

A photograph of the Exeter Cathedral facade, showing the intricate Gothic architecture with its large rose window and multiple spires. The sky is overcast and grey.

ECOCA Newsletter

October 2012

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Members

Welcome to the ECOCA newsletter October 2012. At the third time of asking I have finally managed to produce a newsletter in the Autumn following our annual Easter Monday Reunion!

I would be very happy to receive any news or contributions for the newsletter, as this is your opportunity to tell us what you're doing. I would also be grateful for ideas about what you would like included in your newsletter so that we can continue to improve it in the future. Please contact me at anytime with your news or ideas:

Matthew Ryan

Email: matthewryan06@yahoo.co.uk

Top Floor Flat

8A Islingword Street

Tel: 07980 853 671

Brighton

BN2 9UR

Exeter Cathedral 2012: Gordon Pike

This year does seem to have been a slightly special one with the Flower Festival in July and the West Wing project being opened with two new Song Schools and a new Sacristy for the clergy. The library has been brought into the 21st century and all the valuable books are being looked after properly. I never expected to move from the old Song School even though I heard plans were being made. Well it has happened, and all the music has been moved to the Boys Song School and the girl choristers have their Song School instead of using Kalendar Hall. The next big development will be the organ being cleaned and put back together with some modern improvements. There are also plans for the development of the Cloister area and Archives area. Getting rid of all the asbestos is the first job.



Who knows what will happen next? Not me! I am just the Punctator of the Cathedral Choir who enjoys singing and hopefully can do a few more years before it is time to retire. I have a feeling that the next few years could be quite exciting, especially with the ECOCA Golden Jubilee in 2014 and the National Federation of Old Choristers coming to Exeter from 3rd to 5th July 2015. Please do keep in touch so that you know what is going on.

Chorister Installations: Gordon Pike

Sunday 23rd September was a very special day for Girl and Boy Choristers and for new members of the back row.



At Mattins we had the Investiture of Senior Girl Choristers. They were Kary Armstrong, Georgina Colville, and Freya Wiessler.

We also had the installation of a Girl Chorister Maria Ling. This was all done by the Dean Jonathan Draper assisted by the Precentor Canon Turner.





There was a bring-and-eat lunch arranged at Hall House by the Matthew Locke Society and the Headmaster provided the wine and soft drinks. Some of the Gentlemen of the Choir were able to attend and had plenty to eat and drink.



At Evensong we had the Investiture of Senior Boy Choristers. They were Oran Friar and William Partridge.

We also had the installation of Boy Choristers Rupert Dean, Sebastian Dean, Taki-Ejima-Dalley, and Rufus Stanier.

There was also the installation of five new Choral Scholars: Oliver Butler (Tenor) James Eader (Alto) Michael Graham (Tenor and Organ Scholar) Peter Hale (Bass) and Jonathan Wood (Tenor).





Once this was completed we sang Rubbra in A Flat and *Sing Joyfully* by Mundy. I have to say Dec Bass I (Matthew Cann) was on very good form and sang the solos with considerable ease. The day ended with a cup of tea and refreshments in the Chapter House and the presentation of Friends ties to all the Choral Scholars so that they can wear them on Sundays and on outings in the Diocese.

Chorister Open Day: Andrew Millington



Do you know a boy or girl who loves music and would like to see what it is like to be a chorister for a day?

Following previous successful Chorister Open Days, Exeter Cathedral is hosting a similar opportunity for children on Saturday 17th November 2012. This is open to boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 9 who enjoy singing. It is a great chance for young people to be encouraged and coached by professional musicians in an inspirational setting.

The children will have a great time with the current choristers, rehearsing and then singing with them in the Cathedral during Evensong. They will hear all about the choristers' daily routine, radio and television broadcasts, recordings and tours, and have the opportunity to ask lots of questions. No previous experience is required; all are welcome to attend this day of discovery and information. There is an optional programme for parents – please do attend as much or as little of the day as you would like to.



