

NORWICH CATHEDRAL EX-CHORISTERS' GUILD

(Founded 1884)



NEWSLETTER Spring 2022

Ashley Grote writes:

It was wonderful to welcome Ex-Choristers to the Advent Procession at the end of November; our thanks go to the Guild for their kind invitation to the reception following the service. It was a lovely evening in the company of current choristers, Ex-Choristers and chorister families.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the Cathedral Choir did incredibly well during December. We made it to London on Wednesday 15th for a special Christmas Concert at St Stephen, Walbrook in the City of London. This was given in support of SUCCESS charity, which seeks to provide support for children living with brain tumours. The choir received an incredibly warm reception and performed superbly.

The highlight of course for many of the choristers was the trip to McDonald's in between rehearsal and concert!

We were fortunate to be able to go ahead with the Choir's annual Christmas Concert in the Cathedral, after its cancellation the previous year. This year the choir were joined by brass and percussion as well as organ, and the audience were treated to some light-hearted Christmas numbers to round off the evening – complete with Santa hats! In December 2022, the Cathedral Choir will be singing a performance of Handel's Messiah, as well as their own Christmas concert – early booking for both of these is recommended.



It was a great pity that, after the first of t h r e e Christmas Processions on December 22nd, a number of the

Lay Clerks tested positive for Covid-19. This meant that, regrettably, we had to send the adults of the choir home for Christmas. On the morning of December 23rd the Precentor and I hastily re-ordered the Christmas services with new music, to be sung by the boys and girls only. The choristers did an incredible job, singing beautifully and with tremendous confidence on very little rehearsal. Very many people who attended the two remaining Processions, Midnight Mass and Christmas

morning commented on how good the singing was – with no idea that plans had been changed at the very last minute! I was immensely proud of them all for their efforts.

The Epiphany season at the start of this New Year has had some wonderful musical highlights: an excellent Epiphany Procession and a performance by the boys and girls together of Britten's 'Ceremony of Carols' with harp accompaniment. Many people came to listen, and it was incredibly moving to hear the choristers sing Britten's beautiful music together in the candlelit Presbytery.

Looking ahead, we are excited to be able to put on the first performance since 2019 of a Bach Passion, this year the St John Passion, on Saturday 9th April at the start of Holy Week. Accompanied by Norwich Baroque and with a cast of outstanding soloists, this is not to be missed – do book your tickets now! On the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings in Holy Week, there are short musical offerings each night at 8.00pm which are free to attend, in addition to the many services taking place throughout the week.

Ex-Choristers have already heard about the launch of the Statham Society, at Evensong on Sunday 27th February. Following on from the tremendous success of the Cathedral's music appeal (culminating in the complete restoration of the Cathedral organ, which begins this June – do read David Dunnett's separate article), the Dean and Chapter wanted to create a society for those who wish to support the music on an ongoing basis. Many of you will have known the great 'Dicky' Statham yourselves – and it seems fitting that this society, intended to support the future of our Cathedral's music, bears his name. I hope that many of you may consider joining with a modest monthly subscription.

As I write, we have just held auditions for next year's choristers. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we will begin September 2022 with a healthy number of boys and girls – so the future remains bright!

We continue to be grateful for all the support and interest that the Ex-Choristers' Guild shows in our activities. Please do keep in touch!

Ashley Grote, Master of Music.

For more information about the Statham society please email stathamsociety@cathedral.org.uk

Choir Photo: Bill Smith 2021.

Ex-Choristers! Where are you now?!

We would love to hear what ex-choristers are up to - not just musical news, but where you live and work so that we can update the Alumni page of the website. Please send a photograph together with a short biography (up to 100 words) of what you have done since leaving the choir to David Clover david.clover@quadra-foil.com and visit www.norwichcathedralexchoristersguild.org.uk if you would like to see examples of what others have written.

If you would also like to be interviewed for a more detailed feature in the newsletter please do contact estherplatten@yahoo.co.uk.

2022 Guild Reunion - SAVE THE DATE!

Plans are afoot for a summer Guild reunion on the weekend of **9/10th July 2022**.

More details will follow but we will be inviting former Choristers and their families to join us for Worship, food, singing and socialising.

Chorister Spotlight - Duncan Pigg 1936 - 1941

It was such a joy to meet with Duncan and Jenny Pigg at the Advent reunion on Advent Sunday 2021. Now our most 'senior' ex-chorister, Duncan had some fascinating stories to share about his time as a Chorister

Tell us briefly where you are, and what you are up to now...

I moved to Hethersett when I was 13 and am still living in the same house today. Jenny came to live with me when we married in 1983. We enjoy socialising over Sunday lunch at our Local pub and I am a keen supporter of Norwich City - from my armchair!

For many years I was DOM and latterly sang with Hethersett Church Choir. My poor hearing stops me singing now, but Jenny still sings and I sit in an unused pew behind the choir. When my health does not allow me to go to Church I stay at home and join the Cathedral Sung Eucharist on Youtube which we are very fortunate to have.

In the summer months we enjoy relaxing in our summer house and the occasional trip the the coast. I also spend quite sometime in our garden planting out nasturtium seeds, a regular part of my Christmas present given me by a member of our family, and is a reminder of many happy holidays we have spent in Maderia.

...and remind us what years you were in the choir and who was your Director...

I was in the choir between 1936 and 1941. My Director of Music was the great Heathcote Statham.



Is there a 'stand-out' memory that you have from your time in the choir?

The Organ fire on April 9th 1938. I was there when it happened and for many years I kept one of the charred wooden organ pipes in my bedroom.

