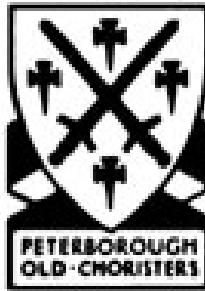


PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATION.



2022 NEWSLETTER.

1. 2022 REUNION.

This year's reunion followed a very different format from previous occasions. The day began with the AGM at 12.30pm, which was held in the Knights' Chamber, followed by lunch at Cote Brasserie at 2.00pm. A rehearsal with the choir took place in the stalls at 4.00pm and Evensong was sung at 5.30pm, preceded by the traditional wreath-laying ceremony in St. Sprite's Chapel. Sadly, the numbers attending the reunion were extremely disappointing. At their next meeting, the committee will be looking at the future of the annual gathering and discussing whether or not a formal dinner can be sustained. We are always keen to take into consideration the views of our members, so please contact Louise Laprun (07595 440279 or pcoca.secretary@gmail.com) if you have any thoughts about future reunions.

2. 2023 REUNION.

The next reunion will be held on SUNDAY 18 June 2023. Please make a note of this date in your diary now and make every effort to be with us.

3. NEW MEMBERS.

We are pleased to welcome the following members to the Association:

LEWIS BARBER, ROLAND CHRISTOPHER, HARRY COLLISTER,
ROBBIE JONES, FINLAY NIKLASSON, NATASHA KHUPE, SASHA
KHUPE, POPPY ORMOND and ELIZABETH SAMUEL.

4. THE REVD. CANON PETER NICHOLSON, OBE, MA, 1925-2022.

Canon Peter Nicholson, a beloved former Precentor of the Cathedral, died at the beginning of June at the age of ninety-six. Peter was arguably the best Precentor Peterborough has had in living memory and he is remembered with the greatest affection by many senior members of the Association.

Peter Charles Nicholson was born at Sutton in Norfolk on 20 November 1925. As a boy he lived in the neighbouring village of Catfield, where he attended the local school and sang in the church choir. At the age of ten he became a pupil at the Paston Grammar School in North Walsham, which involved a daily journey by train. He loved his school days and was very proud to have been a Pastonian. When he was seventeen and a half, he joined the Royal Corps of Signals and served in Italy and India. Following his Army service, he worked for ten years as a housemaster in two Home Office approved schools for boys. During part of this time, he was a lay reader at St. Mary's, Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire. Having felt a calling for the ministry and been accepted for ordination training, he went to Chichester Theological College. After being ordained in St. Albans Abbey, he returned to Sawbridgeworth to be curate of the parish church. In 1962 he was appointed as Minor Canon, Precentor and Sacrist of Peterborough Cathedral. His fine baritone voice, kindly nature and wonderful pastoral gifts made him an ideal Precentor. He lived next door to, and worked in great harmony with, Stanley Vann. After five years at Peterborough, Bishop Launcelot Fleming appointed him as Vicar of Wroxham and Hoveton St. John in Norfolk, close to his roots. He also became an honorary minor canon of Norwich Cathedral. In addition, he joined the governing body of his old school, an appointment which gave him great pleasure. He served on several diocesan committees and was an active member of the Royal British Legion. Peter moved to the West Country in 1974 to be Vicar of Lyme Regis, where he served for six years. In 1980 he became General Secretary and Chaplain of St. Luke's Hospital for the Clergy in London, where he did outstanding work until he retired in 1993. During his time in the capital, he was also an honorary chaplain at Southwark Cathedral. Peter was awarded a Lambeth MA in 1989, he was appointed an honorary canon of Chichester Cathedral in the same year and in 1992 received the OBE.

On 6 June 1960 Peter married Dorothy Goodwins, daughter of the then Vicar of Potter Heigham in Norfolk. They had two children, Timothy (born 1961) and Jessamyn (born at Peterborough in 1966). Dorothy died in 2013. Peter was a keen conservationist and lover of the countryside. He was a member of the RSPB and his hobbies included local history, bird watching, music and drawing.

Peter kept in touch with the Cathedral and the Association until the very end of his life. In various e-mails in recent years, he wrote: "I loved my five years at Peterborough. It was a wonderful place to be"; "I think of you all so often and remember with great joy all the happy days at Peterborough"; and "I rejoice at Stanley's fantastic legacy". Peter was admitted to Hillingdon Hospital with a chest infection at the end of May and died on 6 June (his wedding anniversary). Many of his former choristers were greatly saddened when they received news of his passing. TIM HURST-BROWN, ANDREW TORBELL and PETER WATTS represented the Old Choristers' Association at the funeral at Harlington Church, Middlesex on 4 July. During the course of the service Tim read Psalm 121.

