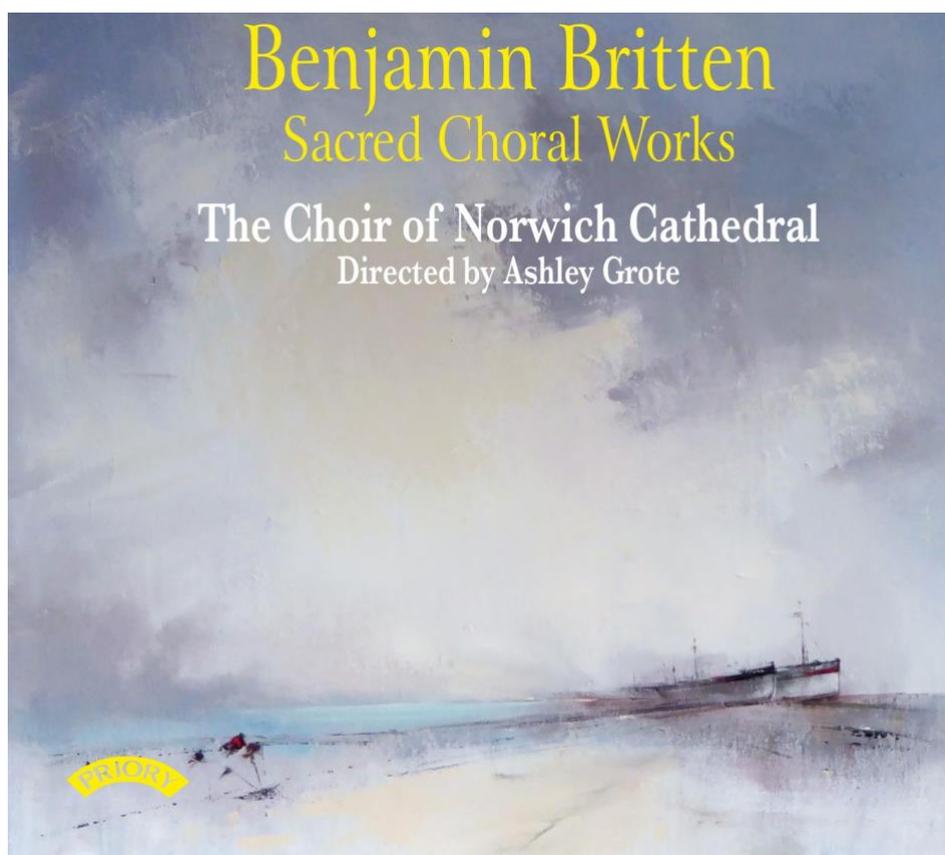


NORWICH CATHEDRAL EX-CHORISTERS' GUILD

(Founded 1884)



NEWSLETTER January 2021



CD available from Norwich Cathedral Shop.

Happy New Year!

Covid 19 has brought so much disruption in many ways. Cathedral services suspended and then socially distanced and we have been unable to have our annual reunion and Advent reception. For those of us who live away from Norwich we have missed the opportunity to worship and walk in the Cathedral and see our lovely old city. There is always hope and we pray that things will return to normal in 2021.

At our AGM on 30th November 2020 Jon Burrell stepped down as Secretary and his place was taken by Esther Platten. Jon has a great knowledge of the guild membership and has done tremendous work over the years to bring us together and organise our reunions etc. For this, much thanks.

SC

Ashley Grote writes:

Like every other cathedral in the country, most of our plans for 2020 were dashed by the sudden onslaught of Covid 19. Projects that were going to be highlights fell by the wayside: a performance of Bach's St Matthew Passion, a collaboration with the BBC Singers in the Aldeburgh Festival and – perhaps most unusually – the arrival of Dippy, the Natural History Museum's touring dinosaur, which was due to be in the Cathedral nave from July until October. For this extraordinary project we had commissioned Bob Chilcott to compose a piece which was to have been performed multiple times by the Cathedral Choir alongside literally hundreds of primary school children. Fortunately, it looks like this may now go ahead in the summer of 2021, albeit with fewer children due to the necessary social distancing.

We were immensely fortunate that in February, before coronavirus, we recorded a new disc of sacred choral works by Benjamin Britten, including pieces that have a particular link to Norfolk – namely the Ceremony of Carols (first performed in Norwich Castle), the Hymn to St Peter (composed for the quincentenary of St Peter Mancroft) and the Hymn to the Virgin (written whilst Britten was still a pupil at Gresham's School). This was released at the start of October on the Priory Records label and has been well received, at a time when all of us have suffered a dearth of good music!