Although we are keen to attract potential choristers, more importantly, we hope that the day will be an exciting and informal opportunity for children to see behind the scenes and learn all about the rich and varied life of a chorister, as well as being a unique chance to sing alongside the choristers in Exeter's Cathedral.

There are no charges for the day and lunch is included. Further details and an application form are provided on <http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk>

ECOCA Reunion 2012: Gordon Pike

On Easter Monday there was over fifty Old Choristers singing Jackson in G at the Eucharist, and by Evensong there were nearly ninety choristers ready to sing Stanford in B flat and Bairstow's *Blessed City Heavenly Salem*. What a wonderful gathering, and the quality of the singing was pretty good. As always, the quire was packed to bursting by the congregation, witnessing another great Old Chorister Reunion. The first lesson was read by Katie Tanner and the second lesson by Dr. Jonathan Hudson.

After Evensong, there was plenty of talking and renewing old acquaintances. By 7.30pm a hundred of us had moved to St. Olaves Court for our Annual Dinner. The Arch deacon of Barnstable David Gunn-Johnson was our guest speaker and the food was delicious. Unfortunately some of our guests who were invited to the dinner became a little too noisy and made it difficult for some of us to hear what the guest speaker had to say. This will not happen again because we will hire a microphone for the speeches. We look forward to seeing you all next Year, and many years to come!



What's the difference – Bursary vs Wesley: Charles Roberts, Chairman

Confused.com?? Recently it has become clear that there is confusion about the association's two bursary funds and their relative purposes. If you are in that camp, then let me explain.

One of the great gifts Exeter Cathedral Old Choristers' Association has to offer is through its Bursary Fund. For many years we have been awarding bursaries to existing choristers where there has been unexpected financial need during their tenure, in a bid to help those choristers remain in the choir and at the school. While we are just one of many funds to which parents of existing choristers can turn, we nevertheless believe this is an important and significant benefit we, as an association, can offer.



Wesley

In 2004, at our Ruby Anniversary, we launched an appeal to establish a second fund for choristers, and it is here where some confusion lies. The Wesley Fund is targeted specifically at talented 'prospective' choristers for whom the financial implications of becoming a chorister are a potential barrier to them taking up an offer at the school.

The vision was for a ten year plan to raise a capital sum of around £100,000 from which we could draw interest annually. The current financial squeeze has slowed this vision considerably, but we continue to put all our fund raising efforts into the Wesley Fund, and ask you to



support it as fully as you can. The Bursary Fund on the other hand is financially secure.

To sum up, the Bursary Fund is for 'existing choristers' facing financial hardship while they are at the school to enable them to remain in the choir. The Wesley Fund is for talented 'prospective choristers' accepted by the school for the future, but whose finances prevent them from taking up the offer of that place.

The Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations Annual Festival 2015

A word of encouragement from Geoffrey Mitchell (Vice-President: F.C.O.C.A.)

Our Exeter Old Choristers' Association was formed in 1964, as I reported in my last Newsletter article: then membership of The Federation was granted in 1967, and in 1983 we hosted our first Annual Festival. Each year, with the exception of the two World Wars, a Festival has been held – at the invitation of an Associate Member – the first being at York in 2012. The Federation had been founded two years earlier at Peterborough by a handful of associations, and it quickly expanded to reach forty or so: we now have 52 with the recent inclusion of some non-Cathedral members such as the Collegiate church of St Mary's Warwick, and Tewkesbury Abbey, each of which has (and *must* have!) a properly founded Old Choristers' Association. We have also admitted St Thomas's New York and The Chapel Royal. To celebrate our centenary we held the 2010 AGM at Peterborough, and York hosted the 2012 festival to remind us that the first festival had been held there one hundred years before.



