

# PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATION



## 2017 NEWSLETTER

### 2017 REUNION

This year's reunion took place on Saturday 16 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, DAVID LOWE laid a wreath at the memorials in 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 SUZ FRANKS. After the service, the Annual General Meeting was held in the Almoner's Hall. The final event of the day was the reunion dinner, which was held at The Park Inn. Speakers were Canon Ian Black and old chorister CHRISTOPHER BROWN. A first-class meal was enjoyed by the assembled company. The reunion proved, as always, to be a very happy and delightfully nostalgic event.

### NEW OFFICERS

At the AGM, TIM HURST-BROWN was elected as Chairman of the Association. SIMON WILKINSON stood down as Hon. Secretary after being in office for eleven years. He was thanked warmly for his work and particularly for his skilful and unobtrusive organisation of the annual dinners. His successor is LOUISE LAPRUN, to whom we wish every success in this demanding role. She has a hard act to follow, but with the support of the committee and all our members she is sure to make a great success of her new post.

## 2018 REUNION / FEDERATION FESTIVAL WEEKEND

The Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations will hold its Festival at Peterborough from Friday 14 – Sunday 16 September 2018. (The Federation Festival was last held here in 1964). In 2018, the weekend will include a good deal of opportunity for singing, tours of the Cathedral, an organ recital, a concert and a Festival dinner at the Great Northern Hotel on Saturday 15 September. (The Federation Festival banquet will replace our annual reunion dinner just for this occasion).

FURTHER DETAILS WILL BE SENT OUT DURING THE AUTUMN, AND WE HOPE THAT MANY PETERBOROUGH OLD CHORISTERS WILL JOIN US FOR THIS VERY SPECIAL EVENT.

## NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new members to the Cathedral Old Choristers' Association:

KATHERINE BARNES, ARVINDER BHATTI, NICOLE BRITTO, CASEY CHITAMBIRA, JOSEPH HORNSBY, THOMAS L'ESTRANGE, HARRY SPIRES-PINTO, TONY TUPMAN and ELLA WARD.

## KENNETH EGERTON NICHOLS, 1932-2016

Ken Nichols, who died on 29 September 2016, was a chorister in the nineteen forties. He was born in Peterborough and lived in Eastfield Road. He was educated at The King's School under Oliver Mitchell, Reg Hornsby and W. F. F. Shearcroft. On leaving school, he did his National Service in the RAF and subsequently became a jet fighter pilot. When he left the forces, he achieved great success in the world of business. In his spare time, Ken was passionate about Formula 1 racing. Latterly he lived in Harrogate, where his funeral service took place on 6 October 2016. He left a wife, Gill, two daughters, several grandchildren and a sister. Gill described him as "a passionate traditionalist, a patriot and bon viveur". Requiescat in pace.

**GEOFFREY HERBERT BLAKE, 1923-2017**

Geoff Blake, who died on 25 August at the age of ninety-three, was one of the pillars of the Association for over fifty years. He was Hon. Auditor for decades and a longstanding member of the committee. He passed away suddenly, whilst watching a cricket match on television.

Geoff was born on September 30 1923 and was initially educated at Orchard Street School, Old Fletton. He joined The King's School in January 1935, during the time of Oliver Mitchell, and was a chorister under Dr. Henry Coleman. He left King's in the summer of 1939 and began work at the firm of George Baker, accountants. When he was called up, he joined the Army and served in India. He was discharged with the rank of Major. Geoff returned to Peterborough after the war and married Mary Waterfield Harrison in the Cathedral on 21 April 1949. That same year he passed the final examination of the Association of International Accountants. He later took over George Baker's firm, which then became known as Blake, Baker and Co. with an office in Park Road, near Westgate. For many years, he and Mary sang in the Cathedral Voluntary Choir; they were also very faithful members of the Peterborough Philharmonic Society. Geoff was a regular supernumerary in the Cathedral choir in the time of Dr. Vann, and was often brought in to sing bass for broadcasts and recordings. After many years of ill-health, Mary died 2014. Geoff continued to worship at the Cathedral, latterly attending services in a wheelchair. His funeral service took place in the Cathedral on 29 September, followed by cremation. Requiescat in pace.

