



**MUSIC
&
MORE
BLACKBURN
CATHEDRAL
2021**



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh in Blackburn Cathedral 2014

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

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From former chorister the Revd. PHILIP CHEW who is now Rector of Ribby cum Wrea St. Nicholas, and Weeton St. Michael



Hi John

How are you keeping throughout this period of pestilence? As we came to Passiontide and Holy Week last year, with COVID-19 looming, I was very much transported back to singing in the Cathedral under your direction, during the 1970s.

We used to process through the Cathedral in Lent singing the Litany, **'From plague and pestilence, Good Lord deliver us.'** At the time it seemed rather archaic, then all



of a sudden, last year it all become so very real. **Bairstow's Lamentations**, another staple of the Lenten repertoire, also became so relevant with all the cities becoming desolate. Prayerfully things will improve and we might get back to some sort of normality later this year

It has been very strange to be a priest in God's church but not be able to celebrate the sacraments and not to be able to come alongside people as I normally would. But it has also been an opportunity to reassess and study once more without distraction.

Nigel and Philip Chew in Delft during the cathedral choir's 1975 continental tour

You may or may not remember, when I was in the Boys' Choir, several of us showed an interest in ordination. We joined the **'Fellowship of Vocation'** which was a group set up in the diocese to help foster vocations in young people.

You decided that it would be good to take this development seriously and so you ran a Bible study class after the Saturday morning rehearsal. I was the only one that actually took ordination in the end, but I would like you to know that your nurture and input at that time really helped me to persevere.



Kind regards, Philip

My dear Phil,

How very good to hear from you! Thank you so much for writing to me and for recalling choir memories of long ago. And especially those Bible sessions for choristers on Saturday mornings.

One of my highest privileges and greatest joys during my 15 years in Princeton, NJ, was to lead the choristers' confirmation classes after Sunday morning services.

Those young people were highly intelligent (that's the sort of Parish it was - right next to the University) - I quickly discovered that whatever I had prepared quickly went in other directions, thanks to the choristers' input.

For example, one Sunday I thought it might be helpful to mention St. Francis' stigmata (as an example of highly committed Christianity). One of my choristers immediately said, "Oh yes, my Dad has written a book about a lady in San Francisco who has the stigmata!"

Where does one go after that?!!

JB

It was the privilege of your BCCA Committee

to welcome (via Zoom), **the new Chairman of FCOCA (Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers) – who is Nick Hodges –**

who aims at increasing the usefulness and fellowship of FCOCA to the benefit not only of Cathedral music in this country, but also to galvanise former cathedral choristers' creative fellowship with one other – **for we are all such privileged folk**, having had the experience of singing **the finest music to the highest standards** in some of **the most beautiful and impressive buildings** in our land. *Such nurture has affected all our lives.*

Chairman FCOCA: Nick Hodges

Founder Chairman BCOCA JB

Secretary Graham Chapelhow



Our Chairman John Robinson

Former Chairman Stewart Hopkinson

Treasurer John Marr

*This is what **Nick wrote to us** after that Zoom meeting:*

"Firstly, thank you everyone who was able to join the meeting last evening. I thoroughly enjoyed our chat and I do hope you found some value in it.

"Second, I would encourage you to consider hosting a Federation Festival at some time in the future. I am very keen to reduce the burden on associations hosting these events and suggest you ignore the guidelines on our website and think in terms of **inviting the Federation to join you at your annual gathering** or, at least, reducing the whole event to one day.

"Expect to be hearing more from the Federation in the future. If you are happy to hear from me from time to time you may wish to put the chairman@fcoca.org.uk into your address book, which should stop them dropping into spam.

"Very best wishes

Nick"

Nick Hodges Chairman Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Association



JB replied: Dear Nick,

Thank you for calling that positive meeting last night.

I'm sure I speak for everyone at that meeting when I say that we were so impressed to meet a Chairman who 'gets things done!'

Thank you for the generous comments you made about our **Music & More**. Much appreciated. The April edition should be mailed this week.

And yes, **we did hold a joint weekend at Blackburn for members of FCOCA** when **Gordon Stewart** was our DoM. He had commissioned me to compose an anthem for Blackburn Cathedral choir for that occasion: *Come, Risen Lord, and deign to be our guest*. I flew over from the USA to be with everyone for that so-memorable weekend. All our choirs sang especially magnificently, for Gordon is such an inspiring musician.

