

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

*Friends of
Blackburn Cathedral Music
Newsletter No. 5*

and

*Blackburn Cathedral
Old Choristers Association
Newsletter No. 14*

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OUR NEW BISHOP

see page 11

Excitingly Ambitious Cathedral Building Plans

Canon **ANDREW HINDLEY** told your roving reporter that exciting plans are afoot for our cathedral – which will transform its environment, making it a real cathedral close (instead of a muddy car park), and it will help to bring the cathedral into an even more central part in the life of our Borough.

The abandoned public Loo on the Boulevard will be demolished and a four-storey apartment block with accommodation for 20 families will be built at the southwest corner of the Close, which will house the cathedral staff – Dean, Canons, Organists, and Virgers, with the remaining flats being offered for sale to help cover the building costs. There'll also be an underground car park for the residents. The cathedral offices will be extended and their rents will help to provide extra income for the cathedral.



The **Waterloo Pavilions** on Church Street are Grade II Listed Georgian buildings. Contemporary architecture will connect and complement the three existing structures to provide a focal point for activity and life adjoining the Cathedral Close.

The total cost of all these amazing schemes will be in the region of £12 million and may be completed within the next five years. Watch this space!

Heartiest congratulations to **OC DAVID SMALLEY** who became interim Director of Music at St. Mary's Hall, Stoneyhurst, in January. He wrote to your Editor: *I have not had a dull moment since! We have Saturday morning school every week and I rarely get away before 7.00 pm, hence my non appearance at many events I would otherwise have attended.*



It has done wonders for my figure – I am half a stone lighter, since the music department is in the attic (fourth floor) and I have six flights of stairs to climb (there is no lift).

The boys' choir sang Evensong at Ripon Cathedral in June and has been asked to make a return visit to York Minster in the Autumn

Congratulations, David!

OC MICHAEL WILKINSON who died suddenly this summer sent the following letter, a few days before he died, to **OC GORDON FIELDING**, who was his contemporary as a boy in the choir under **TLD**. We reprint it in full, in memory of a faithful and much loved Old Chorister.

Dear Gordon,

I am writing to you from Richmond where we are having three nights at an extraordinary B&B (recommended in Alastair Sawley's book on B&Bs, which we now, after several experiences, trust totally). It has rained incessantly since we arrived on Thursday

evening and will do, as they say, for the rest of our time here. So we spent all of today at the Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle, so the rain didn't matter.

The reason for our being at all in these northerly parts was the consecration on Thursday, in York Minster, of a close friend (ever since we went to Portsmouth 20 years ago) as Bishop of Wakefield. He was a cathedral canon at Portsmouth when we first knew him, me being Diocesan Secretary at the time. Then 12 years ago he went off to be the Archbishop of Canterbury's world-wide secretary, (& travel supporter on A. B. of C.'s visits abroad, and advisor on the oddities of Rome, Greek Orthodox etc., etc.). And then, 7 years ago he became Dean of Norwich, where he has done a great job. We have kept in touch, visited regularly, know his young and so forth. So when he was appointed to follow his predecessor who went to Manchester as bishop, we were delighted.

So we had a splendid day at York. There was a lengthy (but not entirely un-boring) process ending up with a Eucharist, and followed by a lunch at St. William's College, next to the Minster.

Blackburn played its part. **Bishop ALAN** came to read a Gospel (I suppose this must be because he is the senior – by years of service – bishop in the North) and I saw your **DEAN** when **Anne** and I were walking back to our car a mile away when the event was over. So, though we had no opportunity to talk to either of them, we felt at home.



Dean Armstrong

Since you last wrote there have been two [BCOCA] Newsletters. In the April one there was a fine tribute to **Ruth [Fielding]**, to which we would wish to add our distant but none the less warm support. I have to say that I did not know her as well as I would have wished, but from such contacts as we had, we feel for you, and the Fielding family, and try to share your loss.

The headlines in the February and April editions centred first on **LAWRENCE JACKSON**, for whom three cheers – he managed to combine a patient friendliness with a pleasing and detached doubt about what we might all be believing. OK, he went on a bit, but never mind that; he was good value on all occasions I heard him.

And then in April there were the first offerings (from **JB**) of approval for, plus sorrow for the departing of **ALAN CHESTERS**. I think that he was also very good value, and I have always admired his utter, unaffected "seniority". **JB** was quite right when he spoke of his "commanding presence and authoritative voice". I remember, at one of the choir events in Blackburn, wife **Jennie** saying to us that she very much hoped they wouldn't be transferred to London or elsewhere – she and he "were both so happy at Blackburn". He avoided that, but did his part centrally on convocation. I always thought what a good contribution he made with that canon of yours whose name I have not got with me in these wilds here, but who got the "permanent & full time" education job in London when Bishop A. did his "front of the house" stuff.

We, too, were sad to hear of the death of **LIONEL DAKERS**. We couldn't get to his farewell Mass in Salisbury Cathedral, which my contact there says was a splendid occasion. We used to call on him when we went to see an archdeacon of ours who had retired (correctly out of the

diocese) to Salisbury. Lionel was blest with a wife who used to rule the roost when Lionel ran Addington Palace and who he always referred to as "my Elisabeth". Both the *Times* and the *Church Times* gave him good obituaries which made the very true point that he was a modest man who was immensely successful without having any university education but just working his way up the system. Anne was very fond of him – he stayed with us at [our home in] Meonstoke from time to time when he was doing business in our area, sometimes at my invitation when I was doing the local job here of RSCM chairman for the diocese – and her recollections are of an invariably charming man (even if he did tell the same story for a variety of different audiences!)

The BCOCA magazine is coming on nicely, and I am finding, as an extremely antique member of the organisation, that more is coming in to liven up the ancients. **BRYAN LAMB's** pieces take me straight back, and I am grateful for that because my links with Blackburn weakened when I left university (in 1950) and had really gone when I came out of the RAF in 1954 after two years abroad (largely, to my enjoyment, then, and to my recollections today, guaranteed to bore everyone, in Iraq), and I then started work in the South.

