



# Friends of St Edmundsbury Cathedral Choir



Newsletter Summer 2018

## Introduction

This is the third edition of the FOCC newsletter, and I hope that you will enjoy the variety of news and articles featured in it.

The FOCC has had a busy year fundraising to support the Cathedral Choir. The year's events have included Starry Night in May 2017; the barbecue on the Garth at the end of the Summer term; sponsored walks in September 2017 and April 2018; and the Quiz in February 2018.

The monthly Sunday morning cake stall has continued, along with the 500 Club, both of which make a regular and significant contribution to our revenue target. Throughout the year, the FOCC provides a cushion hire service at Cathedral events and concerts; a drinks service is also organised at major Cathedral concerts and events, and also for the Bury Concert Club series held at the Unitarian Meeting House.



St Edmundsbury Singers, Evensong Norwich Cathedral – celebrating 30 years in 2018.

Funds raised this year have been used to support the production of a new Choir CD, the purchase of new hymn books for the Choir and to contribute to the costs of the Choir's tour to Portugal in April 2018.

These events require the time, energy and commitment of all those who form the FOCC committee, along with the support of other friends, choristers' families, vergers, the Music Department and the wider Cathedral community.

On behalf of the FOCC, I would like to express my gratitude for your continued support of the FOCC.

Kathryn Mitchell  
Chair, FOCC





## From the Director of Music

I am delighted to contribute to this the third informative and entertaining edition of the FOCC Newsletter, with a résumé of what the Cathedral Choir has been up to during 2017. We continue to benefit from the magnificent fund-raising efforts of the FOCC and thank you for your support of them. Do please consider becoming a member if you are not already, or subscribing to the 500 Club.

The Cathedral's choirs and music staff continue to the very best of their abilities to provide suitable music to enhance the worship at the Cathedral.

The New Year got off to a good start on the feast of the Epiphany and a week later, with the annual Epiphany Carol Service.

On February 1 it was good to field the Cathedral Choir for the RAF Regiment's 75th anniversary service. Also in February we recorded a CD with Neil Collier of Priory Records. Three evenings of hard work resulted in a very satisfactory recording of Christmas music, most of it performed in the previous term. This could not have happened without a generous



grant from the FOCC. Entitled 'Make We Merry' it is currently on sale and sold very well in the run up to Christmas.

In March, one chorister successfully passed the Bishop's Chorister Examination – Jamie Sparkes was our only candidate this year, to whom many congratulations.

In April a Year 6 chorister Matthew Baker left us because he was missing his swimming so much. He is of county standard and it was a very difficult decision to make. I like to think of the Cathedral Choir as a county team 'competing' at national level. He left with my blessing on the proviso that he keep winning.

Easter fell awkwardly with respect to the school terms but we managed some down time for the choir on either side of Holy Week and Easter

On April 27 it was great to welcome new Probationer Theo Geileskey from Risby School. He was rapidly made a Chorister and his mother, Sarah, has begun ordination training on placement at the Cathedral; a very happy combination of circumstances. On 30 April we said farewell to Thomas Upton, a long-serving chorister and Head Chorister. His successor is Samuel Vernon.

On May 21 we gave a concert at 5 pm as part of the Bury Festival. We sang Duruflé's setting of the Requiem Mass, with Katharine Thomas and Janet Banks singing and playing the cello, respectively, for the Pie Jesu. Beautifully accompanied by Mr Binns and with our own David Sadler providing the Baritone solos, this was very well received by a large audience.

In July we very much enjoyed hosting the girls and boys top lines from Trinity Church, New Haven, Connecticut. They spent two weeks in the UK, firstly based at Guildford and then with us. They sang five choral services in all, one on their own, the others in combination with various resident choirs. A grand time was had by all and we were cordially invited to visit them in the USA in due course.

Choir Term ended on July 16 with sad farewells to one Chorister – William Lowden and our two Choral Scholars, Rob O’Brian and Ethan Grimwood.

The annual Outward Bound summer camp took place at the end of August, as usual in what’s left of Happisburgh.

Term began, as did Katharine’s and my 21st year here, on Sunday 10 September with the choir in good heart despite the low numbers. On 24 September we sang an extra service in the evening at Barham church where the Revd Carl Melville, our former curate, is in charge. There was a scarecrow chorister in the choir stalls who watched more attentively throughout the proceedings than any of the other singers.

