● Hugh Wallace cuts his celebration cake after being presented with a medal and letter of appreciation to mark his 70 years as an altar boy for the Catholic church.

Honouring Hugh for 70 years of loyal service

A LONGSTANDING altar server at Okehampton's Roman Catholic Church has been honoured for 70 years' service to his church.

A medal and a letter of appreciation from Bishop Mark O'Toole, Roman Catholic Bishop of Plymouth, was awarded to Hugh Wallace during the morning service at St Boniface Catholic Church on Sunday, November 26 to mark his loyal and devout commitment as an altar server for 70 years.

Hugh began serving on the altar as a young boy in his home town of Eden Grove, London in 1947. During his career in the Royal Air Force, which saw him stationed at bases in the UK and abroad, he continued to be a regular altar server.

After returning to civilian life in 1966, Hugh continued to be a trusted server on the altar of churches throughout England in parishes where he has lived. He has served at the altar of many priests and bishops, in places of worship as varied as wooden sheds, back gardens, convents, abbeys and cathedrals.

Hugh is a member of the Guild of St Stephen, which was founded in London in 1903 to promote a high standard of service at the altar. He was presented with the guild's gold medal in 1997 in recognition of his 50 years' service as an altar server.

Hugh moved to Halwill in 1994 and became a server at St Boniface Catholic Church. Although he now lives near Bude, he still regularly travels the 40-mile trip to Okehampton on Sundays, and when required at other services, to serve mass for Father Darline Joseph at St Boniface.