Also, our Canon Sacrist organised **a day-long meeting of Cathedral Precentors here about 4 years ago which was also a success** - that was during **Sam Hudson's** time with us. I heard later that the Precentor of Worcester was so impressed by the singing of our combined boys and girls at Choral Evensong, that he recommended that Sam be appointed to Worcester - where he now is!!

i.e. All sorts of good things can come from meeting one another.

May our last night's meeting prove equally fruitful.

Most warmly

John B



Memories of HRH The Prince Philip. Duke of Edinburgh, 1921-2021



Photo from BBC TV

Alma Nicholls said, "When the procession began, led by the Cross and candles I couldn't see the Queen (who was immediately behind **Dean Armstrong**). But as they got nearer I saw the Queen *and* the Duke of Edinburgh. And as the Duke passed me (I was in the front row on his side) he looked directly at me. I shall never forget it."

*See **Revd. Philip Chew** (page 1) – above on the extreme left singing the processional hymn*

From **Philip Hunwick**

In the weeks leading up to 17th April 2014 (Maundy Thursday) my part time job as Events Co-ordinator at the Cathedral had been closer to full time. I was heavily involved in the planning for the visit of HM the Queen and Prince Philip. There were meetings with representatives from the Palace, invitations and then tickets to send out, and a detailed seating plan to be prepared.

Apart from the privilege of singing in the Cathedral Choir for the Royal Maundy service, my reward for all the extra work was to be invited to the post-service reception at which I would be among the guests presented to the Queen and Prince Philip. I remember that the Queen asked me about my role at the Cathedral and commented that I must have been very busy. She also made complimentary noises about the music.

I wish I could say that I was the recipient of one of the Duke's famous witty one-liners. Unfortunately, that is not the case. I can't remember who was standing next to me, but the reception being at Ewood Park, the Duke asked him about Blackburn Rovers. My neighbour confessed his ignorance and when Prince Philip turned to me, I told him that there was no point in asking me either as I was a rugby league supporter. "Do they play rugby league in Blackburn?", he queried. The answer being no, I explained that I was brought up in St Helens, home of the mighty "Saints". Thus enlightened, he moved on to the next in line and the conversation turned to the textile industry.

Not very exciting, I admit, but a most memorable experience nonetheless.

Philip at the rehearsal for the Maundy service, checking that all was in order. It was!



JB also has memories of the Duke – although wholly different in kind: On several occasions in his retirement JB visited Corpus, his Cambridge College (founded in 1352 when Geoffrey Chaucer was 9 years old) and JB stayed in a nearby swish hotel which has the river Cam flowing through its grounds. But on one occasion JB was invited to stay overnight at Corpus - **in the Master's Lodge** - which has a very splendid guest bedroom with two single beds. (I could sleep in either - they were identical.)



The Duke of Edinburgh was, Chancellor of Cambridge University for 35

years, and when he visited Cambridge as Chancellor he stayed in that same bedroom in Corpus' Master's Lodge.



When I went into that bedroom I discovered a door leading from that gracious guest room which led to the Duke's valet's room, for in it was an ironing board, shoe polish, pairs of shoes and many brushes, coat hangers galore supporting several suits ...and a modest single bed for the valet: Everything in fact needed to ensure that the Duke would be immaculately dressed for his University responsibilities.

But I never knew if I'd chosen the Duke's bed in which to sleep ... or the other one!!

From Dr Beata von Bremen

Dear John
As you know it has been very quiet on the Bell Ringing front except for yesterday.

I thought you may be pleased to know that our **Ringing Master Ray Hutchings** tolled for Prince Philip.

Tolling of the **Nine Tailors** and **99 years**, at Blackburn Cathedral...

...in memory of His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, whose death, aged 99, was announced on April 9th 2021



Watch this special video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsxjT6DQPM8>

From Wikipedia: For hundreds of years it was considered proper to ring when a person was actually dying, known as the **'Passing Bell'**, in order to protect the soul from the devil or evil spirits while on its journey. Later it seems that the tradition changed slightly, so that the tolling took place after the death.

This tolling is commonly known as the **"Nine Tailors"**, a name almost certainly corrupted from "Nine Tellers", or maybe "tollers".

It would comprise the Tenor bell being tolled nine times, in three groups of **three** (i.e. a longer pause after each three tolls), **for a man**; or six times, in two groups of three, for a woman. These six or nine "Tellers" would be followed by further tolls totalling the age of the deceased.

This, as you will hear, was what our ringers did -- a half-muffled peal for the count of 99.