Short comments Singing voice still gone. I am undergoing "voice therapy" at Winchester. I hope for the best: at least I have a charming instructress.

Thanks for that photo of the choir [-boys with TLD in the Song School] in 1942. I have to doubt the date. I think for various reason it must have been, at earliest, 1943. But the photo is a classic.

Best wishes from us both to you both, **MICHAEL**

My life of Music - BOB KEEN
To be elected Senior Old Chorister
at our Reunion on September 13th.

I was born a Geordie during the 2nd World War and lived in Newcastle upon Tyne until I married.

I served my musical apprenticeship in my father's choirs from the age of 8, first at St Aidan's Newcastle and later at St Paul's Whitley Bay. Very soon after joining, I had the great thrill of attending the RSCM Festival of Britain service in Durham Cathedral.



Whilst at St Aidan's I remember visits from RSCM commissioners - including **T. L. DUERDEN** of Blackburn Cathedral!

At 18, I joined National Provincial Bank later to become NatWest, and after a few years in Newcastle, started my travels which involved house moves to Stockton-on-Tees, Manchester, London, Blackburn, Nantwich, Edinburgh and finally back to Cheshire. I retired early at the age of 54 after the bank decided that it no longer needed bank managers!

At Stockton-on-Tees, following marriage, I was fortunate to be able to join another good choir at St

Peter's, Stockton and enjoyed my four years there, including singing at Durham Cathedral from time to time when the cathedral choir was on holiday. Our two children [OCs] **JILL & JOHN** were born while we lived in Stockton.



Bob & Pauline today!

I was transferred to Blackburn, in 1974. but. I nearly didn't join the cathedral choir. I joined St Peter's Salesbury first, but **JB** wanted me in his choir and so he invited me to attend cathedral choir practices to experience the cathedral's music at first hand. I remember attending the practice for Howell's *Collegium Regale* and feeling totally out of my depth with the sight-reading.

I also recall joining in the practice for the Advent Carol Service and coming up the back stairs into the cathedral and singing the *Advent Responsary* in that wonderful building for the first time with the choir, and the tremendous thrill it gave me. That was a "Champagne Moment" as the Test Match Special Team would say, and that was it; my mind was made up and I left Salesbury to join the Cathedral Choir. It was a wonderful time and I now look back at how I had nearly thrown it all away.

We sang some wonderful music, much of which I had never sung before, but among my favourites must be the singing of the Psalms which was excellent. The rhythm and flow and the clarity of the words was superb, not to mention some of the organ accompaniments like the "creaking stop" when "old men" were mentioned. [*The 16th Holzregal – Ed.*] The recordings I have of the live BBC broadcasts highlight the word-clarity very well and it was generally far superior than more exalted choirs. Music by Parry, Palestrina, Howells, Byrd, Parsons, Vaughan Williams, Stanford, Darke, Kelly, Wesley, Gibbons, not forgetting a certain John Beralot with his lovely fauxbourdon *Mag & Nunc* that had a whiff of Vaughan Williams to it and his Blackburn Mass and "*The Lord of the Dance*". Much of it was well sung, and occasionally it was out of this world, really spine-tingling.

The camaraderie in the choir was excellent. We had a super social life. The banter at practices was always most enjoyable between the quick wits of the likes of **PHIL HUNWICK, FRANK HARE** and **DEREK CROMPTON** and sometimes you (**JB**) if you were not too engrossed in the music making. Memory fails me on specifics except for the night that the practice came to a halt when **KEITH BOND** was taking the full rehearsal. Your note in the Blackburn chant book about Thomas Attwood being "*the son of a trumpet playing coal man*". was the cause. On that occasion the comment tickled someone's sense of humour on Decani and was picked up by others on Cantoris. **Keith** thought we were laughing at him but in fact this was not the case at all.

FRANK HARE was used to airing his feet in the sermon by removing his shoes and I remember at one Evensong that one of his loose shoes was passed right along the line to me, and panic struck when Frank needed it to join in a procession. He got it back just as he was leaving the choir stalls. On another occasion, **BILLY BRADLEY** (a delightful tenor from Clayton le Moors) knocked over a lighted candlestick as we were processing out past the altar. Quick-witted **Frank Hare** behind him managed to dive forward to catch it and continued walking out with it in one very smooth move. The choir who were ahead of this wondered what Frank was doing walking into the crypt with a candle stick.

Parties were always good fun. **Frank** and his late wife **Val** used to put them on regularly, as did **Marilyn** and **Derek** in their new cottage at Copster Green, and **Pauline** and I also did the occasional one

After **CANON WILLIAMS'** daughter's wedding, the choir men were all invited round to the Williams' house (22 Buncer Lane) after practice the following Friday evening for a piece of wedding cake and a drink. Having had an enjoyable evening and plenty to drink, senior chairman **JIM SMITH** (a chemist) who always felt moved to speak on such auspicious occasions decided that he should thank Canon and Mrs. Williams and proposed a toast (in their absence) to the bride and groom. Needless to say, his words did not quite come out correctly and his wished the bride and groom "all the breast of luck". There were howls of laughter from all present, including **BOB ANDERSON** (alto with two boys in the choir) who always looked as if he would explode when such mishaps occurred.

Talking of **JIM SMITH**, who was held in great affection and respect by us all, and whose whole life was centered on the cathedral choir, I remember getting involved in collecting and collating information for a book to be presented to him. It was *This is Your Life, Jim Smith*, on the occasion of his 50th anniversary of singing in the Cathedral Choir (1926-76).



Some very good stories came out through that exercise. One was of the evening (just before my time in the choir) at the opening of the redecorated Song School by the renowned international organist **Daniel Chorzempa**, who had given a spectacular recital on the cathedral organ. **JB** asked **Jim** to invite our celebrity to declare the Song School open (The plaque which he unveiled is still there!). Jim, whose grasp of foreign names was not all that reliable, invited "**Mr. Chorzinski**" to perform the ceremony. After which, **JB**, being used to correcting singers'

mistakes, tactfully thanked **'Mr. Brown'** for his apt choice of words.

