

MUSIC & MORE ONLINE: FEBRUARY 2021

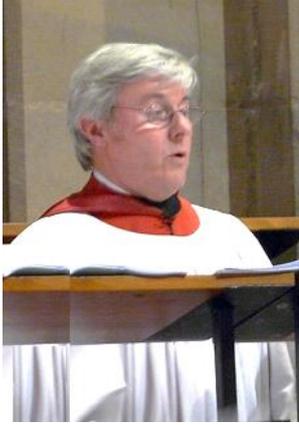
For members, past and present, of **BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL CHOIRS**
and for all who relish, treasure and encourage **INSPIRATIONAL CATHEDRAL MUSIC**

Editor: Dr John Bertalot, Organist Emeritus, Blackburn Cathedral

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

LEAVING BLACKBURN after nearly half a Century

By **PHILIP HUNWICK** – Cathedral Choirman, Choristers' Parent, Faithful Friend, and more: 1973-2020



Dear John,

You asked me for some reflections on my time at Blackburn Cathedral and my thoughts on leaving; so here goes.



Joan and I moved to the Blackburn area shortly after getting married in **1973** and it was towards the end of that year that we first set foot in the Cathedral and, following the 10.30am Eucharist, asked **Provost Jackson** whether he knew of any good local choirs. "Come and meet John Bertalot", he said. So began the long association of the Hunwick Family with Blackburn Cathedral and its music.

We both auditioned for and gained admission to your "**Blackburn Bach Choir**" and almost immediately found ourselves singing our first (Christmas) concert with them on the stage of King George's Hall. We were two of a choir of thirty in front of **an audience of around 2000**, as back then the **Blackburn Bach Choir's** was the only Christmas show in town. This still ranks as one of the most terrifying experiences of my life!



Fortunately we got used to such exposure during an association with the choir under its various names which lasted nearly thirty years.



There were concerts too numerous to mention; tours to cathedrals such as **Wells, Hereford and Exeter**; competitions at the **Royal Albert Hall** and Buxton Opera House; a wide range of music, both sacred and secular and the contrasting styles of **Bertalot, Cooper, Stewart and Tanner**. The choir also became an important part of our social life and many long-lasting friendships began there.

It didn't take you long to persuade me to join the Cathedral Choir, John. **Helping to lead the worship in a cathedral church is an enormous privilege; being allowed to sing (mostly!) glorious music at the same time is almost too good to be true.** Joan never really forgave me for joining a church choir of which she could not be a member, and I did feel guilty about it at times. Nevertheless, it drew both of us closer to the heart of cathedral life, and Joan, as much as I do, appreciated a form of worship which is to be found in comparatively few parts of the C of E these days.



You will remember that you were unable to entice your Godson into the Cathedral Choir. Indeed, Joan and I had begun to think that **Chris**, although musical and quite talented on piano and violin, had no interest in singing. It was your successor, David Cooper, who used more forceful tactics and dragged him into the choir by the scruff of the neck when he was almost eleven. **Noel**, not to be left out, joined shortly afterwards at the tender age of six. **Christmas Day 2001 chez Hunwick: L-R Joan, JB, Phil, Joan's father - Bill, Phil's sons Noel, & Chris (seated)**

Both boys owe an enormous debt to Blackburn Cathedral Choir, not only for the great contribution it made to their musical education, but also for what they learned about the glories of the English language, about working as part of a team, taking responsibility, exercising leadership, and good old fashioned moral values. **For Noel**, of course, it was the beginning of a musical journey which saw him become one of the Cathedral's longest-serving choirboys and eventually Head Chorister and chief soloist. He owes a personal debt of gratitude to **Gordon Stewart** whose help and encouragement enabled him to appear



on national television with **Patricia Routledge** in *"Hetty Wainthropp Investigates"*, [those programmes are still being shown] to do a solo spot on "Songs of Praise" and to produce his own CD. There can also be no doubt that without the Cathedral Choir he wouldn't have gained his Choral Scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford.

Noel graduating from Magdalen College, Oxford, watched by his brother Chris, who is also an Oxford graduate and half blue for Rugby League.

My other involvement with the Cathedral began early in 2006. I had recently ended (with relief!) my teaching career and, as if by divine intervention, the Cathedral advertised the part time post of **Events Co-ordinator**. This was exactly what I needed and I was delighted to be appointed. (I don't think there were many applicants!)

Apart from enjoying the work which was somewhat less stressful than teaching, I found my work colleagues - even the clergy! - an amenable and supportive bunch. When Joan died in 2007, I don't know how I would have coped without the Cathedral; clergy, choir, work colleagues and friends in the congregation, in their different ways, all supported me.

(Right: Phil with close friends who enjoyed pretty regular lunches and dinners in delightful Lancashire hostels.)

Looking back over the past 47 years (!) there have been many choral highlights with both the Cathedral Choir and the Renaissance Singers,

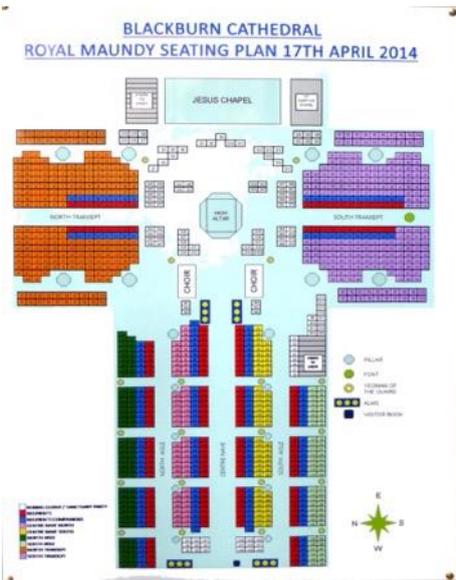


including radio and TV broadcasts, recordings, concerts and tours. If I had to single out one special event, however, it would be the **Royal Maundy in 2014**.

