

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATION.



2016 NEWSLETTER.

EDITORIAL.

In the spring of 1945 Technical Serjeant John Appleby of the United States Army Air Force arrived in England, having been posted to Lavenham in Suffolk. During his spare time he visited many churches and cathedrals. Of Peterborough he wrote: "In the cathedral there I found the absolute perfection of Norman architecture. There is a unity of spirit and design and execution, an air of effortless peace, calm dignity, and simple strength in Peterborough Cathedral that make it, to my mind, one of the greatest works of man. I sat in the nave and looked and looked, knowing all the while that I had found the perfection of design which I had been seeking in Ely and Norwich and Lincoln and had not found. With a start I realised that I had been sitting there for over two hours, and that the train back to Bury was due to leave shortly. I had only time for a hurried walk through parts of the old abbey grounds before I caught the train."

It is all too easy for those of us who have known the Cathedral for many years to take it for granted. For the visitor who arrives in the Precincts for the first time, however, it is surely very different. One might be tempted to suppose that Wordsworth's lines "Earth has not anything to show more fair" would immediately spring to mind. Over the years, so many people have written glowing tributes about Peterborough Cathedral. George Borrow called it "a noble venerable pile, equal.....in appearance to the cathedrals of Toledo, Burgos and Leon.....Nothing in architecture can be conceived more beautiful than the principal entrance which fronts the west and which, at the time we saw it, was gilded with the rays of the setting sun." William Cobbett, in his "Rural Rides", described the Cathedral as "exquisitely

beautiful”, while Celia Fiennes called it “a magnificent building”. Abraham de la Pryne, writing circa 1691, said, “The Minster is a most stupendous piece of work, built after a most wonderful, majestic manner.” There are countless other descriptions of this marvellous building.

Peterborough Cathedral lies in its attractive precincts, which are a serene paradise amidst the bustle of a modern city - a veritable “haunt of ancient peace”, in Tennyson’s apt words. Rather like the gardens of an Oxbridge college, they provide an almost rural setting in an urban environment. The Minster boasts many outstanding features, from the superb thirteenth century ceiling of the Nave to the burial place of Queen Katharine of Aragon, the ill-fated and ill-used first wife of King Henry VIII.

Those of us who have been fortunate enough in our youth to have sung within the ancient walls of the Cathedral will be ever grateful for that wonderful experience. How lucky we were to be part of a musical team in this wonderful place: “Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault/The pealing Anthem swells the note of praise.” (Thomas Gray).

2016 REUNION.

This year’s reunion took place on Saturday 17 September. Once again, it was held in conjunction with the annual gathering of the Friends of the Cathedral. Old choristers assembled in the stalls and rehearsed with the choirs under the genial direction of Steven Grahl. Before the service, GRAHAM ANDREWS laid a wreath at St. Sprite’s Chapel in memory of old choristers and former pupils of The King’s School who gave their lives in the two world wars. The first lesson at Evensong was read by LUKE HAGERTY. After the service, the Annual General Meeting was held in the Knights’ Chamber. The final event of the day was the reunion dinner, which was held at The Park Inn. Speakers were Canon Tim Alban Jones and old chorister Dr. DAVID WHITTLE. A first-class meal was enjoyed by the assembled company. The reunion proved, as always, to be a very happy and delightfully nostalgic event.

2017 REUNION.

Our next reunion will be on Saturday 16 September 2017. A very warm welcome is extended to all Association members, and particularly to those who have not attended for some years. Please make a note in your diary NOW and join us for Old Choristers’ Day.

NEW MEMBERS.

We welcome the following to the Cathedral Old Choristers' Association: SOFFIA CATTLE, SEBASTIAN HARPER, FINLAY HUME, ALYSSA MORGAN, ANNABELLE PICK, ALYS SHORT and MICHAEL WALLER.

FEDERATION FESTIVAL AT PETERBOROUGH 2018.

The Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations will hold its Festival at Peterborough from Friday 16 - Sunday 18 September 2018. The weekend will include a good deal of opportunity for singing, tours of the Cathedral, an organ recital and a Festival banquet. More details will be available nearer the time and are on the event website: <http://peterboroughfestival2018.weebly.com>

THE VERY REV. CHARLES TAYLOR, DEAN OF PETERBOROUGH 2007-2016.

