

ECOCA Newsletter

February 2018



Exeter
Cathedral

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Dear Members,

Welcome to the ECOCA Newsletter February 2018. It has been a further year of change for Exeter Cathedral, with the arrival of the new Dean and President of ECOCA.

I am hoping to make a change to the way we communicate news in the future, using email to stay in touch a little more regularly. If you subscribe to receive this email then I would hope to send an electronic newsletter around July, as well as a February edition.

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:

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ECOCA Reunion:

Gordon Pike, Hon Treasurer



Easter Monday 2017 was like putting the icing on top of a big cake. All the services through Holy Week had been well attended and it was good to see that over forty Old choristers had gathered by 10.30am for a rehearsal with Timothy Noon, the director of Music, and all the choristers. The music was Schubert *Mass in G* and Elgar's *Ave Verum*.



Jonathan Titchin read the Epistle and our Chairman Reverend Charles Roberts provided the Intercessions. He remembered some Old choristers who were unable to attend owing to illness. He mentioned Marjorie Cotton, who passed away in December 2016 aged 100 years, and was the wife of Frank Cotton, who had been Secretary and Treasurer of the Association in the sixties and seventies. He is always remembered by the present choristers when they play skittles to win the Frank Cotton Memorial Shield. Cantoris won the Frank Cotton Memorial Shield this year for bowling the highest scores.

He also mentioned Harry Rann, a former Succentor of the Cathedral in the sixties and seventies, who passed away in March 2017 at the grand age of 99 years old. I remember him for the cream teas he and his wife and family put on for us after Evensong on a Sunday afternoon.

Charles also mentioned the recent death of a former Girl Chorister Naomi Sourbut. Her funeral was to be in the Cathedral the following week after Easter. I was able to sing with the Buckfast Abbey Choir and the Nave was full of people who had known Naomi over her relatively short life. I must say I thought the Acting Precentor Bishop Martin Shaw with the help of her parents and Richard Arkwright, the Director of Music for the Buckfast Abbey Choir, had put together a very moving and emotional service to celebrate her time on earth. May she now rest in peace.



After Eucharist twenty seven Old Choristers joined the Headmaster for drinks in his study and then lunch in the Chantry. The Senior Choristers did their best to look after us and take our plates away and bring back a variety of sweets. The Treacle Sponge and hot custard went down very well.

It was soon time to be back in the Cathedral rehearsing for Evensong. The first lesson was read by Cressida Peers, and the second less by Reverend Canon John Pedlar. For the anthem, *I saw the Lord* by Stainer, we needed to be split into two choirs. So the Director of Music Timothy Noon asked everyone to remember which side they used to sing on. By the time the rehearsal started over seventy Old Choristers had turned up and were being encouraged to sing with sensitivity and on the beat, and occasionally quite loud.

During the service I have to say *Noble in B Minor* was performed to a high standard and the Old Choristers were allowed to sing the section '*He remembering*' on the own without any of the present choir. Who knows next year we may be allowed to sing the psalm. Splitting into two choirs seems to work for the anthem and the performance was very exciting for everyone there.

There were over three hundred and twenty in the congregation sat in in the quire to hear this Evensong, and it was a great way to finish off the Easter celebrations before having a break.



We went to the Chapter House for a cup of tea and a cream scone before retiring to the Pearson room in the Cloisters for the Annual General Meeting at 4.45pm. It was great to see some of the younger generation in the twenties attending. They realised that maybe in ten to fifteen years they may have to organise the reunion, and that the Association has serious amount of money to control for the benefit of the present day choristers.

As Treasurer of ECOCA I was feeling very happy because all my accounts were audited up to the end of 2016. It has taken a while but now I hope to remain up to date. My one concern is that the General Account has only just been big enough to deal with all demands of the last four years. One example is the cream tea on Easter Monday. When volunteers did it, it would only cost approximately £250. The tea done by the Cathedral Refectory was over £990 in 2016, and this year £810. I know times are hard but this is just throwing money away. The committee have discussed this topic and come up with a better solution. This could not go on or else the General Working Fund would be swallowed up and I was afraid bankruptcy would occur.

