

AUGUST

MUSIC & MORE

Cathedral website: <https://blackburncathedral.com/>

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL 2021

Editor [john.bertalot@gmail.com/](mailto:john.bertalot@gmail.com)

WHAT THE CATHEDRAL CHOIR HAS MEANT, AND CONTINUES TO MEAN, TO ME

From former Head Chorister, **CHRIS SNAPE**

I joined Blackburn Cathedral Boys' Choir back in early 2005 under the watchful eye of **Richard Tanner**. Little did I realise I would make some lifelong friends there.



My earliest memory of standing with my fellow choristers was on the stage in preparation for a performance of **Handel's Messiah**, [see photo: alongside **Niki Zohdi** and **William Fielding**, with my sister, **Hannah**, almost top right] something we would later go on to be invited by the Prime Minister of Malta to sing in the Manuel Theatre in Valletta. The **Messiah**, alongside the yearly **Christmas Spectacular** and **Last Night of the Proms** were easily among my favourite performances, with it providing an opportunity to sing with all the other choirs at the cathedral.

Other favourite memories of mine include the healthy competition between the boys on either side of the nave when mass settings

saw us split into different parts, or when plainsong solos were up for grabs during a Wednesday Evensong. I will also always be grateful for having spent my years in the choir with my **father**, just a few feet behind me singing bass.



Dad (former Bp's Chorister) and Son (new Bp's Chorister)

I was lucky enough to conclude my time in the Boys' Choir as Head Chorister with my deputies and my close friends **Harry Brookes** (who eventually went to Imperial College, London to study geology) and **Robert Mitchell** who became an engineer working for Tensar International. At that time I received the **Dots Bertalot Medallion** as longest serving chorister.

Photo of the Medallion ceremony with JB, Dean Armstrong and me.



However my voice would soon give in to time and after my valediction

I would move on to the Young People's Choir under **James**

Davy and then subsequently **Shaun Turnbull**.



My musical life would also see me joining the **Clitheroe Royal Grammar School Swing Band** on the trumpet when I first started at secondary school. The band, created and led by **Nigel Spooner** would go from a modest tour in Ambleside in my first year, to tours in both **Malta** (see photo with me) and Budapest in my later years.

Nigel was a Polymath teacher at CRGS and a brilliant organist (having been a finalist in the St. Albans organ playing competition). He is now organist of Bolton School, which has two fine organs.

I would remain in the band all the way through to my final year of sixth form, ending my time in the band as Lead Trumpet and having taken a few rehearsals myself.

Here's the band giving a concert in Blackburn Cathedral crypt.



After Sixth Form, I went on to study **Psychology** at the **University of York**.

I moved away from choral singing despite having York Minster on my doorstep, although some karaoke nights saw me bringing what I had learnt at Blackburn Cathedral back into practice.



The Snape family at the cathedral (before Covid!)
L-R **Amanda, Chris, Tony & Hannah**



Editor's note:

As Chris's promotions continue in Blackburn Town Hall, his increasing responsibilities will include visiting many parts of the county, and so he'll need a car:



It just so happened that JB's car, with low mileage, was available. It had served JB well for many years, and so, early in July, **Chris took possession** of the **Peugeot 207 Sports**, (which also means that Chris's visits to semi-distant university and choir friends are now possible), whilst JB potters around the village on his new & steadier mode of transport: an **Excel Galaxy II electric scooter**.
Top speed: 8 mph!



**We'd love to hear
YOUR NEWS,
former Blackburn
Singers
Instrumentalists
... with photos**

So please send them to john.bertalot@gmail.com

From **LINDSEY COOPER**,
whose husband, **DAVID COOPER**, was Director of Music of Blackburn Cathedral 1983-94

Dear John.

I hope that you continue to stay well and that you're now enjoying more freedom as the Covid numbers subside in the NW.



Thank you for the July edition of *M & M* - I was especially interested in the article on former **Organ Scholars**. Perhaps it would be of interest if we go back to the beginning? I hope the dates are correct but apologies if there are errors.

1985. David Cooper set up the Organ Scholarship programme (with the support of Provost Jackson), having experienced how successful it had been when he was the Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral.



David Goodenough was the first Blackburn Organ Scholar and stayed 2 years. (**Justin Waters** was Assistant Organist.) **DG** was later appointed Assistant in Blackburn, followed by a post at Chethams (95-98) and then, **Director of Music at Fettes College, Edinburgh** where he still is.



1987. David Leigh, who went on to St Peter's College, Oxford and from there to **St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin**.

There are 2 St. Pat's Cathedrals in Dublin: is this the correct one? JB



1989. Duncan Aspdin. (with Assistant Organist **James Thomas** who became Director of Music of **Bury St. Edmunds Cathedral**) then Duncan was Organ Scholar at Jesus College, Cambridge, and the Royal Academy and now at the magnificent **Farm Street Church, London**, plus City of Oxford Choir and Thame Chamber Choir.