I suppose it had everything. As Events Co-ordinator I was heavily involved in the complex planning of one of the most high profile events ever to be held in Blackburn Cathedral; I sang in the Cathedral Choir during the service;



I was presented to the Queen and Prince Philip during a reception following the service. On the back of that I was one of several Cathedral staff invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace.



So why am I leaving a place which has meant so much to me for so long? COVID 19 is partly - but only partly - to blame. The virus called a halt to sung services and so the Cathedral Choir had to stand down. It's also hard being an Events Co-ordinator when there are no events to co-ordinate! I was at first furloughed and then told that I was to be made redundant. It was then that I decided to bring forward a move which I had intended to make in a couple of years' time - namely, **to move to Northumberland to be near Chris and his family** for support in my old age. My tenor voice has been deteriorating for some time and so I had been thinking that it would be better to leave the choir before I was asked to!

Will it be a wrench to leave? Of course it will! I'll miss colleagues, friends, Cathedral music and worship but I'm also looking forward to a new life close to family in a very beautiful part of the country.

I'll stay in touch and promise to visit from time to time.

Very best wishes, Phil

Celebrating Phil's 70th at Gibbon Bridge.



L-R back row: Geraldine, Phil & Chris - with William and Miranda



A Great, Great Grandma!!

JB phoned **Ruth Bond** just before Christmas; she lives in Norfolk and has been very active in her retirement - playing choral music with a quartet of recorders, being part of a regular discussion group and more intellectual evening activities.

Keith Bond was JB's talented assistant organist for many years: Keith and JB were both Senior Lecturers at the RNCM, and Keith had also been organ scholar at Corpus, Cambridge, two before JB!

It was Keith who introduced young ladies into the YPC (which, previously, had been populated by our ex trebles only).

Keith and Ruth's daughters, 'Wonka' and Angela, are founder members of 'co-ed' YPC which grew to some 36 singers thanks to Keith's musical direction, and Ruth's maternal care for every singer.

Ruth was also our music secretary during those exciting years of expansion of the cathedral's music programme. She radiated calm efficiency in every circumstance.



Ruth sounded wonderfully cheerful on the phone – not least because she now has a **Great, Great Grandson named ALSIE.** ('Where did that name come from?' 'I've no idea!')

Ruth still drives her car for shopping and has a helpful gardener and helpful house cleaner.

Ruth, like all of us, looks forward to the time when she can be visited by her family some of whom live up here in the North.

Veronica ('Wonka') lives near Clitheroe, and Angela has a house in Nice.

Photo of Ruth when we attended the RSCM's 85th birthday celebrations at King's.



From **Nigel Spooner**

Organist of both divisions of Bolton School (with two organs!)

Nigel is a former chorister and deputy organist at Bath Abbey and a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. He was a finalist in the prestigious St Albans International Organ Competition. He is an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, and he has regularly featured as the organist on Radio 4's Daily service. He undertakes a variety of accompaniment and concert work, and has played for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

When he was deputy Head at **Clitheroe Royal Grammar School** he founded a **Swing Band** which was professional in its exciting and adventurous standards. He also taught chemistry!

"It was great to receive *Music and More* and I was particularly interested in the "Smart" history and that wonderful letter of his. What fantastic words they had in those days!"

'Valetudinarianizing'
'Conventicle'

'...a Baconian habit of reasoning from particulars to universals'

Thanks, Nigel, for your complimentary observations on Henry Smart's adventurously creative skilfulness with the English language.



50 MILLION of us from 90 countries around the world watched the Annual New Year's Day Concert from Golden Concert Hall in Vienna – The Musikverein.

But although the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra was there in force with its guest conductor, **RICCARDO MUTI**, there was no audience – the enormous hall was 'Covid' empty, apart from the TV cameras.



In his address to the world, Muti said: "Musicians bring joy to the world – hope, peace, brotherhood & love; so music is important – **not** as an entertainment – for **music is a mission to make society better.**"

*And if that is true of great classical music (which it is) how much more true is the mission of **sacred music** which our cathedrals have created (in healthier days) to bring peace and joy to our souls.*

May those years and centuries of creating sacred music in sacred places soon return to bless us and future generations afresh in all their fulness.



**From former choirman and choir parent, BOB KEEN
MEMORIES OF BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL CHOIR**



Dear John

Many thanks for yet another M&M online production. It is always great to get updates on the whereabouts and doings of old choristers, whether old or young and upcoming.

I will remember my introduction to the Cathedral choir. I had arrived in Blackburn from Hertfordshire in May 1974 and for the previous 2½ years had attended St Alban's Abbey in the days of **Peter Hurford** and **Simon Lindley**. Previously, I had sung in parish church choirs since I was eight years old, first in my father's choir and then to save time travelling when I



was about 15 and studying for 'O' levels, I joined my local parish church choir – **St Gabriel's, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne**. Apart from Newcastle Cathedral choir, St Gabriel's had the best choir in the area with a full complement of 24 boys and 14/16 men. We had a Sung Eucharist every week with one of about 10 settings and an anthem, and also an anthem at Evensong.

After I married Pauline in 1967 we set up home in Stockton-



on Tees and I joined the choir at **St Peter's, Stockton**, where again there was a choir of similar size and quality where anthems were sung at both morning and evening service every week. The young choirmaster, **George Barber** was a schoolmaster and I think had a ready link to furnish the choir with boys. I remember his brother was also an organist and he used to come and accompany us if we were singing something that needed a conductor. My final days there included a performance of **Fauré's Requiem** on Good Friday. While we were rehearsing for that I was travelling back and forth to Manchester and singing the Requiem to myself en route.