Sadly, Charles Taylor retired as Dean of Peterborough in the autumn. His somewhat abrupt departure suggests that the spirit of Barchester did not die with Trollope. His farewell service took place on Saturday 1 October. Charles, a former chorister of St. Paul's Cathedral, and his wife Catherine have been with us for almost a decade. We regret the circumstances of their departure and wish them well for the future. The Bishop has appointed Canon Jonathan Baker as Acting Dean during the interregnum.

TREVOR ELLIOTT: AVE ATQUE VALE.

Mr. Trevor Elliott retired as Deputy Headmaster of The King's School at the end of the Summer term, having held this post for thirty years. It is believed that Trevor's tenure of office is the longest in the history of the Cathedral School, exceeding even Denham Larrett's long incumbency. He has not severed his ties with King's completely, for he is continuing his invaluable work with the Old Petriburgians' Association, and is also assisting with the preservation and ordering of the School archives. We extend our very grateful thanks to him for his long years of service and wish him well in his semi-retirement.

SARGENT ANNIVERSARY.

Next year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the world famous conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent, whose funeral took place at All Saints' Church, Stamford on Monday 9 October 1967. In his youth, Sargent was an articled organ pupil at Peterborough Cathedral, where he studied under the redoubtable Dr. Haydn Keeton. One of Sir Malcolm's dying wishes was that the Cathedral choir, under Stanley Vann, should sing at his funeral service.

It has been suggested that the choristers who were present on that special occasion might have a reunion in Stamford on Saturday 7 October 2017. This event could include a tour of All Saints' Church, a visit to Sargent's grave in Stamford cemetery, a look at the local archives, and a meal at a nearby hostelry.

The following sang at Sir Malcolm's funeral:

TERRY BARBER
RICHARD BATES
DAVID CLIFTON
PETER GREENWOOD
ROGER GROVES
NEIL HOWE
TIM HURST-BROWN
ADRIAN KNIGHT
STEPHEN LEDBURY
RICHARD LUDLOW
STEPHEN MEDLOCK
ADRIAN PARSONS
ROBERT SILVERTON
DAVID STANLEY
STEPHEN WHITEHEAD
PAUL WISKEN
PAUL WOOD
COLIN WRIGHT

If people are interested in this event, then please e-mail Tim Hurst-Brown on: timandlinda@hurst-brown.freeserve.co.uk

PERSONALIA.

The death of Old Petriburgian James Crowden, former Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, should not go unrecorded in these pages. He was a stalwart supporter of the Cathedral and also The King's School, of which he was a governor for ten years. He spoke at one of our dinners many years ago, when he was Vice Lord-Lieutenant, and one of his witticisms has remained in the memory: " 'In loco parentis' does not mean 'My father is an engine driver' "!

Cedric ("Scratch") McCarthy, Head of History at King's from 1952-1981, died in January at the age of ninety-two. His funeral took place at York Crematorium on 3 February. Cedric came to Peterborough after reading History at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, and for thirty years was a pillar of the School. He not only ran the History department, but he was also in charge of rowing, helped out in the tuck shop and displayed superb showmanship at the annual School fete. Cedric was a tremendous "character" and as such we remember him with great affection.

SAMUEL BARBER graduated from Anglia Ruskin University recently with a First Class Honours degree in Forensic Science. He was also awarded the Royal Society of Chemistry prize for the best Chemistry-based thesis of 2016.

It was very good to see DAVID CLIFTON, PETER HANDLEY and DAVID WHITTLE (all choristers in the time of Dr. Stanley Vann) at this year's reunion. They had not attended Old Choristers' Day for many years, so we hope that we shall see a little more of them in the future.

TOM CUNLIFFE and his wife Anna have recently had a son, Finn Jasper, while Tom's brother JAMES and his wife Nora have lately had a daughter, Ingvild Olivia. Our congratulations to both couples.

FRED DIMOCK is now 98 and our most senior old chorister. He lives in Christchurch and is still reasonably active.

MARK DUTHIE is Organist and Director of Music at Brecon Cathedral.

MICHAEL GAMBLE sang in the choir from 1946-1949, and thereafter was a chorister at The King's Chapel of the Savoy. He retired from Glyndebourne Festival Opera in 2006, having spent twenty-six years there as Pit Manager. He was also Piano and Harpsichord Tuner/Technician.

ANDY HALLIDAY is engaged to be married. He was unable to attend this year's reunion, but sends his best wishes to all who remember him.

