

ECOCA Newsletter

February 2022



Contents



Editor's Letter

Message from ECOCA Chairman Charles Roberts

Stone Me - Gordon Finally Retires!

ECOCA Reunion

Lucian Nethsingha Obituary

ECOCA Members News

Cathedral News

Safeguarding

John Thomas Obituary

Dear Members,

Welcome to the ECOCA Newsletter of February 2022. It has been two years since the last newsletter as we had to cancel our last two Reunions due to the pandemic. I was hoping to publish a newsletter in 2021 but my professional life in Adult Social Care prevented this.

We have lost many ECOCA members over the last two years, who we will remember at our Reunion. The life of the Cathedral Choir goes on, and it will be wonderful to finally see old friends on Easter Monday.

As always, I would be very happy to receive any news or contributions for future editions. Please feel free to contact me at anytime with your news or ideas:

Matthew Ryan

Email: matthewryan06@yahoo.co.uk

Top Floor Flat

8A Islingword Street

Brighton BN2 9UR

BN2 9UR

Message from ECOCA

Chairman Charles Roberts



Dear Old Choristers,

At the time of writing (October 2021) we have just held our first face to face ECOCA Committee meeting since early 2020, and I must say it felt really good to be back in business and to see friends and colleagues properly since the lockdowns. I think everyone felt the same, and we have a real desire to get on with the business of the Association once again in the way we have always done.

Chief among the items of business on our agenda was the proposed Reunion in 2022 (18th April – save the date) which we hope will be a great moment to bring us all back together and re-cement our ties with the Cathedral and each other. It will also give us the opportunity (at last) to pay tribute to Gordon Pike properly following his retirement, and plans are already underfoot to make this a very special occasion.

Some of you may have seen that Gordon is to be immortalised in stone soon, and his face will look down from the Cathedral ceiling to oversee all the goings-on below! That is a great tribute from the Cathedral. I'm not sure we can top that, but I do want us to offer Gordon a fitting gift, and while I have received a number of generous donations, I would want that to double at least before we get to Easter Monday.

On a very different note, recent circumstances have brought into focus that we do not have any kind of ECOCA Safeguarding Policy, which these days is a somewhat grave omission.



In order to rectify this we have agreed provisionally that we align ourselves with the Cathedral's very robust policy and I have received excellent advice and help from their Safeguarding Department. Elsewhere in this bulletin you will find details of how to contact the relevant people should you have a safeguarding concern in the future. There are clear lines of communication and process which I hope you will find reassuring. These arrangements will need to be ratified at our annual meeting on the 18th April.

It struck me as I sat in Evensong before our meeting, that for me it was 60 years almost to the day since I first took up my chorister place in the Cathedral. These are important milestones and memories, and are the things that bring us back each year. And don't forget that we are also contributing every term through our Bursary Fund to the welfare and aid of our current choristers who have come through the pandemic remarkably well, and are the ones who are continuing the choral tradition we so enjoy and value. Mr Noon is irrepressibly optimistic for the future!

With my very best wishes,

Yours,

Charles Roberts (1961-1967)

Stone Me - Gordon Finally Retires!



Eagle-eyed ECOCA members may have spotted an article in The Times newspaper on 1st October 2021 about Gordon Pike's retirement from Exeter Cathedral.

The Times reported that Gordon was to be honoured with a stone effigy of his head on the 14th-century ceiling of the Cathedral where he has sung for 50 years. The facial features and luxuriant beard of Gordon Pike will be immortalised in stone and installed in the Cathedral.

The article described how Gordon began his association with the Cathedral as a boy chorister in 1963, singing until 1967 before returning full time in 1974, performing for the last time in 2020.

Gordon was due to retire on Easter Monday 2020, but the pandemic delayed plans to mark his retirement until his farewell service on 19th September 2021.

A clay model of Gordon's head was unveiled at the celebration, which was the first he knew of the plan.



Gordon said that he was gobsmacked that the Cathedral would immortalise his features in stone: "I just thought, 'What's this?', then realised what it was. I do feel quite proud, having thought about it since, that they're going to do something like that to mark my farewell from the Cathedral."

