

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

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL 2021

Editor john.bertalot@gmail.com



From our former head chorister & former organ scholar of HM Chapel Royal, William Fielding

who is now studying organ (and more) with acknowledged masters in Toulouse, and playing on historic organs!

Hi John,

I hope everything is going well with you, I hear things are much improved in the UK. Our Covid curfew has been extended to 21h30 and bars are open! People are certainly making the most of it here..!



I have been meaning to give a little update; I had a masterclass on Friday with **Willem Jansen** at St Étienne, Toulouse (photo left). Bach BWV 541 (P & F in G major), Weckmann *Magnificat 2ème ton*, Marchand *Tierce en Taille*. Fantastic to have both him and Michel Bouvard giving their opinions, and working in great detail.



My tutor is **Michel Bouvard**, (photo right) titular organist on the historic 1888 Cavallé-Coll organ of the Basilique Saint-Sernin here in Toulouse. Yesterday I spent the day in the loft at St Sernin with Michel for 2 masses and vespers, and a small recital, during which he played: Messiaen - *Apparition de l'église éternel*, Bach BWV 631, Messiaen - *L'ascension*, Duruflé - *Choral varié (veni creator)*. A wonderful experience watching a master at work!

I've managed to make contact with a violin professor at the conservatoire, (Cécile Moreau) to try and organise some piano work with other students. I've played for a few classes, and it's great to be playing with other students again. The last time was in London, when I didn't have time to have any more collaborations!

Would the Vierge 'Carillon de Westminster' be suitable to send you for M&M? **(Yes! See & hear: p.2)**



On another note, I was wondering about the possibility of a streamed recital; I could ask to record at St Sernin, but in the likely event that it's not possible, there is the Dalbade, (beautiful Puget organ, (photo, left) or the Ahrend organ (photo right). Is this something people would be interested in? Let me know.

I'm going to send a follow-up email, with some pictures I've taken since I've been here.

Have a great week.
Best wishes,
Will



WILLIAM FIELDING plays the historic (and restored) 1888 Cavallé-Coll organ in St. Serenin Basilica, Toulouse



Carillon de Westminster by Louise Vierne.

The story of this piece is that the French organ composer, Louis Vierne, (sometime organist of Notre Dame, Paris) contacted the English organ builder, Henry Willis (who built the gigantic organ in Liverpool Cathedral). Vierne wanted to write a toccata based on the chimes of Big Ben. So, in a phone call, Willis sang the chimes to him - *but he got them wrong!* Almost certainly if you tried to sing these chimes, you'd get them wrong, too. TRY IT!!



You'll notice that there are no thumb pistons on this organ, so William had to rely on two helpers - one on each side - to manage the stops. *Bach had similar help - so it's OK!*



<https://youtu.be/dYwavn5jMgM>

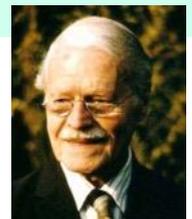
William commented: "Yes I rather regret wearing the hat... it's received quite a few comments! It was quite cold at the time, and I've taken to wearing a hat a lot of the time! Never in the nave though, Michel said the organ loft doesn't count!"

MEMORIES OF A SUPREME CHOIR-TRAINER



Many members of our congregation will know **NEIL INKLEY** who has been in the forefront of our branch of THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY which presses the claims that the 1662 Book of Common Prayer should be used far more often in our services – for it has influenced for good not only our Church, but also the English Language for well over three centuries. It is the poetic language of Shakespeare!

Neil had sung in the choir of Peterborough Cathedral for several years under the direction of **Dr. Stanley Vann** who was regarded as one of this country's most inspiring choir trainers. Neil shared with your editor some memories of Dr. Vann when his choir were recording hymns in 1962 for the BBC's permanent hymn library. Neil commented on 'Dr. Vann's attention to fine detail'. For example: 'The letter k (*as in darkness*) is the most difficult consonant to sing!' 'Make a distinction between "churches" and "church's". 'The 'A' of Alleluia' should *not* be sung as the 'A' in 'HAT'.



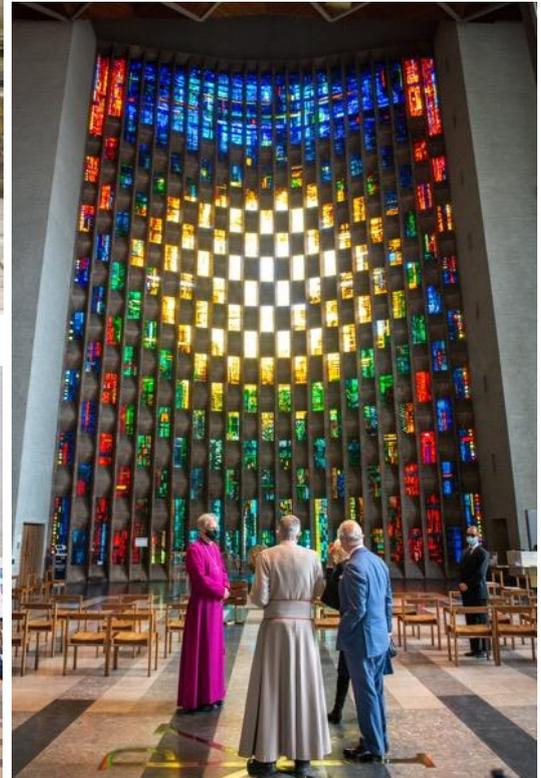
(This attention to fine detail agrees with the other outstanding choir-trainer of our time, **Dr Barry Rose**, who ensured that every singer knew **what the words mean** of every anthem his choirs sang. Thus the music comes *alive* because the composer was inspired by the message of the words, and so the words must convey that same inspiration to singers and listeners alike.

OUR 2018-19 ORGAN SCHOLAR PLAYS FOR A ROYAL VISIT TO COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

Harvey Stansfield wrote: I'm delighted to share the news that yesterday I accompanied the Cathedral choristers in the presence of TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall on the anniversary of Coventry Cathedral's consecration in 1962. The choristers sang *Lift Thine Eyes* by Mendelssohn and *Light of the World* by Dankworth as part of a short service concluding their visit.



Royal couple



Royal photos (above) by Garry Jones. Harvey will give the opening recital of Blackburn's Autumn Wednesday lunchtimes on Sept. 1st at 12.15pm



and Fugue on the notes **BACH** Whatta way to go!!!

The following week after the Royal visit, Harvey gave his **farewell organ recital** in Coventry Cathedral to an enthusiastic audience (the applause at the end was most encouraging)... although he did say that some folk were walking around the cathedral as he was playing! (There's so much to see there, of course, and the console is hidden, unlike Blackburn!)

