

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATION.



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1. 2011 REUNION.

The Old Choristers' reunion took place on Saturday 24 September. For the second year running, it was held in conjunction with the annual gathering of the Friends of the Cathedral. A goodly number of old choristers sang with the Cathedral choir at Evensong. Prior to the service, Alex Spires laid a wreath at St. Sprite's Chapel in memory of former choristers and old boys of The King's School who paid the supreme sacrifice in the two world wars. After Evensong, members adjourned to The Becket Chapel for tea and the Annual General Meeting. The final event of the day was the reunion dinner, which was held at the Great Northern Hotel. Speakers were Mark Duthie, former Assistant Organist here and now Director of Music at Brecon Cathedral; and Arnold Wills, chorister 1967-72. An excellent meal was enjoyed by the assembled company, who clearly relished the occasion. The reunion proved to be a very happy and delightfully nostalgic event.

2. 2012 REUNION.

The next reunion will take place on Saturday 22 September 2012. Please make a note of this date in your diary NOW and make every effort to be with us.

3. NEW MEMBERS.

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members to our ranks: NEIL GIBBONS, LUKE HAGERTY, GINA HAWKINS, LEO NOVAKOVIC, BRADLEY ODEP, GABY PINEDRA RODRIGUES and ANNA TEMPLETON.

4. HEATON EDWARD SPIRES, MBE, 1930-2011.

The death of our dear friend Heaton Spires on 20 February robbed the Association of one of its most stalwart members. He had been ill for only a few weeks and died at home in the presence of his devoted family.

Heaton was born in 1930, the only child of Ted and Rose Spires. He was awarded a choral scholarship to the Cathedral in 1938, and became a chorister in 1940. He was appointed Head Chorister in 1945. During his time in the choir he studied the piano and became a proficient pianist. Whilst at The King's School, Heaton was an outstanding sportsman. He was a member of the Rugby team, a keen Hockey player, an excellent Cross Country runner and a fine athlete.

On leaving school he undertook his National Service with the Royal Air Force, where his sporting proficiency came in extremely useful. He began his working life in 1950 with British Railway Estates. In 1955, he joined the Eastern Electricity Board and remained with them until 1967. He then relocated to Leicester to work for the East Midlands Gas Board as Manager for Wayleaves. In 1993 he took early retirement and ended his career as President of the Incorporated Society of Estates and Wayleave Officers, having been a Fellow since 1981. He was also a Member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

In December 1993 Heaton received notification that he had been appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire for his services to British Gas, his sporting achievements and for work undertaken as a Governor of St. John the Baptist School in Leicester. This great honour was the pinnacle of his achievements.

In the early nineteen sixties Heaton met and fell in love with Gillian Ellicott. They were not only sweethearts but also soul mates and

best friends for nigh on fifty years. They were married in 1965 and their children arrived in quick succession – Jeremy, Alexander, Dominic, Justine and later Tamsyn.

Heaton was a server at the Cathedral for more than half a century, following in the footsteps of his father Ted, who was Head Server and Sub-Sacrist for almost fifty years. When Heaton's sons – Jeremy, Alex and Dominic – left the choir, they in turn became servers and on many occasions there were three generations serving together, an achievement of which Heaton was particularly proud. He was a very keen member of the Old Choristers' Association, and served on the committee for 34 years.

Heaton's funeral, which took place in the Cathedral on 2 March, was attended by a large congregation. His grandson Jacob sang in the choir at the service, and the address was given by Tim Hurst-Brown, a distant cousin and close friend. It was a very uplifting occasion.

To Gilly and the family we extend our sympathy in their great loss. We shall long cherish the memory of this exceptionally friendly and warm-hearted man. Requiescat in pace.

5. REGINALD ELI SUTTON, MBE, 1917-2011.

We record with sadness the death of Reg Sutton, our most senior old chorister, who passed away on 23 April at the age of ninety-three.