The festival is a wonderful opportunity to re-acquaint oneself with old friends, make new ones, and to “showcase” the music and architecture of our own beloved Cathedral to the rest of the membership. Attendance is usually between 120 and 160 delegates, all of which have to be accommodated over the long weekend – no small feat! Early responses to this challenge were usually in university halls of residence or similar, and we at Exeter used this method in 1983. Alas the accommodation available at the Duryard Halls was not to everyone’s satisfaction – being then rather primitive hostel conditions! Even so, we decided to go down the same road in 1999 – our second hosting – largely from considerations of cost, but at least the conditions were something of an improvement on the previous occasion.

The first break with this tradition was at Norwich in 1998 when the committee braved the huge increase in costs and booked us all in to the Hilton Hotel at Norwich Airport. They clearly had negotiated a substantial discount for so many people, and everyone agreed that the greater expense was worth it. We at Exeter, however, having made our plans a few years earlier, stuck with the old method the following year to a certain amount of dissatisfaction from delegates, even though the cost was substantially less than Norwich! In 2000 – our Millennium festival at Canterbury – they also used their university, but by now delegates had tasted blood and so hotels have become the norm; fortunately they are usually so eager to accommodate a hundred or more people that they grant worthwhile discounts. (Lincoln made a great effort to meet both sides of the argument – on cost grounds – and booked a hotel as well as some very good college accommodation near the East End of the Cathedral. Strangely enough the latter offer was taken up by so few people that it was deemed not to have been worth their efforts!)



This lack of suitable accommodation has been a stumbling block though for several associations who would like to have hosted a festival but just haven't had the facilities. At Ely in 1994 we were all "stationed" in Fitzwilliam College in Cambridge, with continual bussing to and from Ely for the various services. In the end so much time was wasted on the bus that people felt they hadn't really had a proper chance to experience Ely at all! Even the Banquet – arguably the highlight of the weekend – had to be held in Cambridge, with the result that the cathedral dignitaries and choir had to come to us, rather than the other way round: a case of the mountain having to come to Mohammed!

The transporting of all the delegates has its own problems too! The Ely festival just mentioned was a case in point; another being the Wakefield Festival where we were all billeted at Bretton Hall College, a few miles from Wakefield and at that time the home of most of Elizabeth Frink's wonderful sculptures. The committee had hired several double-decker buses for the transportation of us all for every event at the cathedral, but had only made the "timing" trips by car! Imagine their surprise to discover that a few low bridges and suchlike were going to increase the journey time from 15 to 45 minutes per trip - a nightmare for them! We at Exeter suffered a minor version of this in 1983 when we held a concert on the Friday evening at St Thomas's Church, expecting everyone to be bussed over the Iron Bridge. Alas that was not permitted, so the round trip took a little longer and the concert was quite severely delayed!

We now come to **2015**. We have invited the Federation for their Annual Festival to Exeter from July 3rd to 5th, and need as many of you as possible to be part of this wonderful occasion. We have already established the Festival Committee with David Acres as Chairman, and he has already booked the Rougemont Hotel for the whole group, as well as the Banquet there. We ought, therefore, to have very few



transport problems, since it is within walking distance of the Cathedral for all but the most infirm. Plans are going ahead apace, as a lot has to be done to make it a memorable event, and we hope you will all put these dates into your diary as a priority. Guides and escorts are always in demand on these occasions since so many people will be visiting Exeter for the first time. So, “See you there”!

Memories of a Chorister of Exeter Cathedral 1944 – 1949: John Lomax

My father and grandfather had both been regular choristers over a long period of time in their local parish church in both Liverpool and later in Cheshire. I don’t think this experience had much, if anything, to do with me becoming a cathedral chorister.

During the war (1939 – 1945) my father was away in the army serving in North Africa and so my mother discussed my education with Cdr. Wood R.N. who was billeted at our house. He had been a chorister a Canterbury Cathedral and must have extolled the virtues of his experience. The result was that I found myself attending for an audition with Dr. Wilcock in the Chapter House of Exeter Cathedral. My recollection of that occasion is fairly hazy except for being asked to listen to a tune of about ten notes played on the black grand piano and to sing it backwards.