Wikipedia defines the significance of a half-muffled peal :

'Half-muffling means a leather muffle is placed on one side only of the clapper of each bell so that there is a loud "open" strike followed by a muffled strike, which has a very sonorous and mournful echo effect.'



GREAT NEWS of our younger choristers and YPC from HELEN DAVIES who has been caring for them, musically, during the year's COVID Lockdown:

Hi John - I attach some choir news for you.

Firstly a pic of our **Young People's Choir** in rehearsal - they have grown considerably as you will see and 4 more are joining next week. They are totally awesome!!



NOW to our Boys' & Girls' Choirs ...which include some very young singers:

Here's some information on our youngest / newest choristers. "What brought them to the choir, what they enjoy, what they have missed due to Covid and lockdown etc. They are all lovely and everything they write is in their own words," said HELEN DAVIES!

Amy and Eleanor Partington

Amy

I have always enjoyed music. I am learning to play the piano and violin and was in the choirs at my primary school. When I was in Year 4 at school we were given some information about an event where you could find out what it was like to be a chorister. I was invited to visit a rehearsal. I enjoyed it very much but was a little bit young so I joined the "Lantern Voices" instead. We had lots of fun singing and when I was old enough I joined the choir. What I enjoy most about being a chorister is being part of something special. I really enjoy singing and Saturday breakfast is good too!



Eleanor

I love singing and music and I am learning to play the piano and ukulele. I joined the "Lantern Voices" with my sister Amy when I was about 6. When I was old enough I joined the Girls' Choir. What I enjoy most about being a chorister is when we all sing together in the Cathedral.



George Seedall, a senior boy – Lambing Tales

I am a Prefect at Blackburn Cathedral. I have been in the choir for 5 years. I like getting bacon butties on Saturday mornings before our rehearsals. When it is a special occasion we sing really nice music such as Faure's *Requiem*.

I have missed singing in the choir during lockdown but I have enjoyed our theory lessons and quizzes on Zoom!

I live on a farm and I have recently been lambing sheep. I have four Cheviot ewes and one Cheviot ram. So far this year we have had 5 lambs and they are all girls! Sometimes we are up really late at night with a sheep that is lambing but most of the time they lamb on their own. I look after the lambs and feed the sheep.

I also keep chickens and I feed and water them every morning. I clean them out every weekend. I have to collect the eggs every morning as well. We have just hatched some chicks and they are doing great.

I also love football and play it every day. In the holidays I go to a football camp with ex Blackburn Rovers player Kevin Gallagher.



Gifong and Giying Feng – Why we joined the Girls' Choir

We joined the Girls' choir because when our big brother was in year 3 he went to 'Sing Together' and got a Golden Ticket, so he joined the Boys' Choir and we waited for him to finish rehearsals in the Cathedral Crypt.

A few weeks later our big sister, **Giwan**, joined the Girls' choir but we were still a bit too young to join so went to *Lantern Voices*. After a while **Giying** (right) joined last; she's the youngest!

Then we joined the Girls' Choir as well. When we got in we were in year 4 and year 3 (Gifong was in year 4 Giying year 3).

Whilst in lockdown we missed the breakfast on Saturdays that Miss Davies makes. (And Bishop Philip's burnt toast that isn't burnt when Canon Pailing makes it!!) We miss the rehearsals at choir with Mr Robinson and talking to our friends at choir. We also miss the theory sessions on Saturday mornings.

We really enjoy the breakfast and the rehearsals (basically everything about choir apart from the standing up for the rehearsals!!!)

So that is how we joined the choir and what we miss about it



Joseph Wilson – How I became a Chorister!

It was a normal day at school and some people came from *Sing Together* to find out how our school choir was coping with the songs that we were going to sing at King George's Hall. I and a few others grabbed their attention and they gave us a Golden Ticket, though not in a chocolate bar, to come to a 'Be a Chorister for the Afternoon'.

I went to Blackburn Cathedral and had a session to see whether I liked it and if I was good enough, and it turns out I did and I was! **So that's how I became a chorister.**

My favourite bit about being a chorister is the food! Bacon butties and satsumas – which gave us the idea of save the satsumas and I also love the hot chocolate!

I like the Zoom sessions in Covid because we all get to share our ideas and laugh about our silly jokes! I wish that things would get back together, because whilst zooms are fun, it's not like being there in person which I miss.

My overall favourite moment in the choir was when I read my HILARIOUS Ed and Deb Story out. We had to create a story about an adventure that Ed

and Deb went on with some words written in the treble and bass clef. Mine was EGGCELLENT!