We had a very successful Garden Party in the Cathedral grounds to raise money for our new red cassocks [*which did years of hard service and have only just been replaced. Ed*]. The huge amount of preparation and the day itself created a tremendous amount of co-operation between the choir men, the choir parents and the rest of the congregation, and that was very successful. **FRANK HARE** supplied the gas (not hot air) for the balloon race, through his connections with BOC. The whole choir was very much involved. Other fund raising for that came in the form of a "Safari Meal" and car treasure hunt. All good fun and well worth the effort.

I remember the last Evensong of **Canon Ruffle** when the appointed Psalm 12 began, "Save me Lord, for there is not one godly man left", and one might add, never was there a truer word sung.

We had a hugely enjoyable recital tour of Holland and Northern Germany in 1977. A book could be written on that alone, but I'll mention only two highlights for me.

Firstly, we were warned on the coach as we approached Germany not to mention the war, along the same lines as Basil Fawlty in Fawlty Towers. Despite this edict, **PETER BANKS**, who was then a chorister, continued reading his copy of *Colditz*. And when we alighted from the bus, **PETER HEALD**, who looked not unlike John Cleese, jumped off and started goose-stepping outside the coach saying "Don't mention the war"!

The next night was spent in Bremen, and Pauline and I were allocated a couple, probably in their 60's. We had 2 heavy cases, and our hosts ignored them and left us to carry them to their car. Off he drove through Bremen like a bat out of hell gesticulating that "Bremen was flattened in zie var, and der was no need vor eet". Pauline immediately replied that she was not to blame, as she was not even born then!

Our son **JOHN** had always indicated that he did not want to join the choir, until he was nearly eight and all of a sudden he decided that he would like to do just that. He was very proud when he became a probationer, having earned his cassock through passing a series of demanding tests – which included processing into the cathedral all by himself, under the eagle eye of the head chorister, sitting in the choirstalls absolutely silently with his arms folded for five minutes and then processing out. In those days all the boys sat absolutely still with their arms folded during lessons and sermons – and they loved this self discipline!.

John was even more proud when he was fully admitted. This was of course a very proud day for Pauline and me as well. He became very much committed to the choir as he grew up and became a Prefect.



Prefect John Keen and Father Bob (Alto) in 1981

A year later we moved to Edinburgh, John & I sang in the cathedral choir, and his commitment continued there until he left to go to university. **JILL** joined the Youth Choir and this was also a great pleasure for us, but when we left to go to Nantwich she unfortunately never continued with her singing.

Pauline was very much involved in the fetching and carrying of choristers, ironing surplices etc. etc. and in all things to do with the Choir Parents. She was always a tremendous support to me and the children and indeed in many ways to the Choir, not least with her catering skills and enthusiasm.

I remember carol singing in the Shopping Precincts as a one-off occasion but cannot remember why we took it on. Probably fund raising rather than spreading the gospel.



Junior Chorister Simon Craddock (who was the first chorister to receive the Dots Bertalot Memorial Badge), and Senior Singing Boy John Keen, carol singing.

We sang in Debenhams which was fairly new. Where the acoustics were awful and it was difficult to sing. Nevertheless, I think that the fact that there was such a choir in Blackburn probably came as a great shock to many shoppers and **JB** had us very well versed in looking straight ahead and ignoring the shoppers as we processed around and sang our carols.



Another view in Debenhams with JB's hand hiding Simon Craddock, and with John Keen acting as JB's human music desk!

But behind, L-R, is a distinguished bunch of OCs: Peter Anderton, Bob Keen, Howard Culshaw, Simon 'Walt' Daniels, Prefect Iain Thompson and Nigel Speak.

There was the morning of **The Great Amen Disaster**. We had practised one of the eight at the back of the Blackburn chant book on the Friday evening, but the service sheet listed a different one. Realising the problem, just before we were about to sing it, JB signalled which it was to be and the signal was misinterpreted and we ended up singing several different amens simultaneously with JB finally playing another on the organ. On that occasion, **CANON WILLIAMS'** vestry prayer went like this "Pardon O Lord the imperfections of our prayers and praises"!

I remember the last Evensong that **IVOR BOLTON** was with us before he went to Cambridge as organ scholar of Clare, and Ivor giving the best rendering I have ever heard of Widor's Toccata. This was a magical moment.

1977 brought **Princess Alexandra** to the Cathedral for the re-dedication of the completed cathedral. That was a wonderful service. Afterwards the Princess asked **JB** if she could meet some of the choir, so he presented Senior Choirman, **JIM SMITH**, and Head Prefect, **STEPHEN RICKERBY**. (See pages 9 & 10!)

We were usually treated each Sunday to one of JB's improvisations on an appropriate tune for the day, such as "Happy Birthday". Once, on the occasion of a visit by an Australian, he played a trumpet tune in the style of Purcell on "Waltzing Matilda". These were wonderfully crafted closing voluntaries which we tried to decipher as we processed out.

I do remember very clearly how much better the choir sang when JB was conducting rather than us just following the beaters. He had and still has an inspired touch that oozes from his hands and arms and not least his face which always dragged out of us something special, something extra. He seemed to generate a magnetic current that passed through to the choir, and the choir was attracted to it and had no choice but to do what he wanted.

We didn't need anyone to tell us how things had gone, we knew very well, and when something went really well, we knew that it was something very special and it was always a great thrill, even a great honour and privilege to have been

part of it. One might call it "The WOW Factor". To have the luxury of a conductor requires there to be a good organist to accompany the choir and fortunately Blackburn has been blessed in that department, too, with **RONALD FROST & KEITH BOND** who were both colleagues of **JB** at the RNCM.