Director of Music Timothy Noon commented: "In addition to his steadfast and utterly reliable presence in the choir, Gordon has also been an inspirational teacher to countless generations of choristers, a fabulous mentor to choral scholars, and a wonderfully supportive friend and colleague. His support of every aspect of Cathedral life, and his unparalleled institutional knowledge are such that, in his case, it would be fair to say he is irreplaceable."

ECOCA Reunion Easter Monday 18th April 2022



The ECOCA Easter Monday Reunion in 2022 promises to be a memorable day for Old Choristers and members after three years without our annual celebration.

Our Reunion in 2020 was intended to mark the final services for Gordon Pike after 50 years as a treble, tenor and punctator. This celebration had to be postponed with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are now able to plan our Reunion with more certainty, and look forward to welcoming Old Choristers and their families to our Morning Eucharist service and Evensong. Our Reunion dinner will be held in the Mercure Southgate Hotel, which is a short walk from the Cathedral and has room for 120 dinner guests.

We hope to be joined by people who have known Gordon for many years, and can no doubt tell a few stories about his life and times at Exeter Cathedral. Do book your place if you would like to attend this memorable evening.



Lucian Nethsingha

Obituary



Canon Arthur Mawson. First published in the *Church Times* on 12th March 2021.



Lucian Nethsingha was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1936, and grew up in the country that he always referred to as Ceylon. At St Thomas' College, he was picked out for his outstanding talent by the chaplain and choirmaster, Canon Roy Lin, who, having been chaplain of King's College, Cambridge, encouraged Lucian's parents to let Lucian continue his studies in England. Lucian had won the Gold Medals for piano from both Trinity College (1952) and the Associated Board (1953), and, armed with these, he arrived in England in 1954, aged just 18.

Just a few days later, having recovered from a three-week voyage and seasickness, he was auditioned for a place at the Royal College of Music to study organ. He was accepted and was there for the next three years. One of his tutors for composition was Herbert Howells, who described him as one of his most musical pupils. This remarkable student then won a place at King's College, Cambridge, to read music.

On graduation in 1959, he moved to St Michael's, Tenbury, where he enhanced an already fine reputation for the best in church music.



While at Tenbury, he married Jane at the London church where they had met, and so started the marriage that was to be the mainstay of his life. They shared the Christian faith in which both had been raised, and their personalities complemented each other in a very positive way. Three years later, their son, Andrew, was born, followed by their daughter, Alison, five years later.

In 1973, Lucian gave the Dean and Chapter an unusually easy decision when he applied to the Cathedral at Exeter. They never regretted their decision to appoint him Organist and Master of Choristers, and he stayed there until retirement in 1999.



The post carries with it diocesan duties, and, each year, the Diocesan Choral Festival meant he spent much time travelling to parish churches around the diocese to rehearse their choirs. He was enthusiastically received, and the festival flourished.

He also conducted the Exeter Choral Society for their annual concerts. This large chorus and orchestra of amateurs and the weekly rehearsals before concerts were especially demanding for any conductor, but, in the end, the results were good and attracted large audiences.

It was, however, the choir that was central to his work, and he chose carefully the back row of the choir at Exeter, a combination of lay vicars, older permanent members, and choral scholars, members of the university who stay for the duration of their courses.



Over the years, he built up a camaraderie and team spirit which was tangible. He expected the best and a high level of commitment, and they responded. With the boys, he established a discipline that they witness to as having lasted a lifetime. Every service had to be as well sung as they could make it, including every weekday evensong with often a very small congregation. I heard him tell the boys "You are singing for God not the congregation." His own commitment to each and every service gave them an inspiring example. The result was a level of excellence which was there throughout his time; conducting the choir with only limited gestures, he could control this superb sound with often the movement of a single finger.

In my nearly 20 years at the cathedral, and including tours abroad with the choir, I never heard a negative comment on the music, and I heard many positive ones, including from the Queen, who, after the Royal Maundy Service at Exeter in 1983, particularly praised the music. Church music can be very moving and, occasionally, a piece will transform into a window into heaven. When Lucian was around, the occasions seemed more frequent. At one recording session, a choirman rebuked a choirboy whom he saw crying. The reply was: "But, sir, it was so beautiful."