Oliver Clemson-Dave

Hi, I am Oliver. The reason I became a Chorister is because my brother **Myles** joined, as he was always singing around the house. It looked fun so I wanted to join.

I have enjoyed the last few years at choir and I enjoy singing. I have really missed socialising at choir and **can't wait to get back**. I love it when we go bowling and have pizza.

I really enjoy singing at concerts, love Christmas, and the Summer concert. My favourite songs to sing at choir are, *For the Beauty of the Earth* and pretty much anything by John Rutter. During the lockdown period I have liked still seeing fellow Choristers and I enjoy the sessions on Saturdays learning about the role of a Chorister and the Cathedral.



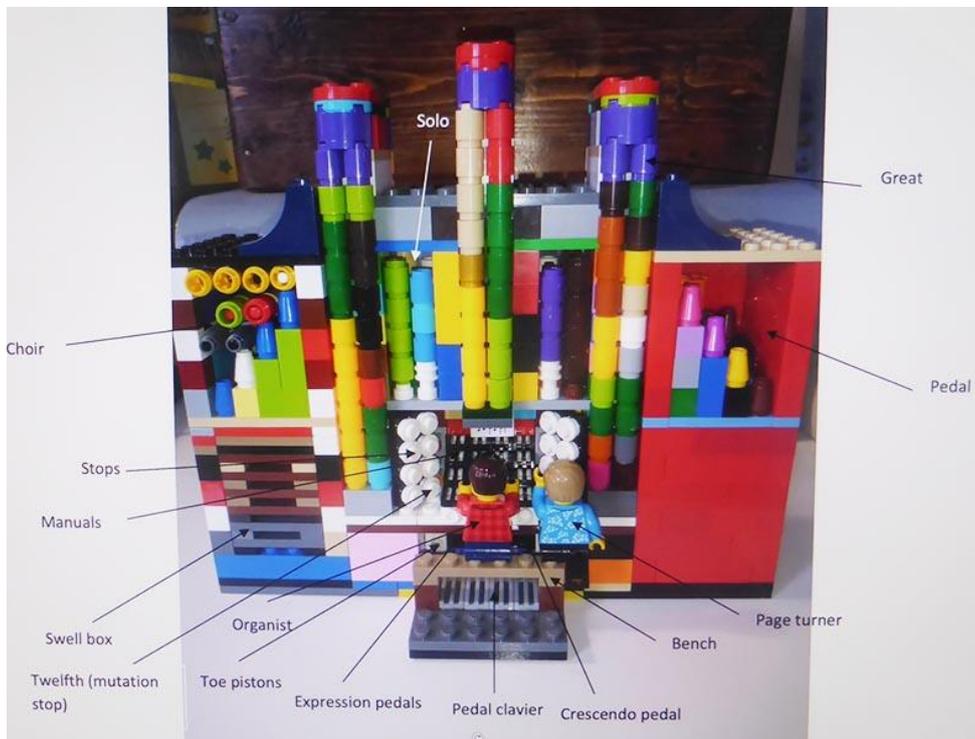
Toby Mott

My name is Toby Mott and I came to the choir when I was eight years old, the 24th of March to be precise. I am almost eleven now, so that means I have been in the choir for almost two years. I came to the choir because I got a golden ticket from the head teacher of my school, Mrs. Moreton, inviting me to the 'Be a chorister for an afternoon' event after the *Sing together* concert. I thoroughly enjoyed the day (Helen Davies said I watched her like a hawk during the service!) and I have been singing with the choir ever since.

My favourite bit about going to choir is the singing. **I LOVE singing**, especially singing the pieces I know. My other favourite bit about going to choir is breakfast on Saturday mornings. Helen and Bishop Philip make the *best* bacon butties and they are hard to beat! What I miss most about the choir during lockdown is seeing everybody face to face, although the zooms have been great fun for everybody! **I can't wait to be back at choir again and to start singing!**



And Toby has built himself an organ out of Lego – with all the pipes named and the action, too! It's amazing!



Rose Goodbody

I am 9 and I like being a chorister because the people are nice and it's a good place to socialise with other people. I also enjoy the singing and I enjoy learning about different pieces of music and beats.

There'll be news of more of our young choristers in the next edition of M&M – and also of our Young Peoples' Choir thanks to our own HELEN DAVIES



From the Director of Music, JOHN ROBINSON

OUR CHOIRS ARE RETURNING!!!



