

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATION.



2015 NEWSLETTER.

2015 REUNION.

This year's reunion took place on Saturday 26 September. Once again, it was held in conjunction with the annual gathering of the Friends of the Cathedral. Old choristers assembled in the stalls and rehearsed with the choirs under the genial direction of Steven Grahl. Before the service, TONY DAVIS laid a wreath at St. Sprite's Chapel in memory of old choristers and former pupils of The King's School who gave their lives in the two world wars. The first lesson at Evensong was read by Dr. ZOE NORRIS. After the service, the Annual General Meeting was held in the Becket Chapel. The final event of the day was the reunion dinner, which was held at The Park Inn. Speakers were The Ven. Richard Ormston, Archdeacon of Northampton, and old chorister ANDREW DE SILVA. A first-class meal was enjoyed by the assembled company. The reunion proved, as always, to be a very happy and delightfully nostalgic event.

Dr. STANLEY VANN MEMORIAL FUND.

Thanks to the generosity of many of WSV's former choristers, the Stanley Vann appeal fund has now exceeded its target. The money raised for this project will be spent on a new desk and chair for the use of the Director of Music, which will form part of the furniture adjacent to the Nave altar in the Cathedral. These items will form a permanent memorial to the late Dr. Vann.

We are extremely grateful to TIM HURST-BROWN and ALEX SPIRES, who have spearheaded this campaign, and also to all those who have so generously contributed.

2016 REUNION.

Our next reunion will be on Saturday 17 September 2016. A very warm welcome is extended to all Association members, and particularly to those who have not attended for some years. Please make a note in your diary NOW and join us for Old Choristers' Day.

NEW MEMBERS.

We welcome the following to the Cathedral Old Choristers' Association: HANNAH CASBON, ALEXANDER FERGUSON, JOSEPH HAYNES, RHIANA PURNELL, GEORGE SPIRES PINTO, TOM WARD and ERICA WOOD.

JOHN BENNETT, 1930 - 2014.

John Bennett, whose younger brother Fred was also a chorister, sang in the choir during the Second World War. After his voice broke he became a Cathedral server and later was appointed as a Steward. On leaving The King's School in 1946 he began work at the LNER Railway offices in Peterborough. Two years later he did his National Service in the RAF, returning to the city at the end of 1949. He later undertook some training in Letchworth, and then moved back to Peterborough to work as an engineer at the British Sugar Corporation's Head Office. In 1954 he married Sheila Noke and three years later moved to Kempston, near Bedford. John's career changed over to computers in the nineteen sixties, and in 1982 he formed his own computer company, Apex Computing and Data Management. He also established a video production company. In 1989 John joined the Crime Prevention Office at Greyfriars Police Station as the Home Watch co-ordinator for North Bedfordshire, a job which he undertook until 1995.

Earlier in his life, John was very interested in amateur radio and worked many famous stations round the world. He took up music once more in 1973 and learned to play the organ.

We extend our condolences to his widow and to his sons Martin and Andrew.

NORMAN GRAVES, 1936 - 2014.

Norman Graves was born in Peterborough in April 1936 and was a chorister under Dr. Douglas Hopkins. He joined The King's School in September 1947 and left in July 1952. Until comparatively recently, he lived in Loughborough. Sadly, we have no more information about him.

HAROLD (BILL) CLAXTON, 1916-2015.

Harold (always known as Bill) Claxton, who died on 9 September at the age of ninety-nine, was born in Peterborough on 17 May 1916. His father was employed as an engine driver by the LNER. Harold attended Orchard Street Elementary School, and joined the Cathedral choir in 1925 at the age of nine. He was a chorister under Dr. Henry Coleman for some seven years. Bill entered The King's School in September 1927. He left school at the age of sixteen and took up a five year apprenticeship with a firm of electrical contractors. He then changed direction in 1936 when he joined the Post Office, working as a technician in the Engineering Department. During the Second World War he served in the Home Guard. Bill worked his way up in the Post Office and his first promotion involved being in charge of a new telephone exchange at Grantham in 1964-65. After this, he managed the construction team involved with building the new telephone exchange at Boston, as a result of which he relocated to that town in 1967. Many years later, there were further house moves to Stamford (in 1989) and finally back to Peterborough in 1996.