**DONALD CLIFFORD HILL, 1921-2017**

Don Hill, who died on 29 January at the age of 95, was a tenor/alto supernumerary during the time of Dr. Stanley Vann. His son, DOUGLAS, was a chorister from 1961-1964. Don's funeral service took place at the Peterborough crematorium on 20 February. His widow, Queenie, died in hospital on 28 March aged 96. Don and Queenie will be remembered with affection by older members of the Association. We extend our condolences to Douglas and his family. Requiescat in pace.

**FREDERICK GEORGE THOMPSON DIMOCK, 1918-2017**

Our most senior old chorister, Fred Dimock, died on 8 March 2017 at the age of ninety-eight.

Fred was born in Peterborough in July 1918. He sang in the Cathedral choir under Dr. Henry Coleman and was a pupil at The King's School during the headships of Herbert Baxter and later Oliver Mitchell. While at King's he appeared in several of the Gilbert and Sullivan productions which were staged in Big School (now the Library), most notably in 1932 when he played the very demanding role of Mabel in "The Pirates of Penzance". He sang in the chorus of "HMS Pinafore" in 1933 and "The Mikado" in 1934. In the latter year he also played Julia in Sheridan's "The Rivals". Fred was Captain of St. Chad's House in his final year at King's and in addition was a member of the school Scout troop.

After leaving school, Fred worked for the Peterborough Co-operative society. When war broke out in 1939, he was called up and served with the Royal Artillery. Having survived the war unscathed, he spent some time in Egypt after the cessation of hostilities. On returning to Peterborough, he became a student at St. Peter's Emergency Teacher Training College in Midgate. Fred taught in London, and when he was living in Clapham he sang with the Royal Choral Society. He moved to Felixstowe to teach in a junior school, and while he was there he performed with the local Gilbert and Sullivan society. He also played the organ and sang in various church choirs. Fred ended his teaching career as headmaster of a primary school at Great Brickhill in Buckinghamshire. Following his retirement, he and his wife Joan moved to Highcliffe, near Christchurch in Dorset. Some time after Joan's death, Fred married his second wife, Daisy. The couple moved into a nursing home just a month before Fred died.

His daughter Ann wrote to us: "He often spoke of his days as a chorister at Peterborough Cathedral and I'm sure his time there had a profound impact on his life." We extend our condolences to Fred's children and wider family. Requiescat in pace.

**THE REVD. CANON FRANK EUSTACE PICKARD, B.SC., M.A., 1931-2017**

Canon Frank Pickard, who died on 5 July at the age of eighty-six, will be remembered with affection by those who sang in the choir in the 'sixties and early 'seventies. He was Head of Divinity at The King's School from 1963-1972, in addition to serving as an honorary minor canon of the Cathedral.

Frank was born in Bletchley in June 1931. He attended Wolverton Grammar School, and from there he went to London University to read Economics. Following National Service in the R.A.F, he studied Theology at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, whilst at the same time training for the ministry at St. Stephen's House ("Staggers"). In 1957 he was ordained by the Bishop of Liverpool.

After serving two curacies in the north-west and later working at a grammar school in Acton, Frank came to the Peterborough diocese in 1963. He and his family initially lived at number 5, Minster Precincts (now flats) overlooking the West front of the Cathedral. When he was a minor canon he was not always on the best of terms with the new Dean, Dick Wingfield Digby, who was somewhat autocratic in dealing with subordinates. In 1968, Frank became Vicar of Newborough in addition to his King's School duties. Four years later, he left Peterborough to become the incumbent of Isham with Pytchley, near Kettering. In 1976, Bishop Feaver appointed him as Rector of Abington, Northampton, where he stayed for twenty years. He became a non-residentiary canon of the Cathedral in 1986. His final move was to Weedon Lois, where he stayed until he was seventy.

In retirement, Frank and his wife Margaret moved back to Northampton. He was a very prominent freemason and much involved in the craft. Being an Anglo-Catholic to the fingertips, Frank became an assistant priest at All Saints' Church in the town, which he cherished for its High Church ritual. It was at All Saints' that his funeral took place on Friday 14 July, when the church was packed.

To Frank's widow Margaret and his three sons we extend our sympathy in their sad loss. Requiescat in pace.