"April 13th (auspicious?!) saw the long-awaited and extremely welcome return of the Cathedral Choristers. First **our girls** returned, and although they aren't able to hug or get any closer than two meters, their sense of joy at seeing each other was tangible. After months of lockdown, and singing limited to sight-singing sessions on zoom, none of us knew what state voices would be in.

Happily, the girls have come back stronger even than before, and eager to sing their allotted weekly services. With the return of our **altos, tenors and basses** at the weekend, we look forward very much to hearing them all together again for the first time in well over a year, and in the choir's new position. (See pp 12-13) Exciting times!

"**Our boys** returned no less enthusiastically on April 14th. Their first Evensong was truly commendable, with voices in all sorts of stages of change. **Yuibun** has bottom Ds (as in 'off the bass clef!') while some very nice tenor sounds were occasionally to be heard (unprompted). We had the usual sad meeting after Evensong to talk through this very challenging transition with each boy, and how the thought of it makes them feel. Some have sung treble for six years! It's a very major part of their lives, as everyone knows. I am so deeply thankful to them.

"We're also working hard at manging older boys' voices, and how we can get some extra months where we might not normally. **All our leaving boys will be moving into the Cathedral Youth Choir** (YPC) as tenors and basses, where their director (**Helen Davies**) is well known to them. We know this will be the continuation of their already long musical lives!

"Our greatest priority right now is to recruit new boys in years three and four, especially once we get past June 21st and we can integrate new probationers more easily (social distancing has made this almost impossible.). Please keep our Cathedral choirs in your prayers, as well as thinking whom you might know who could benefit from this life-changing experience!"

JOHN ROBINSON also wrote to Canon Wedgeworth:

I was so thrilled to have the girls back, and so confidently. Testament to their development and their new inclusions on Sundays as well, which has definitely helped their sense of self-worth.

"Sunday April 18th was heralded by the return of our **Cathedral Girls' Choir**, and the **Cathedral Choir altos, tenors and basses**. It was good to note that three of our four tenors this year are ex-Blackburn Cathedral Choristers! It was the first time our Cathedral Girls have sung with the lower parts as part of their routine Cathedral singing, and it was so lovely to hear them revel in this opportunity.

It was also the first time we've had **female altos** singing with the choir, so a new and exciting chapter in our history. And yet another first :- we sang from the **new Choir Stalls' position**, east of the altar. All in all, it was a tremendously positive experience for everyone, and many positive remarks from the congregation and parents.

Our Cathedral Boy Choristers have been back during the week singing Evensong, and they will be back with us this coming weekend. They are in fine spirits, but very much looking for younger boys to enter the choir, as so many older voices are changing.

Sunday afternoon also saw **Cathedra Voices** at full strength, for the **Duke of Edinburgh's memorial Evensong**. They are a new choir made of local professional singers, many from the Royal Northern College of Music, who are able to make recordings for online worship, and to take one-off unusual events at short notice. Their online singing has already attracted great enthusiasm, with **Angela Hicks** having been able to be with us, thanks to the Pandemic. (See pages 12-13)

From Dean Emeritus David Frayne & Liz after JB sent congratulations upon their Diamond Wedding Anniversary in April:



Dear John

Very many thanks for your "diamond" greetings! Always good to hear from you, not least on special occasions!

Liz and I had a lovely day thanks to our

two daughters (both now living in Clevedon who laid-on a marvellous lunch and tea outdoors in a gazebo with a zoom link-up with our son and family in South Wales. We could not be more proud of their creative initiatives to have put all this together.

The card from the Queen came on the day before her great sadness. Who knows which "royal" will mark our 65th anniversary if we get that far! If we do, **we shall come to Blackburn in 2026 for the great diocese/cathedral centenary!**"

Hopefully we shall meet again before then - we are thankfully still mobile and I still enjoy driving and am looking forward to getting out and about a bit more this year.

Lovely to have heard from you - our love, prayers and good wishes
Liz and David



MULTIPLE COINCIDENCES



1. **RICHARD TANNER**, former Blackburn Cathedral Director of Music, recently had a birthday .
The next day **JUSTIN MILLER** former Blackburn Cathedral Organ Scholar, also had his birthday, so he was invited to the Tanners' home at Rugby School, to celebrate, and Pippa baked him a delicious birthday cake.