In 1981, I was moved to Nantwich where my son John and I joined the Parish Church Choir, and to keep our hands in with cathedral music, also joined The RSCM Northern Cathedral Singers. The following year I was moved to Edinburgh until 1988 when I was again moved to Cheshire. On arriving in Cheshire, I looked at the options of joining the choir at either Manchester or Chester Cathedrals but it was too far to go to Chester and I didn't fancy travelling into Manchester. I decided to learn to ring bells, a latent desire from my childhood, and joined the band at Wilmslow where I soon learnt to ring "**Bob Minor**"!

In 1997, I took early retirement from the Bank.

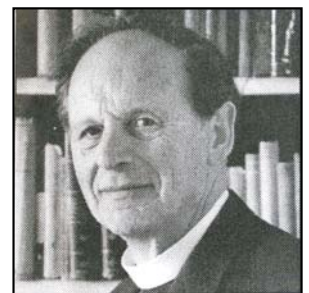
I now enjoy cooking, gardening, DIY, Scottish Country dancing and walking, and I am fairly busy with Rotary, and Alderley Edge and Wilmslow Horticultural and Rose Society both of which I am treasurer, and I also audit the accounts of three other organisations. **Pauline and I** both enjoy our holidays in France. Thus I keep busy.

Music has been a tremendous part of my life. I am not especially gifted musically, but I do love music and music making, and it takes someone who is musically gifted, like John Bertalot, to be able to make a group of, let's face it, very ordinary individuals into something very special.

Bob: Thanks for these super memories. You and your lovely family were very special to us all, and continue so to be. Ed..

From CAROL ROBINSON following the sudden death of OC, the Venerable DAVID ROBINSON

Dear John, thank you for your kind letter. As you suggest I have received floods of letters, many from people who knew David but whose addresses I do not know. It is a great encouragement to me and to Chris and Cate and all the family to know that so many friends are remembering us in their prayers.



BCOCA was always very important to David as he valued so much his time in the Cathedral choir and he always enjoyed the gatherings of old and new friends. I wonder if you would be willing to pass on to them my thanks for all their kind thoughts and prayers and to assure them that their support is greatly valued. Thank you. With love from Carol

**From former Director of Music,
GORDON STEWART**

I am with Millennium Youth Choir next week, then I am playing at the Chester Festival and in Alkmaar before I fly to South Africa for an RSCM weekend. After that I record two CDs at Huddersfield Town Hall and play at Hastings (for their annual concert there!) before taking a short break in Paris.

With all best wishes,
Gordon

Phew! Ed

From OC EDWARD 'WOODY' SEYMOUR

Hi John,
. I forgot to share some good news with you earlier. I was awarded a distinction in my grade 8 singing. Not too bad considering learning the music competed with my A-level coursework. Hope you are OK.

Woody. *Heartiest congratulations! Ed.*

From OC CHRIS RYAN in Singapore

We are absolutely delighted to announce the arrival of **Magnus Jieyong Ryan** at 17.15 hours on 22/07/03 at Mount Elizabeth Hospital, Singapore. Weight: 3.54kg (or 7lb 12oz in old money) Length: 53cm (21.2")



Mother, baby (and dad) are fine (see the attached photo) - and Magnus looks forward to meeting you all soon!

From a very proud & happy Mom & Dad,
Bee Ling & Chris *Well done! JB*

**CATHEDRAL WEDNESDAY LUNCHTIME
RECITALS
1-00 pm**
with lunch available before or after
in the crypt café

October

- 1st John Kitchen (Edinburgh University)
- 8th David Shorrocks, - baritone & Barbara Siddelley – piano
- 15th Daniel Cook (Westminster Abbey)
- 22nd Sian Carys- Soprano & **GREG MORRIS** – piano
- 29th **OC RUTH LIVESEY** – piano

November

- 5th Ruth Longmaid – violin & **GREG MORRIS** – piano
- 12th Carleton Etherington (Tewkesbury Abbey)
- 19th Gordon Thorne
- 26th Stephen Disley (Southwark Cathedral)



James Tanner inspects our organ with a view to has dad putting him on the distinguished recitalists' list – perhaps for next year?

SONGS OF PRAISE (again!)

Blackburn Cathedral featured several more times in the summer on BBC-TV Songs of Praise – which isn't surprising as **RICHARD TANNER** is one of its music advisors!

The Renaissance Singers appeared in a splendid programme in July – of modern 'traditional' hymns – and close-ups of the Singers added considerably to the impact of the programme.



GREG MORRIS was shown playing our super organ superly.



← YPC member **EMILY CREWE** was highlighted several times,

as was **LINDSEY COOPER** →





← and
RACHEL FIELDING

OWEN KENNEDY, (left) who is a long-time member of the Singers sang next to BCOCA Chairman **GORDON SHAW**



and there was a splendid quartet of Old Choristers:- **PHILIP WILSON, MATTHEW OGLESBY, WOODY SEYMOUR & TONY ROBINSON**

But again, alas, there weren't any shots of conductor **RICHARD TANNER**. Apparently the Beeb doesn't believe in showing conductors!

BISHOP ALAN'S FAREWELL SERVICE

The bishop's last service in the cathedral on Saturday, 19th July, was both a glorious and most moving occasion. The cathedral was packed to the doors with diocesan parishioners and clergy, canons, deans and half a dozen bishops (including one archbishop) who were seated on time in their right places, thanks to the meticulous preparations made by **CANON ANDREW HINDLEY**. Every detail was worked out to the second and it went very well indeed.

The magnificent order of service was a superb keepsake – a tour de force of the printer's and designer's, art packed with photos of **ALAN CHESTERS** from his choirboy days, through marriage and his six parishes, to Blackburn. **Steven Greenwood**, its designer, deserves our very warmest congratulations.