Bill married Jessie Bird in February 1939. They subsequently had two children, Anne and Geoff. Bill's enquiring mind and electrical ability led him to build his first television set from scratch in order that the family could enjoy the Coronation in June 1953. Bill left his job with the Post Office in July 1977 after forty years of loyal service in order to care for his ailing wife, who suffered health problems for decades. Her death in 1999 after sixty years of happy married life was a sad blow for him. Bill, who still drove a car until he was ninety-two, was an avid reader. He greatly enjoyed crosswords and Sudoku, and this helped to keep his mind alert. In addition to his two children, he had five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. One of his grandsons said recently, "He was the best grandfather you could ever have". Bill left his body to medical research. A thanksgiving service in celebration of his life took place at The Quaker House in Thorpe Road, Peterborough on Saturday 17 October.

DENNIS CHAMBERLAIN, 1922 - 2015.

Former Lay Clerk Dennis Chamberlain died suddenly on 29 May at the age of ninety-two, having devoted his long life to a passionate pursuit of church music. He began his choral career at St. John's Church, Isleworth in Middlesex, and met his wife Eileen whilst singing in the choir at St. Matthias' Church, Richmond in Surrey. He later sang at St. Peter's, Eaton Square in London, before moving on to Hereford Cathedral and then to Wells Cathedral. He arrived at Peterborough in 1970, where he served under Dr. Stanley Vann and later under Christopher Gower. Dennis's funeral took place at Barnstaple Crematorium, Devon on 16 June 2015, where two former Peterborough colleagues - sometime Assistant Organist Barry Ferguson and erstwhile lay clerk Christopher Helyer - performed one of his favourite anthems, "Sing joyfully" by John Mundy. The hymns included "For all the Saints, who from their labours rest" and "Thine be the glory". Dennis's dry wit and remarkable deep bass voice, both of which were quite unforgettable, were recalled with affection at the funeral. In Barry's words, "Praise be for every memory of Dennis and his vibrant ministry of church music. How would Cathedral choirs survive without such people?" We extend our sincere condolences to Eileen, Alexis, Alison and Stuart.

MICHAEL RILEY, 1964 - 2014.

With sadness we record the death of former alto lay clerk Michael Riley, who passed away on 10 December 2014. Michael, who was born in Stafford in July 1964, studied Theology at Oxford. He arrived here in September 1986 after singing for a short time in the choir of Lincoln Cathedral. For six years he taught in the Preparatory department at Westwood House (now The Peterborough School). When his brain tumour was diagnosed, he was invalided out of teaching. He continued as a lay clerk until 2006 and, in the words of Christopher Gower, "was a hugely loyal and devoted member of the choir". Later on he worked in the Cathedral office, and subsequently became a Cathedral welcomer. Michael leaves a brother, a sister and two nephews. The Dean has suggested that a song school piano might be dedicated to Michael's memory.

JAMES TRICKEY, 1992 - 2014.

Bass lay clerk James Trickey was killed in a tragic road accident whilst out cycling early on 23 December 2014. He had been a lay clerk here for just over a year. James was originally a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral, and then moved on to Dean Close School, Cheltenham. He later won a choral scholarship to Christ Church, Oxford where he read Geography. He came to Peterborough in the autumn of 2013 and proved to be a very popular member of the choir. His funeral service took place at Gloucester Cathedral on 7 January. May he rest in peace.

PERSONALIA.

We extend our congratulations to SARAH COOPER, who has recently become engaged to be married to Jon Byrd.

We have heard from FRED DIMOCK, who at the age of ninety-seven is our oldest former chorister. Fred was in the choir from 1928, in the days of Dr. Henry Coleman. When he was at King's he sang in several of the Gilbert and Sullivan productions which were staged in Big School (now the Library) in the early nineteen thirties. After war service, he was a student at St. Peter's Emergency Training College in Midgate (the red brick building - designed by George Gilbert Scott - which still stands to the north of the Cathedral). W.F.F. Shearcroft, Acting Headmaster of The King's School during the war years, was Principal of St. Peter's College from 1945 - 1950. Fred sang with the Royal Choral Society for several years when he was living in Clapham. He ended his teaching career as a headmaster at Great Brickhill in Buckinghamshire. He lives on the south coast and has only recently given up his driving licence.

STEVE FRASER-BURTON has recently been in touch after many years. He left King's in 1980 and, after taking his 'A' levels in Derbyshire, went to Sandhurst. He served for twenty-eight years with the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters regiment, retiring in 2008. He now works for an international Software Group based in Nottingham. Steve has two daughters from his first marriage, and two sons (aged 7 and 5) with his second wife Jules. All his children are singers. He tells us that he has very fond memories of his time in the choir under Stanley Vann.

ANDREW GOWER is Principal of Morley College, London.

EDWARD GRUBB works for the Yorkshire Building Society Group based in Peterborough as an IT Support Analyst.