After a brief spell in Manchester, I was promoted to the bank's training centre in London and set up home near St Albans. Having sung in choirs for 20 years I wrote to the Abbey to offer my services but there were no vacancies and that situation remained until I moved to Blackburn two years later. After settling down in Wilpshire, near Blackburn, Pauline met up with **Audrey Hill** (wife of Bryan who was a bell ringer at the Cathedral) and mentioned that I had sung in choirs before and she told her that the Cathedral were always on the lookout for choirmen. I contacted you and you invited me for an audition after the asked to sing a well-known hymn, maybe part of a Psalm "There is a Country far beyond the skies". When I said not, no idea how I did, but was invited to join the men for I remember that the choir had been less than impressive at later found out that they had been to baritone **choirman previous evening**. I wrote to you to decline your offer and astounded me, that you were so disappointed because you Howell's *Coll Reg. Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis* at Evensong the following Sunday. It was too late because instead



Sunday morning service. I think I was and then you asked me if I knew Parry's you said well please sight read it. I have practise the following Friday. the morning service and I hesitated. I **Frank Hare's** house for a party the received a prompt response which had been looking forward to me singing I had gone to **St Peter's at Salesbury** (a go-ahead village church near Blackburn with the Bishop as a parishioner.)



Now I was in a quandary. I explained the situation to you and you suggested that I should attend practices for a few weeks and then make up my mind. That did the trick. At my first practice we went up into the back of the Cathedral to sing the Advent Responsory –



WOW! What a fantastic sound. My mind was made up and now I had the job of explaining to St Peter's. I saw them through Christmas and then started properly singing at the Cathedral straight after Christmas in 1974.



When I joined I thought that I could sight-read music. How wrong I was. I could read music but now it was at a different level and pace and moving from Howells to Byrd to Britten to Brahms etc. etc. within a few minutes I found it extremely difficult and a little embarrassing to begin with.

Your method of telling me that I had sung a wrong note(s) puzzled me. I had to put my hand up to acknowledge an error and that was fine if I knew I was wrong, but if I didn't you would stop and look at the opposite side of the choir and ask us to repeat it, not once but twice or thrice until the penny dropped, and no help came from the piano or anywhere else. Eventually I began to feel more comfortable and I remember a comment from **Frank Hare** after singing Stanford's "Ye Choirs of new Jerusalem" after Easter 1975. I must have let rip for I knew it well..

Well the months went by and I became more and more familiar with the repertoire so that I was not having to sight read everything and could relax a little. I found the Psalm singing wonderful and loved the pace and excitement of them. Another memorable thing, and I have mentioned this previously, was **Canon Williams'** system of assessing us after a service. or at least that was how I saw it. After the final vestry prayer he would say, "Thank you gentlemen, thank you boys", which I took to mean it was satisfactory; or "Thank you gentlemen, thank you boys, not only have you taken us to the Gate of Heaven but you have taken us through" – that was very rare for what had been a particularly beautiful and exceptional service; or " Pardon, O Lord, the imperfections in our prayers and praises", and that was the killer for a disastrous service. Those were the extremes and he had shades of these in between.

It was a joy when my son **John** decided to join the choir at Blackburn when he was eight and to have him sing along with us. My daughter **Jill** also joined the Youth Choir but gave up singing when we left Blackburn.

1981 John Keen

Prefects' board in the Song School

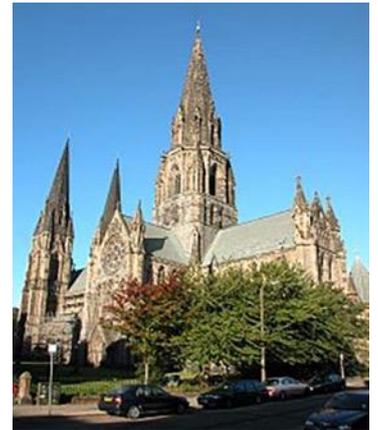
Special services were always exciting and also the Tour of Holland and North Germany in 1977 and the re-Consecration of the Cathedral and the live broadcasts on Radio 3 and the knowledge that so many people were listening and any slip was out there for all to hear. That made me rather nervous. The camaraderie of the choir was excellent and we had some excellent times together.

My seven years in the choir have been some of the happiest days of my life and I am so grateful to you for taking me on in the first place and not taking "No" for an answer. I must say that I am also very grateful to my wife, **Pauline** who always supported me for, without that support, I could never have done it.



After leaving Blackburn because of my job, we moved to Nantwich, where we joined up with the Northern Cathedral Singers under **John Cooke** for a year before moving to Edinburgh as a manager in the branch there, and joining the choir of **St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral** under the late **Denis Townhill**. John continued at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh as a treble, and after his voice broke, he sang alto beside me.

That was another very special experience for we were able to sing some mighty works with the **St Mary's Music School Orchestra** e.g. *The Bach Passions, Christmas Oratorio, Handel's Messiah, Brahms'* and *Faure's Requiems* and so on, and that would never have happened without our time at Blackburn



A huge debt of thanks must go to you and Blackburn Cathedral Choir

Regards,
Bob



Bob celebrating his year as Blackburn's Senior Old Chorister in 2003

Bob, having retired to live near-ish Blackburn, with son John for an Old Choristers' Annual Reunion.





From Dean Emeritus CHRISTOPHER ARMSTRONG

A Happy New Year to you, John! We regularly tune in to Blackburn Cathedral worship for the quality is quite excellent – and we live in a musical desert here! **The Dean** and I are in touch occasionally and both Geraldine and I marvel at **Canon Rowena's** addresses. You are so lucky! It's also good to have news of old friends, and **Mike Wedgeworth** does a sterling job with the notices.

Much is changing. One of the archdeacons in this diocese (Peterborough) has described the effect of the pandemic in church circles as another Reformation. Interesting thought. For me – now being house-for-duty and officially one day less a week - the workload has increased hugely. Yes, of course there is the burial of the dead – this is a big retirement area but light on Covid-19 so far – but shifting much of the worship on to electronic means is very challenging. Luckily, one or two folk in the Benefice are quite gifted at that sort of thing but we cannot afford to buy all the swanky cameras

which seem to be necessary.