See the partying friends above: L-R

BEN NICHOLAS, RICHARD & PIPPA TANNER, RICHARD PINEL & his partner JUSTIN MILLER

2. **Richard Pinel** is Director of Music of Jesus College, Cambridge.
Ben Nicholas is Director of Music of Merton College, Oxford: i.e. similar jobs at the two historic universities!
3. Before coming to Blackburn Cathedral, **Richard Tanner** was organist of All Saints' Church, Northampton, where **Richard Pinel** was one of his choristers and also his talented organ student.
- 4 a & b. Before coming to Blackburn Cathedral, **JB** was organist of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton. i.e. the 'other' main church in that town.
Justin Miller is now the organist of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, where he's doing a FINE job.
5. **Ben Nicholas** and **JB** share a birthday (15 September) though not the same year! (So does *Philip Chew* – page 1)
- 6 a & b & c. **Ben Nicholas's** father, **Dr Michael Nicholas**, succeeded JB as organist of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton:
Michael went on to become Director of Music of Norwich Cathedral where he was succeeded by **David Cooper**, who was then DoM of Blackburn Cathedral where, in his turn, David had succeeded JB.
7. JB went on to become DoM of Trinity Episcopal Church, PRINCETON, NJ, USA, and Adjunct Associate Professor at Rider University, Princeton, where **Justin Miller** would become a student.



HAVE YOU EVER TRIED PLAYING A FRENCH HORN? It's one of the most difficult instruments there is. So be prepared to have your socks blown off by this staggeringly amazing playing by the Berlin Philharmonic French Horn Ensemble when they were in Japan!

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

It was, with great delight, that we learned that **DAVID ROTHWELL**, who recently moved from Preston to Nottingham, has joined the Choir of **NOTTINGHAM CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL** – whose Director of Music is **GREGORY TRELOAR** – who was a recent outstanding Choral Scholar of Blackburn Cathedral.



David had been a member of Blackburn Cathedral choirs for many years (first as a Prefect under Thomas L. Duerden (who was here 1939-1964), and then with JB and his successors – as bass soloist and choir librarian. He was also a valuable member of the Renaissance Singers and is the sort of person who *gets things done!*

Gregory wrote: “Please find attached a photo of David and me following Easter Sunday Mass, unfortunately we had taken our robes off but it was great to have him singing with us for some of the Easter Services and services to come as he joins the choir.”

Nottingham Cathedral (1844) was designed by **Augustus Pugin** (1812-1852) who also designed St. Chad’s Catholic Cathedral, Birmingham, and many other churches and cathedrals in the UK and Ireland. He is principally remembered for his pioneering role in the Gothic Revival. He designed the interior of the Houses of Parliament. But probably his best known work, and best loved, is **The Elizabeth Tower**, better known as **Big Ben**.



Nottingham Catholic Cathedral: interior





We heard, online, that great plans have been made for the music programme at Worcester Cathedral, where **SAM HUDSON, our former DoM, is now their Director of Music**

In a press release the following plans were announced:

A significant change to the chorister programme that presents equal opportunities to boy and girl choristers. In a historic first, the change will not only see boys and girls taking an equal share in choristerships, but also see girls join from a younger age and, like the boys, have access to scholarships at King's School, Worcester founded by Henry VIII in 1541, with each chorister receiving a choral scholarship towards their fees.

Further to the inclusion of younger girls in the Cathedral Choir, other significant steps include changes to **the Cathedral Voluntary Choir**, which will become open to all boys and girls from the local area from September 2021. Worcester Cathedral is also creating a **brand new Youth Choir**, the first of its kind at the cathedral which caters specifically for singers between school years 9 and 13, again open to youngsters from across the local area. These two choirs provide exciting opportunities for children across the Midlands to experience and develop their passion for singing and music.

Sam Hudson wrote to JB:

Dear John,

Many thanks indeed! How kind of you to remember my birthday. Thank you very much for the good wishes. We are going to spend a day in my parents' garden (or at least, a few hours, depending on how cold it is!). It will be good to see them for the first time since August last year.

I'm glad you caught our choral news - thank you very much indeed. We are excited to be planning the forthcoming academic year, and I hope it will be a good step in the right direction.

I hope you are keeping well, and that your special birthday later this year will be marked with a full celebration!



With very best wishes and renewed thanks,
Sam

IT WAS WITH UNRESTRAINED JOY that we heard, on St. George's Day, that our former organ scholar, **DR. ED JONES has been appointed Director of Music of **WAKEFIELD CATHEDRAL!****



Ed is currently based at **Worcester** Cathedral where he directs the cathedral's Voluntary Choir of boys and adults, and is the principal accompanist of the Cathedral Choir when the girls are singing. He still sings alto on occasion, deputising in the Cathedral Choir, and is involved with other ensembles in the area.