Academy then Yale. Recently Canon Organist and Master of the Music at **Grace Cathedral** Charleston, SC. and since April 2021, Director of Music at Church of the Redeemer, Boston, MA.



1992. Nigel Potts (from New Zealand) with Assistant **David Goodenough**. From Blackburn to the Royal Academy then Yale. Recently Canon Organist and Master of the Music at **Grace Cathedral** Charleston, SC. and since April 2021, Director of Music at Church of the Redeemer, Boston, MA.
Liese & Nigel

1993. Robin Walker (R). From Organ Scholar at Blackburn to the Royal Academy and now Director of Music at **Corpus Christi College, Cambridge...** where **Keith Bond, JB & Karen Au** were organ scholars.



1994. Stephen Bryant. Manchester University and now **Organist at Clifton Cathedral, Bristol**.

He was educated in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and whilst in the sixth-form he was Organ Scholar at Newcastle Cathedral. He moved to Manchester University to read music, during which time he studied the organ with **Gordon Stewart**, directed several choirs and orchestras as well as being **Organ Scholar at Blackburn Cathedral**. After graduating he completed a PGCE course before initially teaching in Liverpool. In 1999 he moved to Bristol and has since taught in several schools within that city and its locality.



Again, apologies if there are any errors here ...I'm sure many of your readers can offer corrections where necessary!
warmest wishes, **Lindsey**.

We are thrilled to hear from Lindsey Cooper again, for she was such a shining light for all of us when she lived here. And what a scintillating list of **talented organ scholars** who can now be added to our list in our **July M&M** – and **who have all reached top rank as Directors of Music** of Cathedrals or distinguished Colleges, or their equivalent.



From our 2019 choral scholar, **DANIEL HICKS**

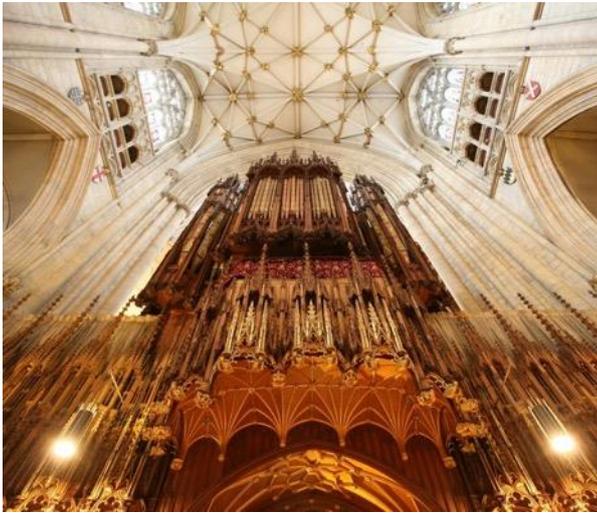
Dear JB,

I hope this finds you in good health, and that life in Blackburn is starting to creep back towards normality. It's been a pleasure to keep receiving **Music and More** throughout the pandemic, and to keep abreast of how the cathedral community is faring in these strange times. It struck me when I received the most recent

edition of *M&M* that I had not been in touch for some time - and so, here I am!



As I think you know, I've spent most of the last year working as one of the Choir Chaperones at **York Minster**, where I was a chorister, having decided to defer my place at university for the time being. This has been a huge amount of fun, in spite of the restrictions placed on the musical life of the Minster by the pandemic. Most services are currently taking place in the Nave, rather than the Quire, where both congregation and choir can be physically distanced. While much of the Easter term's music-making was lost to the national lockdown, both the Christmas and Holy Week services were able to proceed with limited congregations, and this past summer term has been as close to 'normal' as we have seen since Lent 2020. It's been great to reconnect with the place where I began my musical journey, and to play a part in looking after the choristers, all of whom have been paragons of resilience and good humour in the face of previously unthinkable challenge. (Overseeing a choristers' Euro sweepstake has been a particular highlight!) At Easter we were able to celebrate **the once-in-a-century restoration of the Minster's grand organ**, and



for *M&M* readers who are interested, here is the link to a recently-broadcast talk about the process of restoring the instrument, complete with demonstrations: [Restoring the Grand Organ: An Evening with the Experts - YouTube](#)

Alongside my chaperoning duties I have been volunteering in the Music Department at **my old school, St Peter's**, which this year has become the Minster's choir school. This has involved everything from helping in class music lessons to running lunchtime 'scales



clinics', to stewarding ABRSM exams. This, too, has been both incredibly rewarding and great fun. As both a former chorister and an OP (*Old Peterite*), it's been especially good to see how quickly and how well the choristers have integrated into the life of the school - a credit both to them and to the staff who have made them feel so welcome. I've also been doing some freelance singing teaching (over Zoom!) preparing children for chorister auditions both at York and further afield; some commissioned arranging and transcription work; and even a two-day stint in March as a runner/stage assistant for the National Centre for Early Music (based in York) for a live-streamed concert - the joys of the gig economy!