## IAN DERRICK DARBY, 1928-2017

Ian Darby was born into a farming family at Marholm in January 1928. He attended St. Mark's School and joined The King's School Junior School in the autumn of 1937. He was admitted to the Cathedral choir in the final years of Dr. Coleman. Ian left King's in July 1943 and went to work as an apprentice at Newall's Engineering. In 1946, he joined the Royal Signals and served in the Middle East where he volunteered for the military police. He became a Lance Corporal and was then promoted to Sergeant in the space of a few months. Ian left the Army in 1948 and returned to Peterborough. He married Audrey Johnson in 1949. Becoming unhappy with engineering, he joined the Police force and spent fifteen years as a policeman in Peterborough. After this he moved to Brampton near Huntingdon, where he was promoted to Inspector. He retired from the force in 1977 and for the next eight years he and Audrey ran the Decoy public house at Newborough. Ian died on 11 June 2017, aged eighty-nine. We extend our sympathy to his widow and two children. Requiescat in pace.

## SARGENT ANNIVERSARY

Four former choristers who sang at the funeral of Sir Malcolm Sargent in Stamford in October 1967 re-visited the town exactly fifty years later. RICHARD BATES, TIM HURST-BROWN, RICHARD LUDLOW and STEPHEN WHITEHEAD had lunch at the Crown Hotel, explored All Saints' Church, where the funeral service took place, visited Sargent's childhood home and sang in a commemorative service on Sunday 8 October. (Another former Cathedral chorister of a much later vintage – GABRIELLA PINEDA-RODRIGUES – performed the solo in "Rule Britannia!" during the service).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sargent was a choirboy at St. John's Church, Stamford, where his father played the organ. The young Malcolm was an articled organ pupil of the redoubtable Dr. Haydn Keeton at Peterborough Cathedral from 1911-1914, before beginning a conducting career which launched him to international stardom. One of Sargent's dying wishes was that the choir of Peterborough Cathedral should sing at his funeral.

## WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

On 14 July 1949, a large oak board listing the names of old boys of The King's School who gave their lives in the Second World War was placed in Big School. It was made by Harold Chapman, the veteran school caretaker. On 23 October 1950, a stone tablet recording the names of those who did not return was unveiled in St. Sprite's Chapel at the west end of the Cathedral. The Headmaster (Reg Hornsby) formally handed over the memorial to The Dean and Chapter for their safekeeping; The Bishop of Peterborough (Dr. Spencer Leeson) dedicated the plaque; and the Cathedral choir sang "Blessed are those that die in the Lord" by Sir John Goss. Nearly two hundred people were present at the service. Afterwards, many of them in turn visited the tiny chapel to inspect the memorial and to shed silent tears for their loved ones. At the end of the poignant ceremony, Dean Noel Christopherson said of those whose names were recorded on the plaque: "May they never be forgotten".

## KING'S SCHOOL ARCHIVES

In recent times, local historian Jane King has been doing a great deal of research on Headmasters of The King's School. In doing so, she has uncovered various facts which have hitherto been overlooked – including the names of two previously unheard of heads! She has been eagerly assisted in this work by Trevor Elliott, the recently-retired Deputy Headmaster of the School. The fruits of her work ("Mortarboards and Mitres") can be viewed in the History section of the School website.

Earlier this year, a splendid album of photographs of governors, staff and boys taken in the late nineteen-thirties was donated to the School archives. This fascinating volume was presented to Oliver Mitchell, Headmaster 1932-1939, when he was about to leave Peterborough to take up the headship of Owen's School, Islington. Mitchell was an extremely popular Headmaster, and very senior old choristers still speak of him with great affection. The surviving members of the Mitchell family have most generously gifted this charming photograph album to King's. We are extremely grateful for this important contribution to the School records, and are delighted that it has now come to rest in the archives room.

## PERSONALIA

The Revd TOM BATES has completed his curacy and is now Team Vicar of Abergavenny. He is also Sub-Prior to the Holywell Community (a group of young people who give a 'year for God' living life according to the Rule of St. Benedict).