As Master of Music I was tremendously grateful to have been able to continue working throughout lockdown, continuing regular sessions online with the boy and girl choristers as well as our Cathedral children's choir. Now that the choir is able to sing together again in person I realise just how valuable this online contact was. Whilst rehearsals via 'zoom' are in no way a substitute for real music-making, they did provide a lifeline in maintaining the sense of camaraderie, community and human relationship which is so vital to the life of any cathedral choir. Our music department in Norwich, through the initiative of Canon Precentor Aidan Platten and the technical expertise of Assistant Organist George Inscoe, was able to facilitate the Sing Forever project which involved some 269 choristers from Cathedral and Collegiate Choirs across the country, singing together in a virtual performance to raise money for the Friends of Cathedral Music (now Cathedral Music Trust) Emergency Fund. Back in Norwich, like many choirs, we did a number of virtual recording projects with our own choristers contributing to the Cathedral's digital worship offering. The boys and girls in the choir enjoyed various other online activities to keep their spirits up, including a virtual 'bake-off' judged by the Dean and the Bishop together. There were some extraordinarily creative and complex entries, including one of the Cathedral organ being played by the aforementioned Dippy the Dinosaur!



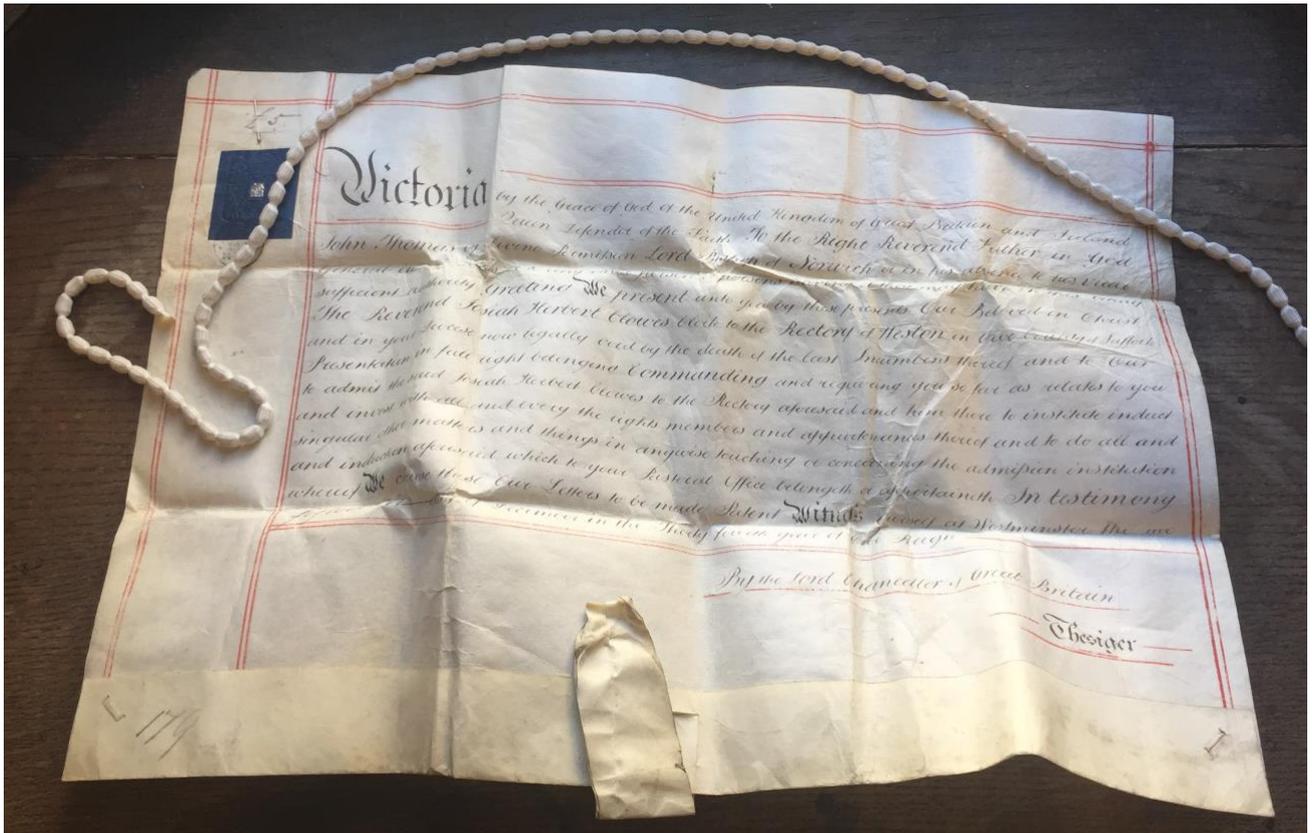
After such a long period of absence, it was incredibly uplifting to return to choral singing last September. It is not, of course, 'normal' – the choir are singing only in the nave with

social distancing in place and, whilst they are doing the most impressive job, the choristers are missing that sense of togetherness that comes from standing shoulder-to-shoulder in the choir stalls. However, if Covid 19 has taught us nothing else, it is the realisation of just how blessed we all are to be able to make beautiful music together at all in the very special space that is Norwich Cathedral. Conscious of all those musicians who are still unable to return to the work that they love and depend on, we will continue to strive to uphold our choral tradition to the best of our ability, whatever the challenges of the present times.