I have decided to delay starting at university for another year (chiefly because, despite the government's unrelenting optimism, I'm not entirely convinced that things will be wholly 'back to normal' come September) - and so, I have found another job! Next year I will be working as a junior member of staff in the music department at **Swanbourne House School** (a prep school near Milton Keynes), where I will be assisting with classroom music lessons, extra-curricular ensembles, music practice, admin and more, as well as having some responsibilities in their boarding house. The setup is in some ways similar to the choral scholar system at Blackburn, with a number of 'gap assistants' sharing a house on the school site and helping out with different aspects of school life.

I hope to make it up to Blackburn and catch up in person before long. With all best wishes, Dan

Dan was an exceptionally gifted & 'outgoing' choral scholar here at Blackburn – for he shared his many gifts with us all unsparingly and worked with **GILL FOURIE** in our outreach for singing in our 200 Lancashire church schools.



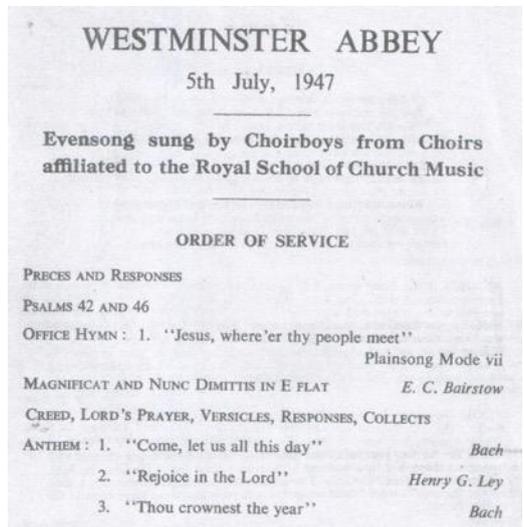
We've heard again from

Neil Inkley

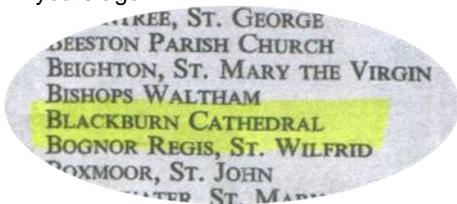
Neil writes:

"Here's a programme of a 1947 post-war occasion (*when the lights had come on again all over the world*) with me still singing treble at the age of 15." →

The young Neil was one chorister from his choir in Great Ilford amidst over 2,000 choristers who represented their own RSCM church and cathedral choirs throughout the UK at this amazing event in Westminster Abbey 74 years ago.



And there was much more music including 2 more anthems – and a procession!!



The choir of Blackburn Cathedral was represented – but **BY WHOM?**

Can any Blackburn 'Old Chorister' help us?



Could he be one of these past prefects, who are still with us?

Answers, please to john.bertalot@gmail.com

FROM FORMER CHOIR PREFECT, WILLIAM FIELDING, who is studying advanced organ playing in France:



Dear John,

Forgive me once again for the wait. I had my exam last week, so I've been busy preparing for that. (I've been successful in proceeding through to the top year, and was given a « *mentionne très bien avec l'unanimité du jury.* » Very happy with this result!)

My programme was a short one, consisting of Weckmann, *Magnificat / Marchand, Tierce en Taille / Duruflé, Fugue sur le carillon des heures de la cathédrale de Soissons.* (Isn't that a mouthful..)

The exam took place on the organ at the cathedral, St Étienne. It is worth playing there for the climb to the tribune itself, but not for those who dislike heights..!

As far as photos are concerned, I haven't been able to get anything taken yet at St Sernin, but **here's one of me playing at the Augustins.** (I realise there's not much of the organ console visible, but I have time booked in all churches this week, thus more to follow!

I hope all is excellent with you!
Will.



A quick link to *historic issues* of our online **Music & More:**

<https://www.fcoca.org.uk/members-news.html>

Check out, *also on this site*, the fabulous choir magazine of **Leicester Cathedral**.

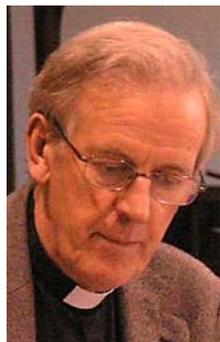
We grieve at the recent death of **JIM HOLDEN** who held many offices in our cathedral – not least, Church Warden.