DAVID BUTT PHILLIP was the tenor soloist in Prokofiev's cantata "Seven, They are Seven" (receiving its Proms premiere) at the Royal Albert Hall on Monday 7 August. The National Youth Choir of Great Britain learned the work in a single weekend. David won great praise for his singing. His roles at the Royal Opera House have included Abdallo in "Nabucco" (with Placido Domingo), First Armed Man in "Die Zauberflote", Pang in "Turandot" and Gaston in "La Traviata". Future engagements include playing The Earl of Essex in "Gloriana" in Madrid, and Narraboth in "Salome" at Covent Garden.

Professor FRANK CLOSE, the eminent Physicist, gave a talk on BBC Radio 4 on 16 August entitled "Dark Side of the Sun". In the programme, Frank mentioned that CYRIL LAXTON had introduced him to eclipses in 1954. Cyril was an old chorister, lay clerk, Hon. Secretary of the Association and a teacher at St. Mark's School (where Frank was educated before moving to King's). Frank's semi-biographical memoir is called "Eclipse – Journeys to the Dark Side of the Sun". He visited the USA for the solar eclipse on 21 August this year.

EMILY CUNLIFFE was married to Michael McMillan at Peterborough Cathedral on 2 June. They spent their honeymoon in Sri Lanka. We send them every good wish for their future together. Emily left Peterborough in 2003 to attend Wells Cathedral School sixth form, and then went on to study French Horn performance at the Royal College of Music. She is now a freelance French Horn player based in London, and also teaches this instrument.

CHRISTOPHER GOWER, former Master of the Music, is one of the churchwardens of St. Martin's Church, Canterbury. It is the oldest church in the English-speaking world still in regular use. Christopher plays the organ there once a month. He has been writing a good deal of music lately – for Worcester Cathedral, St. John's College, Cambridge and the Shrine Church at Walsingham. Christopher also plays the organ for evensong at Canterbury Christ Church University.

JULIA HAMILTON-BOX has recently graduated from York University with a First in Linguistics.

Her brother, WILLIAM HAMILTON-BOX, married Victoria Price at the Church of the Holy Cross, Sherston, Wiltshire on 28 August. William is currently undergoing ordination training at St. Stephen's House, Oxford. Victoria was formerly PA to the Bishop of Coventry.

We send our belated condolences to Dr. JOHN MARTIN, whose wife Carol died in November 2016. Older members of the Association will remember her as Carol Thompson: she lived in the Minster Precincts and was secretary to Bishop Blagden until his retirement in 1949. The Martins were married in the Cathedral in October 1951. John is an emeritus fellow and former Vice-Master of St. Catherine's College, Oxford.

SIMON MOLD retired from full-time teaching three years ago. He subsequently joined Leicester Cathedral Choir as a Songman, and sang at the re-interment of King Richard III in the Cathedral on 26 March 2015. He also took part in the Royal Maundy service in Leicester Cathedral earlier this year, forty-two years on from singing at the same service in Peterborough in 1975. He brought a choir to sing evensong at Peterborough Cathedral in December 2016, when fellow old chorister Dr. DAVID WHITTLE played the organ. Simon tells us that it felt like the days of Dr. Vann all over again, especially as the choir sang one of Stanley's chants.

A former Director of Music at the Cathedral, ANDREW REID, is now Managing Director of Harrison and Harrison, the famous firm of organ builders. On leaving the Cathedral in 2012, Andrew became Director of The Royal School of Church Music. He, his wife Louise and their four children are now living in County Durham.

On Palm Sunday 1967 GARY SIELING played the organ for his first church service. On Palm Sunday 2017 he announced his retirement from St. Mary's, Henley-on-Thames after half a century of organ playing in venues from parish churches to Cathedrals. Gary was Assistant Organist at Peterborough from 1987-1993.

MAX STEVENSON and his wife Jane became the proud parents of Sebastian in October 2016. We send our belated congratulations to them both.

ANDREW TORBELL joined the Corby Male Voice Choir as a bass in 1980. He became Deputy Musical Director in 1996, and Musical Director two years later. He has conducted the choir at countless venues in the UK and abroad, including twice at the Menin Gate in Ypres, with more than six hundred people in attendance on each occasion. Andrew has now decided to step down from the choir in order to devote more time to his family.