With affection and kindly remembrance we bid Peter farewell. To the members of his family we extend our deep sympathy in their great loss. Perhaps the words of Rabindranath Tagore may serve as his epitaph: "When you live in the hearts of those you love/Remember then you never die". Requiescat in pace.

(A shortened form of this obituary appeared in 'The Church Times' on 24 September 2022).

5. JOHN FRICKER, 1947-2022.

John Fricker, who died in August, was a boarder chorister from 1958-1961 during the time of Stanley Vann. It is believed that he was the son of the composer Peter Racine Fricker. John left The King's School after taking his 'O' levels in 1963 and sadly lost touch with Peterborough and the Cathedral. We understand that he continued to play the organ during his later life. Sadly, he suffered with dementia for many years before his death. Requiescat in pace.

6. DARREN PHILIP HUMPHRIES, 1975-2022.

Darren Humphries died suddenly on 19 September aged forty-six. He was a chorister here from 1985-1989. His father John, who was a fireman, lost his life in the appalling Fengate explosion of March 1989. Later that year, Darren left King's to attend St. Edmund's School, Canterbury as a boarder. He was a talented pianist and, after leaving school, worked in the Middle East as a teacher and performer. Later he returned to the UK, living first in Sussex and then in the Midlands. We extend our condolences to Darren's mother and sister. Requiescat in pace.

7. ST. SPRITE'S CHAPEL.

St. Sprite's Chapel contains memorials to old choristers and other old boys of The King's School who fell in both world wars, as well as a door to the south-west tower which commemorates John Saunders, an Old Petriburgian who lost his life in Lahore in 1928. There is also a plaque honouring former students of St. Peter's College who gave their lives for their country in the First World War. (St. Peter's, which was a teacher training college designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, was opened in 1864. It was built on land just to the north of the Cathedral precincts. The college closed in 1938 and the building, now known as Peterscourt, still stands in City Road).

A framed inscription resting on a nearby ledge records that St. Sprite's Chapel was renewed for worship in 1920 by The Very Revd. William Holden Hutton, Dean of Winchester, in memory of Daniel Moyer and other friends killed in the First World War. Dr. Hutton was Archdeacon of Northampton and a residentiary canon of Peterborough Cathedral from 1911-1919. His obituary in 'The Times' commented on his engaging charm and referred to him as "a staunch friend and a great gentleman". Hutton graduated from Magdalen College, Oxford in 1881. He was a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford from 1884-1923, and an honorary fellow thereafter. While he was at Peterborough he befriended Daniel Moyer, a chorister who possessed an outstanding voice. Moyer was killed in the early days of the conflict on the Somme in July 1916. He was seventeen years old. Hutton wrote of him: "Dan was of a fiery, impetuous disposition, eager in all he did, a loyal, faithful and loving friend, and a most amusing and delightful companion. He had a voice of exceptional beauty and a heart of exceptional loving kindness. I can never forget him singing one night in Peterborough Cathedral "I know that my Redeemer liveth" when Mr. Philip Taylor, now organist of Cheltenham College, played the organ and the only others present in the vast, dark, empty Norman building besides myself were two friends of mine.....The music that night carried us up together to the throne of God".

In addition to restoring St. Sprite's Chapel, when he moved to Winchester Dr. Hutton gave a statue of St. Thomas Becket in memory of Moyer and Arthur Wooldridge, another young friend. The statue was placed outside Bishop Fox's chantry at the east end of Winchester Cathedral, where it can still be seen.

Old choristers who lost their lives in the First World War:

Eric Carruthers Leigh, died in 1916 aged 20.
Frederick Daniel Moyer, died in 1916 aged 17.
Frederick Wardale Smith, died in 1916 aged 25.
Ernest Taylor, died in 1918 aged 23.
Horace James Taylor, died in 1917 aged 23.
John Thomas Woolley, died in 1915 aged 21.

Old choristers who lost their lives in the Second World War:

Anthony Levoir Barber, died in 1944 aged 21.
Frank Dingley, died in 1943 aged 23.
Roy Albert James Mitchem, died in 1943 aged 26.
Charles Hugh Newman, died in 1943 aged 27.
Ronald Arthur Sims, died in 1940 aged 19.
Thomas Edward Teanby, died in 1945 aged 22.