He and **AUDREY** were choir parents, too: son **BENEDICT** had been a most faithful JB chorister and eventually became a distinguished doctor – fulfilling influential research work in London.

Benedict recently returned North and it was a coincidence that he was on the staff of the Blackpool Royal Victoria Hospital where Jim had recently been admitted after a heart attack.

How frequently we, at the cathedral, enjoyed Jim & Audrey's presence with us, especially in the crypt after Sunday morning services. Here they are, with Benedict, celebrating **Jim and Audrey's 50th wedding anniversary**.

May their joyful memories of Jim be of comfort to Audrey and Benedict – and to us – for Jim was such a cheerful soul, who spread unrestrained energetic joy wherever he went.



MUCH CHOIR NEWS is included in Canon Wedgeworth's July 18th Cathedral newsletter

Here it is (with permission)!

Dear Friends

The approach of the end of the school year is always a poignant time of transition especially for our choristers, with four of them leaving this time.

We say goodbye and offer profound thanks to choral scholars, Tenor **Michael Hillesdon** (left) and Bass **Matthew Baldwin** as they move on to what are sure to be wonderfully music-filled futures.



In company with other public bodies we shall now only publish first names of our young choristers, thus helping to continue keeping them safe online.



"Well, that was emotional", said **Logan's**, mother, as he said goodbye to being a chorister. "The journey he has been on has brought him confidence and an ability to sing outstandingly....We cannot thank Blackburn Cathedral Music enough for the teaching they have provided. Although his time singing is not over, it is the end of a time which has brought him much happiness, friendship and skills he will keep with him for life."

The other leaver is **Connor** He says he has really enjoyed his time in the Boys' Choir. "My musical abilities have



improved so much since I started seven years ago. I've met lots of talented musicians and it is an experience I will never forget."

Connor's Mum, **Harriet**, says "it has been a privilege to see his development over the years. He is an extremely enthusiastic musician and has been surrounded by supportive peers and teachers who have helped him along the way. He has made lasting friends, all of whom share his love of music.

"We will never forget the time when he sang with an undiagnosed broken arm which swelled up so much during the Eucharist it required a trip to A and E. He insisted we return him to the Cathedral for Evensong, and he sang with his plaster cast disguised under his cassock. We are thankful to the Cathedral for these precious memories that we will cherish forever."



Of course, leaving the Choir does not mean leaving the Cathedral community and we hope that Logan and Connor will continue to flourish among us.

The three-times-postponed (because of Covid) but beautiful wedding of **Jessica May Twigg** took place at the Cathedral on Saturday 10th July. **Jessica** is the daughter of **Joy** and recent long-term Cathedral alto, **Jim**.

Jessica and her husband **Wezi** are seen here after the ceremony, conducted by Canon Rowena. You will recognise bridesmaid **Christina Carr**, friend of the bride from the days they attended the Sunday School led by **Barbara Robb**.

Jessica was a server, and her brothers **James** and **Joseph** were outstanding Head Boys in the Cathedral Choir.

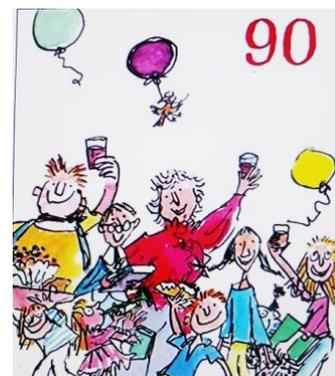
Jessica and Wezi are hospital doctors in Newcastle, working in paediatrics and respiratory medicine respectively.

We wish them and their families every blessing...



90th BIRTHDAY!

Your editor phoned former chorister **BRYAN LAMB** for his 90th birthday in July (although JB was a week too early!) He and **Pat** were planning a family birthday party with daughter and grandchildren, "But," said Bryan, "like the Queen I have two birthdays – a real one and an official one!" *How did that happen?*, asked JB. "My mother registered my birth on 26th July, but my Father, at a later date, registered me having been born on 27th!"



Bryan is one of the Great Ones in our 'former Choristers' Fellowship' (BCCA). During his treble chorister years he used to **walk** to the cathedral for practices and services all the way from his home in Mellor! He won a place at QEGS and rose to become Head Boy. In his teenage years, at Provost Kay's request, he helped

to dismantle the old organ which was in the West gallery, to keep an eye on the organ builders for the Provost, to enable it to be moved to the Nave's East end – during the cathedral's major building plans at that time which, unfortunately, had to be curtailed through lack of money and the shortages resulting from WW 2.

Bryan had a distinguished career in the RAF and was, at one time on an officers' training course in company with HRH the Duke of Kent (who rose to the very highest rank in the army – Field Marshall).