There wasn't a dry eye at the end of the service when, after the bishop had blessed us for the last time, he laid his Blackburn Crozier (which had been presented to **Bishop Herbert**, the first Bishop of Blackburn), on the altar as a token of his surrender of the See. He knelt at the altar, clearly very moved, whilst the cathedral choir blest him in

our name by singing, most beautifully, Rutter's, '*The Lord bless you and keep you.*'

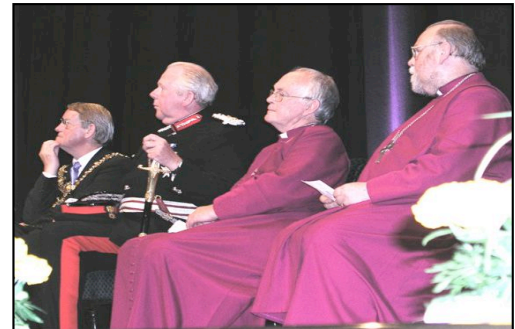
Then, during the final hymn, **BISHOP ALAN** divested himself of his glorious vestments in the Martin chapel and appeared in his cassock. And he walked down the Nave, collecting **Jennie** en route, with son **David** and fiancée, **Katie**, as we burst into spontaneous applause. It was a powerful end to a mighty ministry.

Afterwards there was a reception for everyone in King George's Hall when **Alan** and **Jennie** we speeched at by the **Mayor, Lord Lieutenant**, and representatives from the twinned Dioceses of Bloem-



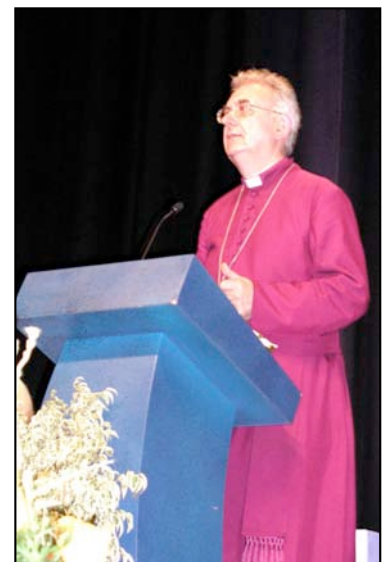
Rep. of Braunschweig, with Jennie & Alan

fontein and Braunschweig, and an hilarious speech by **Bishop Stephen** of Lancaster..



The Mayor, Lord Shuttleworth, Bishops Stephen Lancaster, & John Burnley

In a powerful speech **Jennie** thanked the women of the diocese, ('*Behind every good woman there's a good man!*') and **Alan** thanked us again almost breaking down because of the emotion of the occasion. We were moved by the whole experience and greatly uplifted, for we have lost a Father in God who was a true friend to us all



Alan and Jennie, the Lord bless you and keep you ...

... and, from us all, THANK YOU!

Special congratulations to **Jessica Twigg**, sister of **OCs JAMES & JOSEPH**, who represented the young people of the diocese at the Bishop's Farewell when she gave thanks, so well and so clearly, during the service, for Bishop Alan's ministry. After that service their proud father, **JIM**, (stalwart cathedral alto), told your editor that James was currently in Greece, training with a Kung Fu Grand Master, and Joseph was playing Rugby in South Africa with Lancaster Royal Grammar School's 1st XV. !

We welcome a new tenor into the cathedral choir: **MATTHEW MOSS** who has recently completed his musical studies at Blackburn College and looks forward to studying voice and piano at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. His home is in Preston. We wish him a long and happy tenor tenure with us!



We also give a special welcome to our new organ scholar **ALEX DAVIES** who is joining us in September, hot foot from Trinity College, London, where he earned himself a Bachelor of Music degree.

He plays Rugby, Cricket, and Hockey and he holds a Welsh Hockey Union coaching certificate. He enjoys wind surfing, sailing and water skiing, and when he's in pensive mood he fishes for salmon and sea trout!

OC RAYMOND COUNSELL R.I.P.

It was with sadness that we learned of the death of **OC RAY COUNSELL** in July. Ray was born on 23rd May, 1923, and joined the cathedral choir in 1935 in the days of **DR. BREARLEY**. He was the youngest of a large family and owned a stall on Blackburn Market where his ready accessibility made him a host of friends. He was a Freemason and rose high in their ranks. He also loved the Rovers and was often seen in Jack Walker's box. He took up golf fairly late – in his 40s – but managed to acquire a handicap of only 12.

Salesbury Church was packed for his funeral. It was an honour for your Editor to represent BCOCA at that memorable service. We send to **Leah** and to her family our love and deepest condolences.

Heartiest congratulations to the **HUNWICK** brothers – to **CHRIS** who, having completed his Master's in Paleography at Liverpool University has been appointed Archivist at Manchester Cathedral – which will also include work with Chetham's archives. And to **NOEL**, who narrowly missed a First in Classics and English at Oxford. and so is the proud possessor of a hood with bit of rabbit fur, denoting a splendid **BA (hons) OXON**. (If he'd chosen Cambridge he'd have got a lot more bunny for his munny!)

Noel wrote to the Editor: It's been an amazing three- year experience culminating in 24 hours of the hardest examinations I've ever taken. A physical and mental test of extreme proportions. When one out of eight papers covers the complete works of Shakespeare it's pretty scary.

One of my link papers (between the Classics and English sides of my course) was simply entitled EPIC which took in some of the seminal texts of world literature.. The *Aeneid* (in English and Latin), the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad*, *Paradise Lost*, and Dryden's *Aeneis*. to name but a few.

I think this serves to encapsulate the fascinating breadth and interest of my course, but also hint at how panic inducing it could be in the build up to finals.

Nevertheless, I made it and can now only be grateful for what Oxford has added to my life. I read a joint Honours course, had a full-time Choral Scholarship, singing 6 services a week, I was Senior Academical Clerk (Choral Scholar) and played Rugby and football for the college. Even more importantly, however, Oxford, and Magdalen in particular, has given me the opportunity to make what I hope will be lifelong friendships

I now look forward to next year where, in conjunction with my job for Oxford University Admissions, I can encourage others to try and get from Oxford as much as I have.