TOBY HESSION won the 2015 BBC Proms Inspire Young Composers' Competition. Toby, who is a recent graduate of Manchester's highly acclaimed Chetham's School of Music, said that winning the BBC prize "capped my whole time there". He took part in a concert at The Royal College of Music in August which included his winning piece "After Death", which was recorded for subsequent broadcast on Radio Three. He is currently a choral scholar at Clare College, Cambridge and hopes to pursue a career as a conductor or composer. We wish him well.

On Saturday 14 March the Cathedral Choir, Youth Choir and Festival Chorus, with The Aurelian Ensemble and soloist NICHOLAS MORRIS, performed Faure's Requiem and Bernstein's Chichester Psalms. The concert was directed by David Humphreys, Assistant Director of Music at the Cathedral.

We extend our heartiest congratulations to Canon PETER NICHOLSON, a beloved former Precentor of the Cathedral, who celebrated his ninetieth birthday on November 20. Peter, who was on the Cathedral staff from 1962-1967, looks back on his days at Peterborough with tremendous fondness.

ZOE NORRIS is a GP in East Yorkshire. She has two daughters.

MATTHEW O'MALLEY is now Director of Music at Tiffin School, Kingston upon Thames. Tiffin is a selective grammar school for boys which has specialist status in both the performing arts and languages.

In the spring of 2016 DAVID BUTT PHILIP will be taking part in a production of "Boris Godunov" at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He will be playing the role of Grigory Otrepiev. Bryn Terfel will take the title role, and Sir John Tomlinson will also be in the cast.

JACOB SPIRES plays the organ for Evensong at All Saints' Church, Peterborough every other week. He has recently taken his first organ examination. He sings in All Saints' choir and also in the Cathedral Youth Choir.

After twenty-five years in Singapore, Father DANIEL TOYNE has returned to Europe and is now at the Frankfurt International School, as IBDP Co-ordinator and Head of the Theory of Knowledge department.

MR. TREVOR ELLIOTT.

Trevor Elliott was honoured with a lengthy and well-deserved standing ovation at The King's School Speech Day in the Cathedral on Friday September 18. He is to retire next summer after thirty years as Deputy Headmaster, having held that post for longer than anyone in the school's history. Trevor, who was appointed to the staff in 1976, has been deputy to three headmasters - Michael Barcroft, Gary Longman and Darren Ayling. We wish him well in his retirement. The King's School will never be quite the same without his kindly and avuncular presence. Trevor's leaving celebration will take place at King's on Saturday 16 July 2016, to which all members of the Association are invited.

CATHEDRAL CHOIR FILM.

In March 1965 the Canadian Broadcasting Company made a thirty minute film about the life of a Cathedral chorister here. The background music was sung by the lay clerks and choristers under the direction of Stanley Vann, with Barry Ferguson at the organ. In 1995 a volunteer in the Cathedral Library discovered this film, which had been placed in the archives in 1969 by Paul Rose. The film was subsequently shown at the John Clare Theatre in Broadway in November 1995, after which it is understood that several copies were made. It was presumed that the film had lain in the Cathedral Library ever since. However, despite a thorough search of the latter, the film has not been unearthed. If anyone has a copy, TIM HURST-BROWN would like to borrow it so that further copies can be made. Please e-mail: timandlinda@hurst-brown.freeseve.co.uk

OLD CHORISTERS NEEDED FOR CHRISTMAS SERVICE.

On Sunday 27 December, old choristers are invited to form a choir to sing at the Eucharist in the Cathedral. If any members are interested, they are asked to e-mail LOUISE LAPRUN (louise.laprun@gmail.com) or click on: <https://www.facebook.com/events/834261363338387/>. Later on the same day, the Old Petriburgians' Association will be holding a reunion at The Brewery Tap, and thus people will have an opportunity to attend both functions. Please contact Louise with any feedback or suggestions for future events.

LEGACIES.

A number of old choristers have expressed a desire to leave some money to the Cathedral on their death. Leaving a gift in a will is an important decision and often the most significant benefaction one can make. If any former choristers would like to talk to someone about making a bequest to the Cathedral and/or its music, then the Legacy department would be pleased to help. They can be contacted on: 01733 355301, or by e-mail: campaign@peterborough-cathedral.org.uk

All legacy donors automatically become members of the Ambassadors' Guild, a special association for those people who have decided to leave a bequest to the Cathedral. An annual event is held to thank members for their help in securing the Cathedral's future.

Tim Hurst-Brown has once again collated all the material and written the newsletter. I am extremely grateful to him for continuing to take on this considerable task.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Simon Wilkinson

Hon. Secretary
December 2015.

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