I must have got it right because I found myself, in May 1944, a probationer at the Cathedral School. The old school premises in Exeter had been bombed in 1942 at the same time as part of the Cathedral had been hit, and from then until the end of 1944 we were located at a house in Honiton called “Holy shute”.



HARD LESSON: Exeter Cathedral School choristers in the school remains

The headmaster was Mr Langhorne: I have vague memories of meeting him but I think that must have been at the time of my audition because by the time I arrived he was ill – possibly in hospital – and later died. Until a new headmaster was appointed, as from January 1945, the school was run by the assistant master Mrs. S.M. Watts who lived in Honiton and on the domestic side by Miss Harper, known as “nurse”. Whether she was one or just adopted that title I haven’t the faintest idea. My abiding memory of her is being asked “ ‘ave you drank your mild, Lomax?”

The only choir practice I remember in Honiton was on a Monday morning when Dr. Wilcock came over from Exeter – by train I presume. At the age of eight I assumed that all doctors were medical men and felt reassured that if I was ill he would be able to look after me.



During those two terms in 1944 – May to December – the choristers went into Exeter by train four times per week but the probationers only went on Saturdays and Sundays. On Saturdays we all walked in crocodile over the Exe bridge out to Whipples factory canteen in St. Thomas for lunch but on Sundays we had a “picnic” round a large table in the cloister room (now the refectory). My memory of good things to eat is retentive and I remember on those occasions that we often had a large home made fruit cake. Where all the fruit came from in those days of strict rationing I don’t know.

Although I never liked returning to school after the holidays it had nothing to do with the way we were treated. It was not unknown for the cane to be used occasionally but never maliciously. It was, after all, almost sixty years ago when attitudes towards corporal punishment were very different from today.

I remember Holy Shute being generally a happy household. There was a pond in the back garden where we played with clockwork boats and Miss Watts used to take the six probationers for walks in the glen. There was a good sweet shop between the school and the town centre where we all used up our coupons and pocket money. The vicar of Honiton, Reverend Hayter, was a good friend of the school during this period and I am sure I remember the contact continued after we returned to Exeter.

One aspect of the accommodation which would not be allowed today were the toilets. They had obviously been installed in haste and the only space available was a long narrow room with a door at one end and no partitions between the toilets – very PUBLIC conveniences!

The school returned to Exeter in January 1945 when we returned to The Chantry after the Christmas holidays. Our new headmaster was Howard Treneur. He had previously been the head of St. Michael’s



School in Exeter. He and his wife Mary were very popular. There were strict when needed but were kind and caring people who treated all the boys as they would their own children. Mr. Treneer was a good sport, keen sportsman, and had a good sense of humour. There were only 26 boys in the school so it was like a big happy family.

Keith Gibb was also still on the staff but left after a year or two (I think) and I believe he went into business in Exeter as a surveyor. He must have stayed in touch because I have his autograph dated Christmas 1948. His place was taken by Mr Pickering who was an ex-army officer and a keen sportsman. I hoped when he came that we may have been able to go to the swimming baths more frequently but matters didn't improve much. We had to be so careful about catching throat infections and the like. What good is a Cathedral choir if all its members are croaking? For the same reason we were not allowed to eat nuts or pepper.

Mr. Pickering did not stay all that long. No doubt he moved to a school with greater sporting opportunities. His successor until the time I left in 1949 was Mr. Langdon. He was my least favourite teacher. I believe he subsequently became organist and choirmaster at Ludlow Church.

Other part-time teaching staff included Mr. J.R. Parsons (M.A. Oxon) and Mrs. Pamela Michelmores (M.A. Oxon). The former always walked to school and wore tweed clothes and hob nail boots which he used to stamp on boys' feet if they misbehaved, for example by flicking paper pellets at him when he was writing on the blackboard.