He began his programme with Mendelssohn's 6th Sonata and ended with the Liszt 'showpiece' **Fantasia**



Enjoy Harvey's full Coventry recital:
<https://youtu.be/5adnvU1DhSg>

Your Editor welcomed three visitors one morning in early June when Blackburn was amongst the worst blackspots in this country for COVID... but fortunately Mellor is a safe distance from the town centre, and the nearest living things from your editor's front door are cows, which contentedly chew the cud in the fertile fields which stretch a fair way along the near horizon.



THE FIRST VISITOR was Rachel Lawson, a delightful



lady who had been born in Blackburn (she was visiting her father who is 87): she studied at Oxford and is now the Director of Development and Alumni Relations at JB's Cambridge College – Corpus Christi! What a joy it was to meet her at last (for we had exchanged a number of emails when JB was donating his electric tricycle to the College (for the hills in Mellor did not encourage riding such a vehicle) ... It's now being ridden by a succession of Senior Corpus Fellows in the pastorally flat fenland around that illustrious university city!



Here we are (above) posing beside a photograph taken 10 years ago when JB had been invited to conduct Choral Evensong with the College Choir in Corpus Chapel to celebrate his 80th birthday (The Corpus organ scholar at that time was Karen Au who is well known in the social circles of Blackburn Cathedral and who will be giving an organ recital here in March 2022.)



What a joyous hour that was with Rachel Lawson – sharing our own news and hearing how Corpus is managing to flourish so happily and creatively during the Covid pandemic. Both our spirits were lifted high by our meeting. Please call again, Rachel, when you're next visiting your Dad!



JB's 2nd & 3rd VISITORS an hour later were Dr Ed Jones and his partner, Helen, who were on their way to Wakefield Cathedral, where Ed had recently been appointed Director of Music.

Many of us will remember Ed with much affection and respect when he was our organ scholar 6 years ago. During his most happy year with us he earned his doctorate from the University of Aberdeen and shortly after that earned his Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists (FRCO).

Currently Ed is musician Number 3 at Worcester Cathedral, where our Sam Hudson is Number 1.

We look forward to seeing much more of Ed and Helen once they are well settled into their new home. They've bought a house 15 minutes from their cathedral, and they have exciting and constructive plans for their new lives in that historic House of God.

MEMBERS NUMBERS OF MCM
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

click <https://www.fcoca.org.uk/members-news.html> and you'll see magazines from other cathedrals, too!

WE HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE IN THE LAST FEW YEARS TO WELCOME A SUCCESSION OF TALENTED ORGAN SCHOLARS

Many of whom have continued to excel in the UK and abroad.

How many do you remember?

- **Ian Roberts**. Now Director of Music, Newcastle Cathedral. <https://newcastlecathedral.org.uk/learn/about-us/meet-the-team/>
- **Jeremy Holland-Smith** is a composer. See his website <https://www.jeremyholland-smith.com>
- **Ian Pattinson** FRCO. Organist Lancaster Priory.
<https://uk.linkedin.com/in/ian-pattinson-41902233>
- 2002-2003 (Dr) **Jonathan Clinch**, lecturer in Academic Studies, Royal Academy of Music, London
<https://jclinch.com/>
- 2003-2004 **Alex Davies** to Lyme Regis Parish Church (built a brand new Skrabl organ.) Is i/c a fine Lyme R. hotel
www.lymeregis.com/kersbrook-hotel
- 2004-2005 **Emily Crewe** (Music Scholar) Publicity Officer for The SIXTEEN <https://thesixteen.com/team/emily-crewe/>
- 2005-2006 **Jonathan Turner**. MA, ARCO. Organ Scholar Lincoln College, Oxford. Asst. Director of Music at New Hall School, Chelmsford
- 2006-2008 **David Scott-Thomas** (Assistant Organist) RSCM Manager for France & NW Europe!
- 2007-2008 **Edmund Rugman**
- 2008-2009 **Tom Daggett** Organ Scholar, Lincoln College, Oxford (1st class degree) Now @ St. Paul's Cathedral (OBE Organ Outreach Fellow) <https://www.stpauls.co.uk/worship-music/music/cathedral-choirs>
- 2009-2010 **Justin Miller** to St. Matthew's Northampton via Princeton USA, then Ripon, Winchester & Worcester Cathedrals.
- 2010-2011 **Chris Woodward** ARCO. DoM S. Barnabas with Christ's Chapel, Dulwich
<https://www.stbarnabasdulwich.org/st-barnabas/news/>
- 2011-2012 **Benedict Todd** (Dr) to Great St. Mary's, Cambridge (Organist)
<http://www.benedicttodd.co.uk/biography.html>
- 2012-2013 **James Kealey** 3rd Presbyterian Church, Rochester, New York,
<https://www.thirdpresbyterian.org/staff/james-kealey/> jkealey@thirdpresbyterian.org
- 2013-2014 **Karen Au**. BA ARCO (former organ scholar, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)
- 2014-2015 **Joseph O'Berry**. Asst DoM @ St John's Cathedral, Denver, Colorado, USA
<https://sjcathedral.org/music-staff/> joseph@sjcathedral.org
- 2015-2016 **Edward Jones** (Dr FRCO) to Worcester Cathedral as No. 3, & now DoM 2021 Wakefield Cathedral.
- 2016-2018 **Christopher Jones** (ARCO) returned to Bristol Cathedral as musician & verger.
- 2018-2019 **Harvey Stansfield** to Coventry Cathedral organ scholar 2020-2021, & B'ham Univ. School of Music Harvey Stansfield (@HarveyStans1) _ Twitter
- 2019-2020 **Giles Longstaff** to Worcester College, Oxford, organ scholar 2020

Here are some photos we haven't seen before:



James Kealey
now in the USA



Chris Woodward
in Dulwich



Dr Benedict Todd
Cambridge University Church



Emily Crewe
The SIXTEEN

We seem to have lost touch with some of our **organ scholar colleagues** – so **please get in touch with us**, for many of us remember you so well.

Give us updates on your careers and correct any errors above – for we care.

THANK!
john.bertalot@gmail.com



OUR HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS to former Chorister PETER HOLROYD

who was married to **CAROLINE** on June 11th at Stanley House (near Mellor).

Peter lost his first wife several years ago and, needless to say, missed her terribly.

So we rejoice that, in Caroline, he has found a wonderful partner. May Caroline enjoy her new 'grown-up' family, **Emma & Luke**, as well as her ebullient husband.



Who is Peter Holroyd? you may ask.