Photo (L):

At a choristers' reunion in 2005: L-R **Bob Keen** (Cathedral alto & choristers' Dad), **Peter and Constance Heald** (founder members of the Renaissance Singers), **John Marr** & **BRYAN LAMB**.

Bryan, whose home is in a delightful village in Cambridgeshire, used to be a regular attender at our BCCA Annual Reunions – even hiring a taxi to bring him all the way here and to take him all the way back. That's devotion for you!



HAPPY DOUBLE BIRTHDAY, BRYAN

**One of the joys of 'not throwing things away'
is discovering treasures which we'd thought we'd lost.**

Your editor was looking through some cathedral choir magazines of 40 years ago.

(Yes, we did have a regular choir magazine in those days, too, which was printed by choirmen Derek Crompton and David Rothwell!)

**BLACKBURN
CATHEDRAL
CHOIRS'**

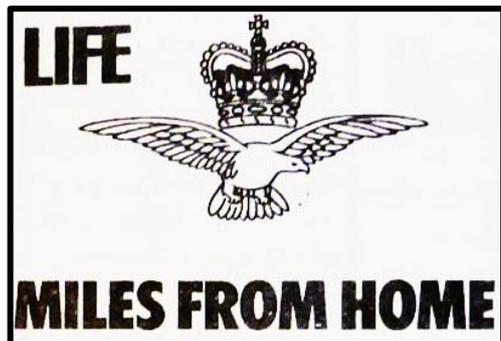
Dec. 1980 - Jan. 1981
Vol 2 No.4. FREE.

Newsletter

He discovered, in the December 1980 edition, a speech made by **Squadron Leader BRYAN LAMB** after he had been installed as SENIOR OLD CHORISTER at our Annual Reunion 3 months' earlier...

NB *this was before we enjoyed the enhancement of girl choristers:*

But there's a strong message here for us all, right now!



'I look back with a certain amount of pleasure to 1942 when I joined Blackburn Cathedral Choir. My Mother brought me along to the Cathedral – I'd been singing in Balderstone church choir for three years since I was seven, but she thought it would be a jolly good idea if I joined the cathedral choir – so, having been introduced to TLD [Mr Duerden, the then Director of music] he stood me by the piano (it's still the same piano, I suppose?) and made me sing 'Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven' with alleluias in it. I was quite good at alleluias, so I was signed on, and that was that.

And so I was brought into Blackburn (we lived in Mellor in those days) to sing in this rather wonderful place.

Fear

What I want to say this evening is really rather serious – what I want to get over is a message to the younger fellows here who are mostly in the Young People's Choir. I want to say why I am here today, for when you reach my age in another 35 years or so, I hope that you may think as I do now. You see, most of my adult life has been spent a long way from Blackburn, not only geographically, but in every sense.

It's been a strange sort of life – it's been a life in what I suppose you might call the rat race – a life where there is occasionally fear, embarrassment, and so on. I think that most people who fly aeroplanes have looked death in the face once or twice, and even in non-flying jobs there is fear.



When I was commanding an airfield on the south Arabian coast one was in fairly constant fear of assassination, and I had to sleep with a pistol under my pillow. And even in my present appointment in London one has had fear.

Super – super - super

And so, speaking to the young fellows here (and this is the serious bit), to explain to you why I'm here. In the sort of distant life that I lead I come back here once a year with great eagerness. I look forward to this reunion for weeks and weeks in advance – you'd be surprised – because for me it's almost a sort of re-generation – I come to be 'warmed up' ... great!

I'll tell you the sort of things that warm me up: I come back into town, like I did today, drove into the Cathedral Close and walked into the place ... and the atmosphere grips you – it's so beautiful now – it's super, I love it. In my day, as a boy, it really was a **crummy joint** – absolutely appalling; but over the years, what with **Provost Kay** and all the other people who have built it up and **made it so beautiful**, it's super just to come in – you're warmed – the feel and the atmosphere of the place are so wonderful. I'm warmed when I'm greeted by JB and it's super to be welcomed by all my O.C. friends.



Old friends – old times

Of course it's mostly my own contemporaries who mean most to me - you can understand that – I don't know you young fellows all that well, although I hope I will during this weekend. It's marvellous to see my old friends again – although you look at them and wonder what's happened to their hair – it's got a bit thinner and a bit greyer since last time. And you think back about all the things that you used to do, and it's very much an emotional experience for me. It grips me inside to do the things that we did this afternoon when we rehearsed together in the Song School, chatted over tea, and then took part in that marvellous Evensong with the boys and old choristers singing together.