What skills learnt at Norwich Cathedral have helped you later in life?

CONFIDENCE - in all my professional roles. As a Licenced Reader, to sing the Office and Preach. My career as an Administrator, to chair meetings. As a District Councillor, public speaking. Choir Master of Hethersett Church Choir and for many years to write and produce the annual Village Pantomimes.

What would you *now* tell your Chorister-self?

Make sure you keep MUSIC as part of your life.

What piece of music springs to mind when you think of Norwich?

Holy, Holy, Holy. William Crotch, a Norwich Composer. A few years ago Hethersett Church Choir was invited to lead a Trinity Service at the Cathedral and we sang this anthem. I also sang it as a boy when at the Cathedral and it has also been used at a Diocesan Music Festival.

Loud Organs His Glory!

Following a very successful fundraising campaign over the last three years, in May this year scaffolding will be installed around the great Cathedral organ. Thousands of the pipes will be removed and transported by the organ builders Harrison and Harrison to their workshop in Durham for repair, cleaning and replacement.

It is 80 years since the 1899 Norman and Beard organ was rebuilt after the disastrous fire during evensong on 9th April 1938. It is unusual for such a large and significant instrument to go so long without a major rebuild and the fact that it has remained in playable order for so long is a tribute to the quality of the workmanship of the original team and to those who have tuned and maintained it over the years.



Work has, of course, been done in that time and there have been numerous tonal alterations and repairs over the years, but this will be a very significant rebuild with considerable restructuring within the case.

The organ will begin to return to Norwich early in 2023. Initially it will sound utterly horrible! (I hope they will let us record it!). This is because very few of the pipes will be at their correct pitch or regulated

to the correct tone. It will need another few months – from mid-April to early July to be voiced and tuned.

The organ will look the same – but some of the golden pipes in the cases will be made into speaking pipes – they are presently all dummies. The number of pipes and stops will be about the same and the star will still have pride of place at the top of the case!

There will be some difference to the sound – particularly in the Choir – and those who play it should find it easier to manage in both sides of the building. But in our planning it has been important to preserve the wonderful warm quality of the tone and its huge range of volume and colour. While the rebuild is in progress we will have two digital organs – one for the Choir and one for the Nave with speakers in the triforium.

It is a very exciting project and the planning team have put in a huge amount of effort over the last year or so. Particular thanks must go to Aidan and Ashley and our organ consultant Revd Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite who has given invaluable advice.

David Dunnett.

Photo: Ex-choristers on an 'Organ tour', Stephen Coleman

Some of you will have known **Lionel Stone's** wife **Elizabeth** who sadly died on the 8th August 2021. Her funeral service took place at Great Chesterford, Cambs on August 27th 2021.

New Committee Member - Harvey Neve



Harvey Neve 79 – 81

We are delighted to welcome Harvey Neve as a new member to the Guild Committee. Having left school Harvey had a number of roles in Sales and Marketing, and latterly working in the digital sector for Public Health England. Harvey lives in Durham with his family and joins the 2022 committee which is this year being chaired by David Clover 76 - 81.

2022 Committee

Chair - David Clover

Vice Chair - Ayrton Westwood

Secretary - Esther Platten

Treasurer - Nick Potts & Jon Burrell

Magazine Editor - Stephen Coleman

Members: Tim Ashcroft, Robert Woodcock, Richard Hunt, Terry Nichol and Ivor Bartram.

ADVENT REUNION



The unlocking of restrictions allowed a good number of us to meet up on Advent Sunday for a Winter Reunion. Ex-Choristers enjoyed wonderful Advent services, both in the morning and evening. The 2021 AGM took place after lunch and an afternoon tea in the Dean's official dining room followed. The traditional drinks reception with current choristers and their families took place after a magical Advent Procession. It was a very good (and much needed!) start to the Advent and Christmas season.



ORGAN CRAWL

Our illustrious former Organist, Dr Michael Nicholas will be embarking on a fantastic 'Organ crawl' on April 23rd in aid of the new Pricilla Bacon Lodge Hospice. Visiting 8 churches across Norfolk, Michael will be playing a different 20 minute programme at each. **Good luck Michael!**

For more information about how to support this wonderful endeavour, do contact him at michael.nicholas38@btinternet.com

Choristers - Where are they now?

Daniella Beck (2001- 07) studied for a BA in Vocal and Opera Studies at the Birmingham Conservatoire. After graduating she became lead vocalist on a number of large cruise ships and worked her way to becoming the first female Cruise Director aboard the Aegean Odyssey. Unfortunately Covid hit the cruising industry but undaunted, Daniella worked as a Covid Marshall in Great Yarmouth and has now turned herself into a singer who can provide entertainment for weddings, functions, birthdays and many more events. She is now PA to the Executive team at Great Yarmouth Borough Council and still performs. Her website is daniellabeck.com

Hannah Parry (1998 - 2006) studied organ performance at the Royal College of Music and went on to Royal Holloway College for a master's degree. Her freelance musical career has included church music posts at various London churches (most recently at Farm Street, Mayfair) as well as accompaniment opportunities with choirs and choral societies. Hannah also regularly performs as a soloist up and down the UK including St Paul's, Bradford and Norwich Cathedrals. As if this wasn't enough Hannah has also become involved in travel writing and you can follow her as 'Hannah the traveller'. www.hannahparry.co.uk

Contact us: Website: www.norwichcathedralexchoristersguild.org.uk

Or Cathedral.org.uk and visit NCexCG entry via "music"

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