He was an outstanding JB chorister many years ago when JB lived in the Cathedral Close. Early every Sunday morning young Peter used to ring JB's doorbell and ask for the Song School key. (That was in the days long before burglar alarms and 'security'.) So Peter opened up for us all – and was, along with so many other choristers, wholly committed to our cathedral and its music.



He sang in several of JB's RSCM 2-week Cathedral courses, including Westminster Abbey, along the **Carr twins** and **Ivor Bolton**, and with tenor **Derek Crompton** and bass **David Rothwell**.

Peter's Dad, **RON HOLROYD**, was, for some time, our Cathedral Virger. He'd served in the Navy during the war... on the dangerous winter conveyors to Russia when he and his fellow sailors were *locked* down below: if they'd been torpedoed there was no escape. (We, in this age, cannot imagine such long drawn-out bravery.) →



Peter eventually became manager, in turn, of more than several BOOTH'S supermarkets – for he was so highly regarded the 'big boss', **Edwin Booth**. He retired several years ago – so **may Pete and Caroline now enjoy many years of creative retirement together.**

From **Millie Sleight** (née Whiteside) a founder member of the **Blackburn Bach Choir**, along with **Peter Crowther** (see next page). (See photo, below, of our very first rehearsal on **20th May 1965** with **Millie and Peter**.)



Thanks so very much for the May and June M&M mags., which I was able to read last week whilst visiting my daughter, Helen (for, as you know, I don't have a computer).

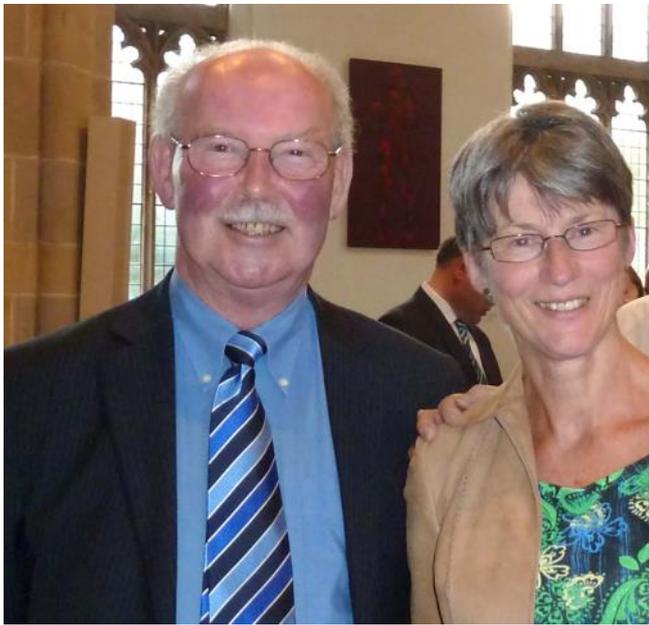
As always there was much to enjoy in the magazines and it is good to know that the cathedral choirs will

be able to get back to "almost normal" soon.

I see that the Renaissance Singers are again changing their name... to the **Blackburn Chamber Choir**: I was proud to be a founder-member of the **Blackburn Bach Choir** (**BBC** instead of **BCC**!)

I presume that the July edition will be sent through soon, so I will be able to read it on my next visit to Helen. That will be for a joint birthday celebration for my grandson, **Matthew**, and myself. He will be 12 and **I will be 7x12+1 !!**





Peter & Jean Crowther Golden Wedding Anniversary: 29 May

1958 Peter G. Crowther

From Peter Crowther to JB: Tomorrow (Saturday) we are celebrating, in a very understated way, our Golden Wedding Anniversary! 50 years since we were married in the Cathedral by Canon Tom Rockley.

[SEE PETER'S CHOIR MEMORIES page 11](#)

Our family up here are all doing very well – daughter Alison is now a senior staff member at Beaumont College, a residential school formerly called Scope: her husband Iain, is 3rd in seniority at Lancaster & Morecambe College. Of the two grandsons, Adam, the older of the two boys has just finished as Head of School (formerly Head Boy) at Lancaster Royal Grammar School, whilst his brother, Charlie, is captain of Lancashire County Cricket under 14s team and a very good bowler

into the bargain.



Just a week ago I retired after 11 years as Chairman of Carnforth Station Heritage Centre (the Brief Encounter Museum), a voluntary unpaid post!

Jean is very well indeed and enjoys her knitting and crocheting various items of clothing! As our parents have died we are now the elders in the family, but not necessarily the wisest!

Congratulations on the wonderful publication that is Music and More! It just seems like good wine that improves as it gets older. I hope you find the energy



and inspiration to keep on going on with it... All the very best to you, Peter.

Peter's parents were strong Cathedral folk. His Dad, Donald, was a churchwarden, and his Mum, Edna, ran the cathedral shop. Peter and Jean spent their married life in Lancaster, where Peter has been a strong member of the community – including many years as a Justice of the Peace.

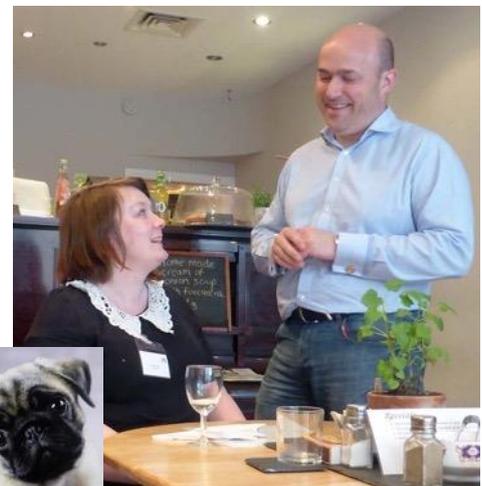
From choristers' mum Kate Fulwell



We're looking forward to Ollie being home in three weeks' time from York where he's reading music. His first year seems to have gone so quickly - and yet he's only got to meet other people from his course in the last few weeks because of Covid! So strange. He did manage to sing in a concert with The 24 and has finally had a face to face trombone lesson, so hopefully things will be a little more normal for his second year.

his fellow choral

Leo has been given the names and contact details of scholars at Hereford Cathedral for 2021-22 in three weeks' time, so there's an opportunity for them to get to know each other a little before they start. We're all looking forward to moving him down there (not that we're looking forward to getting rid of him, just to reacquainting ourselves with the place!). We've just acquired a rescue dog, a pug called Roly, so we've had to change our Hereford hotel booking to one which is animal friendly.



Kate & Daren Fulwell

Anyway, hope you're fettleing okay. Come and have a cuppa with us when Ollie gets back, if you feel comfortable to - it'd be lovely to have a catch up. Kate x



From former Head Chorister, and now Tenor Choirman, NIKI ZOHDI

Dear John,

I hope you are keeping safe and well – it is lovely to hear from you. Of course! I'd love to write a little bit about my time at Blackburn Cathedral and after.



