

Music & More online Supplement No. 24a

Remembering GORDON SHAW

Gordon filled many roles during his lifetime: electrical engineer, chairman, librarian, handyman, member of the Cathedral Chapter, wonderfully loving husband, father and grandfather, and a faithful friend to all who were privileged to know him.

Gordon Shaw's funeral on Tuesday 24th September, 2013, was remarkable. Gordon was such a lovely man – loved and respected by all who were privileged to know him. Someone said, after his funeral – 'Gordon is the only man I know about whom nobody has ever said anything bad.' That's a wonderfully negative compliment, and so very true.

Folk started to arrive for his funeral a full 35 minutes before the service began – the Nave quickly filled. People had come from far and wide to be there: **Dean David & Liz Frayne** from Somerset; **Richard Tanner** from Rugby, **Lindsey Cooper** from Devon, former organ scholar **Chris Woodward** from London, former choral scholar **Tim Ferguson** from York and **Sarah Davy** from Chelmsford.



The procession – Clergy, Candles, Virgiers, Sheila Shaw, her three children – Elizabeth, David & John – and eight Grand-daughters.

The Renaissance Singers sat ready in the North Nave aisle as the cathedral choirs of men & boys, and girls, who were already in the choir-stalls, sang Purcell's setting of ***Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts.***

The music was sung exquisitely by all the choirs, which were directed by **Samuel Hudson**. **Shaun Turnbull's** organ playing was exactly right: accompanying the choirs so sensitively and leading the singing of the hymns so helpfully.

The Dean welcomed us, and then we sang ***Angel voices, ever singing round thy throne of light***, with a soaring descant on the last verse by **Richard Tanner** (Director of Music of Blackburn Cathedral, 1998-2011), who was in the congregation.



Gordon's elder son **David** said that his Dad wanted this service to be a celebration of his life. He was so very proud of his three children and eight Grand-daughters for they have all achieved so much. David ended by looking at the coffin and saying, 'You made us what we are today; good-night, Dad, and God bless you.'

The cathedral choirs sang Psalm 121 – *I will lift up mine eyes* – to Walford Davies' lovely chant.



Robert Mitchell, a fellow member of the Renaissance Singers with Gordon, gave an illuminating résumé of Gordon's life: school, Grade 7 piano (with merit). 40 years at Mullard's... He became a legend in his lifetime including his contribution to our concerts – not least in giving his all when singing ***Come into the garden, Maude!***

Gordon, at a Crypt concert, singing the top note at the end of 'Come into the garden, Maude', which always brought down the house!

The lesson, from John's Gospel, ('*Let not your heart be troubled...*') was read exceptionally clearly by Grand-daughter **Elysia Kenyon**. We could hear every word.



This was followed by the cathedral choirs singing David Cooper's exquisite setting of '**Come, my Way**', with the soaring treble solo sung by Head Chorister, **William Fielding**.

Canon Andrew Hindley's address brought tears and laughter. Sheila first saw Gordon ('his back') when he was playing the piano in a church hall. 'Who's that?' she asked. She soon discovered what an exceptional man he was.

He could put his hand to anything: installing a new stove in the Deanery, enthusiastic librarian of the Renaissance Singers, valuable member of the Cathedral Chapter for many years, faithful choirman, long-time chairman of our Cathedral Old Choristers' Association, ever-helpful at serving refreshments at crypt concerts, playing the part of Captain Mainwaring at a crypt concert as well as singing 'Maud' many times. And, with Sheila, an enthusiastic choir parent and marvellous host in their lovely home in Mellor.

Gordon's life was built upon two pillars: Love and Faith. 'The cathedral was, literally, his second home and he made the cathedral what it is today.'



The Renaissance Singers sang Ken Burton's setting of **Rest, (Come unto him)**, and then we all sang the hymn **The day thou gavest**.

The final prayers led by the **Dean** were faith-filled. 'Go forth upon thy journey from this world, O Christian soul...' followed by the rousing hymn, **O praise ye the Lord...** which summed up Gordon's walk with God: **For love in creation, for heaven restored, for grace of salvation, O PRAISE YE THE LORD!**

As the cortège left the cathedral the choirs sang Stanford's moving setting in G of the **Nunc Dimittis**.



We were all enriched by the service which was an outstanding tribute to a man whose like we shall not see again.

It was a happy coincidence that three past Directors of Music of Blackburn Cathedral sat together for the service:



L-R:
John Bertalot,
Gordon Stewart
and
Richard Tanner,
with
Joan Banks MBE
(widow of former
church-warden
and choir-parent,
Keith Banks)
next to them.

This was indeed a
Celebration of Gordon's
life, so there was much
fellowship amongst us all
afterwards.





After the service **Dean Frayne** exchanged greetings with Blackburn Cathedral Choirs' Association Treasurer, **John Marr**.

Notice smiling OC **George Nicholson** (L)

Former organ scholar **Chris Woodward** complimented Head Chorister **William Fielding** on his solo in David Cooper's ***Come, my Way***.



And **Samuel Hudson** showed the new Song School to **Sarah Davy** (wife of former Assistant Director of Music, **James Davy**).

James, now DoM of Chelmsford Cathedral, was at St. David's Cathedral, Wales, where his former Assistant was being installed as the new Director of Music.

It was a special joy to welcome **Lindsey Cooper**, seen here speaking with **Liz Frayne**, for David Cooper's anthem, ***Come my way***, moved us all so much at that never-to-be-forgotten service for that never-to-be-forgotten man.



See *M&M online Supplement 23b* for many photographs of Gordon Shaw.