OLIVER HAMILTON-BOX and Charlotte McAuliffe were married in the Cathedral on Tuesday 29 December 2015. Old choristers WILLIAM HAMILTON-BOX and SAMUEL BARBER were present at the service.

SIMON JOHNSON is currently the Organist and Assistant Director of Music at St. Paul's Cathedral. On Friday 10 June he played the organ there at the special service to mark the 90th birthday of Her Majesty The Queen.

ANDREW MADDOCKS married his new wife Catherine at Taunton Registry Office on Saturday 10 September, where his choir sang Eric Whitacre's "This Marriage". Afterwards the couple, family and friends moved to another venue for a concert by violinist Fenella Humphreys and pianist Erdem Misirioglu. Andrew and Catherine have music interests in common and met several years ago at an RSA meeting. We send them our belated congratulations.

TOM MOORE is Director of Music at Wakefield Cathedral and university organist at the University of Huddersfield.

NICK MORRIS was one of the soloists in Handel's "Messiah" which was performed in the Cathedral on December 18 2015. Steven Grahl conducted the combined forces of the Cathedral choirs, the Youth Choir and the Festival Chorus. The singers were accompanied by the Saraband Consort, a London-based baroque orchestra.

ALEX PAINE has given up teaching and has now moved on to computer game design.

We regret to record that Canon PAUL ROSE, a former minor canon and Precentor of the Cathedral, has suffered a severe stroke and is now living at The College of St. Barnabas, Lingfield.

In addition to their sterling work for the Association, ALEX SPIRES (Hon. Treasurer) and SIMON WILKINSON (Hon. Secretary) are keen athletes. Seasoned runner Alex completed the Great Eastern Run in Peterborough in one hour 43 minutes (incredibly, the same time for the last four years), while Half Marathon first timer Simon finished the Manchester Half in one hour 57 minutes. Congratulations to them both.

DESMOND SWINBURN (Assistant Organist 1945-1950) celebrated his ninetieth birthday in March. He now lives in King's Lynn. Desmond has many memories of his time at Peterborough and of the choristers of his generation. He was Director of Music at St. Olave's and St. Saviour's Grammar School from 1957-1977. One of his duties there was to choose and train the trebles for The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy. The Chapel marked Desmond's 90th birthday by performing a Te Deum which he had written many years ago. This took place at a choristers' reunion, which was followed by a splendid lunch. We send our belated congratulations to him.

OLIVER WATERER is Organist and Master of the Choristers at St. Davids Cathedral.

EVENSONG SUNG BY OLD CHORISTERS.

Following the success of last year's Eucharist sung by members of the OCA, the committee felt that it might be appropriate for old choristers, lay clerks, Music department colleagues and friends to sing Evensong in the Cathedral on Tuesday 27 December. There will be a rehearsal at either 4.00pm or 4.30pm before the service at 5.30pm. Old chorister Christopher Brown will conduct and has suggested the following pieces:

Responses - Ayleward.

<http://www0.cpd.org/wiki/images/sheet/ayle-pre.pdf>

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis - Dyson in D.

<http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/a/a1/IMSLP364851-PMLP589210-Dyson>

Anthem - 'Sleep, my Jesu'.

<http://jamiewhall.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Sleep-My-Jesu-SATB1.pdf>

Please let Louise Laprun know if you would like to sing. She can be contacted via Facebook or by telephoning 07595 440279.

The annual gathering of members of the Old Petriburgians' Association will take place at the 'Brewery Tap' later that evening, so people are invited to combine the two events and meet up with old friends.

HIDDEN PLACES.

During the Heritage Open Days at the beginning of September, a number of buildings in the Minster Precincts not normally open to the public were available for inspection by visitors. These included the Trinity Chapel above the porch in the centre of the West Front, which houses the Cathedral library and which was the Song School from 1994-1998; Table Hall, at the north-east angle of the Infirmary ruins, where in immediate post-Reformation times the minor canons and lay clerks (then called singing-men) had their meals, and where Dr Henry Coleman, Master of the Music, lived in the mid twentieth century; and the Knights' Chamber above the gateway to the Bishop's Palace, which half a century ago housed a canteen for the choristers run by Mrs. Mullis, wife of one of the Cathedral vergers. The Knights' Chamber has recently been restored, and is now available as an exhibition space and a meeting room.

Tim Hurst-Brown has once again collated all the material and written the newsletter. I am extremely grateful to him for continuing to take on this considerable task.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Simon Wilkinson
Hon. Secretary

December 2016.

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