker as a given name.