Having said all that, we are blissfully happy still, living in the country. We don't miss the police sirens wailing up and down Preston New Road! It is so good to get to know the farmers – and especially the shepherds – in the benefice to see how their work is not just very hard but closely linked to nature. As one whose vocation is modelled on The Good Shepherd, their example is truly humbling!

Thank you for your good wishes on our Wedding Anniversary! Apart from a morning's work, it was marked quietly with a lovely supper and good wishes from the family, zoomed in from all around the world.



Do give our best wishes to those who will remember us – and take good care of yourself. You are a very precious commodity!

God bless,

Christopher

AND A CREATIVE PS from Dean Christopher:

Since you wrote John, you might like to have a look at this when you have a moment!

It's a performance of Messiaen's **La Nativité du Seigneur** by **William McVicker** on the fine Walker organ in Bromley Parish Church

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbiy5FoSR-M>

William McVicker was the first Organ Scholar I appointed when I was a Chaplain in Durham. William has since made a name for himself in London.

I used to do the meditations for **Greg Morris** and **Richard Tanner** when they turned their hands to Messiaen but I was under the impression that Messiaen himself scripted the meditations which were very short. Am I right? [Yes, see here below; JB]

God bless,

C

Dear Christopher,

Yes, I'll certainly include this in the Feb M&M.

I remember a Wednesday lunchtime recital in Blackburn Cathedral a few years ago by the sub organist of Chester, **Andrew Wyatt**, who played the whole of this Messiaen. I had a passing thought that this was not the sort of music to play for a 'popular' lunchtime... but suddenly in the middle of the second movement **the music clearly began to talk to me - I heard what Messiaen was saying through music notes** - that whole hour was transformed for me - when Jesus 'accepted' his suffering - that was a triumphant experience - every nuance of Messiaen's Christian genius came through so creatively. I've never forgotten it. **Andrew Wyatt** had studied with **Dame Gillian Weir** - which explained why his performance was so gripping.

The performance by William McVicker seems to be of similar Christian conviction. So thank you indeed.

Ever, John



Why is the second Friday of this month so interesting – and almost unique?
Clue: The last time this happened was 2nd February last year.



Do you believe in coincidences?

For the next day JB received the following from former Blackburn Organ Scholar, **Dr Ed Jones**, who is no. 3 at Worcester Cathedral with Blackburn's former **DoM, Samuel Hudson**:

Dear John.

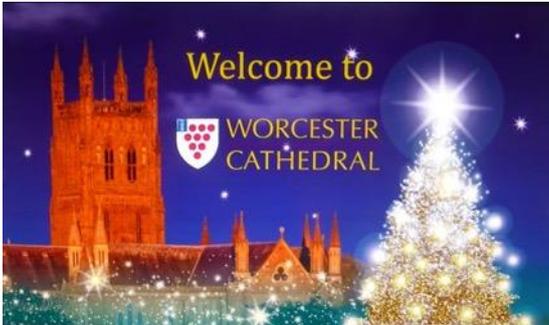
Hope all is well. Tomorrow evening (Sun) at 6.30pm, I'm performing **Messiaen's Nativité** cycle in a devotional performance. It's live on Facebook if you've got little else to do! Should be on the Worcester Cathedral Facebook page.

Cheers, Ed :-)

Well here it is:

<https://fb.watch/2OYKfl2Gqa/>

NB it begins after TEN minutes



And to add to our joy, Samuel Hudson introduces each movement **IN FRENCH!**



(The cathedral's main organ is undergoing some major attention.)

Ed is playing on the temporary organ in Worcester Cathedral – but he makes it sound so authentic.



From Dean Peter Howell-Jones (extracts from his letters to the Cathedral congregation)

The Directors of Public Health across Lancashire have asked faith communities to suspend all acts of public worship to help stem the acceleration of the COVID virus across our region.

In many ways we really have no option but to work with our Directors of Public Health in this local community. At this moment in time the Cathedral needs to hold a position of responsible leadership in the community, working with the council when asked to support them.

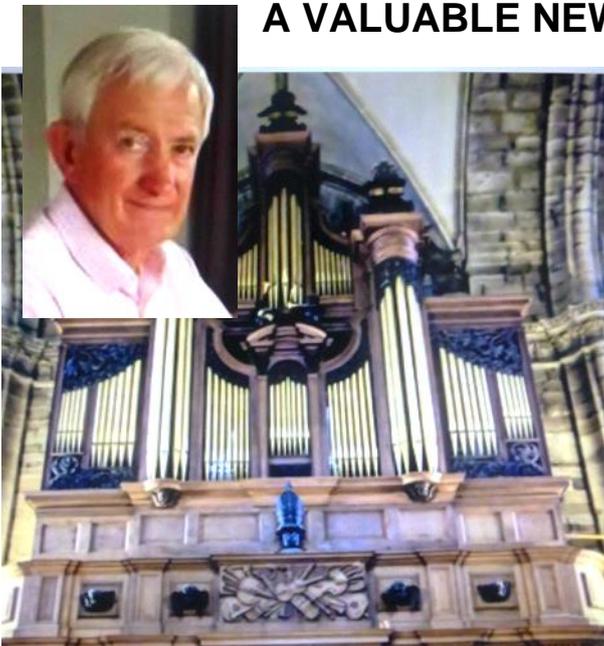
Public worship within the Cathedral building will close with immediate effect. The building will remain open for private prayer **Tuesday to Friday and Sunday between the hours of 10.00am to 12.00noon.** I would also like to emphasise that public worship will still take place **on line at 9.00am every Sunday** to which everyone is welcome.

You can of course join for live streamed morning prayer on our YouTube channel Tuesday – Friday at 8.30am <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLfoGkTHQCyj9VMYtE9uvOLg/videos> and evening prayer at 5.00pm on ZOOM Monday – Friday .email Precentor@blackburncathedral.co.uk for login details.