We used to have some amazing hysterical times in the choir stalls in the old days – it's amazing, really, what we laughed at. I think there's much more decorum now, but we had some marvellous times and there used to be many occasions when I daren't look at **Peter Fielding** [Paul's eldest brother] because, if I had, then that would be it – we'd be helpless with mirth. Anything could set us off – for example I could never really understand why you should take your kids to talk to the 'enemy at the gate' (psalm 127) – maybe it was a sort of Biblical Grunwick! [[See below](#)]

Unbelievably marvellous

What I'm trying to say to you chaps is that looking back over almost 40 years when I started here as a boy of 10, to look back over that time and to be able to come back, year in and year out, to meet up with the chaps who were 10 years old when I was 10 years old is unbelievably marvellous.

Now, I know it, and WE know it (for these were my friends 40 years ago, and they are my friends for life). Now, if YOU are able to do this and continue to do this in this Cathedral, based on this fabulous music and all the wonderful things that happen week by week for you, and if you can think forty years ahead and believe that what is true for me will be true for you, it really will be absolutely marvellous.

I wouldn't miss one minute of it for anything.



From Wikipedia: The Grunwick dispute was a British industrial dispute involving trade union recognition at the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in Chapter Road, Dollis Hill in the London suburb of Willesden, that led to a two-year strike between 1976 and 1978

Your editor welcomed two delightful Cathedral visitors towards the end of July: CANON MICHAEL WEDGEWORTH ~ who creates the so-informative Cathedral weekly Newsletter.

Needless to say we talked about the cathedral – and shared so many happy memories.

But Michael let slip that, two days' later, **he and Pat** would be celebrating their **55th Wedding anniversary**.



Heartiest congratulations, indeed.
Michael and Pat planned a family reunion celebration.

Long may their joy in each other
continue to inspire and energise us all.

And JAMES DAVY
also visited JB.
James was Blackburn's
Assistant Director of
Music
during **Richard**
Tanner's reign.
He is now Director of
Music of
CHELMSFORD
CATHEDRAL

James was up here for a few days to see some of his many friends and admirers. He most generously drove your editor to the **Inn at WHITEWELL** for a delicious lunch.



Conversation flourished between what is happening to the music at Chelmsford Cathedral under James' inspired leadership – to stories about Sir David Willcocks ('You must read his biography', said James – 'I couldn't put it down.'). To glorying in the superb view of a Whitewell storm from a dining room window.

James still enjoys riding horses - and he's learning Swedish!



Then for another drive through the incomparable Lancs countryside, to a magnificent ice cream emporium, **Bashall Barn**, where we sheltered outside during a noisy thunderstorm and torrential rain, enjoying blissful ice-creams and discussing Elgar's influential *Kyries* (from *Gerontius*) on the *Kyries* of Britten's *War Requiem*, the dramatic opening of Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* influencing the opening of Walton's *Belshazzar* and many other composers' influence on even more colleagues. Fascinating stuff!

Then home, through more Lancashire countryside – which enabled James to pop in to see the SNAPE family (see pages 1 & 2). A truly memorable, life-enhancing & wonderful visit. **Thank you, James.**





From **Millie Sleight** (nee Whiteside) in Scunthorpe. Founder-member of Blackburn Chamber Choir / Blackburn Bach Choir.

See our June edition page 6 for more from Millie.

The sweltering heat here has meant that I have spent a lot of time reading ... including this month's *M&M* magazine.



As ever, it is packed full of interesting items of musical endeavours and achievements, and I especially love reading the articles from former Bach Choir singers, especially [fellow] founder members; so it was a real joy to get **Peter Crowther's** very fulsome account of his long singing career and of how it has 'shaped' him as a person.

From a personal angle, I count my 6½ years as a member of the *BBC* as an outstanding episode in my life. Being part of a choir which reached and maintained such high standards under your direction was a thrilling experience.

I feel sure that the successes I had with my own school choirs during the '60s were largely as a result of what I had learnt from you.

It seems no time at all since I was looking at photos of young **William Fielding** in his choir robes... and now he is leading an amazing life in France pursuing his music studies – another example of his time at the Cathedral as a chorister and, of course, the influences of his very musical family – I'm sure they are very proud of him.



Well, I'm utterly blown away by the article from **Niki Zohdi** on **New Complexity**. My reaction on reading the provisional title for his Ph.D. project was: 'Do I need a science degree to understand this?!!' (I see that maths & physics were two of the subjects he studied at College). I had enough problems trying to understand atonal music and the 12-note system. Memories of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* come to mind – the work you introduced us to during one of your Workers Educational Association classes in the Cathedral Close! For myself, I am reasonably well, and I hope you are too.