I started in the boys' choir in 2005 and spent the next six years as a chorister, mostly on cantoris, under **Richard Tanner** and **James Davy (L)** (I owe a great deal of thanks to Richard and James for my development as a musician.) I took part in many exciting concerts, broadcasts and tours during my time as a chorister, including trips to Paris and Malta (I don't think that I'll ever forget singing in the **Notre Dame in Paris in 2006!**)



I vividly remember singing **Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers** in concert at the Cathedral with period instruments in 2010 – that was a fantastic experience, especially as it was one of my last concerts as a chorister.



I spent the final six months of my tenure in the boys' choir as **head chorister**. The musicianship skills I was taught at the time are still fundamental in my life as a musician today and I couldn't be more appreciative of my time in the cathedral choir for that! I also recall, in my final year, almost begging Richard Tanner to put Igor **Stravinsky's Mass** in the music list!!! I seem to remember singing the 'Agnus Dei' from the mass one Sunday.

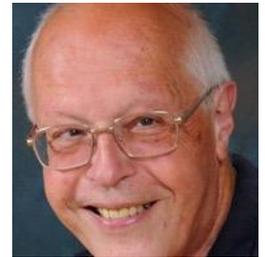
Senior Old Chorister Phil Wilson presenting Niki with his Old Choristers' tie at Niki's Valediction in 2011.



After my valediction in Easter 2011, I began to sing bass 1 in the YPC, staying in the choir until 2015, originally under the direction of James Davy and, later, under the direction of **Shaun Turnbull**. In 2013, I had finished as a student at **St Wilfrid's Academy** and moved to **Runshaw College** to study **mathematics, physics, English language & literature** ...



and, of course, **music** under three fantastic music teachers: James Astley, Rosemary White and Sally MacGregor. During this time, I began to realise that I wanted to take music seriously and began experimenting with composition and learning about analysis, especially in forms of **contemporary music**. When in college, I formed a deep interest in composers of the so-called '**New Complexity**', such as **Michael Finnissy (R)** and **Brian Ferneyhough (L)**. This interest has continued to stay with me as the '**New Complexity**' forms one of the main focal points of **my current PhD project**.



Continuing on from Runshaw College, I spent the 2015/16 academic year as a 'gap year' bass **choral scholar** at Blackburn Cathedral under **Sam Hudson (L)**.

My year as a scholar gave me countless fantastic memories such as the **Renaissance Singers trip to sing daily services in Wells Cathedral**.

I made some lovely friends, too, during



this year and learnt so many valuable things, as well as in my singing lessons with the brilliant **Josh Ellicott**. In the summer of 2016, I sang in the **Proms Youth Choir** performance of **Verdi's Requiem** in the penultimate night of that year's BBC Proms season under the direction of **Marin Alsop** and **Simon Halsey**.



In 2016, I moved out of Blackburn to New Cross in SE London to begin my undergraduate **BMus degree in music** at **Goldsmiths, University of London**. Here,

I had the chance to really focus on my compositional technique as well as my singing and musicology. I had singing lessons with **Ashley Stafford** who immediately suggested that I start singing tenor which I have done ever since.

My first year was full of exciting projects and concerts, such as the premiere of my around one hour long piano piece *After Feldman*, and being cast as Aeneas in the Goldsmiths Opera Society production of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* which was a phenomenal experience.

In my second year, I focussed a lot on my conducting and conducted ensembles in pieces by **Sofia Gubaidolina** and **Giacinto Scelsi** and was appointed as the assistant music director to **Tom Seligman** for the Opera Society's G.F. Handel 'gala' concert at the end of the academic year. In the 2018/19 academic year, I became **tenor choral scholar** at St George's church in Beckenham under **(R) Marcus Wibberley** which I did alongside my final undergraduate year at Goldsmiths. For my final composition project, I composed a string quartet that was workshopped by the **Ligeti String Quartet** (here is the link to my **soundcloud** which contains the recording of my string quartet as well as the recording of my recent **clarinet piece, [inter]r[e]act**: <https://soundcloud.com/user-552857943>).

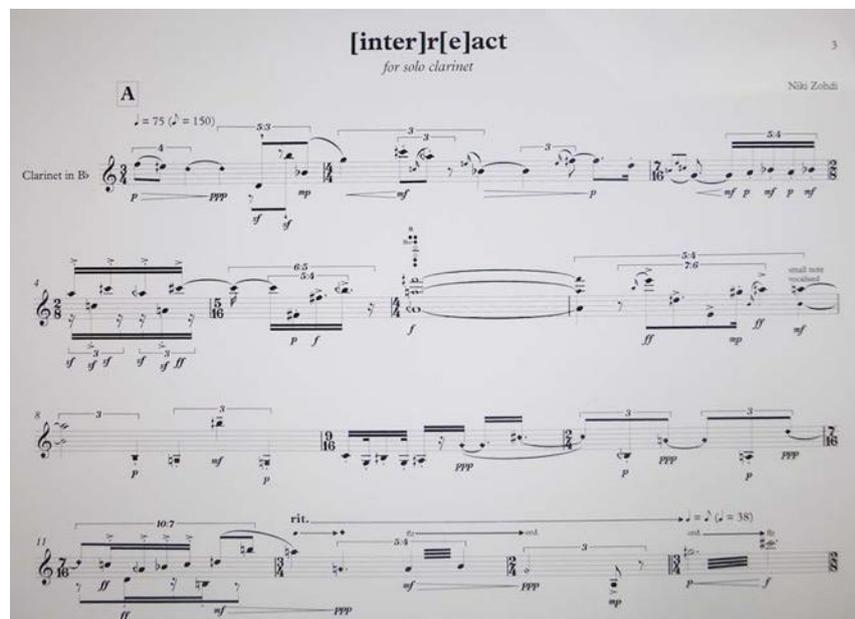


Here's the first page of Niki's clarinet piece:

Following my undergraduate degree, I spent the following year studying for a **master's degree in composition** at Goldsmith's under the inestimable



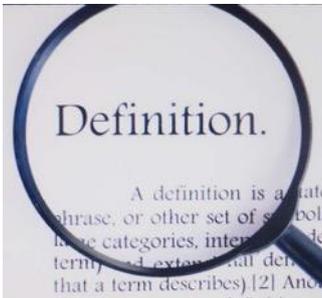
Roger Redgate who is a fantastic composer and teacher (and a fellow northerner – he's from Bolton!!!).