30 September saw an extra service requested by the Bishop to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther. It was a good experience, nice to be made to listen to some relevant organ music and some German was learned. Saturday 7 October saw the annual diocesan choirs’ Festival, at the Cathedral this year. It was a joy to witness the baptism of three Choristers on Sunday 8 October.

Sunday 15 October saw a special Evensong to say farewell to the Dean of the last seven years, Frances Ward.



Celebrating twenty years at St Edmundsbury

Bishop Graeme took up the reins as Acting Dean, and was and continues to be enormously supportive of what the Cathedral’s Choirs try to achieve.

The annual performance of *Messiah* was well up to standard, particularly the four excellent soloists, all of them friends of Mr Binns! The ticket sales were well up on previous years, which was very heartening. The Advent and Christmas engagements were all successful and enjoyable: Carols by Candlelight; the service of Nine Lessons & Carols; and the Mass on Christmas morning, accompanied by a small string orchestra.

Recruiting is proving more difficult than ever, but a recent ‘Be a Chorister’ event resulted in the appointment of three new Probationers: Oliver, Tristan and Oliver, you are hugely welcome on board. Here’s to many years of happy music-making together!

## Moves

**Salvete** Ray Alexander  
Oscar Gleeson  
Thomas Gotch  
Toby Webster

**Valete** Thomas Field  
Matthew Baker  
William Lowden  
Thomas Upton



# The Choir Outward Bound



Throughout the year Mr T is always saying how he doesn't want to think about the Outward Bound, because it means the summer holidays are nearly over. However, by the time the weekend away rolls round, we all start looking forward to it.



## Day 1:

After loading all the bags and food on the mini-bus we are off to Happisburgh with a strict NO SINGING RULE. But we never reach Happisburgh by mini-bus, instead we get dropped off a mile or two down the coast for lovely walk up the beach - this opinion can change depending on how much water you have with you and on you - with an ice cream stop half way. Once we arrive at the Village Hall we unpack our neatly packed bags – thanks Mums – and make our beds. After running around the field



a couple of times we are ready for a BBQ and evening games of charades and Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

## Day 2:

After breakfast we all get back into the mini-bus and go off to a nearby forest. Once there we make a base at a picnic bench and start the first of many capture-the-flag games. A quick break for lunch and to rest, then it's back off to the forest. After a couple of hours, we're ready to go back to the hall and get our fish and chips. Another round of games while Bertie the dog (tired of chasing a ball) lies on Mr T's bed.



## Day 3:

The morning of Day 3 is always slow as we regret not unpacking neatly and decide to use the stuff and hope-it-fits method. Parents don't arrive for pick up for another couple of hours, so we whip out the board games and try to make as little mess as possible. Soon most people have gone and it's only the few who are travelling back on the mini-bus left. It's not long before Mr T is dropping off the hall's keys and we are heading home, once again having the sinking feeling that the summer hols are over.

**Sam Vernon**

## The Service of Nine Lessons & Carols

The Service of Nine Lessons & Carols is very different from our usual Evensong or Eucharist. First, it's held on a different day each year, and secondly it's not structured in the same way.

I'm here to tell you what I remember about the day of this service last Christmas.

First of all we arrived at four o'clock and met Sam Knock, a former chorister. Sam was there to host the "Once in Royal David's City" auditions and choose who would sing the first chorus solo.

We all picked a number from a tin and I just so happened to get number one, which meant I auditioned first. I was more than a little nervous. We sang on the other side of the Cathedral so

Sam didn't know who was singing at which time. Once we had all finished, he chose who would be singing the main solo.

During the service, we sang nine Christmas carols and in between there were nine short readings. The Cathedral was packed full, so full I couldn't see a free seat. The atmosphere was incredible and I loved it. One of my favourite songs that night was "Sir Christemas"; it's a quick moving English song, with a little bit of French in the middle of it, this was great fun.

After it all finished, I went home thinking of how much I had enjoyed the night.