Pro Deo Pro Rege Pro Patria

“At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them”.

8. NEW HEADMASTER OF THE KING'S SCHOOL.

The new Headmaster of The King's School is John Harrison, who began work at the beginning of this term. He replaced Darren Ayling, who had been Head since 2014. John, who is a graduate of Lancaster University, knows KSP well as he was appointed Head of Geography in 2001 and subsequently became an Assistant Headteacher. Later, he moved to be Vice-Principal of Catmose College in Rutland and more recently was Head of Harington School in Oakham. John is also an Ofsted inspector. He and his wife Bernadine have three children. We bid him a warm welcome.

9. RECOLLECTIONS OF A CHORISTER.

The late ALEC CATTAWAY, who was Hon. Treasurer of the OCA from 1954-1994, wrote an account of his time in the Cathedral choir called "Recollections of a Chorister". It is a fascinating record of the choir during the nineteen-twenties. Here are some of Alec's memories:

"On Sundays, choristers wore Eton suits and mortarboards. The former had to be provided by parents, while the squares were paid for by the Dean and Chapter. The latter were bought from 'Jackson's Little Hat Shop' in Midgate. The head chorister stood at the east end of Decani, and the next senior boy occupied a similar position on Cantoris. The third senior stood at the west end of Decani, and the fourth opposite. The four "corner boys" were privileged to sing all the solos and "verses". Men and boys carried mortarboards into service; the tassels were black, except for those of the corner boys which were red. The boys wore stiff white collars provided by the parents. The choir comprised 12 trebles, 4 boy altos, 2 tenor and 2 bass lay clerks. All choristers in those days were local boys. There was no bowing to the altar on entering or leaving the stalls.

Rehearsals took place in what was then known as the Practice Room (now the Sacristy). The choir vestry was at the west end of the North aisle; this was screened off and fitted with cupboards for robes. In 1934 the Becket Chapel became the Song School and this arrangement continued until 1994". (Note: The choir vestry moved to the eastern aisle of the North Transept in 1950 and remained there for more than forty years).

10. MEMORIES OF SIR JOHN BETJEMAN.

In the late nineteen sixties, it was not unusual to see what appeared to be an elderly gentleman sitting alone in the Nave of the Cathedral for weekday evensong. This slightly shambolic figure was none other than the writer and poet John Betjeman, who was knighted at the end of that decade. JB was appointed Poet Laureate in 1972. The following year, speaking on Radio 4's "Week's Good Cause", he said: "I am not sure that Peterborough Cathedral isn't the greatest of the hidden glories of Britain". He went on to call the West front "one of the strangest, most daringly original and...most beautiful of medieval exteriors". Betjeman, who was a great admirer of Dr. Stanley Vann, stated: "The Cathedral is a place well known to listeners because of its deservedly high musical reputation".

11. PERSONALIA.

Dr. RACHEL CHILDS (nee O'Malley) lives in Bedfordshire with her husband William. She is now specializing as a psychiatric doctor. Having moved from place to place over a number of years, she tells us she is glad to finally be settled in one spot (for now!)

We extend our warmest congratulations to CHARLES CUNLIFFE, who was thrilled to be through to the semi-final of the Kathleen Ferrier Awards at The Wigmore Hall in London on 20 April. Charles was present at the reunion in June.

BARRY FERGUSON, who was Stanley Vann's assistant organist from 1964-1971, celebrated his eightieth birthday in July. He remembers his seven years at Peterborough with great fondness. Barry and his wife Sandi live at Shaftesbury in Dorset.

OLLIE HAMILTON-BOX has recently been appointed Musical Director of the Sawtry Chorale. He is also choir master for the Summer Strings, Peterborough, in addition to teaching singing, piano and music theory.

GEORGINA (GINA) HAWKINS married Oliver Proud at Peterborough Cathedral on Saturday 2 July. The service was conducted by the Dean, standing in for Canon Jonathan Baker who was ill with covid. The choir consisted of old choristers and members of the St. Peter's Singers. The official photographer was ALICE CUNLIFFE. We extend our warmest good wishes to Gina and Oliver on their union.

The sudden passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Balmoral Castle on 8 September occasioned deep outpourings of grief throughout the nation. The Rt. Hon. DAVID LAMMY, as a Privy Councillor, was present at the historic Accession Council held at St. James's Palace on Saturday 10 September. This was the occasion when His Majesty King Charles III was officially proclaimed as monarch of the United Kingdom. Another Peterborough connection was provided by the presence of the Archbishop of York, the Most Revd. Stephen Cottrell, formerly Canon Pastor here.