After organ scholarship years in **Blackburn** and **Exeter** cathedrals and a year as Associate Organist in **Bradford** Cathedral, Ed is looking forward to returning to Yorkshire. Besides his musical life, Ed is a keen runner, has an interest in motor cars, and enjoys a good curry.

Ed said: "I am absolutely delighted to be joining the

cathedral and working in such a vibrant department continuing the great work of the choir. Wakefield Cathedral is such an exciting place, and **Helen and I** cannot wait to become part of the community.



From former Blackburn Head Chorister and amazingly gifted organist WILLIAM FIELDING

Former scholar at the Royal College of Music, London, and organ scholar at HM Chapel Royal, London



Dear JB,

Things have changed quite considerably since we were last in contact. **I'm now living full time in Toulouse**, studying with the inspiring **Michel Bouvard at the conservatoire de Toulouse**. (He's organist of St. Sernin Basilica, Toulouse.)



Time is spent playing Cavallé-Coll organs and strolling around the historic city has been everything I imagined it would be and more!

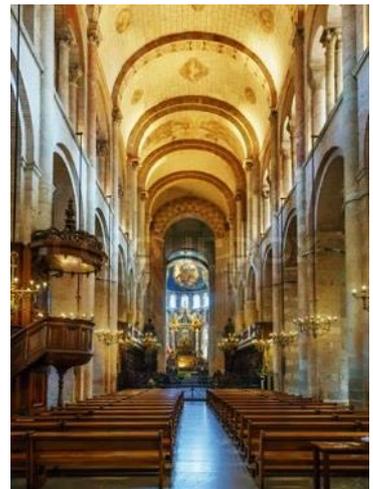
I plan on spending another year here, and then moving elsewhere in France - tbc!

Things are a little restricted over here at the moment, but practice and lessons are continuing as normal. I'm glad the UK is opening up a little more, and I look forward to getting back soon!

Let me know how things are going with you! **I'm preparing a video of some Widor on the Cavallé-Coll at St Sernin - link to follow!**

With very best wishes,
Will

The historic 1888 Cavallé-Coll organ at St. Sernin' with two 32fts and everything else.



Our highly gifted Director of Music, JOHN ROBINSON

will, at the beginning of May, be making **a recording on our magnificent organ** to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of its installation (on 20th December 1969) ...but, of course, due to the universal COVID situation, this had to be delayed until now.

John will play music composed in significant years in the history of Blackburn Cathedral: starting in 1926 (when the Parish Church became a Cathedral) with **Percy Whitlock's 1926 Sonata**... and much more, including JB's Variations for Pedals on Henry Smart's hymn tune **Regent Square** for 'Light's Abode' composed for the opening recital. (Henry Smart was organist here 1832-38).

Watch this space for more news of this most special recording.

NOT ONLY ARE OUR CHOIRS RETURNING (more UNRESTRAINED JOY!) but they will be heard in much better balance with each other and with our magnificent organ: AND the clergy can also be seen & heard!

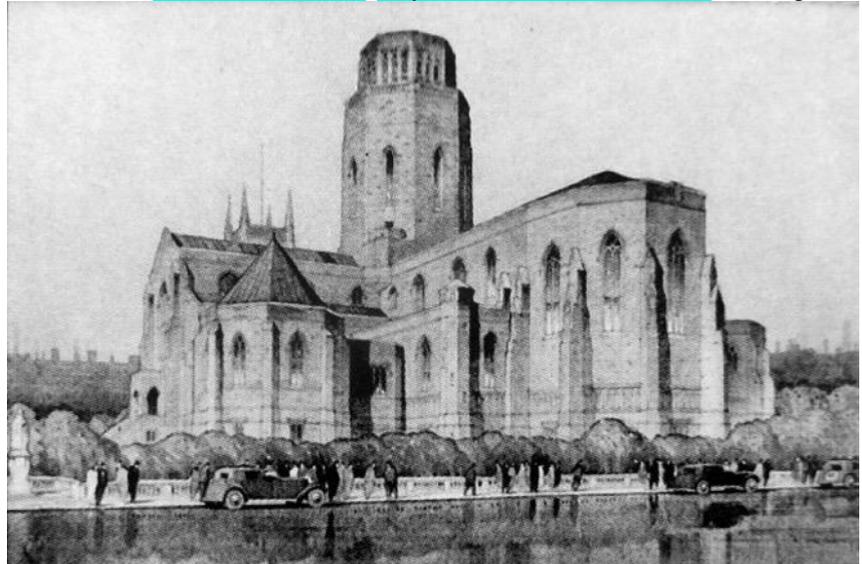
Why?