This year proved to be very important in my development as a composer and musicologist, having the opportunity to write a few papers, too. One on Jonathan Harvey's *Bhakti*, and the other on Brian Ferneyhough's *Exordium*, supervised by Keith Potter and Stephen Graham respectively. I also deputised in a few vocal quartets in some of London's church choirs but this was, unfortunately, cut short by COVID-19 and I completed the final term of my master's degree from home in Blackburn.

This brings me to September 2020 when I began my practice-led PhD research project at the University of Leeds under the supervision of Mic Spencer and Martin Iddon. This should keep me occupied until September 2023!!! The provisional title for my project (at the minute) is: *'The Perceptibility of Borrowed Material: The Limits of (in)audibility of Existing Material in 'Complex' Musical Contexts'*.

I am looking at the different functions of musical borrowing in my compositional practice and exploring different 'bite-points' of aural perceptibility of borrowed material. The project connects my interests in early music and my interests in contemporary music, especially that of the New Complexity.new com



Wikipedia defines **New Complexity** as a label principally applied to composers seeking a "complex, multi-layered interplay of evolutionary processes occurring simultaneously within every dimension of the musical material."

Niki continues: 'Due to COVID-19, the PhD has been fully online so I have been based in Blackburn for over a year.

Whilst this is a little frustrating as far as my PhD is concerned, it has meant that I can rejoin the back row as a tenor at Blackburn Cathedral under John Robinson! I have loved every minute of being able to sing again at Blackburn and couldn't be more thankful for having the opportunity to do so. I plan on moving to Leeds in September and will hopefully do some composition teaching. In the future, I plan on staying in academia, hopefully teaching composition in a university somewhere.



I gained so much from Blackburn Cathedral and couldn't be more thankful for that!

Warmest regards and all the very best,
Niki

(See a photo of Niki singing in the choir today – page 17)

Picture of Niki taken in 2019 in the Skaska Canyon in the Issyk-Kul region of Kyrgyzstan. "I went travelling around Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2019."

PETER CROWTHER again! – see pages 7 & 12



was a grand climax to the course.

"The anti-climax came that night when the seniors discovered that the trebles had made them 'apple pie' beds. It took the combined force of the three masters to prevent blood being shed!"

JB first met Peter Crowther when Peter was a boy – he was a leading treble in Mr. Duerden's Blackburn Cathedral choir. Peter had been invited to be one of 28 trebles and 24 teenagers who formed a hand-picked RSCM choir which would sing the daily services in Chichester Cathedral for two weeks in August 1959: JB had been invited as a Housemaster on that course – in charge of the trebles. Martin How was i/c the seniors! JB can remember Peter for he was an outstanding leader amongst that very special choir.

JB wrote a report on that course for his St. Matthew's Northampton choir magazine (... yes, JB was 'into' home-grown choir magazines that far back!) His report ended: "Singing the broadcast service was a great thrill: there were four microphones on large stands in the chancel and in the Nave and Dr Gerald Knight (the Director of the RSCM) stood on one side of the choir conducting, and I stood on the other side relaying his beat. A large congregation came to watch us sing: it



MY MUSIC AND MORE... Part One

1958 Peter G. Crowther

by former TLD Chorister, Peter Crowther (See page 7)



My introduction to choral music came at the age of 6 when I joined the small choir at my local church in Blackburn, St. Francis, Fenisccliffe, where the incumbent priest was Fred Street, later to become **Canon Fred Street** and Succentor at the Cathedral. I have no idea who suggested that I should go to an audition for **Tom Duerden (TLD)** at the Cathedral, but I was accepted and joined the choir as a Singing Boy, together with my brother **Michael**. **Tom Duerden** called me Crow and my brother Baby Crow, about which Michael was not very happy. It used to be said that joining the Boy Scouts or the Girl Guides could be the making of you. In my case, **joining the choir did it for me.**

Some of the things I remember about being a chorister at Blackburn were:

- **Wearing the Eton Suits**, collars and bow ties, even when travelling to the Cathedral on the bus. We were the subject of much derision from non-singing local lads who travelled with us!
- **Rehearsals in the Song School**, especially on Friday nights before the men arrived. We used to sight-read the weekend services and the evensongs for the coming week that were sung in the Crypt Chapel, although the latter were mainly plainsong.
- **TLD was a tartar at boys-only rehearsals before the men joined us on a Friday night.** He would walk between the stalls in the Song School listening to every boy's contribution. If not pleased with what he heard he would go back down the row knocking off all the copies onto the floor and making us sing everything from memory, no matter how long or difficult! Again, there is a story that TLD used to throw hymn books at the choirmen, but I never saw it and cannot imagine that he would get away with that.
- One of the boys, a couple of years older than me, was called **Lionel Walmsley**, the lead singer in a local pop group called **The Four Pennies**. He later changed his name to Lionel Morton. One of their records, a ballad called "Juliet" rose to become **No.1 in the charts**. Some of Lionel's female fans used to turn up at weekday evensong and sat on the front row drooling over him. He married TV presenter Julia Foster and now lives on a farm in Devon, with his second wife and family.
- Singing the first carols of Christmas at Midnight Communion hoping that the many nearby town centre pubs would not release their drunken customers who might find their way to the Cathedral.
- The choirboys' annual trip to Southport - sailing on the Marine Lake and enjoying other attractions - and ending the day with a fish and chip supper at Salt's Café. There is a story going round that the trip to Southport was by train and that all the boys tried to get into a carriage that TLD was not in, so that they could enjoy themselves without TLD spoiling it for them. This may or may not be true but I never experienced it.



Judging the sermons of Canons, such as **Canon Browning**, Warden of Whalley Abbey, **Canon Jackson** Canon Sacrist, **Provost Kay** and many visiting preachers from out of town.

• **Singing services in the central space (before the Lantern Tower was erected) & before the extension at the East End was completed, with a wrought iron screen all around.**

- The Cavaillé-Col organ, (rebuilt by Cowan) located on a bridge-type structure above the nave. It was from there that TLD would make his way down the turret to have a smoke outside whilst the sermon was being given. All went well until **Provost Bill Kay** gave an unusually short sermon (2 minutes on Harvest Sunday) and TLD was caught out when the final hymn was due to start. Luckily, **John West** had perfect pitch and managed hum the right note, and the choir got going, sans TLD!