We have recently heard from the distinguished metallurgist Dr. JOHN MARTIN, Emeritus Fellow and former Vice-Master of St. Catherine's College, Oxford. At ninety-six, he is the oldest member of the Association. John sang in the choir in the late 'thirties and during the early part of the Second World War. He won a choral scholarship to St. John's College, Cambridge in 1945. After graduating, he remained there to undertake research and took his D.Phil in 1953. Four years later he moved to "the other place" to lecture in metallurgy. He was an Oxford don from 1957-1989.

JUSTIN MYERS is Head of Music Technology at Gresham's School in Holt, Norfolk.

DOMINIC PAINE married Melanie Urbain-Grainger at the Cathedral on Saturday 30 April. Canon Tim Alban Jones, Vice-Dean, conducted the wedding service. Best men were Ollie Brooks, Richard Howells and old chorister JOHN HANBY. After a reception at the William Cecil in Stamford, Dominic and Melanie honeymooned in the Loire valley. We send them our warmest congratulations on their nuptials.

ANDREW REID, Director of Music at the Cathedral from 2004-2012, has recently stepped down from his post as Managing Director of Harrison and Harrison, organ builders, where he has been since 2017. He continues as a director of the firm. Andrew is Director of Music at St. George's Church, Cullercoates, North Shields.

In July MATTHEW SEARLES was appointed as Master of the Music at Buckfast Abbey. He joined the music staff there in 2018 as Assistant Master of the Music, during which time he helped to re-establish a treble line of choristers; co-founded 'Ad Fontes', Buckfast's in-house record label; and accompanied Midnight Mass televised live on BBC 1. We send him our heartiest congratulations on his well-deserved promotion.

ALEX SPIRES, Business Relationship Manager at Barclay's Bank in Peterborough, has been a server at the Cathedral for forty years. He began serving with his father HEATON and his grandfather Ted, a familiar figure who lead Cathedral processions as Head Server for many years. His brothers JEREMY and DOMINIC were also members of the serving team. Alex's wife, Anita, has recently been appointed as a Teaching Assistant at The King's School. Their daughter CHLOE continues to sing in Peterborough Cathedral Youth Choir. In December she will be singing Peter Auty's "Walking in the air" at The New Theatre, Peterborough (formerly The Odeon Cinema) as part of the 'Snowman Project'. And their son JACOB is in his fourth and final year at Nottingham University, where he has been studying German. He successfully completed his placement year, which was an internship with Kern (a Global Language Services company) based near Frankfurt. Alex and Jacob both took part in the Great Eastern Half Marathon Run in October, raising almost a thousand pounds for cancer charities. It was Jacob's first half marathon, which he completed in one hour 35 minutes, while Alex finished in one hour 38 minutes. Our congratulations to them both. This is a wonderful achievement and one of which Ted and Heaton would have been justifiably proud.

We were saddened to hear of the death of Katrine, the wife of VAUGHAN TOWNHILL, who passed away on 5 May after a long battle with cancer. We extend our sincerest condolences to Vaughan and his family. He made the long journey from Edinburgh to be at the reunion in the summer.

After receiving the 2021 newsletter, PAUL WHITEHEAD wrote: "Many thanks for the newsletter. I like the format and the informative content. And I know how much effort goes into good newsletters, including the all-important treble-checking – or more – for typos!"

Velma Wilson (nee Bird), widow of TOM WILSON, one of our former members and a longstanding Cathedral server, died on October 29 at the age of ninety-three. She will be remembered by senior members of the Association. TIM HURST-BROWN and DAVID TWELL attended her thanksgiving service in All Saints' Church, Peterborough on November 17. We extend our condolences to her family.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Tim Hurst-Brown

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PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO PUT THE DATE OF OUR NEXT
REUNION IN YOUR DIARY – SUNDAY 18 JUNE 2023. WE LOOK
FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THEN.

STOP PRESS:

As we go to press, we have received the sad news of the death of Pauline, wife of DAVID LOWE, who passed away on 24 November. She had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer early in 2021 and died at home surrounded by her family. Her funeral service took place at St. Mary's Church, Billingshurst on Tuesday 6 December. We extend our deepest condolences to David and his family. Pauline, who frequently attended our dinners and AGMs, will be greatly missed. Requiescat in pace.