After his retirement, he maintained the links and came to the Easter Monday choir reunions, which were always well attended. He and Jane returned to Cambridge and St Benet's, which had played a part in their earlier life. They enjoyed their family, but still found time for some foreign travel. When Jane died after a prolonged illness in 2015, he had to live without his most precious friend; thanks to the support of his family, however, he maintained an active life until his death, with her dressing gown on the bed in the hospice, surrounded by the family he was so justly proud of. He died on 12 February, aged 84, and leaves his son, Andrew, with his wife, Lucy, his daughter, Alison, and his grandchildren, Emily, Peter, and Helena.

ECOCA Members News



Weddings

Cressida Peers (ECOCA Committee member) and Timothy Parsons (Former Assistant Director of Music) were married in Exeter Cathedral on 30th July 2021. The music for the service included Wesley's *Blessed Be the God and Father, The Wedding* by Eric Whitacre, and a setting of the Lord's Prayer by the groom.

Charlotte Smith (ECOCA Committee member) and Philip Longhurst were married Exeter Cathedral on 7th September 2021. The music for the service included Parry's *I Was Glad, Panis Angelicus* by Cesar Franck, and Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine*.

Many congratulations to Cressida, Timothy, Charlotte and Philip.

In Memoriam

We have received notice that the following ECOCA members have passed away in the last two years.

- John Attfield
- Edward Brice-Bennett
- Eric Dare
- Christian Larder
- Andrew Moseley
- Lucian Nethsingha
- Donald Rutter
- John Thomas (ECOCA Committee member)

We will remember our departed friends and colleagues at our Reunion on Easter Monday.

Cathedral News

New Assistant Director of Music



Exeter Cathedral has appointed James Anderson-Besant as Assistant Director of Music from September 2021, succeeding Timothy Parsons following his appointment as Director of Music at St Edmundsbury Cathedral .

James has spent the last four years as Organ Scholar and then Assistant Organist at St John's College Cambridge, where he graduated in 2020 with a starred first degree in Music. In his role with St John's Choir he has accompanied the daily round of services, regular broadcasts, recordings, and tours under the direction of Andrew Nethsingha (former chorister of Exeter Cathedral) and also assisted in the training of the choristers.

James said: "I am absolutely delighted to have been appointed Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral. It will be a privilege to work within the renowned music department and have the opportunity to contribute to the Cathedral's rich and varied musical tradition. Everyone I met at the interview was very friendly and welcoming, and I can't wait to immerse myself in the life of the building and its music-making."

New Organ Scholars



Exeter Cathedral has appointment Laurence John as organ scholar for the academic year 2021-2022.

Lawrence was previously the organist of Pusey House, Oxford, and is also reading for a Master's degree in Musicology at Oxford University. During his undergraduate studies he was organ scholar at The Queen's College. He is a prize-winning Associate of the Royal College of Organists.

Lawrence said: "I am immensely looking forward to joining the community at Exeter Cathedral. To make music and worship in such a beautiful building, and to work with such skilled musicians, will be a great privilege. I am very excited to make Exeter my home for a year."

Director of Music Timothy Noon said: "We are thrilled to have appointed Laurence at this significant moment for the development of music at the Cathedral, as we emerge from the Covid related limitations and difficulties of the past year."



Alexander Finlayson-Brown has been appointed Organ Scholar at Exeter Cathedral for the 2022-23 academic year.

He will join the Cathedral's musical team fresh from completing his A' Levels at Eton College and will have the opportunity to play, conduct and sing, as well as

assist in the organ loft at services held in Exeter Cathedral each week. He will also take part in broadcasts, concerts, recordings and tours.

He arrived at Eton as a music scholar from King's College, Cambridge in 2017 (where he was a chorister). Alex, who has a particular interest in 20th century French organ music, hopes to return to King's College as an organ scholar in 2023 to read Classics, and ultimately he dreams of becoming a director of music.

Alex said: "I am absolutely delighted to be taking up the organ scholar position at Exeter Cathedral next year and can't wait until I start. I really look forward to working with the Choir, Mr Noon, Mr Anderson-Besant, Canon Mustard, and getting to know everyone in the Cathedral community."