- After Saturday morning rehearsals (Yes, Saturday) we would all go to the Lyons Ice Cream Cafe at the top of Church Street.
- During my years as a boy chorister, at the age of 13, I was fortunate enough to go on the 1958 RSCM Cathedral Course at Southwell Minster near Nottingham.
- My second RSCM Course was at Chichester in 1959, directed by Dr **Gerald Knight** with a young but immensely talented assistant Master called **John Bertalot**. Unwittingly, I became the first person from Blackburn Cathedral to meet with and admire the numerous musical talents of John, some years before he was appointed to Blackburn (in 1964) to follow TLD.
- Duetting with **John Wilkinson** in "Hear My Prayer" by Mendelssohn. John's father, Jack, was a Head Teacher
- Singing a solo at a Memorial Service following the assassination of **John F Kennedy**
- Receiving 2 Awards for solo singing
- Becoming a **Prefect** permitted me to wear the wonderful Black Cloaks and Elizabethan Ruffs and an historic **solid silver medallion** with my name inscribed thereon. (See p.1)
- The annual invitation for the Prefects to join TLD and his family at their home in Wellington Street St John's. We were all in awe of his beautiful daughter called Cecilia (I think).
- When my voice broke it was time to move on to the Men's choir. I received a book by **Sir Sydney Nicholson** called "**Peter – the Adventures of a Chorister**" and I was also given a copy of the Church Anthem Book, which I still have and have used throughout my singing career.
- As Head Boy I had received £1.50 in today's money, each quarter. [That would be worth over 10 times as much today.]



PART TWO

It was a huge honour to become a member of the men's choir, joining people such as **Tom Robinson**, a mature and experienced second bass, **Arthur Howarth**, a very reliable counter tenor, **Peter Heald (upper R)**, who worked in PR and his father, **Walter Heald** who had been a Major in the military, **Tom Wilkinson**, who was a Design Engineer **David Battersby**, **Norman Eccleston** another Head Teacher, at whose school my wife was employed, **Jim Smith** was a Chemist or pharmacist as we call them today, **David Metcalf**, who was Head Groundsman at Penwortham Sports Fields in Preston, **Ian Hollin**, who was later ordained. Others included **John Sutcliffe** who had a wonderful baritone voice and **Ian Stancliffe**, hugely talented and Head Designer at Walpamur in Darwen. **The greatest honour was to sing with the Fielding Clan**, the Patriarch of which was **Harold Fielding (lower R)**, who once formed a trio with **Isobel Bailey** and **Kathleen Ferrier**, a heavenly trio if ever there was one! [NB **William Fielding** - page 1- is the latest in that most gifted family.]

David Smalley used to sit behind the Decani choir stalls near the pulpit where he controlled the sound system throughout the cathedral. The choir sang beautifully and gained a national reputation that was recognized when it received invitations to sing **Choral Evensong on Radio 3** on Wednesdays. The services were recorded by Sound News Productions, SNP, that made the recordings available on vinyl discs. (*One is still available via Google*)

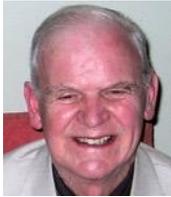


Some of the things I remember about being in the Men's choir, initially under TLD, then JB:

- Singing the Russian Kontakion of the Dead
- Singing at the Enthronement of new Bishops.
- After Sunday morning Service the men used to head for the nearby **White Bull**, to set the world to rights and to sink a few beers. I used to get a lift home from **Jim Smith** in his racy Triumph Vitesse.



- When **John Bertalot** arrived in 1964 the quality of music-making increased no end. JB dramatically altered the way in which Psalms were sung by being far more flexible about the words and placing the emphasis on different words from our usual way; with hymns, for broadcasts, he often had the first bass line singing the melody. His rehearsals were dynamic, hard work but inspiring. The repertoire was extended, too, with more modern services being used.



- Keith Bond** was Sub Organist (he and JB were both Senior Lecturers at the RNCM, and both had been organ scholars at Corpus, Cambridge). Keith had performed recitals live on Holland's Radio Hilversum, and so using his contacts, the choir made two tours of Holland and North Germany, mainly in churches before large and appreciative congregations, and to a very high standard. The choir - boys and men alike - were tired out after finishing every concert with "Zadok the Priest" and the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's "Messiah".

- Along with JB we got his wonderful Mum, **Dots Bertalot**, who became the boys' grandmother! **A silver medallion in her memory is now worn by the longest serving boy treble in our cathedral choir.**



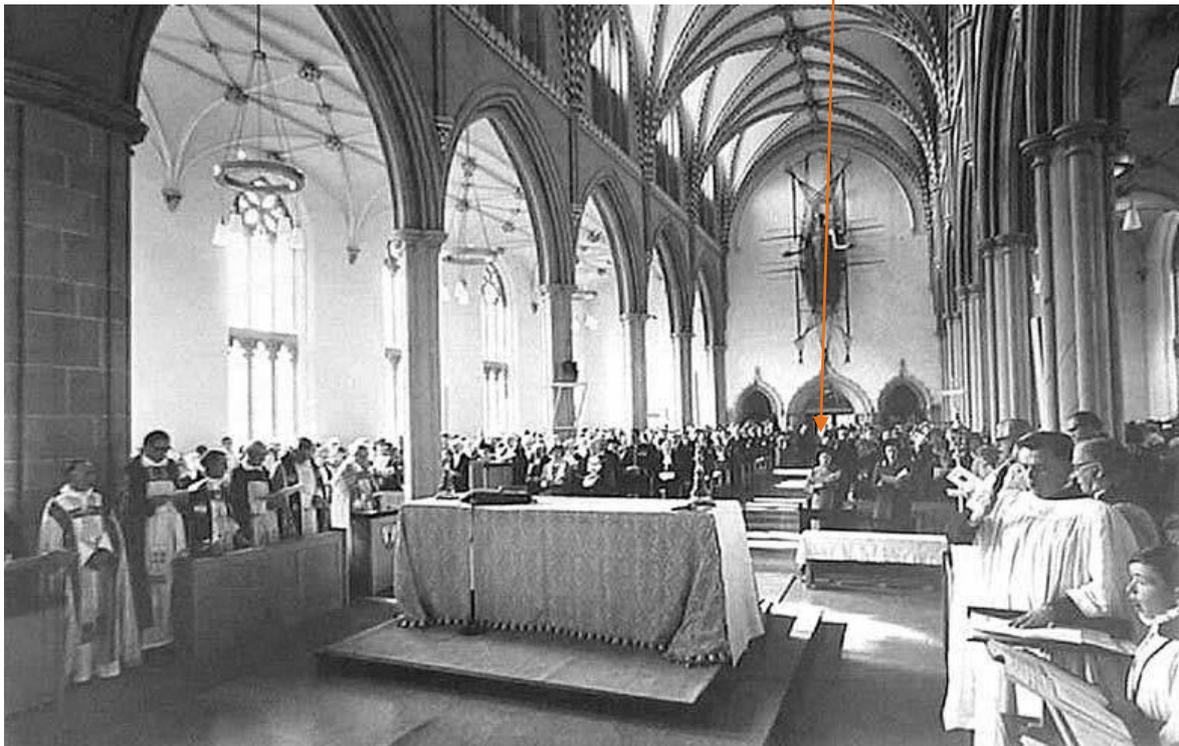
- A special visitor was **Dr Harold Darke** [whose son, Michael, was a lecturer at Manchester University, so when HED stayed with Michael he popped up to Blackburn for our Eucharist] and it was wonderful on some Christmas Mornings to have him and Dots on the front row as we sang *Darke in F* and his beautiful version of "In the Bleak Midwinter".