**Logan Williamson**



## The making of "Make We Merry"

In February last year the Cathedral Choir met to record a new Christmas CD, "Make we Merry". We had a photo shoot around the Christmas tree in December which provided a photo of us all for the inside cover. I remember thinking how confusing it felt singing Christmas music in February! Neil Collier (who recorded us) set his equipment up in the nave, the choir and Mr T gathered underneath the tower and Mr Binns was at the organ. The microphones were positioned just far enough away in order to pick up the beautiful acoustics of the cathedral, the only drawback to that was that the mics picked up the occasional vehicle going

by outside which meant we had to stop and do a retake; we also had to do retakes when somebody sang a wrong note.

After three long and tiring sessions we had 22 songs recorded. The songs ranged from Bach to traditional Christmas carols, my favourite being "I Saw Three Ships".

Neil made 500 CDs and I think to date we have sold 250.

Making the CD was tiring but fun and I feel lucky and proud to have had the opportunity to be a part of it.

**Jamie Sparkes**



# 30 YEARS OF St Edmundsbury Singers

Original members  
- Catherine, Penny,  
Claire, Liz



Carol service  
Dec 1994 with  
Margaret Cousins



Silvery Moon  
1995



Silvery Moon  
Sister Act



Carols  
by Candlelight  
2015



It's now 30 years since Paul Trepte founded the St. Edmundsbury Singers. His original plan was to form a chamber choir to sing when the Cathedral Choir was not on duty, but far more women than men auditioned, so initially two choirs were formed. The mixed voice chamber choir was short-lived, but the ladies' choir flourished. New robes were ordered for us (with the addition of white collars a few years later) and rehearsals began in the "Cloister Hall", the hut which served as a song school until the Cathedral Centre was opened in 1990.

Margaret Cousins took over as our conductor until 1997 and was succeeded by Assistant Directors of Music, Scott Farrell (1997-99), Michael Bawtree (1999-2004), Jonathan Vaughn (2004-07), David Humphreys (2007-11), Dan Soper (2011-16) and Alexander Binns (2016-present).

With rehearsals on Tuesday or Thursday evenings, the St. Eds Singers sing regular Tuesday Evensongs once a month and join forces with the Lay Clerks for Sunday Evensong once a term and for Midnight mass on Christmas Eve. Other annual events are Carols by Candlelight, Messiah with the Cathedral Choir and Compline services during Holy Week.

Over the years we have also taken part in concerts and many extra services, covering a wide range of music, ancient and modern. "Older" members of the choir will remember an eventful Knights Templar service and our annual carol services for

the Parkinson's Disease Society and Havebury Housing Association.

Other highlights of the past 30 years include our memorable tours to various destinations in this country and Europe – Dublin, Copenhagen, Nice, Winchester (where we were warmly welcomed by James and Lorna Atwell), Malta, Wells and, more recently, Canterbury. There have also been visits to local village churches to sing Evensong – and one unusual service at Orford, where our singing was accompanied by liturgical dance!

We have sung at several members' weddings and also, sadly, for the funerals of former members Brigid Maxwell, Geraldine Birt and Jill Van de Plasse.

On a lighter note, there have been many enjoyable social occasions and good friendships have been made within the choir. Our members enjoy taking part in FOCC events, such as the annual quiz and "Starry Night" (formerly "Silvery Moon"). Who could forget the time when we and Michael Bawtree dressed as nuns and performed songs from "Sister Act" in the Athenaeum?

We currently number 8 first sopranos, 8 second sopranos and 9 altos. Four of us have been in the choir since it began in 1988:- Catherine Topham, Claire Robinson, Penny Carter and myself.

Our 30th Anniversary Concert, performed as part of this year's Bury Festival was a special occasion; here's to the next thirty years!

**Liz Wright**



Starry Night  
2015



Canterbury  
Cathedral  
Oct 2016



Liz & Kathryn  
Christmas Fayre  
tombola  
2016



Liz & Faith  
2016

# Old Choristers



**James Tuck**

I joined the choir in 1988 and I have my primary school music teacher to thank for this as she suggested that I apply for the auditions. I sang for three different choir masters – Paul Trepte, Mark Blatchly and Mervyn Cousins - and working under three different regimes benefited me as a musician by seeing their different approaches to nurturing musical talent. I was also extremely fortunate to be inspired by some amazingly talented Head Choristers, from Simon Wall to Jamie Foreman. Particular favourite opportunities include the choir tours (Belgium and Czech Republic), singing a solo for a programme on ITV, Noye's Fludde, the football and cricket matches, singing memorable solos such as Stanford in G and Once

In Royal and having the honour of becoming Head Chorister. Looking back it is clear to me that the choir was the best musical education I ever had - that level of musical professionalism at such a young age is priceless.

