

Blackburn Cathedral, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2013

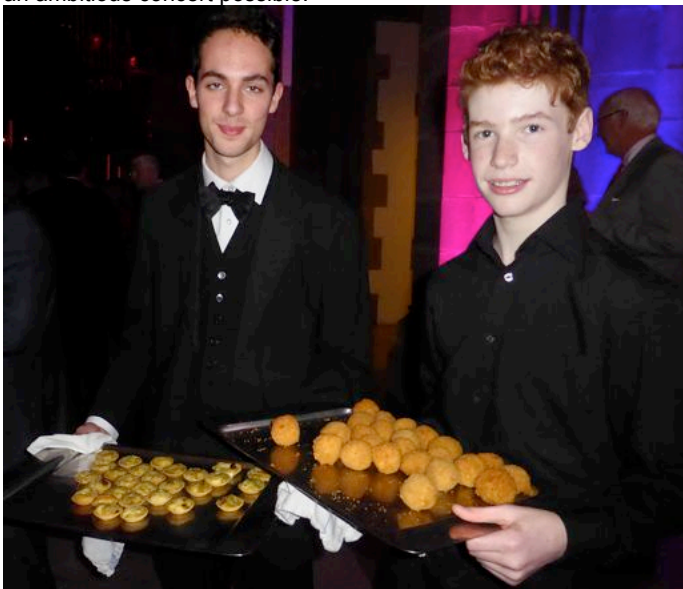
# Music & More online Supplement No. 33

## Christmas Spectacular



Our cathedral was bathed in ever-changing coloured lights when we welcomed a capacity audience for our annual *Christmas Spectacular*.

But before the music began, we welcomed generous Patrons into our hospitable North Transept – for it was they who had made such an ambitious concert possible.



Bearing trays of delicious hors d'oeuvres for our guests were choral scholar **Nic Walker** and new YPC member **Harvey Finney**.

Dave Riley, our new Café-in-the-Crypt Chef Manager, had provided a tempting spread of delights for us to try – although the roast beef in Yorkshire Puddings had to be tackled with care – the gravy tended to obey the force of gravity, via shirt-fronts and blouses!



L-R: **Amanda Tattersall** and her sister, **Suzanne Pickering** (wife of the Dean's Virger), Music Administrator **Linda Bruce** and husband **Andy**, with former choir-parent **Brenda Carruthers**.



Aptly named **Paul and Julie Eatwell**, parents of YPC giant (6' 6") **Dominic Eatwell** – there wasn't room to take his photo! – flanked energetic FoBCM member, **Anitra Haythornwhite**...



... whilst our resident 6' 6" giant, Director of Music **Samuel Hudson** and his wife **Rebecca (R)**, welcomed **Mr & Mrs Hudson Sr – Cheryl & Christopher**.

Our North Transept was abuzz with abounding goodwill – and that was before one note of the music had yet to be heard!



It was a particular joy that evening to welcome **Scott Cooper** and his fiancée **Charlotte Wells**, for it was Scott's company which helped to build our new £225,000 Song School.



Former cathedral choirman **HH Judge James Prowse (R)** had brought two of his neighbours to the concert: **John and Clare Berry**. Clearly everyone was having a great time!

We then took our places in the Nave for the concert. There wasn't a spare seat. (The empty chair in the centre of the photo belonged to your itinerant photographer!)



The first item was Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* scored, originally, for children's voices and harp. But tonight several of the carols were sung in a skilful SATB version by Julius Harrison.

How effective it was to hear the trebles begin sing from a distance their quasi-plainsong *Procession, Hodie Christus Natus est*, as they gradually came into view from the North transept.



The excellent harpist was **Lauren Scott**.

Then the cathedral choristers and choirmen, and members of the Renaissance Singers, were joined by members of the Northern Chamber Orchestra, and by children from four local Primary and Junior Schools, and also by the cathedral's Lantern Voices and our own Young People's Choir. What a stimulating sight they were as they sang (with raised arms) Will Todd's *My Lord has come*.



Samuel Hudson had chosen new arrangements of popular carols by **Bob Chilcott** who was a member of the famous *King's Singers*. How well they sounded – *Good King Wenceslas*, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, *Away in a manger*, and so many more.

There were several solos by choir members – the first was by head chorister **William Fielding** who is not only an accomplished singer, but also an organist (seeming to learn a new movement of a *Vierne Symphonie* every week!) as well as being a skilled pianist, cellist and trumpet player! William's talented chorister sister, **Elizabeth**, can just be seen on the left!



And then came the interval – with more refreshments in the North Transept and also in the Cathedral Crypt. (We don't do things by half measures here!)

It was a particular joy to welcome our new Bishop, **Julian Henderson**, seen here with **Peter Turner** (who is a strong supporter of our cathedral music) and **Canon Andrew Hindley**:



It was also a delight to welcome Mrs **Heather Henderson** to her first *Christmas Spectacular* since her husband's inauguration as the ninth Bishop of Blackburn.



*Mrs Henderson (R) is seen here with Mrs Geraldine Armstrong, wife of our Dean, Christopher Armstrong.*

The second half of the concert began with the recounting of an apocryphal Christmas story telling how *In dulci jubilo* might have been created by a monk, a choir of angels – and by a donkey which sang in the monastery choir! (It was quite a lot to swallow after our double-dose of refreshments!)

The story was told, most engagingly, by **Canon Hindley** in the pulpit, with attractive musical illustrations played by the orchestra and with occasional singing by the choirs.

It was called *Brother Heinrich's Christmas* and the music was by the legendary British composer **John Rutter**.



At one point in the story, Canon Hindley had to play the part of an Archbishop of Canterbury with a glass of red wine. (We can't quite remember why!)

Even though the bright light of a white donkey projected onto a screen next to His Grace didn't help the quality of the photograph, yet the sight of Canon Hindley as an archbishop had to be recorded for posterity.

Needless to say, the applause after this *tour de force* was loud and long!



And so the joy of listening to and singing favourite carols continued unabated.

A press photographer captured Assistant Director of Music, **Shaun Turnbull** accompanying one of the carols...



... but he probably didn't capture the energetic commitment shown by long-time cathedral choirman **Philip Wilson** (flanked by Phil Davenport and Ed McCullough) as we all sang *White Christmas*!

*(We are greatly indebted to Philip for the continuing flow of funds for our music programme through his second-hand bookstall in the crypt!)*



There was an encore, of course: *We wish you a Merry Christmas*. The only thing lacking was a light dusting of snow as we made our ways happily homewards.

It was raining!



Thank you, **Samuel and Shaun**, thank you cathedral choirs, thank you school choirs, thank you orchestra & harpist, thank you generous Patrons, thank you generous Sponsors, thank you attentive caterers, thank you all hard-working helpers,

thank you Blackburn's **Lite Alternative** for colouring our cathedral with gloriously festive lights,

and

special thanks to our **Virgers** and their stalwart assistants who, so efficiently, moved platforms and chairs for three hours afterwards to restore the cathedral to its Sunday Best.

It was a glorious evening.