Phew – Oxbridge wasn't as demanding in my day! Renewed congratulations to both Chris & Noel. Ed

From OC NEIL FELLOWS
who is a professional horn player in Germany
Dear John Bertalot,

Yesterday I was speaking to a friend who is looking for an organist with whom she can arrange an exchange recital. Amongst other things she has done recitals in Chester Cathedral and in Edinburgh in St. Giles Cathedral. She is herself an organist in Basel, Switzerland, and is also the mother of my youngest son's violin teacher! A part of the deal might include

having to incorporate a horn player, myself, in the programme

As I would very much like to be able to take advantage of this offer in order to re-establish some musical contact to the north-west of England, I thought I could take the liberty of asking one of the only people of authority whom I still know, now living in the area, for his advice.

Any more details about this I would have to coordinate with Basel, but if you know of anyone who might be interested in such an undertaking, I would be very glad if you could contact me. Of course I would love to be able to interest you yourself but can't imagine that this would be possible!

Apart from this I can only hope that you are keeping in good health and enjoying your retirement(?) in N. England. I was very surprised to hear that you have been busy in Fence. This must be the only reference to the town I have ever come across since my mother discovered that my great grandfather is supposed to be buried there. However, there seems to be some complication about the location of the grave !!

To add to my news as to my family etc. I am a father of three and only the youngest is still at home (18), I remarried three years ago and we are now expecting our first child.

My very best wishes to you,

Neil Fellows, N.Fellows@web.de

Neil was one of JB's first new boys in 1964 and sang at the Rehallowing of the Nave in October 1965, in the presence of HRH Princess Margaret. Their photo, taken at that service, is displayed in the Song School.

OC ERIC BANCROFT

who, as a choirboy, could be seen in the 1946 photo of the cathedral choir, published in our last edition, showed your editor one of his cherished mementos: the programme of a concert, given by the cathedral choristers, conducted by **T. L. DUERDEN**, in Blackburn's Public Hall, on Saturday, 6th, September, 1947. This was an annual event.

Vocal solos were sung by a number of choristers, including our **RALPH ROBINSON** 'Break o' Day', **GORDON FIELDING**, 'Rose among the heather' – Schubert, and **TONY ROBINSON**, 'The Road to the Isles'. **MICHAEL HAMM** was featured in some verse speaking, and **EDDIE HOWORTH** told 'A Story'. (What was it?!) The boys sang songs ranging from *Drake's Drum* (Stanford), and songs by Gounod, Bizet and Elgar, to 'Old Mother Hubbard' (Diack).

At the interval the boys received their annual prizes at the hands of County Councillor W. W. Cocker, OBE, MA. The list of boys and their prizes, on the back page of the programme, makes fascinating reading. How many well-known OC names can you spot?

The Song School

Prefects: Duxbury, W., Fielding, G., Gradwell, R., Robinson, R. N., Holden, A. D. (*Ex-Prefect*).

Choristers: Bancroft, E., Hamm, M. E., Howorth, E. J., Kingston, C., Lister, D., Taylor, G. F., Bancroft, J. (*Ex-Chorister*).

Singing Boys: Buck, W., Cronshaw, G., Duxbury, R., Fowler, J. M., Fowler, D. H., Gradwell, P., Heald, E., Heald, P. G., Lindsay, J. B., Monk, T., Ormerod, K., Robinson, A., Smith, W., Thompson, M., Walmsley, G. A.

Probationers: Haworth, P. B., Kitchen, J., Riding, E. L., Sefton, C., Shorrocks, K., Wilson, E., Yates, R. A.

Awards (1946-47)

SPEECH PRIZES	Senior—M. E. Hamm.	SONG SCHOOL AWARDS	Junior—E. Bancroft.
THEORY OF MUSIC	Senior—R. N. Robinson.	SONG SCHOOL AWARDS	Junior—C. Kingston.
CHANTING PRIZES	Senior—W. Duxbury.	SONG SCHOOL AWARDS	Junior—A. Robinson.
SIGHT SINGING	Senior—D. A. Lister.	T. DUERDEN MEMORIAL	Junior—P. Gradwell.
SOLO SINGING	Senior—E. J. Howorth.	M. A. DUERDEN MEMORIAL	Junior—
PIANOFORTE PLAYING	G. F. Taylor.	R. W. HOLDEN AWARD	
ORGAN PLAYING	No award.	WOLSTENHOLME AWARD	
PREFECTS' PRIZES	R. N. Robinson.	T. SMEDDLES MEMORIAL	A. D. Holden.
PREFECTS' PRIZES	G. Fielding.	SIR HENRY DARLINGTON J.S.H. MEMORIAL	R. Gradwell.

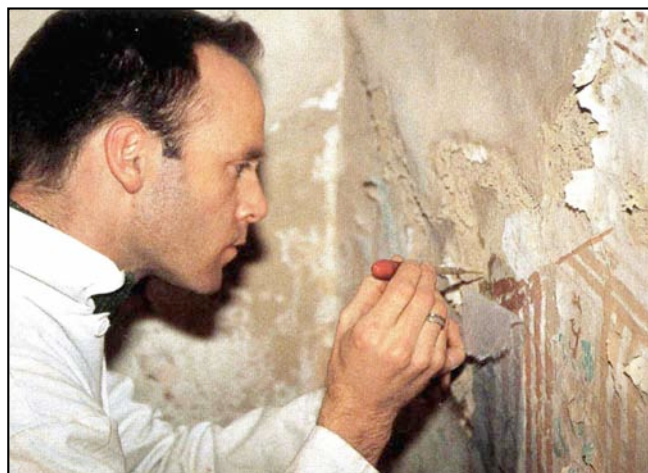
Special Awards

HEAD PREFECT'S PRIZE	Donor: MR. and MRS. T. L. DUERDEN
	R. N. Robinson.
CHORISTER'S PRIZE	Donor: G. E. MOORE, ESQ
	E. J. Howorth.
DIVINITY PRIZES	Donor: REV. A. C. F. DAVIES
Senior—G. Fielding.	Junior—P. Gradwell.
ATTENDANCE PRIZE	Donor: H. DUXBURY, ESQ.
	G. Fielding.

¶ The proceeds of this concert will be devoted to the Choir Endowment Fund.