- Another regular visitor at Easter was **Dr. Gerald Knight**, dynamic Director of the RSCM who stayed several Easter Eves with JB & Dots.



- I left the choir for 3 years from 1965 whilst at St. John's College in York. Whilst there I was chosen by the producer to lead all the singing in the **York Mystery Plays** in the Minster Gardens. In the cast was **the mother of actress Judi Dench** whom I met on one of Judi's visits to see her Mum, Olave, on set.
- JB had appointed Dr **Francis Jackson** of York Minster as consultant on the design, building and installation of **the new 1969 organ**. As Dr. J did not drive, I was asked to drive him each time he came to Blackburn for planning meetings.
- The first major visit by Royalty was in November 1965 when **HRH The Princess Margaret** came to the re-hallowing of the Cathedral Nave. (She was an hour late in arriving which meant two false starts!)
- New music was commissioned for this memorable service: a magnificent "Te Deum" by **Dr. Harold Darke**.



- JB invited **Dr. Francis Jackson** to play our temporary tiny Walker organ for this service: The Archbishop of York, **Donald Coggan**, was there, too – so he offered Dr. Jackson a lift back to York in his magnificent Limo!!

- JB decided to form a new choir called the **Blackburn Bach Choir** and I was invited by John to be a founding member and it was a startling standard that emerged with the choir winning the BBC's international *Let the Peoples Sing* competition. **So we were rated as the best mixed voice amateur choir in the UK for two years running!** I never imagined that I would ever sing again in a choir with such high standards. **See photo of our very first rehearsal, p. 6**



During my time in the men's choir, JB and choirman **Norman Eccleston** with **Fred Green, Jack Smethurst & Peter Heald**, decided to form an **Old Choristers' Association** like those organized by many Cathedrals up and down the country. I was elected as its second Secretary and continued what Norman Eccleston had done in writing a Newsletter to all members of the **Blackburn Cathedral Old Choristers' Association** members, 'BCOCA'. Now, having moved with the times, it's called Blackburn Cathedral Choirs Association, 'BCCA'.

- Peter Heald (see p.12)** designed this logo and also the logo for the **Singers (above)** which combined treble & bass clefs.

- I was honoured when JB invited me to be an Assistant Master at a two-week RSCM Course he was directing at **Westminster Abbey in 1970**. For any singer this was the equivalent of a footballer playing at Wembley! We also gave a memorable concert in the Abbey on our final evening to a large audience. Those were 2 weeks that I will never, ever forget.



Peter Crowther JB Rennie Simpson Dr. Roy Massey (organist)

[JB added: "During the live broadcast of Choral Evensong, in the Responses **the Precentor sang 'Praise ye the Lord' down a tone!** For me, time stood still whilst I considered three options!! *Should I ask him to sing it again, correctly? Should I sing it myself?* After careful thought I decided that the choir should respond down a tone, too, and so I hummed the trebles' new note and brought the choir in. They all followed my lead immediately and sang the Response magnificently. *Listening to the recording afterwards, there was no break at all!!* That was a hairy moment especially for a live broadcast!

Afterwards the Precentor, **Rennie Simpson**, who was a good friend – he'd been Precentor at Blackburn with TL Duerden – apologised and said that if that had happened with the Abbey Choir, they probably wouldn't have been able to respond so quickly or so accurately! **I still have the BBC recording of that whole most-memorable service.'**

• PART THREE

- Having married **Jean Thexton** in the Cathedral in 1971 we later moved up to **Lancaster** where I



knew nobody connected with choral music. Two and a half years later I was invited by the **Rev. Ian Hollin** (former Old Chorister), to come along to Morecambe Parish Church to hear a carol concert by a local choir, the St. Laurence Singers. I was staggered by the ability and musicality of the mixed choir and was delighted to pass an audition to join. I sang with that choir, ending up as its chairman, before it folded through lack of a Musical Director two years ago.



- Still later I was invited to become a founder member of the **Rushley Singers**, under the Directorship of **Rachael Lee**.

Her father is a former OC, **Albert Ogden**. The standard was incredible, and it felt wonderful to be a part of it. Over the next 25 years we sang our way around North Lancashire and South Cumbria, and we visited churches, and Cathedrals to sing services over a weekend. The highlight of each year was the Carol Concert we gave in the Ashton Memorial in Lancaster's Williamson Park, a building not unlike the Cathedral for the duration of its echo.

This continued until we were forced to stop by the restrictions imposed under the Covid pandemic. Sadly, the choir was unable to celebrate its 25th anniversary and the untimely death of Rachael's husband, Douglas, weakened the chances of the choir singing again any time soon. I decided it was time to retire from that choir after 69 years of singing. That is where my *Music and More* finished! What a life I have had through music.

FAMILY NOTES

I worked for **Lancaster City Council** and ended my working days there as Marketing Officer for Economic Development. In 1985 I was appointed as a **Justice of the Peace** for Lancaster, and I served there until I had to retire by law at the age of 70. I was eventually elected as **Bench Chairman**, rather like **OC Fred Green** had been in the Ribble Valley District. My wife, **Jean**, was employed in a church school just outside Lancaster at a village called Halton. During her many years there she taught **Scott McTominay**, the Manchester United and Scotland mid-fielder (but not as his soccer coach) and Olympic Gold Medal Rower, **Scott Durant**. Such was the reputation of her school that, when she retired, there were over 100 applicants for her job! **Jean is an excellent gardener but still manages to spend a lot of time with both of our grandchildren.**

The older of the two grandsons, **Adam**, (photo with his Mother, our daughter **Alison**) has just finished at Lancaster Royal Grammar School (LRGS) where, during his last year was Head of School, (what used to be called Head Boy). He is an IT expert and puts Jean and me right when we fall foul of the foibles of PCs and iPads.

Younger grandson **Charlie** is an excellent cricketer, and this season is captaining Lancashire County u14s and plays for LRGS first team. He opens the Lancashire bowling with Freddie Flintoff's son, Rocky.