Because not only has the organ console recently been moved near the altar so that the organist can, for the first time in 50 years, hear it in balance with the choir... Until recently the organist had been shielded by **enormous pillars** which had been constructed to support **an equally enormous tower** way back in the late 1930s. This grand

plan for a **large** Blackburn Cathedral didn't materialise due to the outbreak of the 1939-45 war and the ever-present lack of money.

But **Provost Sinker** laboured on during the war (even financing some building work from his own pocket!) so that the Eastern bay of the Nave was widened – thus enabling larger-scale transepts which we now have.

In the early 1960s LAURENCE KING, noted architect from London, was commissioned to make a new design to complete Blackburn Cathedral. But, as ever, the money ran out, so it was not fully completed.



But we **do have** the **Lantern Tower and Spire**, but not a **full height East end** nor the attractive **Lady Chapel**.

All this building and planning took place, happily, during JB's early years at the cathedral. He was asked where the new organ pipes should be placed: he suggested a similar position to the organ in Liverpool Anglican Cathedral – which is what happened by December 20th 1969.

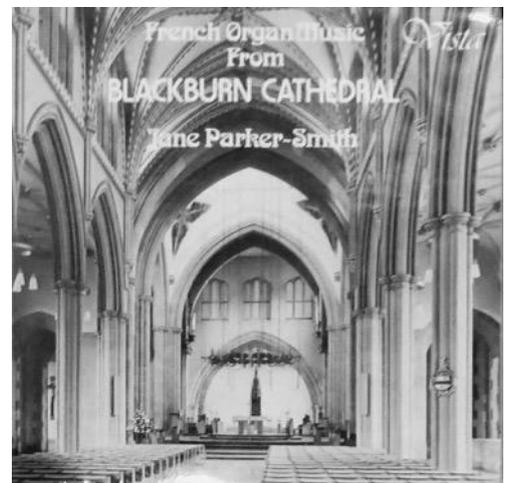
But Laurence King felt that the only place for **the choir** was at the **far East end** – which would be crowned by the Bishop's throne.

(Where the

Jesus Chapel now is.) This may have presented a grand view of the Bishop's throne, but it meant that the choir (a) could not be seen and (b) could not be heard, b for it was effectively *behind* the organ pipes.

The one positive outcome of this planning was that **the clergy would be on the steps from the Nave to the central altar**. Two Canons' stalls either side on the wide step, and the Bishop and Provost (Dean) on the single high step – from where they could clearly be seen and heard by everyone.

But the choir was still in a most unsatisfactory position. So, after a while, JB suggested to the clergy that a better arrangement would be for the *choir* to be on the steps leading to the central altar. This was tried one Sunday morning after the Eucharist, and the clergy, after hearing the singing, were **unanimous** that the choir should indeed be moved from the far East end to where they now have been for the last 45+ years. The only drawback was that the clergy would have to be moved behind the central altar. But they could move forward more easily when necessary. However it was generally agreed that this clergy far-East position was also unsatisfactory.





The organ console had originally been under the South East organ pipes (below the swell box) but Laurence King, in answer to the complaints of non-see-able, non-hear-able choir, moved the choirstalls a few yards Westwards, which meant that the console had to move to an even more impossible position to the very far East end where the organist couldn't hear the organ in balance at all. But then, with the change of position of the choir to the clergy steps in the 1970s the console was moved to the head of the Nave where it has remained for some 45 years.

A major plus of this mid 1970s arrangement would be that Laurence King and John Hayward would design a Jesus Chapel (where the choir and organ console used to be), plus attractive screens for an Ambulatory, and a new Bishop's throne from where he (or she) could preside in full sight for large services.

This is what we have had for some 45 years

But now the choir, in their new position either side of the Bishop's throne, can hear themselves in balance and they can hear the organ much more clearly, and the organist can hear both choir and organ in balance! AND the clergy have returned to their proper places on the steps leading to the central altar – from where they can be seen and heard by all.



So, may the editor say a hearty WELL DONE to everybody for these major positive changes in our cathedral.



And now we need **more singers** to fill our glorious choirstalls, for Time, during the year-long Pandemic Lockdown, has worked its natural miracle, and boys who were leading Trebles 12 months ago, are now turning into most promising young Tenors and Basses!



So, ENJOY this wonderful video, prepared by our dynamic Director of Music, to encourage active recruitment to all our exciting and so-rewarding choirs!

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



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'Once in Royal David's City'