Richard (Dick) Anderson 42 - 47

In our last issue we reported that Dick Anderson had passed away aged 87. His son, Paul, contacted us to tell a tale. Back in the 1940s a chorister friend of Dick's dared them both to go into the Dean's vestry and take a "souvenir". They emerged with a document from early Victorian times with a heavy seal attached (pictured). The document relates to the appointment of a clergyman to a living in the gift of the Queen. Dick kept this for nearly eighty years but when Paul suggested he give it back to the Cathedral, Dick was still fearful of the consequences and asked Paul to take it to the Cathedral library after his death. The document is unusual as the heavy seal is still attached.





Dick left the Choir and the Cathedral School in 1947 when he was fourteen and moved across to Norwich School. He worked in insurance and eventually ran his own business in Hethersett.



Dick was in the news a few years ago when the EDP reported that his Geography A level certificate had arrived 48 years late. Norwich School had discovered it in an old box of papers. As he said at the time, nobody had ever asked to see it.

Alice Platten – Young Chorister of the Year Semi-Finalist



Alice Platten has kindly written for us about her experience taking part in the Young Chorister of the Year programme at the end of 2020.

"I was very surprised when I received a call from the Songs of Praise producer in August 2020 informing me that I had been chosen as one of the 2020 semi-finalists of the BBC Young Chorister of the Year. At first I felt an overwhelming sense of excitement but once reality had set in I was quite nervous. The competition was only a couple of weeks away and due to lockdown I hadn't done any real singing in months! I grew even more alarmed (and excited) when I discovered that I was to take part in a masterclass before the competition with Katherine Jenkins!

After a few weeks of preparing two pieces, my mother and I took a trip to the outskirts of London to the beautiful Botley's Mansion where I met my fellow girl contestants and had a wonderful masterclass with Katherine. For anyone wondering, she is even more beautiful in real life than on-screen if that is even possible! I was so thankful to be offered this wonderful opportunity and afterwards to hear Katherine's advice to me. I felt more ready than ever to sing to the judges for the competition.

Two weeks later (after arranging school days off, child performance licenses, travel and accommodation) my mother and I took the five and a half hour journey to our hotel in Manchester where we spent the night before the big day. On arrival at Gorton Monastery,

where the competition was taking place, we did a couple of 'pieces to camera' before a run-through of my piece with Neil Taylor.

I was lucky enough to spend most of the day with my fellow contestants (socially distanced of course) as we were in a practice room where one by one we would venture downstairs and sing to the judges. None of us had any idea who the judges were until a couple of minutes before we sang. I'm sure you can imagine that I was utterly terrified when I found out I was singing to John Rutter (and very relieved that I hadn't picked one of his pieces as that would have been a bit embarrassing). I felt ill with nerves but was pleased with how I sang and as soon as I stepped out of the church I wanted to perform again!

Obviously it would have been nice to take part in the final but I was very pleased that I had got this far and the feeling of sadness wasn't because I hadn't won but because the experience was over. For me the best part about being in the programme was making new friends who share the same love of music as I do and I am so thankful to everyone who made the whole competition happen, especially in such a challenging year."

Alice was the youngest competitor in the semi-final and she sang 'Ex Ore Innocentium' by John Ireland.



Phil Perchard 59 – 63

Many of us on the Guild Committee were contemporaries of Phil and we were very saddened when he died in July although he had suffered from ill health for a number of years. When he left the Sixth Form, Phil went to study at what was then Nottingham Trent Polytechnic but returned to Norwich and had a number of jobs before completing a M.A. in Social Work at the University of East Anglia and working for the Probation Service. Phil was one of a number of 'lost' ex-choristers tracked down ten years ago and we had a joyful re-union with him; he hadn't changed a bit and was the same great company he had always been. There was a good attendance of ex-choristers at his funeral at Colney.



Phil Perchard (right) pictured with Howard Armes outside Ely Cathedral in 1962. Sadly, Howard was to die the following year.

Norwich Cathedral Online

The eagle-eyed amongst you may have spotted a Youtube channel called 'Norwich Cathedral Services' which appeared during the first Lockdown. Set up initially to host podcasts recorded by the clergy, it is now where services are being live-streamed thanks to a fantastic new camera system installed in October last year. Please do join those in the building for worship on Sunday mornings, and on special occasions.

Organ Recitals

In addition to live streaming worship, it is wonderful that the three distinguished Organists of the Cathedral are performing organ recitals online. Up to date details can be found on the Cathedral website.

Annual Reunion

As you can imagine it is very difficult for us to make any plans at the moment regarding future events and especially getting together in person. We will be in touch as soon as we are able make plans. EP

Contact us:

Website: Cathedral.org.uk and visit NCexCG entry via "music"

The Secretary: Esther Platten, 33 The Close, Norwich, NR1 4DZ

email: estherplatten@yahoo.co.uk

The Newsletter Editor: Stephen Coleman, 16 The Orchard, Albrighton, WV7 3RE

email: colemansteam@aol.com

We are always grateful for stories or photographs from your time in the Cathedral Choir.