After the Annual General Meeting the next event was the Champagne Reception provided by two Old Choristers at 6.30pm in the St.Olaves Hotel garden. The weather was sunny and everyone enjoyed being able to sit out, relax and talk, and sip a really good Champagne.

It was so good that many of us kept recharging our classes not realising the price per bottle was £39.50. I know the bill was over £400 and that the two Old Choristers paid it wondering how sixty people could have drunk so much. May I publicly thank the two Old Choristers for their generosity and it was a brilliant idea.

Over sixty of us sat down to dinner and everything was going well until the food for the main course was served on cold plates, and there were no vegetables on the plates. I have to say that my meat was tender and did taste lovely, even if the plate was cold. Everyone survived this problem but this was not good. I returned to St. Olaves Hotel the following day at 12pm to meet the owner and discuss the dinner. I have to say the owner Simon was apologetic and I did get a refund of £500.00, which helped to pay the very expensive tea bill.

After dinner we had a raffle, and the younger generation sold tickets to the value of £304.00. The first prize was a lovely bowl donated by Nicholas Pedlar, one of our recently appointed Vice Presidents. The first prize was won by Peter King, former Organist of Bath Abbey, who was our guest speaker. He had entertained us very well with a humorous speech and gave the toast to the ECOCA Association.

Our Chairman thanked Peter King and brought the dinner to a close. As always there was plenty to chat about and some of us did not leave the venue until about 11.30pm. I was the last person off the premises. On the whole, the reunion had gone very well, but there had been a few problems and these will be dealt with before the 2018 reunion.

Remembering Naomi Sourbut



Many Old Choristers attending our reunion in 2017 were shocked and saddened by the recent death of Naomi Sourbut, whose funeral was held in the Cathedral on 20th April 2017.

Gordon Pike has written of his experience of singing at Naomi's funeral in his account of our reunion.

Naomi was 26 years old when she unexpectedly passed away, requiring an inquest into her death. Speaking after the inquest Naomi's father Reverend Philip Sourbut paid tribute to his daughter:

"Naomi was a vibrant, intelligent, beautiful and very caring person who often put other people's needs before her own. She had a great sense of humour. She was a gifted musician and an accomplished singer with a deep love of choral music. We have been deeply moved by the many tributes we have received and would like to thank those who supported Naomi."

"We are saddened that mental health services, particularly for eating disorders, are so poorly funded and we very much hope that future tragedies can be avoided."

‘Keep Singing’: Charles Roberts, ECOCA Chair



Everyone likes a good “reminisce” and maybe that’s why we enjoy our Easter Monday’s so much. It is now 23 years since I heard the dulcet tones of Gordon Pike’s voice calling to me across the Cathedral Close when I happened to be in Exeter on a visit. I hadn’t been in Exeter for some 25 years yet incredibly we recognised each other immediately.

My orders were simple – come to the next Reunion! As I look back on that chance meeting, I realise that it was a pivotal moment for me. And I’m not just talking about my rapid rise onto the committee and then into the Chairman’s seat (where I appeared to have remained for the past 14 years!) but rather that sense of reconnection to my own history that we so easily forget, yet which helped to shape who we became, and what we decided to do.

As I look back it was clear that music would be my “thing”. Not necessarily as a singer, for while I managed my Grade 8, it was never my most natural talent. But music would be my main pursuit for sure, and while at music college my trumpet teacher dismissed me after just one term (“You’ll never make a brass player”, said Mr Gulley – as it happened, very prophetic!), nevertheless there began my love affair with the most unlikely of instruments, the Double Bass.