A VALUABLE NEW CONTACT

foca



We've recently been in creative correspondence with the new **Chairman of the Federation of Cathedral Old Chorists, Nick Hodges.**



Nick is an Old Chorister of **St. Mary's Collegiate Church, Warwick** (which has **THREE** organs! Blackburn has only two!)

When JB congratulated Nick on his new role (of coordinating and encouraging former choristers of our Cathedrals and major Parish Churches) **JB also sent him a copy of our January M&M.**

Nick immediately replied:

"Thank you very much for sending me your rich and diverse newsletter. It certainly puts my 2 page twice yearly effort in the shade. "I very much look forward to reading future issues and thank you for putting me on your mailing list. **On the Federation website we have a page reserved for Associations' newsletters. Would you like us to**

upload M&Ms to our website?"

John Robinson wrote, "I for one would be very much in favour of sharing M&M with the wider old choristers' community as I think it is the perfect model for how to do this, from which so many might be inspired."



So now our **Music & More online** is being sent not only to Blackburn's present and former choristers, but also to a number of **Cathedral Directors of Music**, and members of the Lancashire chapter of the **National Friends of Cathedral Music** through the good offices of its Diocesan Representative, **HH Judge Jeremy Duerden.** But now, thanks to **Nick Hodges**, potentially to **very many hundreds of former Cathedral Chorists throughout the UK.**



THANK YOU, NICK!

Nick Hodges' letter to JB (above) continues:

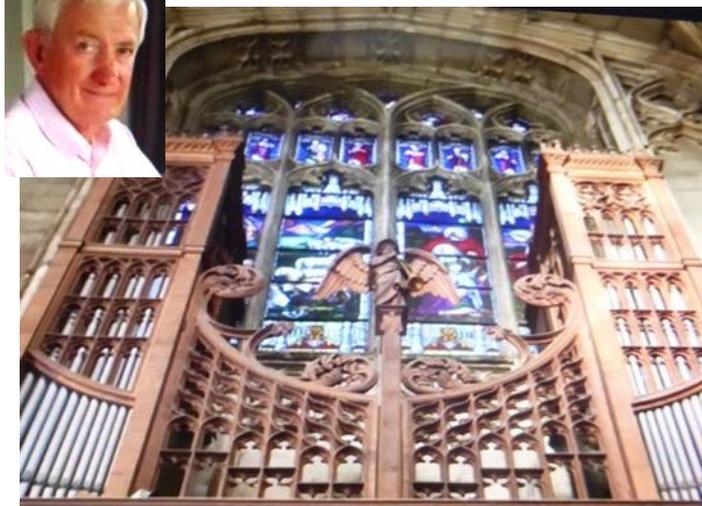


"The most important message which comes from the content [of your M&M] is the influence that "choir" has made on so many lives. I am very proud to be chairing the body that represents the interests of all choristers everywhere and hope that, collectively, we can encourage all those currently in charge of music in worship realise the role that former choristers can play as ambassadors.

"I was particularly interested in the short article about **Justin Miller** now at **St Matthews, Northampton**, a place which, in the past, has brought us so much wonderful music. I do hope that Justin is staying in touch with his former choristers and is led by your wonderful example."

Another Warwick organ!

JB replied: Yes, **Justin Miller** is doing a superb job at St. Matthew's, Northampton. He was a fine organ scholar here and since then has occupied significant posts at three cathedrals – Ripon, Winchester and Worcester.



I was honoured to be made Organist Emeritus of St. Matthew's 2 years ago – and I am thrilled that several of my former Northampton choristers (one of whom has recently retired as Professor of modern Greek at Cambridge), still keep in lively touch with me – even though I left there 56 years ago to come to Blackburn!!

THE DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC

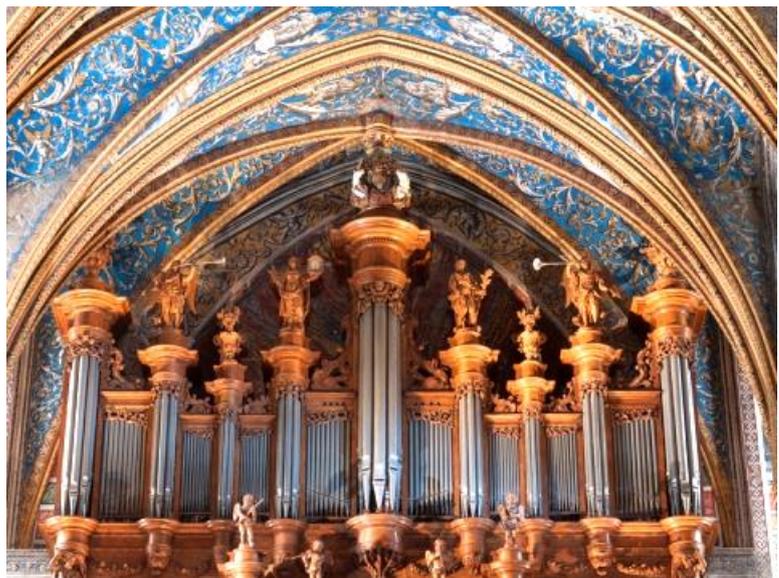
has just announced an important addition to the RSCM's worldwide mission
(enhanced below for readers of M&M)

"The new network of regional Managers is a crucial part of our growing work, and so we are delighted to confirm the appointment of **David Scott-Thomas** as our new **Regional Manager for France and North West Europe!**

"David is Head of Music at Broughton Primary School, a Musical Director of **Sing Together** for Lancashire Diocesan Schools, alongside the dynamic **Gill Fourie**, and directs the chamber choir **Octavius** [which was founded by **OC Anthony Tattersall**].

"He was organ scholar of Liverpool Cathedral and then studied at Trinity College of Music before coming to **Blackburn Cathedral** as an Assistant Organist 2006-2008.