Reg was born in Peterborough on 22 July 1917. He was educated at The King's School under The Revd. Herbert ("Bertie") Baxter and later under Oliver Mitchell. He sang in the Cathedral choir during the early years of Dr. Henry Coleman, and was a contemporary of Fred Dimock, Eric Dodson and Ron Laxton. On leaving school he joined the engineering department of the Post Office in 1934 and made a career in the telephone division. Although Reg was in a reserved occupation, he volunteered to join The Royal Navy in 1942 and after training he joined 'HMS Rodney'. When the war was over, he re-joined the Post Office. Reg and his family moved to Oundle in 1951. He was elected to the Oundle District Council in 1958, later becoming a councillor for

East Northamptonshire. In 1971 The Prince William School (named after the elder son of TRH The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester) was opened and Reg was chairman of the governing body for the first ten years of its existence. He was also a governor at Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School, Milton Road Primary School and Warmington Primary School. Reg was thoroughly involved in the community life of Oundle and took part in many activities in the town. He was a founder member of the Oundle Gilbert and Sullivan Players and was President for many years. He also enjoyed his time as a member of the Cotterstock Male Voice Choir. He belonged to the Oundle Rotary Club, which honoured him with a Paul Harris Fellowship, a rarely given award, in recognition of his work in the community. The most memorable of his achievements was his investiture on 14 June 1997 as a Member of the Order of the British Empire.

Reg married Dorothy in 1940, and that partnership lasted until his wife's death in 2003. He leaves two children, five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. With affection and kindly remembrance we bid him farewell. Requiescat in pace.

6. THE RT. REVD. PETER KNIGHT WALKER, MA, DD, 1919-2010.

Bishop Peter Walker, who was on the staff of The King's School from 1947-50, died in Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge on 28 December 2010 at the age of 91.

Peter Walker was educated at Leeds Grammar School. He went up to The Queen's College, Oxford as a scholar and took a Second in Classical Moderations in 1940. During the Second World War he served in The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. He returned to Oxford in 1945 and was awarded a First in Literae Humaniores. Reg Hornsby appointed him to the staff of The King's School in 1947, where he was a very successful teacher of Classics. In 1950 he moved to Merchant Taylors' School in London. Walker was ordained deacon in 1953, and was priested in the following year. In 1958 he became Fellow, Dean and Lecturer in Theology at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. In 1962 he was appointed Principal of Westcott House, where by the long arm of coincidence Cecil Harrison (Headmaster of King's 1951-69) was a

theological student in 1967. In 1972 Peter Walker was consecrated Bishop of Dorchester, and in addition became a Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. Five years later, he was appointed Bishop of Ely. It was while he was at Ely that he took the service and gave the address at Denham Larrett's funeral in St. John's Church, Peterborough in the autumn of 1982. Bishop Walker retired in 1989 and moved to Cambridge. He died after a short illness and his funeral service took place at Grantchester Parish Church on 11 January 2011. A memorial service was held at Ely Cathedral on 10 February. We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow, Jean.

7. CHANGES AT THE KING'S SCHOOL.

From the time of its foundation in 1541, The King's School was a grammar school for boys. In the autumn of 1976, all this was swept aside and King's was changed into a co-educational comprehensive school. Recently, more far-reaching changes have taken place. On December 31 2010, The King's (Voluntary Aided) School formally closed, and the following day The King's (The Cathedral) School opened. The 'new' school is an academy, independent of local authority control, and receives funding directly from the Government. In September 2011, a new Junior department opened at Madeley House, the former boarding establishment. This will educate sixty pupils aged between seven and eleven. The new junior school will cater for nine choristers and six non-choristers in each of the four year groups.