If you don’t know me, you need to be aware that I came to school at the age of 8 standing a modest 3ft 6in, and have never managed more than 5ft 5in! Nevertheless that was to be my career for the next 15 years or so, a professional career I thoroughly enjoyed, taking me to Scotland, South Africa and more recently Germany. While they say that travel broadens the mind, I believe that music does the same, indeed it is a wonderful means through which to keep the mind active.

That my full time career was replaced by a vocation in the church has not prevented me from continuing my playing – a bishop once told me that playing would make me a better priest! I hope that is true. But like the rest of us, it all began in those choir stalls in our magnificent cathedral a lifetime ago, and it is on Easter Monday that we rekindle that same love affair with music that launched us in the first place. So my advice (to misquote a well-known TV catch phrase) – ‘Keep singing’!

Charles Roberts (1961-1967)

Choir News: BBC Evensong

Exeter Cathedral's Choristers performed to a much larger audience than usual in January 2018 when the BBC came to town.



On 17th January 2018 the choir was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3's "Choral Evensong" programme, which comes from a different Cathedral, church or chapel around the UK each week. Director of Music Timothy Noon explains:

"The daily service of Evensong is at the heart of the choir's work in the city, and during the week they sing for congregations ranging in size from 5 to 500 people."

"Choral Evensong was first broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 1926 and now attracts up to a quarter of a million listeners each week – it's great to give people around the world an opportunity to 'drop in' on a service here in Exeter."

The service broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 was also made available on the BBC iPlayer.

John Turner Retires:

Gordon Pike, Punctator



After forty one years in the choir, John Turner has decided to retire. When he joined the choir in 1976 John was a student at St. Luke's College and he sang beside Brian Hann as Cantoris Bass II. Since then he has sung under three Masters of Choristers / Directors of Music: Lucian Nethsingha, Andrew Millington and Timothy Noon.

Over the years John intoned the Responses, and sung the Gospel sentence in the middle of the Alleluia at Eucharist. John toured extensively with the choir in Europe, Russia and America. No matter how much teasing happened in the back row, John could always be relied upon. He will be missed.



John Turner, far left, in the snow February 1978

Introducing the new Dean Very Reverend Jonathan Greener



ECOCA welcomes our new President and 71st Dean of Exeter, the Very Reverend Jonathan Greener, previously Dean of Wakefield in the Diocese of Leeds.

The appointment was announced on 19th September 2017, and members of the Cathedral Choir were present to sing a musical welcome. Jonathan is pictured here with some of the choristers.



As Dean of Wakefield, Jonathan has overseen the most complete makeover of any Cathedral in recent times, raising £7.5 million and completely transforming the interior, which had been untouched since the 1870s.

Jonathan's wife Pamela also rose to fame for writing and singing a VAT ditty, warning that the then Chancellor George Osborne's proposals to end VAT relief on repairs to historic buildings would plunge church restoration projects into financial crisis. Her song went viral (and is still available on YouTube) and the ensuing outcry forced the government into a U-turn.

Bishop Robert said: *"I am delighted with the appointment of Jonathan Greener as our new Dean and look forward to working with him. He has a strong track record of running a Cathedral, of fundraising and of re-ordering its interior imaginatively. His experience in Wakefield makes him ideally placed to take our Cathedral into its next chapter, serving the people of Devon."*



Jonathan said: *"I am delighted and humbled to be invited to serve as the next Dean of Exeter. This is a fantastic Cathedral which speaks of the glory of God and the job of those leading the Cathedral is to look after it on behalf of the people of Devon, and of the generations who come after us. There has been a Christian presence on this site for 1,600 years and I feel privileged to be part of the next stage of its journey."*

"I am looking forward to working closely with the Bishop and the Cathedral staff and the wonderful volunteers, who give so much of their time to keep the Cathedral open and serving visitors, worshippers and those who need a quiet and sacred space in their lives."

Jonathan has served for ten years as Dean of Wakefield, overseeing the transformation of the building and many new initiatives: introducing a new coffee shop, gift shop and Visitor Information Point, and introducing a 'Messy Cathedral' for families. Previously, he was Archdeacon of Pontefract, and he also chaired the Wakefield Diocesan Board of Education for four years. He also chairs the Sponsors of the Trinity Academy in Halifax.