From OC STEPHEN RICKERBY

whose photo appeared in the last edition when he was Head Chorister at the final consecration of the cathedral in the presence of Princess Alexandra in 1977. He and his partner, Lisa, now have their own business as wall painting conservators – working all over the world.



Dear John,

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you with an image for the next Newsletter. We've been tremendously busy since returning from Cyprus, working at an English worksite this time, in a small medieval church in Herefordshire. Next Friday we leave for a month's work in China. So, the image I've attached is one of me working in the Buddhist Cave 85 at Mogao, in the Gobi Desert...! It contains exquisite wall paintings of the High Tang Dynasty, dating to around 950AD.

Trust you're well, and I look forward to hearing from you whenever. Don't know when next I'll be in Blackburn, but I'll be sure to call by and see you.

As ever, Stephen

OC ROBERT FIELDING

We've just heard that **OC ROBERT FIELDING** is to become the new director of music at Romsey Abbey. This is terrific news and heartiest congratulations are very much in order.



Robert, who was one of JB's choristers, has been director of music of Sarum College for a number of years – a post he will run in tandem with Romsey - running choir and organ courses all over this country and writing helpful articles in the RSCM's quarterly journal which is read all over the world

At Romsey Abbey he has a choir of 20 boys and 12 men, a girls' choir, assistant organist and available annual organ scholarship. The Abbey boasts a three-manual 1858 Walker organ which has recently been renovated by Walkers with the addition of a new Nave organ. He was short-listed with a past organist of Westminster Abbey and an organist from a cathedral in Paris

His organ courses at Sarum College, situated in the Cathedral Close, Salisbury, have been adopted by the RSCM under Robert's direction and will continue to develop. (**David Briggs**, and **GORDON STEWART** will be among his galaxy of tutors next year!). Robert will also be involved in the provision of pathways for organists within a new RSCM syllabus leading to a Certificate in Higher Education.

Robert has also been enjoying the role of Lay Cantor in Salisbury Cathedral, cantoring for Matins and Evensongs. 'There must be nothing more nerve-wracking than hearing your solo voice emerging from the speakers all the way down the Nave as you prayerfully begin the office with the words *O Lord open thou our lips*. When the choir reply, you know you are part of something that matters. That kind of

spiritual 'kick' can come from teaching a small choir to sing a simple chant well or leading a larger choir under the dome in St. Paul's Cathedral (where Robert will be directing the music for a week in August), and with the job in Romsey I can look forward to many such times.'

Robert was with us last spring when he played, brilliantly, for **Ruth Fielding's** memorial service in Blackburn Cathedral.

From OC Dr. SIMON 'WALT' DANIELS in Noocassl.

I am hoping to make this year's bash, along with IT*, and hopefully William [Heap] (both of whom would appear to be well ahead of me in the totalizer [of our names in **BLOCK CAPITALS**] currently...even if this is via some fairly oblique references!!).

We are well, and still enjoying life in Newcastle, which seems an exciting place to be, despite the failure of the "City of Culture" bid. "The Sage" [concert hall below] .. (I'm not sure what its full title is) . is progressing rapidly, and is clearly going to be a very impressive & distinctive building, as well as being the musical centre of the Region.



I am enjoying my singing, though my nerves are still recovering from a somewhat "seat of the pants" performance of the Rutter Gloria a couple of weeks ago. Having said that, we will be moving in higher circles in October, when "we" (All Saints Chamber Choir....directed by Ed Marsh), join forces with Newcastle Cathedral Choir to sing in the Newcastle version of the "Voices for Hospices" series of concerts....with Julian Lloyd Webber (no less).

The week after the OCs' Reunion is the Great North Run which I have signed up for this year (I think my 5th time), so I should be looking fit (or alternatively I may be limping heavily). I have warmed up by running the "Blaydon Race", which follows the route in the song. All runners are expected to join in with a rendition of the song (in full Geordie dialect) prior to the start!

Best wishes Walt

IT' is not Walt's favourite computer but his contemporary in the cathedral choir - one **Iaiain Thompson! Ed.*

CATHEDRAL'S NEW CAR PARKING POLICY *No West Side Story!*

Because the car parking in the Cathedral Close has recently gotten out of hand, due, in some measure, to the on-street parking charges levied by the Council which has led some drivers to park in the Close for free, the Dean and Chapter have had to re-think the policy of parking in the Cathedral Precincts.

There will, therefore, be no parking in front of the West Tower (i.e. the former direct access from Darwen Street). This will serve to enhance the West side space in front of the Cathedral, which is maintained so well by the Borough Council.



Car-less Close, with Borough Bouquets

All parking will now be on the South side of the Cathedral – from the Dandy Walk entrance (from Darwen Street by the side of The Postal Order). This, during weekdays, will basically be restricted to Cathedral & Diocesan office staff.

However, there will be two spaces available for the **disabled**. The **Cathedral helpers** will be allocated places by the Cathedral Receptionist, **Debbie Heyes (01254-51491)**. **Choir parents** will still be able to drop off their children and collect them, and the South car park will be available **in the evenings for all** – first come, first served.

Special arrangements will be made for those who attend **weekday recitals**. Phone Debbie for details.

Those who attend **weekday meetings** should phone the Assistant Bursar, **Alison Feeney (01254-51491)**, who may be able to arrange special parking in the town centre car parks.

On **SUNDAYS** all entrances will be open, but parking should still be confined to the **south side** of the cathedral, leaving the west side free of cars.

All this is bound to cause problems, but, as **DEAN ARMSTRONG** has said, *'Car parking has the potential to cause even the most reasonable amongst us to become unreasonable.'*

So, please give a thought to the **Virgers** who have the onerous task of monitoring this new policy.

OC PETER FIELDING wrote to the Editor with the news that the Fielding Clan raised well over £500 from a concert they gave in Highgate in June as a tribute to his sister, **Ruth Fielding**. [Sister, also, to **GORDON & PAUL**.] The

proceeds went to the North London Hospice where Ruth had been cared for so wonderfully. (See the last Newsletter).