We received a magnificent new **PSALTER** from our former Tanner chorister **ANTHONY GRAY** (who

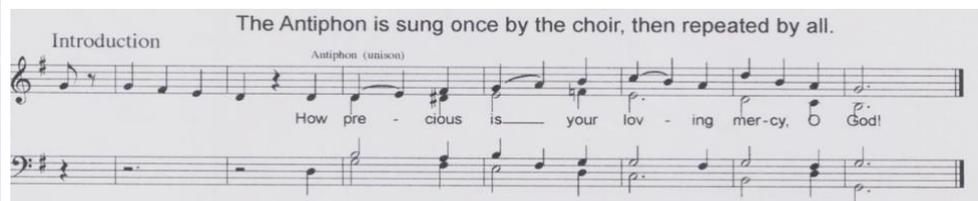
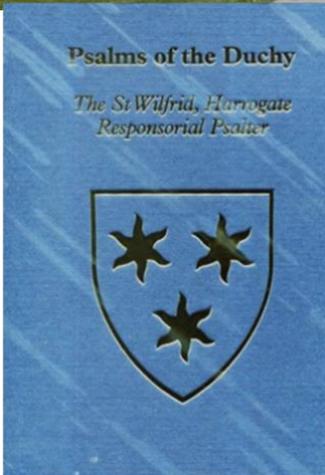
moved to Bradford Cathedral and eventually won the organ scholarship to Robinson College, Cambridge). Anthony is now Director of Music of the enormous



St. Wilfrid's church, Harrogate, and this psalter is designed specifically



for that church with specially composed refrains to be sung by the congregation, and new pointing and chants for the choir. This psalter is so exceptional that it will be kept for reference in our own cathedral music library. **Thank you, Anthony!**



ARE WE ALMOST GETTING BACK TO 'NORMAL'?

Yes – especially our Cathedral's exciting music, for

OUR WEDNESDAY LUNCHTIME RECITALS ARE BEGINNING AGAIN on September 1st @12.15

And the very first will be given by our former organ scholar,

HARVEY STANSFIELD,

who has just completed a most successful and exciting year as organ scholar of **COVENTRY CATHEDRAL** whilst studying at the **Birmingham School of Music**.



Harvey will be accompanying one of this country's youngest and most exciting treble soloists:



CORMAC THOMPSON

Listen to Cormac singing Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Pie Jesu* (Skip ads)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spxzjUkBjw&list=OLAK5uy_IGClmmPXRJqnhFwIX584rqJf-FrE1rkGY

Wednesday September 1st at 12.15pm...

See Cormac's official publicity, next page:

**Cormac Thompson – age 12,
recital at Blackburn Cathedral, Wednesday 1st September 2021, 12.15pm.**



Cormac started singing when he was 7. Weekly lessons at school led to successful auditions for 'The Halle Children's Choir' and 'The National Youth Choir of Great Britain' and a solo performance singing 'Walking in the Air' with The Halle Orchestra at Bridgewater Hall in December 2018.

In the following years Cormac continued to sing in his school chapel choir. A charity performance at Manchester Children's Hospital, with 'Carrot Productions' saw him reprise 'Walking in the Air' and at the start of 2020 he entered some music festivals too. Just as he was getting going with these, along came COVID – 19! Choir singing stopped, in fact all singing stopped and as the world was told to stay at home, Cormac thought that would be it with his singing for a while.



Unable to see his Nannie (*see above photo*) in Northern Ireland during lockdown, Cormac wanted to do something special for her so he learnt her favourite song, *Danny Boy*. When a social media post, made by his mum, was seen by Decca Records, Cormac was invited to record an album with them. 'Hear my Voice' was released in December 2020. It was Classic FM's Album of the Week, went in to the UK Classical Charts at no. 11 and the Australian Classical Crossover Charts at no.3 and it was a very exciting time.

At the start of 2021, apart from another lockdown! life started to go back to normal. At this point Cormac was introduced to the delights of Blackburn Cathedral. Encouraged by John Robinson he was able to sing with the choristers a few times and taking advantage of the beautiful setting, he recorded two videos at the cathedral too. You can see these on his YouTube channel if you would like to take a look.

Music exams returned! He passed ABRSM grade 5 Theory, Grade 7 Singing (Distinction) and Grade 4 Piano (Merit) and preparation for Grade 8 is well underway.

Cormac is however just a little boy who loves to sing, he loves to know that people have enjoyed listening and he also hopes that he can make them smile. Keen to promote singing, especially amongst younger boys, Cormac hopes that when he goes on stage if that makes even one boy want to give it a go then that's a job well done.

In his upcoming recital at Blackburn Cathedral on 1st September 2021, **Cormac** will be accompanied by the talented **Harvey Stansfield** (Organ Scholar at Blackburn 2018-19 & Coventry 2020-21) and by his dedicated and equally talented singing teacher, **Daphne Sumbler**.

This will be **Cormac's** biggest performance yet.