Mrs. Michelmores was a very nice lady. She taught Geography and occasionally we would cycle out to her house in the country (but I can't for the life of me think where it was) and be rewarded with cake and orange or lemon squash.



Miss Reader came to give us weekly piano lessons. She was a rather severe lady who always wore dark clothes and rimless spectacles and a lot of powder on her face. She never inspired me with much interest in piano playing (I regret very much) and I only reached grade 2 in exams taken at a house almost into Heavitree. The only other member of staff who I remember by name was Edna who was a sort of assistant cook. She could be a bit bossy on occasions but generally we got on quite well with her.

Dr. Wilcock, of course, we saw a great deal more of once we returned to Exeter. He always wore a bow tie and spats with a gold watch chain and fob in his waistcoat. To keep his head warm outside he wore a Homberg. His nickname was "baldy". Choir practice took place at school every morning before matins with psalm practice in the evenings.





On Saturday afternoon choir practice was in the Chapter House and was attended by the six “Sunday men” in addition to the six regular men. The names of the regular men were Mr. Isaacs and Mr. Tapley (Tenor and Bass on Cantoris) and Mr. Dineen (Bass on Decani). I can picture Alto on Cantoris, short with a chubby face and horn rimmed spectacles, but I can’t recall his name. Alto and Tenor on Decani I can’t remember.

Occasionally if we had a good practice and few minutes to spare, we would all gather round the grand piano and Dr. Wilcock would play to us. “Rustle in Spring” was a popular piece.

After morning choir practice we would put on our Eton collars and go in a crocodile across to the Cathedral, wearing mortar boards in winter and straw boaters in summer, put on our cassocks and surplices and line up to go into the service. Eton suits were always worn on Sundays. Mine was second hand and I expect many of the others were, not only because of cost but also to save on clothing coupons. Dr. Wilcock would appear before going up to the organ loft and his breath smelled of beer. We always assumed he had been to the Clarence Hotel for a “quick one”.

During a service, if there was a long sermon, we were convinced that we could see wisps of smoke above the organ loft from his cigarette. It could have been our imagination.

A normal school day started at 6.30 a.m. All the boys would have a cold bath – very enjoyable especially on a cold winter’s day – followed by a short walk which generally followed a route via Palace Gate and through the Bishop’s palace grounds. After breakfast we cleaned our shoes before choir practice. Matins followed after which we had school lessons until lunchtime. Lessons again after lunch until evensong at 3 o’clock. This finished at about 3.45 p.m. when we were



free to go out in pairs but had to be back at school for tea at 5.15 p.m. We would go to the Rougemont Gardens, down to the River Exe or canal, play in the fields and build dams in the stream opposite Exeter University. Often on the way back to school we would call in at the Cathedral just before 5 p.m. when we were allowed by a friendly steward or sidesman to ring the Curfew. This same gentleman was a snuff taker and often gave us a sniff – horrible stuff! After tea we had psalm practice and prep for an hour and a half. For supper we had a cup of cold milk and something like a nice sticky Chelsea bun.

Every Saturday morning we would all go in crocodile to St. Michael's School and use their gym. Quite surprisingly for "angelic" looking choirboys, one of the activities was boxing. On Wednesday afternoons we played football or cricket at Wonford next to the old lunatic asylum as it was then called. The land is where the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital is now situated. One of the patients who used to come and watch and cheer and throw their hats in the air was an elderly Mr. Halford, the founder of the bicycle empire. The patients were always accompanied by a warder but their behaviour was just as bizarre as their wards.

We also played cricket on Sunday evenings. There was often a match against other schools from as far away as Allhallows at Rousdon (near Lyme Regis) and of course we went to them for return matches.

It was on occasion when we were playing evening cricket that Mr. Gibb arrived on his bicycle shouting at the top of his voice and throwing his first in the air. The reason for his excitement was that the war was over.

John's memories of life as a Cathedral Chorister in the 1940s will be continued in our next newsletter.