When my voice broke one world ended and another began. I knew that singing was still the most important thing for me in the whole world but that singing in a choir was something that I wasn't really interested in pursuing. I got into rock music and very quickly Kurt Cobain (Nirvana) became my idol so I started to sing in bands and then learned guitar so I could start writing songs. I studied Music (and therefore the classical tradition) up to A-Level standard but decided that my heart was in popular music, both from a production and performance perspective, so I studied Popular Music with Music Technology at the University of Derby. When I finished university I spent a few years singing and playing in a band with my best mates with the dream of being able to earn a living from it; unfortunately that didn't happen so I had to re-evaluate.

Becoming a teacher was probably the last thing on my list of things to do as a career but it was one of the best decisions I have ever made and I would recommend the profession to anyone. I finished my PGCE at The Faculty of Education, Cambridge University, in 2005 and I was pleased that my second placement school (Sudbury Upper School) offered me a job and that I had a supportive head of department that gave me autonomy to build Music Technology in the





school. I am now Head of Music at Mayflower High School in Billericay and I am extremely fortunate to work in a school that is really supportive of and values music education. The school has allowed me to build a choir by increasing the available rehearsal time by taking students out of tutor time. It's been great to have introduced repertoire from my days as a chorister such as Mozart's and Byrd's Ave Verum and Fauré's Cantique de Jean Racine and to see how the students fell in love with the music (compared to their original evaluation of 'that Latin one' and 'that French one').

I have recently been revisiting classical based singing and sat the ABRSM Grade 8 singing exam in 2016 (I was relieved to have got a distinction) and I am now preparing for the ARSM diploma. I would love at some point to sing in an opera.



I am completely obsessed with every single facet of music making and luckily for me due to my job I continue to learn more about this subject that I love every day and I also have the honour of sharing amazing musical experiences with the musicians of the future.

## Procession at West Front of the Cathedral, circa 1955-56



The vergers of St Mary-le-Tower, Ipswich / Cecil Gladwell (ex chorister - The crucifer usually wore this style surplice) / Timothy Collard? / ? / Michael Ryba (Head Chorister) / ? / ? / Rowen Ransome / Paul Marsh / ? / Howard Willingham / John Brabrook / Roger Clark (later Pugh) / Peter Parkhouse / Keith Blasby / Wilfred Mothersole / ? / Peter Wood / Peter Balaam / Vic Clarke / John Collard / John Hanchett / Graham Murdie / Maurice Brown / Stanley Snell? / George Wharf / John Fisher / Alfred Grove (father of John) / Ted Mason / R.W. Elliot (Headmaster of King Edward VI Grammar School) / Prefects / Revd. Geoffrey Tarris (Precentor) / Mr Davies (Vergers) / The Very Revd. J.L. White (Provost)



## Keith Blasby

I joined the choir in December 1949, when I was seven years old.

The then Provost (John Lawrence White) press-ganged mothers to put their sons into the choir and this is how I was recruited, possibly on a Thursday afternoon at the Mothers' Meeting at the Eastgate Street Mission. At the time there were two Mission Rooms belonging to the Cathedral, the other in Victoria Street. Mrs Mothersole (the assistant organist's wife) ran the Eastgate Group, she would read to them, there was a hymn and a prayer, they discussed whatever and had cups of tea whilst doing their knitting.

The Sunday services were Matins at 10.45am and the Evening service at 6.30pm. On the fifth Sunday morning of the month would be a sung Eucharist. All of these services included a sermon and at the evening service most of the lights in the nave would be extinguished during the sermon.

The choir stalls were in the nave, just west of the pulpit. We sat on the same style of pews which are currently used and each pew would hold eight or nine boys, it was unfortunate if you

were boy in the middle as the central support was most uncomfortable to lean against. As there were approximately twelve boys on each side, this meant that the younger boys had to sit on wicker-seat chairs which were borrowed from the Lady Chapel. The choir wore cassocks of a ghastly purple which buttoned down the front.

Mr Percy Hallam was the Choir Master assisted by Wilfred Mothersole, referred to by the boys as Percy and Nunc respectively.