Repertoire that Cormac will include:

Bist Du Bei Mir (JS Bach), *Wiegenlied* (Brahms),
Pie Jesu (Fauré) *Hear My Prayer* (Mendelssohn),
Ave Maria (Schubert), *Be Thou My Vision*,
Sunrise, Sunset and Empty Chairs at Empty Tables;
with a few more surprises up his sleeve too.

Harvey will also treat us to Sonata No.6 in D minor, Op.65
(*Chorale and Variations*) by Felix Mendelssohn.

If you would like to know more about Cormac and hear him sing, you can do this by visiting www.cormacthompson.com

As a young artist working hard to build his profile, it would be wonderful to see you on September 1st You are also very welcome to keep up to date with all that is going on via Cormac's various social media channels. Links to these are on his website as well.

**And now – Crossing the ‘Pond’ where great musical events are also happening:
(If you’d like to hear enthusiastic American Hymn singing, with brass and enormous organ: Read on!!)**



INTRODUCTION: Many long-time members of Blackburn Cathedral will remember that JB brought his

PRINCETON SINGERS for three 2-week UK concert tours – and each time they sang to **capacity audiences in Blackburn Cathedral**. (They also sang in many other cathedrals: After singing at **Westminster Abbey** the Dean told them that they were the finest visiting choir the Abbey had had!)

They sang to a **capacity audience at Dr Roy Massey’s Three Choirs’ Festival in Hereford Cathedral** and, two years’ later, to another **capacity audience in the Chapel of King’s College, Cambridge** – with Dr

Stephen Cleobury and Dr George Guest in the audience!

Two Founder Members of JB’s Princeton Singers, Dr. Kathy Rohrer and her husband John Sully, visited Blackburn Cathedral 5 years ago – and they stayed with **Jean and Jeremy Duerden**.



Kathy and John were (and are) two of JB’s greatest friends from his 16 creative years in Princeton, NJ.

Kathy reached dizzy academic heights by becoming, for several years, the English equivalent of **Vice Chancellor of Princeton University!!**

John & Kathy’s daughter, **Clare**, became one of JB’s finest young sopranos in his Princeton Church Choir. She is also highly intelligent and married an equally highly intelligent husband: both of whom lecture at Duke University. They now have four boys and a girl – who also thrive on music.



JB recently received this email from Kathy:

“Last month **James** (our eldest grandson, 9+ years) and **I** both had the very special opportunity to join a choir of 16 voices in the Duke University Chapel to help record the opening event of the **RSCM America** virtual summer course, a hymn festival.

<https://youtu.be/haQDaoetfNM>

“The music begins at 4:41 with one of several terrific organ solos by Kit Jacobson, Chapel Organist.”

*(Duke University Chapel – as big as King’s – has **FOUR** organs. Look them up here. JB):*

<https://chapel.duke.edu/sacred-music-arts/music-worship/organs-carillon>



Kathy continues: “I send this so that you can share our joy in having a 3rd-generation chorister participate in such a wonderful event. **James** is the little guy with the blond hair & red cassock up front on the left with 14 adult singers from a variety of churches. Our humble thanks to **James’s choirmaster who is the current president of RSCM America, Joe Causby**, who conducts, and to the fabulous accompanying organist, Bob Brewer.

“You, John, are heavily responsible for James’s budding church music career, for it was your splendid choir training of his mother (Clare), when she was a young chorister in Princeton, that gave her such a deep love of sacred music, which she continues to pass down to her (many) children.”

--Kathy

WOW, THANKS, Kathy, and heartiest congratulations to you & your John, to Clare & her John, and to young James! JB

And here's choral music from **Blackburn Cathedral**
and encouragement from our Director of Music,
John Robinson



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMk7wObYz68>

Here's an extract from **the Dean's** most recent Pastoral Letter:

'Back to Cathedral' Sundays

We have designated the first two Sundays in September as **'Back to Cathedral' Sundays**. On Sunday 12th September following the 9.00am service, there will be a brunch for those who attend. This will provide an opportunity for folk to gather safely, reconnect with others and to hear a little more about where we are, as a Cathedral community, and what plans we are putting in place for moving forward.

On Sunday 12th September following **Choral Evensong at 4.00pm**, we will be hosting a **welcome reception** for all who attend. As in the morning it will provide an opportunity to reconnect with folk we have not seen for some time.

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL CHOIRS' ASSOCIATION (BCCA)

proposes to arrange a Post Covid informal

'Annual Reunion'

of past choristers

to coincide with the Dean's plans for **Evensong on**

12th September.

This will also happily (almost) coincide with the

90th birthday of our

Cathedral Organist Emeritus,

Dr John Bertalot.



So please, **former choristers and organ scholars**, note this in your diary **NOW!!** and plan to be with us.

NB: NO PRESENTS please!

See more details in our **September edition of M&M**.