The Director's welcome continues: "David splits his time between the UK and France and has latterly developed associations at the **Abbey Church of St. Gildas de Rhuys in Brittany:**



and **Vannes Cathedral**, also in Brittany:



"David is married to Erik and they live with two beagles and several chickens!"

Blackburnians will remember David as being packed with super-abundant energy and 'drive'. He will do well for the RSCM!

GOOD NEWS

...of **Peter Holroyd** ... who phoned your editor to share the good news that he had recently become engaged to a delightful lady – they planned to get married soon, but plans were delayed because of Covid.

1971 Ivor Bolton
Peter Holroyd



Peter was a Blackburn Cathedral chorister 50 years ago, and was a most enthusiastic member of our boys' choir.

Peter in 1971 as a member of JB's handpicked RSCM choir singing at Westminster Abbey.

In those days JB lived in the Cathedral Close, and Peter was first every Sunday morning to ring JB's bell to ask for the key to the Song School so that he could open up. (That was in the easy days of no need for 'security'!)



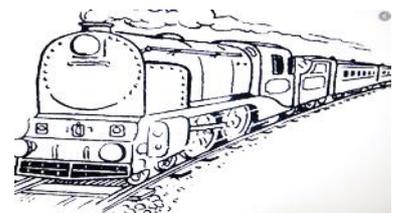
Peter's father, **Ron**, was our Virger – he'd served in the Merchant Navy during WW2 which included the dangerous missions to Russia in the middle of winter when he and his fellow sailors were locked below decks! If they'd been torpedoed, there would be no escape!

Peter in 2018.

Pete had a successful career as Manager, in turn, of more than several Booths' Supermarkets throughout Lancashire. He married and had a lovely family: two children, **Emma** and **Luke**, who supported him strongly especially in recent years,

Pete visits JB every so often for a chat. **We wish him every happiness for his second marriage.**

the waiting game



HARVEY STANSFIELD, our 2018-2019 organ scholar, and now organ scholar of Coventry Cathedral, phoned your editor after Christmas:

Although he had returned to the **Royal Birmingham Conservatoire**, where he studies organ, yet, in common with other colleges throughout the UK because of Covid restrictions it is not yet open for teaching.

'What do you do during this lockdown?' asked JB

'I get on the train to Coventry – it only takes 20 minutes and it's almost empty – but there's nothing much happening at the Cathedral either.'

So Harvey, like so many of us, is awaiting developments.

He did say that he was studying for his ARCO – and was grateful for the weekly theory sessions which he had had whilst he was at Blackburn.

Harvey has also tele recorded **PERCY WHITLOCK'S** restful **FOLK TUNE** at Coventry:

<https://youtu.be/lenJlhwN3c> with lovely shots of the cathedral to match his own delicate playing. **See page 14**



DEEP MUSICAL HISTORY

Harvey also discovered a **50-year old BBC Recording of CHORAL EVENSONG from Rochester Cathedral** sung by a hand-picked RSCM choir – conducted by **Dr Gerald Knight** (who was the elegant Director of the RSCM) and accompanied on the cathedral organ by **JB!!**

JB remembers it well – for the broadcast came at the end of a two-week course at Rochester – this was JB's first live broadcast which eventually led to JB *directing 3 similar 2-week courses* at **Westminster Abbey**, another at **Norwich** and also the newish **Coventry Cathedral**, and ending with a sublime 2 weeks at **Canterbury**. (See *Holroyd, above*)

On each JB course he took with him half a dozen Blackburn Choristers to share in the thrills of such privileged fortnights.

Listen to a bit – for the singing of the trebles at Rochester - most of whom came from Parish Church Choirs – was exceptional.

One couldn't find such a wealth of talent in many church choirs these days. <https://youtu.be/2wP4zMXuaig>





**NEWS of Members of your
Blackburn Cathedral Choirs' Association Committee
(who held a Zoom committee meeting in January)**

John Robinson (BCCA Chairman and Director of Music)

"I'm much better [after Covid] but with lasting Covid-ear infections. Government and C of E advice has been as usual inconsistent and changeable, so I don't know how many short-term music lists I've made and then destroyed! **All the choristers are off singing** as long as schools are out, which is just so tragic, but we have no choice.



"Choristers still meet on-line for **theory and sight-reading**, but there's nothing we can do as a group, with the latency problems of the internet. So we now have a 5-part choir of adults (*page 13*: they sound great!) who are recording music for services on Sunday mornings, until further notice.



"**The organ** is sounding really wonderful since its major tuning - much more clear and bright, and even in pitch. It's not completely finished, as the scale of how far apart things had moved means it's going to take some time for it all to settle. The boxes have been improved as well. When the engineer is back in business, we'll get the organ recording made.



"**Angela Hicks** and I are working on recording some Finzi (unrelatedly) which feels like a salve to the current woes." **See and hear MUCH more of John's music on page 14.**



Angela Marr, (wife of BCCA Treasurer **John Marr**)



holding her first grandson, **Benjamin** (b. Dec. 18)

(Due to Covid restrictions, she could hold him for only an hour at Christmas before he was returned to his parents!)

Heartiest congratulations to Angela – and especially to John (!) on becoming an 'instant' Grandfather – for Angela and John celebrated their second wedding anniversary in January!

Graham Chapelhow (efficient Secretary)

Graham's memories of being a boy in the Cathedral Choir will appear in the **March edition of M&M**

Stewart Hopkinson (past lively Chairman and current wise committee member)

I continue to work remotely as an **Assurance Manager for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation services**. The impact of COVID-19 has been to increase our workload and to vary our approach significantly, so there's no 'enforced idleness' for me.



Stew continues: The challenge is obvious – how can providers of criminal justice services continue to meet their objectives of protecting the public, reducing reoffending and safeguarding their staff during the pandemic?