VAUGHAN TOWNHILL is organist and choirmaster of Holy Cross Church, Davidson's Mains, Edinburgh. He is a founder member of the Scottish Schools Orchestra Trust, an organisation promoting orchestral playing for young people. He is principal clarinet of the Edinburgh Symphony Orchestra, a member of the Doune Wind Quintet and a soloist with other orchestral ensembles. He is also the conductor of the Dunbar Choral Society.

ARNOLD WILLS has recently joined the committee of the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations.

Choristers of the late 'sixties and early 'seventies will be sad to hear of the death of Helen Tilley (daughter of Canon PAUL ROSE, former Precentor of the Cathedral), who had been suffering from cancer for some time. Her funeral service took place in the Cathedral on Friday 20 January, followed by interment in Aldwinckle churchyard. Helen's mother, the late Dr. Judith Rose, was parish priest of Aldwinckle for many years and is also buried there.

Pam Proctor, wife of honorary member BARRY PROCTOR, died in the Sue Ryder hospice at Thorpe Hall on 6 June aged 85. We send our sincere condolences to Barry, who was a Cathedral server for more than fifty years.

Older members of the Association will recall with affection the name of W. Denham Larrett, former Deputy Headmaster of The King's School, who retired from full-time teaching in 1967 after forty-five years on the staff. Exactly half a century on, a new trophy – the Denham Larrett Memorial Cup – has been donated to the School and was presented at Speech Day in the Cathedral on 15 September.

The Very Revd. Michael Bunker, one of the Deans Emeriti, celebrated his eightieth birthday on 22 July. Michael and his wife Mary originally retired to a property in Pembrokeshire, but are now living in Oundle.

Canon Jonathan Baker left the Cathedral in the autumn to become Vicar of Beverley Minster in East Yorkshire. He did a sterling job as Acting Dean after the departure of Charles Taylor, and is greatly missed. We offer him our very best wishes on his new appointment.

Canon Bruce Ruddock, who retired from the Cathedral staff in the summer, is now living in Sussex. He has recently been receiving treatment for prostate cancer and we wish him well.

## EVENSONG SUNG BY OLD CHORISTERS

Old choristers, lay clerks and friends are invited to sing Evensong in the Cathedral on Wednesday 27 December. There will be a rehearsal at 4.00pm and the service takes place at 5.30pm. Please let Louise Laprun know if you would like to sing. Music for Evensong has yet to be confirmed, but any suggestions for Magnificat/Nunc Dimittis/Anthem will be gratefully received. Dress code: dark suit/all black. Louise can be contacted via Facebook, by email (l.laprun@srm.com), 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.

## MISSING OLD CHORISTERS

The following old choristers seem to have completely disappeared from our radar. Any help in tracing any of them would be greatly appreciated:

STEPHEN CAMMACK  
MICHAEL CLAYTON  
IAN COCKCROFT  
JONATHAN COLLIER  
PHILIP DOODSON  
JOHN FRICKER  
KEITH GIBBS  
RICHARD HALE  
IAN HARTLEY  
JAMES HOGAN

NEIL HUBBARD  
PETER JOHNSON  
STEPHEN LEDBURY  
STEPHEN LODEY  
STEPHEN MEDLOCK  
ANDREW PELL  
DEREK PYWELL  
RICHARD SHARPE  
RICHARD WALES  
NICHOLAS WIGG

With every good wish for Christmas and the New Year,

## *Tim Hurst-Brown*

Chairman

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PLEASE MAKE A NOTE OF THE DATES OF THE FEDERATION FESTIVAL AND MAKE A VERY SPECIAL EFFORT TO BE WITH US FOR PART (OR ALL) OF THE WEEKEND. WE WOULD BE DELIGHTED IF YOU WERE ABLE TO ATTEND THE FESTIVAL DINNER AT THE GREAT NORTHERN HOTEL ON SATURDAY 15 SEPTEMBER.

### STOP PRESS: NEW DEAN OF PETERBOROUGH

The Very Revd. Chris Dalliston, currently Dean of Newcastle, has recently been appointed Dean of Peterborough. He will be installed at Choral Evensong on Saturday 20 January 2018. The new Dean hails from Norfolk. He studied Modern History at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and later trained for the ministry at St. Stephen's House, Oxford. Before going to Newcastle, he was Vicar of St. Botolph's Church, Boston ('the Stump'). He and his wife Michelle have four grown-up children.