2 months ago I retired as Chairman of the **Carnforth Station Heritage Centre**, the Museum based around the film that was made there, **Brief Encounter**, a post I had held for 11 years.



Peter Crowther, 1958, Prefect,

wearing his solid silver Prefect's Medallion inscribed with his name (see p.1)

At the end of May 2021, Jean and I celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary.





SINGERS' PRESENTATION TO JEAN DUERDEN



[RENAISSANCE SINGERS to BLACKBURN CHAMBER CHOIR!]

On Thursday, 27th May those choir members who could manage it met together in Alizon and Dave Elliott's garden in Darwen - the first meeting for well over a year - and what a joy it was to see each other face to face!

The Duerdens lent their gazebo to join with the smaller Elliott one so that there was

cover available in case of a downpour. Happily it was a fine evening so we had drinks and chat outside....

... during which we took the opportunity to recognize **Jean Duerden's wonderful contribution as Chair of the Renaissance Singers for the last seven years.** We welcomed the new Chairman of Blackburn Chamber Choir, **Alan Crameri**, who made the presentation on behalf of the choir and I think we all feel the change of name of the choir is now established! **BCC**



After the presentations we moved under cover (opened so very well ventilated!) and under **John Robinson's** relaxed direction actually sang madrigals together which felt amazing. Then we moved to coffee and cake and rounded off the evening with chat and laughter.

person and hopefully it won't be too long before we can sing together properly in the great acoustic of Blackburn Cathedral. (A.E.)

Dear Lovely Singers

What a joy it was to meet up with many of you last night in **Alizon and Dave's lovely garden** and then to have the huge delight of actually singing together in the gazebo. How we have missed singing.



I was completely overwhelmed and utterly surprised by the gorgeous bouquet of flowers and fabulous Renaissance Singers glass plaque. Thank you so much. It has been a real privilege and an honour to be your chair over the last seven years and I am thrilled by the appointment of **Alan** who I know will be, and is already proving to be, a brilliant chair.

For those who were unable to attend, here are pictures of both flowers and plaque and, after a request from Alizon, a picture of me with both!

Thanks again. Can't wait for June 24th when hopefully we will be able to sing together again.

Best wishes

Jean



Some of our wonderfully dedicated singers:

Socially distanced in our newly configured choirstalls, with acoustics like St. Paul's Cathedral:

Back row L-R

Choral Scholar Matthew Baldwin, Niki Zohdi, Choral Scholar Michael Hillesden, Sebastian Roberts, Edward McCullough (*Choristers' Father*), Andrew Orr, Rebecca Weaver

Front row L-R

Eleanor Partington, Amy Partington, Darcy Tayler, Poppy Felipes, Charlotte Roberts, Lucy McCullough, Stephanie Adebayo, Giwan Feng, Rose Goodbody



Some of our boys in the Song School (singing a song about the G7 which was meeting in Cornwall!)

L-R: Joseph Wilson, Zachary Strain, George Seedall, Connor Markwell, Toby Mott, James McCullough, Joseph Baron, Logan Goodbody.



Members of our dedicated Young People's Choir

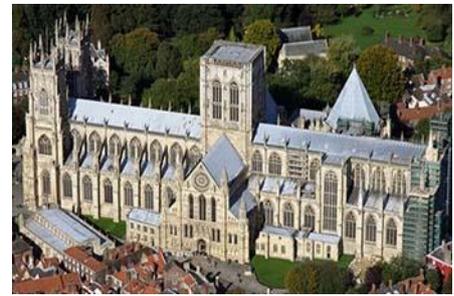


We plan to include more photos of our so-faithful and dedicated singers in the next M&M.



Our Director of Music's plans for Blackburn Cathedral Choirs

A letter sent to all UK Cathedral Directors of Music



Dear All,

Here at Blackburn Cathedral we've had an extraordinary tradition of volunteer ATB singers in the Cathedral Choir, brilliantly developed by Dr. John Bertalot and maintained by his successors.

With changes in mobility, demographics, and the pandemic, we've realised that to make the Cathedral Choir sustainable, we also need now to employ **six paid singers at the weekends, two per part.**

I've realised that the very fact that, nationally, we have such **a mobile student population** means you may well have ex-choristers who have gone on to University in the North West, who may now be interested in singing ATB (male or female Altos).

We are not a wealthy Cathedral, but can offer either pleasant single accommodation or reasonable remuneration for one day a week of singing, in term time, and for major festivals. This would be a great opportunity for recent graduates or current undergraduates of appropriate experience to keep good choral singing in their lives.

Blackburn Cathedral is a delightful place in which to sing. Our treble lines between them sing 4 mid-week Evensongs as well as Sundays.

I'm writing to you to try and hone our recruitment, by **asking if you have any ex-choristers who have come to the North West perhaps to attend University (Manchester, RNCM, Liverpool, UCLAN etc are all commutable)**, who would be interested in and suited to these kinds of positions. As usual, sight-singing and sturdy vocal production are paramount. Please do share this opportunity with them, or let me know their contact details - anyone you think could be interested. <https://jobs.churchtimes.co.uk/jobs/Lay-Clerkships-in-North-West-jn9060>



Thanks very much in advance,

John Robinson

Organist and Director of Music, Blackburn Cathedral

Phone: 01254 277 442

Email: john.robinson@blackburncathedral.co.uk

Web: www.blackburncathedral.com



POTENTIAL ONE TIME FINANCIAL STUDENT-AID 2021-22 FOR FORMER BLACKBURN CHORISTERS ONLY!

It's wholly confidential and wholly immediate but only available if you are a former Blackburn Cathedral Chorister with a special College or University need, for it's funded by

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL CHOIRS' ASSOCIATION

APPLY NOW – cut-off date: August 1st

See next page



Blackburn Cathedral Choirs' Association

Small Funding Application Form

1 Name:

2 Address:

3 Telephone/Mobile Number:

4 Email Address:

5 Please briefly describe the project/activity you are seeking funding for:

6 How much funding are you requesting from BCCA?

7 Briefly describe why this project/activity is needed and how has the need been identified?

INFORMATION NOTES:

1. What is the fund for?

BCCA may be able to offer an applicant(s) small financial assistance, where they have experienced a reduction in income, in order to assist with their studies. For example, the fund may be able to contribute towards the cost of technological support, extra tuition fees, or general living costs. All applications will be treated as strictly confidential

2. Who can apply?

Any former chorister of Blackburn Cathedral, who is a full-time student experiencing financial hardship, is eligible to apply for funding from the committee.

3. How to apply:

Students are invited to apply for funding awards between the amounts of £100-£500. Completed application forms should be emailed to the Treasurer, BCCA at: alexmar2010@hotmail.co.uk by 1st August 2021.