Safeguarding



Our Chairman Charles Roberts reported in his message that ECOCA needs to implement an interim safeguarding policy, and agree these arrangements at our next Annual General Meeting on Easter Monday, 18th April 2022.

These are the interim arrangements for reporting any safeguarding concerns prior to our Annual General Meeting.

If you are concerned for the safety or wellbeing of a child or vulnerable adult you may wish to contact the relevant local authority, or seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Contact details can be found on the Diocese of Exeter website at

<https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/safeguarding/safeguarding-team/>

Should you have any safeguarding concerns, recent or non-recent, relating to Exeter's Cathedral, Cathedral Choir or Diocese, you can also contact the Diocesan and Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor directly and confidentially at:

Charlie Pitman

Diocesan and Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor

Tel: 01392 345 909

Mobile: 07889 542 640

Email: Charles.pitman@exeter.anglican.org.

John Thomas Obituary



John Ashton Thomas (known as John Thomas at Exeter Cathedral School) was a British composer, arranger, conductor and orchestrator who contributed to the Oscar-winning score of *Black Panther* and worked on more than 160 other films, has died. He was 60.

John's death 4th October 2021 was announced by music publisher Manners McDade and Trinity Laban, the London college where he had taught since 1992 as its composition department's longest-serving member.

An accomplished pianist with a background in jazz, John collaborated with composer John Powell (his onetime Trinity College of Music classmate) for two decades on nearly four dozen films, including *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) for which Powell received an Oscar nomination for best score.

The pair also teamed on the Paul Greengrass-directed *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004)

United 93 (2006) and *The Bourne Ultimatum*

(2007); three *Ice Age* films and two *Rio* films

helmed by Carlos Saldanha; *Happy Feet* and

Kung Fu movies; and *The Adventures of Pluto Nash* (2002)

The Italian Job (2003) *XMen: The Last Stand* (2006) and

Solo: A Star Wars Story (2018) among other efforts.



John partnered with composer James Newton Howard on films including *The Last Airbender* (2010) *The Bourne Legacy* (2012) and instalments of the *Hunger Games*, *Fantastic Beasts* and *Maleficent* franchises.

More recently, he worked on *Captain Marvel* (2019) *Dora and the Lost City of Gold* (2019) *The Call of the Wild* (2020) *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* (2021) and *Operation Mincemeat*, set for release in 2022.

He also wrote arrangements for the Oscar ceremony for several years.

Born on 28th March 1961 in Plymouth, John was a chorister at Exeter Cathedral, then studied at Trinity College and at Goldsmiths College at the University of London.

He served as an orchestrator on *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992) and Thomas and the *Magic Railroad* (2000) before working with Powell for the first time on *Rat Race* (2001).

He and composer Ludwig Göransson collaborated on *Tropic Thunder* (2008), then reunited for *Black Panther* (2018) and *Trolls World Tour* (2020).

He recently conducted for Christine McVie, Diana Ross, Michael Buble and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

In 2004, Thomas was awarded an honorary associateship from the Royal Academy of Music, where he had taught jazz aural and transcription before leaving to pursue opportunities in Hollywood.

The Academy of Music's Head of Jazz,
Nick Smart, paid tribute to John:



"We were deeply shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death of a dear colleague and friend, John Ashton Thomas. John was a phenomenal musician and pedagogue, as well as a hugely inspirational and popular figure during his many years teaching in the Jazz Department.

He ignited endless musical possibilities for generations of our students. Unbound by stylistic confines he celebrated and created music across all genres as though it was the most natural endeavour in the world.

John stepped down from his Academy post as the much-loved teacher of Jazz Aural and Transcription to pursue career opportunities in Los Angeles, but he remained in close contact with all of us here and continued to visit and teach on occasions.

An award-winning composer, orchestrator and conductor, John's passing leaves an irreplaceable void in the music industry. But above all, as a wonderful human being and mentor to aspiring young artists, John possessed the rarest kind of passion, generosity and skill from which all of us can only feel supremely lucky to have benefitted.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family, friends and colleagues around the world."

