



The Voice

The newsletter of The Guild of Ex-Choristers of the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick

Issue No 25

November 2015

Lunch for Guild President

There was a unique gathering for lunch, in Warwick, on 14 November, to celebrate the 69th birthday of Guild President, Prof. Edward Higginbottom and in recognition of his outstanding achievements during 38 years, directing the choir of New College, Oxford.

In the picture, left to right, are six former Directors of Music at St. Mary's, and Edward; Andrew Fletcher (Organist to the University of Birmingham), Geoffrey Holroyde who hosted the lunch (Holy Trinity, Gosport), Edward Higginbottom, Simon Lole (previously at Sheffield



Guests were all former or present organists and choirmasters, since 1962, of St. Mary's. Edward started his musical career in 1962 as an unpaid assistant organist at Warwick, when only 16 years old. Despite his age, he played a key role, helping Geoffrey Holroyde to rebuild the fine boys and men's choir at Warwick, which had sadly fallen on hard times.

Salisbury Cathedrals now freelancing and working for the BBC), Tom Corns (the current DoM at St Mary's), Katherine Dienes-Williams (Guildford Cathedral) and Paul Trepte (Ely Cathedral). Sadly, Mark Shepherd (now DoM at Charterhouse School) had a virus and could not attend. Neither could Chris Betts, now in Washington DC, rather too far to come for even such a unique event.

FCOCA News

The Federation of Cathedral Old Chorister Associations held its Annual Festival in Exeter over the weekend of 3/5 July. Guild Vice-President, Geoffrey Holroyde and wife, Elizabeth, represented St Mary's. The next Festival will be at Wells over the weekend 29 April to 1 May. All guild members are welcome to attend and it is hoped to field a larger team from Warwick on this occasion. If you would like to join us, details are available by email (address overleaf). The FCOCA Executive Committee is

currently considering the role of the organisation in the 21st century. Attracting new members to associations has proved difficult in recent years though the tide seems to have turned in some areas. Providing relevant support to local associations and connecting them in a meaningful way is one of the challenges. The 2016 issue of *Once a Chorister*, the annual magazine of the Federation, may be the last in its current format and an "on-line" version is being considered. Copies of the magazine, which has reports from most of the affiliated associations, including Warwick, are generally available at the St Mary's gift shop.

New Guild Organ Scholar

We are delighted to welcome William Parkinson as the third Guild of Ex-Choristers' Organ Scholar for the 2015/16 academic year.

William is in his first year at Birmingham Conservatoire where he was offered a scholarship to study for a BMus (Hons). His musical education began aged four, when he started playing the trumpet. Over the following years he gained musical experience, also taking up the piano and singing. Aged fourteen, William commenced organ lessons at Bromsgrove School, as a music scholar, studying with Jonathan Kingston.

In 2014, William gained a gap-year organ scholarship to Worcester Cathedral under the guidance and mentorship of Peter Nardone and Christopher Allsop. He was fully involved in the music department, learning to accompany, rehearse and conduct the various choirs and assisting in the training of the choristers. During this time he also acted as the rehearsal pianist to the cathedral's chamber choir and he freelanced in and around Worcester.

Now, as organ scholar at St. Mary's, he is enjoying honing his organ playing and choir directing skills, with the help of Tom Corns and Mark Swinton.

William's recent engagements include a recital at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Gibraltar and at St Stephen's Church in Barbourne, Worcester.

The Scholars' Carol Concert

Directed by Mark Swinton

Organ: Richard Dunster-Sigtermans

Tuesday 15th December

7.30pm

St Mary's Church

*Tickets available from St Mary's Gift Shop
with audience participation, plenty of opportunity for
ex-choristers to relive memories of Christmases past*

Diary

Thursday 26 November c7.00pm	Victorian Evening Market Square, Warwick
Sunday 29 November 6.30pm	Advent Carol Service St Mary's
Wednesday 16 December 5.30pm	Evensong To celebrate 25 years of girls' choir St Mary's
Saturday 19 December 7.30pm	Carols at Warwick Castle Warwick Castle
Sunday 20 December 6.30pm	Candlelit Christmas Carol Service St Mary's
Wednesday 23 December 6.30pm	Candlelit Christmas Carol Service St Mary's
Thursday 24 December 11.15pm	Midnight Mass St Mary's
Friday 25 December 10.00am	Christmas Family Eucharist St Mary's
Sunday 24 January 2.00pm - 6.00pm	Be a chorister day St Mary's
Saturday 5 March 7.30pm	Concert - Handel Coronation Anthems St Mary's

DoM column

The season of Advent and the Christmas festival are approaching and already it has been a busy term for the choirs. Special services were held in St Mary's to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's reign as the longest serving monarch, to mark Remembrance Sunday and to acknowledge the service of the Warwickshire Regiment.

It has also been a time of energetic recruitment with visits to many local schools. At the time of writing, including probationer choristers, the boys' choir numbers nineteen and the girls' choir twenty six.

There are a number of occasions to look forward to, including a celebration of twenty five years of the girls' choir at 5.30pm Evensong on Wednesday 16 December with at a reception afterwards. Former members of the girls' choir are warmly invited to attend.

May I take this opportunity to wish you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Thomas Corns, Director of Music

In memoriam

It was with much sadness we learnt recently of the death of David Watson who died in March. He had struggled with Parkinson's for some years and went into care in December 2014. A memorial service was held for him in the chapel of Magdalen College, Oxford on, 3rd Oct.

The news came to us from his wife, Gwyneth who said, "We were married at St Mary's in July 1965, by which time David had been teaching at Warwick School for a year and begun to sing with the choir. Over the following 4 years he was much involved with local music making, at school, with Warwick Singers, and, I think, John Cooper in Leamington. He also played the organ for village churches when needed. A highlight must have been the trip to America with St Mary's choir in 1967. We moved to Cheltenham in 1969".

Guild Vice President, Nick Hodges said, "I had the great pleasure of singing with David in both St Mary's Choir and Warwick Singers. Not only was he a very fine bass, he was also a very generous hearted man who gave much support and encouragement to the young gentlemen of the choir".

A life member of the Guild and retaining a great love of Warwick and St Mary's, he was never able to join us at AGMs as they always clashed with those of Canterbury Cathedral, where he had been a chorister.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Chairman's column

In October, we were pleased to welcome Mark Shepherd back to St Mary's for our annual reunion and Evensong. It is always a most enjoyable occasion and, the opportunity to sing Evensong with the choir, in one of the finest parish churches in the country, is a privilege as well as being a lot of fun.

We had a good turn-out for the AGM but we would like to see more return from all eras so, put Saturday 15 October 2016 in your diaries and make a point of being there. George Bevan has agreed to return for the day. George was a chorister at St Mary's and he is currently Director of Music at Monkton Combe School. He is a fine choir trainer – I met George when he was teaching at Rugby – and I am sure that it will be a most enjoyable day.

On Sunday 27 December we are again having our informal Christmas gathering at the Zetland and I very much hope to see many of you there for a drink during the evening – any time from 7.30pm onwards.

Colin Edwards, Chairman

Xchoristers' Xmas Drinkx



Sunday 27 December
From 7.30pm

Zetland Arms, Church Street



The Guild of Ex-Choristers

The Parish Office, Collegiate Church of St Mary, Old Square, Warwick, CV34 4AB

Email: exchoristers@stmaryswarwick.org.uk

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