In many ways, it is very much a matter of 'turning the clock back' as King's had a junior school in the twentieth century which flourished for almost fifty years. The Junior School was originally established in 1902 by The Revd. Edward Bidwell, Headmaster 1897-1903 (later Bishop of Ontario). It originally catered for five boys under the age of 8, who were taught in a house in Park Road that had been adapted for the purpose. In 1932 Oliver Mitchell moved the Junior School to the first floor of the main school that had previously been two dormitories, the matron's room and a store room. The Junior School eventually had eighty pupils (and a long waiting list). For many years it was under the direction of the redoubtable Miss Ruth Wigner (afterwards on the staff of Westwood House School), who was assisted by Miss Mary Beaumont (later Mrs. Capper) and Miss Isabel MacLaren. The Junior School closed in 1948 as a result of the 1944 (Butler)

Education Act, which gradually eliminated junior or preparatory departments of all Grammar Schools.

At one stage during the immediate post-war period, some discussions took place with regard to the possibility of The King's School becoming part of the Woodard Foundation. Sadly, these deliberations came to nothing and consequently Peterborough has always been the only major Cathedral in this country not to have an independent school attached to it.

8. MUSIC DEPARTMENT.

The Music department has now moved out of Laurel Court and is currently housed at number 28 Minster Precincts. It is hoped that in the fairly near future the choir will once again be permanently based in The Becket Chapel. The former Headmaster's house next door (for many years a verger's residence) will also form part of the department, as will the basement of the adjoining three flats (numbers 3, 4 and 5). Plans are afoot to erect a purpose-built song school in the courtyard behind the Headmaster's house.

Choral Evensong was broadcast live from the Cathedral on Wednesday 19 October.

9. PERSONALIA.

TOM BATES has recently given up singing full-time with Llandaff Cathedral choir, though he does continue to deputise there and at Gloucester Cathedral. He has been accepted for the ministry and is now in his first year of ordination training.

It was a great pleasure to see DAVID CLIFTON, his brother Chris and their parents at Choral Evensong on Monday 23 May. Through the kindness of Andrew Reid, one of Stanley Vann's anthems was sung at the service (David was a chorister under Dr. Vann). After evensong, Andrew invited Chris Clifton (a former pupil of Andrew Newberry) to play the Cathedral organ. Chris now lives and works in Norway, while David is currently domiciled in America.

MICHAEL GAMBLE has e-mailed to tell us that he has recently been going through some reel-to-reel tapes recorded by his late

father. One of these is a recording of choral evensong sung by the choirs of Ely, Norwich and Peterborough Cathedrals on Saturday 20 July 1963. Responses were by Thomas Tomkins, Psalm 104 was sung to a chant by Stanley Vann, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis were composed by Herbert Howells, and the anthems were "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" by Edward Bairstow, "Hail, Gladdening Light" by Charles Wood, and "O pray for the peace of Jerusalem" by Herbert Howells. The lessons were read by Canon Laurie Cartwright (Chancellor and Librarian) and Dean Noel Christopherson, while the Precentor was Peter Nicholson. Stanley Vann directed the music, and the organist was Richard Latham.

WILLIAM HAMILTON-BOX is now a Choral Scholar at Rochester Cathedral.

DAVID HUMPHREYS, formerly on the music staff at St. Edmundsbury Cathedral, arrived here in October as Assistant Director of Music. Prior to being at St. Edmundsbury, David was Organ Scholar at Jesus College, Cambridge, and before that was Organ Scholar at All Saints', Margaret Street, and also on the music staff at St. Albans Cathedral.

SIMON JOHNSON, now Organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, gave an organ recital in our Cathedral on 22 July as part of the Oundle International Organ Festival. Simon's work has taken him to the USA and throughout Europe.

DESMOND SWINBURN, Assistant Organist 1947-50, sang with the choir and old choristers at Choral Evensong during the recent reunion. He greatly enjoyed visiting his old haunts and had a splendid 'yarn' with Commander JOHN WILLIS, who was a chorister for part of Desmond's sojourn in Peterborough. Mr. Swinburn and his wife live in King's Lynn.

Tim Hurst-Brown has once again collated all the material and written the newsletter. I am extremely grateful to him for continuing to take on this considerable task.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Simon Wilkinson
Hon. Secretary