I am one member of a national team. As you can imagine, there is a lot of high level interest in our findings and it seems that the more we deliver, the more is requested. On a positive note – all this means that I remain gainfully employed when so many are not, or have been furloughed and so, whilst tired, I do count my blessings!!

Outside of work I continue to sing (virtually) with 'Octavius' which was founded, I believe, by OC **Anthony Tattersall** (now living in NZ) and is currently directed by **David Scott-Thomas** (see p.9). The technology has been a challenge for me but we managed to produce some lovely music for Christmas which has been uploaded to You Tube.

Finally, we care for my elderly mother-in-law, who lives alone, and who is coping commendably with the isolation that COVID has brought. Similarly, we have some caring responsibilities for our **grandchildren** who live locally, so that my daughter and son-in-law can continue to work as Key Workers.

In brief, there's a lot going on.

Stew

Clara Slater (College Students' Representative)

Clara is a second year student at Bristol University, studying Geography, who wrote:

I'm struggling to describe the upcoming term in a way that doesn't sound like a complete dirge. **University has gone completely online**, which is rather dull. I'm supposed to be on a field trip at the moment, but instead, we are to watch videos of data being collected!

Geography is a rather hands-on subject and I think it's one of the courses which is particularly suffering due to the Covid pandemic. However, lecturers are doing everything they can and I really feel for them.

I'm also really missing playing with the Orchestra and bands, but know we will make up for lost time once everything is a little less upside-down. I am still working at the travel health business, which I know I am very fortunate to have to keep me busy.



Louie Hindle (YPC Representative) who writes:

At the moment I am in Year 11 at St Christopher's C of E high School. I was supposed to be doing my GCSE exams this summer but because of the pandemic it will not be going ahead but we will have some "mini" internal exams. The night Boris announced that exams were going to be cancelled, I was rejoicing because it has been very hard having to study at home due to all the lockdown and all isolations from school. For the past two years I have been studying – **Maths, English, Separate Sciences, Geography, Spanish, Religious Education** and most importantly **Music**.

Over the past few weeks I have been submitting my applications to multiple sixth forms. Whilst it has been hard thinking of what subjects I want to do at A-Levels, I have finally

narrowed it down to 5. **English Language, Music, Politics, Law and Religious Education**. It was hard to pick out subjects because to be honest I like every single one. I don't know where this will all take me and that will be something I have to think about in the following years. At the moment **it looks like I shall become a musical, religious politician!**



Alec Stuttard (Media Secretary) Former TLD chorister. former chairman, former choir parent. Current Cathedral Publicity Officer.

**THERE WILL BE A ZOOM BCCA REUNION ON
SUNDAY 12 September at 5.00pm
when we plan to celebrate JB's 90th birthday!
(NB: No presents, please!)**

Join Zoom Meeting

Book the date NOW!!

<https://zoom.us/j/95080809428?pwd=V095VDI5UXZlcS9lWHlJZFUySVpPZz09>

Meeting ID: 950 8080 9428

Passcode: 499962



JB (Founder Chairman of BCOCA)

had his second Covid jab at Barbara Castle Health Centre in January: 'twas very efficient and quick. All praise and thanks to the dedicated medical staff.



Aren't friends wonderful!
Especially when they send you **AMAZING VIDEOS:**

WOW!!



Here's Handel's **Hallelujah Chorus** as you've never seen it before. <https://youtu.be/9jynUQjIXxM>

WELCOME TO OUR TWO NEW CHORAL SCHOLARS, who began on January 1st!



Michael Hillesdon (Tenor) who has a B.A in music from the University of York, and an MSc in computer science; he has the Duke of Edinburgh's **GOLD** award and plays the French Horn, Clarinet and Saxophone, **writes**

It has been a great experience, despite the unusual start, singing in the cathedral. It is just a shame that most of my correspondence with people is over email as opposed to face to face, however it is lovely to hear from people like you and to be singing regularly again.

For more information on me: I am currently working within a **computer software development company** as an **apprentice software developer**. While this role is quite removed from my music degree, I am enjoying the new challenges that it poses. The apprenticeship course lasts for 15 months and fortunately for me, my firm have expressed their interest for keeping me afterwards! Alongside this, I hope to maintain my music as best I can. This is why I am so happy to have been given the opportunity to perform in Blackburn every week as a choral scholar. I am also a part of the **National Youth Chamber Choir and Canzonetta Choir** which will keep me even more busy when the lockdown restrictions lift.

I also play the **French Horn** and will be looking for opportunities to play, however for the moment I think I'll just be performing to my new neighbours through the walls when I practise!

Aside from that, it's just waiting to get properly stuck in at the cathedral once the ability to do so is available and working on my apprenticeship. I'm looking forward to when we can have a proper conversation, which hopefully will be in the near future.

Matthew Baldwin (Bass) who studied singing at the RNCM and also spent six months studying in Italy, has already enjoyed a **glittering career as a soloist, including opera, writes** I am currently deciding between three scholarship offers for a master's degree beginning in September. I am also auditioning for various operatic roles.

Looking forward to meeting you when services open up again, and for future contributions to the M&M magazine!



Our heartiest congratulations to **GORDON FIELDING**, who celebrated his 88th birthday in January. Gordon was a TLD chorister and, for many years, was the efficient Treasurer of the **Blackburn Cathedral Old Choristers Association** – which earned him our highest honour - **The Order of Merit**: only two past Directors of Music of Blackburn Cathedral have received that honour. Well done, Gordon, and thank you!

Gordon wrote: "I am fortunate in that my two daughters ensure that I am well cared for, well fed, and fit and healthy. I trust that you are keeping well, despite the frustration of having limited contacts.

"I celebrated the birth of my **first great granddaughter** a couple of weeks ago. **I already have two great grandsons.**

" The Fielding family just keeps on expanding!"