What's On at Exeter Cathedral

Friday 2nd November 2012 at 5.30pm: All Soul's Eucharist

The Eucharist of the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day). The music for the service will be the setting of the Requiem Mass by Gabriel Fauré. Our own Cathedral Choir are on holiday, and the service will be sung by the Laurence Blyth Singers, with members of Schola Exe.

Saturday 3rd November 2012 at 4pm: RSCM Devon Area Festival

This service will be led by a massed choir of voices from around Devon. Its membership is drawn from groups affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music, and the singers will be conducted by Exeter Cathedral's Director of Music Andrew Millington. RSCM awards will be presented, and the homily will be given by the Rt Revd Martin Shaw, Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Exeter. All are welcome to attend.

Sunday 4th November 2012 at 6pm: Bach Cantata Service

A liturgical performance of J.S.Bach's Cantata 150 *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich* by St Peter's Singers and members of the Exeter Bach Society. Admission to this act of worship is free.

Sunday 4th November 2012 at 7pm in the Chapter House: The Music of John Sheppard.

David Davies (Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral, and Director of Music at Exeter Bach Society) will give an illustrated talk on the music of 16th century composer John Sheppard. Tickets cost £10 and are available from Exeter Phoenix Box Office 01392 667080 and on the door (subject to availability). Refreshments will be served.



Tuesday 6th November 2012 at 1pm: Osilgi Maasai Warriors

The Osilgi Warriors were founded by their chairman Tajeu Minnisa (Richard) in 2007.



The purpose of the troupe is to benefit their community and the families in their village of Kisamis, situated approximately 30 miles southwest of Nairobi. Money is raised by a series of UK tours during which the troupe will perform their tribal song and dance and spread the word about their culture.

**Thursday 22nd November 2012 at 7.30pm in the Chapter House:
The Richard Hooker Lecture 2012.** 'Primate of All England' - and now much more: The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion.

Speaker: Paul Avis. Dr Avis is Canon Theologian of Exeter, Honorary Professor of Theology at the University of Exeter and Chaplain to HM The Queen. Admission free, with refreshments provided. All Welcome



Wednesday 5th December 2012 at 7.30pm: The National Trust Exeter and District Centre. A Concert for Christmas with choirs and orchestras from Exeter School. Tickets £12 (Nave, unreserved) and £10 (Aisles, unreserved). Children admitted half price. Telephone 01392 461787

Saturday 8th December 2012 at 7.30pm : Exeter Festival Chorus sing Christmas Jazz at the Cathedral. With Jacqui Dankworth and Andy Williamson's Big Buzzard Boogey Band. Duke Ellington Sacred Concert and Christmas favourites with some audience participation. Nigel Perrin *Musical Director*. Tickets Front Nave £22 (£20), Rear Nave £17 (£15), Side Aisles £12 (£10) Unreserved. Concessions: Students and Children. EFC Tickets 0845 6005441. Exeter Tickets 01392 665885 Online Booking www.exeterfestivalchorus.org.uk

Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th December 2012 at 7.30pm: Carols in the Cathedral. Exeter Philharmonic Choir and Triumph Brass. Andrew Millington *conductor*. Supper Club £38 (includes a premium nave seat). Premium Nave £16, Middle Nave £14, Rear Nave £12, Side Aisle (unreserved restricted views) £8. Student discount available. Tickets from <http://www.exephil.org.uk> or Exeter Tickets 01392 665885

Saturday 15th December 2012 at 7.30pm: Cathedral Choir Concern Once again our wonderful Cathedral Choir take to the concert platform to deliver a fantastic programme of Christmas choral music. Last year's concert was a sell-out and the capacity audience enjoyed the usual mix of carols for choir and audience, along with a few 'surprises' thrown in. Nave (unreserved) £12 Adults, £10 Students (ID must be shown) and Under 18s. Aisles (unreserved) £10 Adults, £8 Students (ID must be shown) and Under 18s. Telephone Bookings: 01392 285983.