Jonathan is an executive member of the Association of English Cathedrals and is also a Church Commissioner.

Jonathan was installed as Dean on Sunday 26th November 2017.

Thank you Bishop Martin Shaw



Old Choristers returning for our reunion in 2017 found a familiar face acting as Precentor of the Cathedral.

Bishop Martin and his family came to Exeter Cathedral in 1981 as Succentor, after which he became the Diocesan Missioner.

In 1989 he became the Adviser on Spirituality in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.



In 2002 Martin returned to King's College Cambridge where he had been chaplain in the 1970s to take responsibilities as Dean. Martin was a Residentiary Canon and Precentor of St Edmundsbury Cathedral before he returned to Scotland as Bishop of Argyll and The Isles in 2004.

Retiring in 2009 he then came to Exeter as an Assistant Bishop, mainly involved in Spiritual Direction. In 2017 he took on the work of the Precentor of the Cathedral. Martin is a singer and writes on spirituality. He is married to Elspeth, with a son Ben who was a chorister in Exeter Cathedral in the 1980s, now running his own Event Management business. His daughter Madeleine and son-in-law Eammon are also singers.

Bishop Martin will stand down as acting Precentor shortly before Easter 2018. We wish him well in his retirement and thank him for his service to Exeter Cathedral over the years.

Appointment of new Canon Precentor, Reverend James Mustard



The new Canon Precentor will be the Revd James Mustard. James graduated in Music at Exeter University, where his lecturers included Paul Morgan, Organist Emeritus. He was a choral scholar at the Cathedral under the direction of Lucian Nethsingha.

James trained for ordained ministry at Westcott House in Cambridge. He read Theology at the University of Cambridge and went to Yale Divinity School and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, where he studied liturgy and ethics.

After ordination in Norwich in 2005, he served in the parish of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, where he was also chaplain to the Theatre Royal and chaplain to the Sea Cadets. In 2008, he moved to London to be Assistant Priest of St Peter's Eaton Square. During this time he completed an M.A. in Systematic Theology at King's College London.

James is currently Rector of East Barnet, a lively congregation in an ancient church building in modern North London. James will be installed during Evensong on Palm Sunday, 25th March at 4pm. All are welcome to attend the service to welcome James back to Exeter in his new role.



Christmas Market



Exeter's Christmas market has become a popular part of the region's Christmas celebrations.

Thousands of people from across Devon and beyond have visited the event, which for some people has become as much a part of the Christmas experience as carols, trees or gifts.



This year Exeter Cathedral brought the management of the market 'in-house', with Old Chorister Cressida Peers acting as Christmas Market Manager. Cressida helped take the event in a different direction, giving more opportunities to support local business and performers. Whilst there was still a continental feel to the market, businesses from the South West occupied over 60% of the chalets.

The layout of the market also changed to encourage people to the front of the Cathedral. That area also included a bandstand, built on the square outside the main entrance, to allow local musicians to play to the crowds visiting the Cathedral Green.

Local traders were also involved in some of the market's key infrastructure and features. All the chalets for this year's event were purchased by the Cathedral from Sheds Direct Devon, based in Broadclyst, just outside Exeter. They will be stored locally and re-used in future years.



Exeter Cathedral Events and Christmas Market Manager Cressida Peers said that the market this year had been a big success. Cressida said she feels that the Cathedral can build on the success of this year's Christmas market and look forward to making some changes next year.

"Overall the feedback has been brilliant; people have enjoyed the new design and layout. People have also had more positive feedback about the local feel, and the local traders getting involved" she said.

"Next year we are looking forward to seeing what traders apply. We are listening to what people are saying. We want to build on the success of this year and make the changes that are necessary, but we feel like we have done a great model in good stead for next year."