Our Cathedral is making most of these ongoing lockdowns and especially by our fabulous music department



Enjoy 23 anthems and 2 organ solos ! recorded exquisitely by

L-R (back) Matthew **Baldwin** (Bass Choral Scholar) Michael **Hillesdon** (Tenor Choral Scholar) Ed **McCullough** (Cathedral Choir Tenor),
(Front) Bex **Weaver** (events coordinator at St. George's Hall) & Angela **Hicks** (former B'bn chorister and now international soloist),

Shaun Turnbull, organ accompanist,
conducted by organ soloist John Robinson

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gnwgu2gah2i3o9u/AABQ5yrnILM0kxspbNOPIRM1a?dl=0>



Former TLD & JB chorister IAN HARRISON

who, for many years organised a superb annual music festival in his magnificent **St. Stephen's church** in Bournemouth, (which was regularly attended by multiple cathedral Directors of Music and their choirs) has now retired to a high flat in Bournemouth, where he has a fine view of the sea.

He told JB that he knows the caretaker of the **Bournemouth Pavilion** very well, so he frequently drops in, now that it is temporarily closed because of Covid, to play the magnificent cinema organ they have there –



which the composer **PERCY WHITLOCK** (who was also organist at St. Stephen's) played frequently. **See page 10.**



Prefect IAN HARRISON
Christmas 1964



Bournemouth Pavilion



Our cathedral crypt is now a centre for folk to receive their COVID jobs.

This was reported on BBCTV News nationwide on Monday 11 January.



Above: The new entrance to the Crypt for jobs.
 Right: The men getting the Crypt ready
 Below: Everything ready to begin!

BBC NEWS
 * Mass vaccinations begin at another 10 centres in England from Monday 13:02

BEGIN!



Acknowledgement of copyright – with thanks.

You've enjoyed reading the memories of past choristers of our Cathedral:

So let's enjoy your memories – which will encourage parents to send their children to relish the privileges and joys which you enjoyed.



Please send your memories (with photos) to john.bertalot@gmail.com Thanks!



From **James Davy**, our former Assoc. Director of Music,
now **Director of Music of Chelmsford Cathedral**



James playing for Sam Hudson's wedding two years ago

Dear John,

I hope that things in the NW have been bearable what with the Covid restrictions, the heavy weather, and winter in general.

We have been so fortunate here not to have (yet) suffered major financial distress, unlike many including the very biggest places which have had huge losses already.

I'm afraid that since our last correspondence we managed to do very little at the Cathedral; the Essex infection numbers have been extremely high, and we were rather poleaxed by the sudden locking-down of non-choir school foundations in November.

When we did get the choristers back in early December we'd missed Advent, of course, and were able to start preparing for Christmas services that didn't really come to fruition, the one exception being Nine Lessons, which we recorded in front of invited. Our 'chain gang' at the carol service were the Mayor, Lord Lt, MP, and County Council Chairman, all huge supporters and we're usually well-served by the incumbent High Sheriff for high occasions. It's good to know that the great and good know that they'll get a good service when they come (it doesn't bring down the Council Tax but hey-ho!).

A planned recording of the *Ceremony of Carols* with the girls was rescheduled twice before being cancelled. There wasn't one point where we could say with any confidence what we were going to do in the next week; the acting bishop of Chelmsford testing positive for the virus just before Christmas was the last straw and we closed to even the planned small congregations, with the choirs stood down.

We're currently operating one organist plus cantor, which means that I'm getting to play every other week again, which I'm enjoying, but there's just no guessing when the choirs might be back. Aside from that, we're continuing to hold choir practices and singing lessons online for the trebles, and a social thing for the gents once a week. We've a choral scholar who's good at making videos from people's recordings at home, so we're going to experiment with that in the meantime and see what happens - I'll let you know if it comes off!

Hope you're keeping well.

All the best,
James

JB's reply:

My dear James,

How very good to hear from you, even though your news is not good. Thank you so much for keeping in touch.

Yes, you share John Robinson's frustrations, for he told me that he keeps making music plans and then finds he can't fulfil them.

I mourn your situation, crowned by your acting bishop having caught 'the bug'.

One of the consolations is that it's the same for everyone ... although you are in an area of especially high risk.

Another consolation is the stream of helpful, encouraging emails from the **President of the Cathedral Organists Association, Robert Sharpe** at York Minster, to the COA brethren which are full of sound advice.

And yet another is the initiative being shown by the younger folk with digital expertise...

Harvey Stansfield, who was Organ Scholar at Blackburn two years ago but is now **O.S. at Coventry** (studying at Birmingham Conservatoire which, at the time of writing, is closed) sends me a steady stream of videos of himself playing pieces on the Coventry organ. And he knows about digital techniques! [See p.10](#)

And one more consolation... there's a bunch of members of the congregation at Blackburn who meet via Zoom on Sundays at 10.30 for a chat whilst drinking coffee (at home, of course). All praise to **Jean and Jeremy Duerden** for heading this up.

And for me, it's the creation of **Music and More** which keeps me going..(creatively interacting with so many cathedral friends... with consequent feedback) plus the wonderful generosity of two former choir parents, **Tony & Amanda Snape**, who live around the corner and do my main shopping once a week, with resulting *socially-distanced-doorstep-conversation* when they bring bulging bags of food and other necessities.

Although your news is not good, James, we're all in this together which, in itself, gives cause for **'Strengthening the sinews and summoning up the blood'!**

And please continue to stay in touch, for so many folk here care for you,
John





...to Emma and John Robinson on the birth of their daughter.

"We have named her bearing in mind various Ursulas - the early Martyr, the writer of 'Sing for the morning joys Cecilia sing' as well as the fact her baby suit has little bears on it!"

SO



"John and Emma are thrilled and relieved to welcome **Ursula Adriel Kerry Robinson**, who was born at 2.47pm on January 23rd, weighing 6 pounds 13 ounces. She is tiny, and adorable.

"Mother and baby are doing well.

"Thank you for all your love and good wishes.
John and Emma"