Peter went on to write:

*I thoroughly enjoyed your recent Newsletter. In **OC Archdeacon DAVID ROBINSON's** letter to you he mentioned the Revd. A. C. F. Davies and his tenure as Precentor of Blackburn Cathedral. David said that he would recount another spat between him and **Provost William Kay**. During a Diocesan Festival the aforesaid Precentor was carrying the cross in procession. Wm. Kay was not happy with the way this was being done, and in front of hundreds of choristers he wrested the cross from the Precentor's hands and pushed him aside!! I don't think the poor fellow ever got over it.*

Our New Bishop of Blackburn was announced in August

He is the **Venerable NICHOLAS READE**, currently the Archdeacon of Lewes and Hastings. He will be consecrated bishop in York Minster in the New Year. Our new bishop is married to **Christine**, their daughter, **Clare**, works in the finance industry, Like **Bishop Alan**, he loves steam trains!



The Archdeacon wrote to the Editor: *Christine and I are much looking forward to living among you all and I'm sure our visits to the Cathedral will be enjoyable where the worship is greatly enriched by your wonderful choir. We're listening to two of your CDs at the moment!*

For 24 of my thirty years in ordained ministry I have served in parishes, in the Midlands and here in East Sussex, and always been blessed with a keen choir, and particularly at S. Dunstan's Mayfield and Eastbourne Parish Church where they enjoy a very high standard of music. I do know just what a difference a good choir can make to our worship. Please be assured of my support and prayers, and thanksgiving for the strong lead you give to choirs in the Diocese.

Archdeacon Nicholas Reade

The Archdeacon phoned your Editor to add: *'Give the choir my greetings and tell them how much I look forward to hearing them and to getting to know everybody.'*

Archdeacon Nicholas will also need to get to know cathedral choirman **PETER EASTHAM** who is chairman of the Worth Valley Steam Railway in Yorkshire (Bronte country!) Ed.

From OC **DAVID GOODENOUGH** in Edinbrrrr

Thanks for the latest edition of the Newsletter. It has become strangely avid reading in our household and is certainly a very good means of keeping up with all the news at BB. I still hold the Cathedral very fondly in my memory; apart from spending two years there as Organ Scholar and then four years as Sub Organist, it's the place where **CLAIRE** and I were married and where our kids, **James** and **Eleanor**, both were christened. Whenever I'm back in BB I enjoy just sitting in the nave and listening to the unique atmosphere that the cathedral has.

CLAIRE (YPC 91 - 95) is going back to work after all the family thing. She gave up work in 1995 to bring up our kids and now she's going to be a Classroom Assistant at Edinburgh's Royal Blind School. We're both very excited about this, and her job comes after a lot of work on her part. She went back to College for a year to gain the right qualifications and, thanks to that, she was offered a plum job at the first attempt. She starts next week, once we return from France with **DAVID & Kerry TATTERSALL** and **DEREK & Marilyn CROMPTON**, where we're singing a couple of concerts with **NIGEL SPEAK** at his home in France.

Everything is still going very well up here in the frozen north. Edinburgh has to be one of the most exciting cities on the planet in which to live and work and I'm still very much enjoying my job here as DoM at Fettes.

CLAIRE & I have just returned from a seventeen day tour of North America with my Fettes College Chapel Choir (with another former BB Asst. **ROBERT COSTIN** coming along as Organist), which has been terrific, taking in Boston Cathedral, Minneapolis Cathedral, New York St Bartholomew, and Buffalo Cathedral.



There were times when I was organising it all when I had some serious sleepless nights, especially after the war with Iraq broke out with all of the potential implications there, but everything came out well in the end and we all had a superb time. I'm hoping to take the choir back to the USA in two years' time, when I hope to go Trinity, Princeton. I'll be coming to you to get us in there

I've just spent a week in Devon as Composer in Residence with the Exon Singers. This superb choir is run by **Matthew Owens**, Organist and Master of the Choristers here at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh, and he

commissioned me to write a new anthem for them. This turned out to be **'Behold how good and joyful a thing it is'** and I was really very moved indeed when I heard that, together with my **'I will sing with the spirit'** and my **Blackburn Canticles** sung at Choral Evensong in Exeter

Cathedral last Friday. You will appreciate that unique feeling that one gets when one hears one's own music sung for the first time, and those sorts of occasions really spur me on to write more and more music. **Barry Rose** has a couple of my anthems at the moment for inclusion in a new book of Introits by Novello, and I'm hoping that he'll take this latest one off me, too.

I've had **JAMES ATHERTON** staying with me for the past couple of days. James used to sing Alto at BB in **DAVID COOPER's** time under a different name - **JASON HARLOW**. He changed his name when he turned professional two years ago, and since then he's done really well in gaining Lay-clerkships to Chester, Lincoln, Winchester and now wait for it.



... he's singing tenor at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, an employee of **The Queen**. He's now a God in the Tenor world. After all, the Queen is very particular about her men and doesn't just take anyone!

As well as singing a very superb Tenor at Windsor, James is Head Tuner for Matthew Copley Organ Builders and he's been up in Edinburgh tuning a couple of their instruments. It's been a very good opportunity for us to catch up and talk into the early hours about the Cathedral in BB.



Anyway, enough for now. here's a piccy of me at America's fourth biggest (I think) church organ, in St Bartholomew's, New York City, taken on my recent tour with my choir here at Fettes. Take care, **David G**

*David: We're singing your 'I will sing with the Spirit' at our Old Choristers' Reunion Choral Evensong in the Cathedral on Saturday, 13th September, at 3.30 pm. It was chosen by our outgoing Senior Old Chorister, **PHILIP CARR** A great choice. Come and conduct it for us! Ed*

E MAIL- eeee! Mail!

OLD CHORISTERS: ARE YOU ON LINE?

If so, please send me your e mail address so that we may communicate more speedily –

And let's have **your news** for the next edition of our super-duper Newsletter. Thanks!

john@bertalot.demon.co.uk