The choir rehearsed in the choir stalls and Mr Hallam usually used a small keyboard called a Dulictone whereas Mr Mothersole preferred a rather cumbersome harmonium. As the music desk was quite high and Mr Mothersole was fairly short he had difficulty in seeing over the top. The harmonium had a removable back and was held in place by small fasteners which could easily be undone and at one rehearsal the fasteners were loosened. As Mr Mothersole peddled away the vibration caused the unfastened back to fall onto the floor with a crash - he was not amused but I do not remember there being any recriminations.

There was a tradition that each new boy should be 'bushed'. This did not take place immediately but it happened to me one spring evening after a rehearsal. In the Vestry yard there were a few shrubs and being 'bushed' was to be repeatedly pushed into a bush as you tried to get up. On my return home my mother was furious and insisted that those responsible apologised, this they did and no more 'bushing' took place.

Singing in the old Chancel, mid 1960s - conductor Wilfred Mothersole; Keith is in the back row, far left



Many of the choristers, including myself, were very keen train-spotters and in our free time would visit railway stations to collect engine numbers. Porky Holmes was probably the keenest. John Hanchett (son of the stone mason in Kings Road) was very much a Midland region spotter, he used to travel to Bletchley, whereas Michael Ryba and myself were Eastern region spotters and would have a few days on Peterborough North station, the main line from King's Cross to Edinburgh. I used much of my choir pay to buy some of the Hornby Dublo locomotives and rolling stock which were very popular at the time.

For funerals and weddings each chorister was paid a half-crown (12½ pence), this seemed like a fortune at the time. On one occasion, with my half-crown a couple of friends and myself went to Berry's baker's shop (which was in Churchgate Street) and I bought some iced buns. Quite a treat.

As we boys became more senior, some of us took on the role of being 'book boys'. We would arrive early and open hymn books, psalters, chant books etc. at the appropriate places, and would also put out copies of the anthem and settings of the canticles. On one Sunday after the clocks had been changed, George Wharfe (one of the basses) arrived at the Cathedral very early in the morning and wondered where everyone was. It transpired that both he and his wife had changed the clock without the other knowing.

The Reverend Maurice Pirani, a New Zealander, was appointed as Succentor. He was very go ahead and caused many a head to turn. He was fairly well built, not huge, not

only did he chain smoke but he was also an accomplished musician. He had a bicycle which had a motorised back wheel which he used to travel around the parish - much easier than pedalling. He organised the Bury St. Edmunds Cathedral Choir Club on Saturday evenings for the older boys in the Eastgate Mission Room. There was a table tennis table and a small billiard table. The Rev. Pirani would sit at the piano, with a cigarette on his lip, and we would have a sing-song standing around the piano. I have a copy of the programme of a Choir Club Concert held in the Eastgate Mission Room on Saturday 19th February 1955. In all, 13 choristers performed and one item was conjuring. Mr Grove (tenor) also sang a solo.

I remember there was much excitement learning Zadok the Priest, with its jerky rhythms and runs in thirds. I am assuming it was 1953 and would have been for a special service during the Coronation period.

Mr Shann who was the organist for many years, prior to Mr Hallam, wrote two hymns specifically for the Cathedral, one was for St. Edmund's Day and the other for St James's Day. The Mothersoles also wrote a hymn for St. Edmund's Day, Mrs Mothersole wrote the words and Mr Mothersole composed the tune. I have copies of all three. Mr Mothersole related the story of how Mr Shann demanded a new chant for Psalm 24 with only a week's notice. This chant, in A major – a favourite – has continued to be used. During the late 1980s, when Paul Trepte was Director of Music, this was one of the two Mothersole chants used during a BBC Broadcast of Choral Evensong.





On Wednesday 11 March 1964, Choral Evensong was broadcast, live, from the cathedral. The traffic on Angel Hill was diverted so as not to produce extraneous sounds, the cathedral was closed to outsiders and the choir had to stand for the whole broadcast so that the noise of sitting and standing would not be transmitted. From memory, the music was Byrd's Responses; Armstrong in D minor (the bass solo of the Nunc Dimittis sung by George Wharfe); Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, SS Wesley and the final hymn to the tune Gonfalon Royal.



A girls' choir was formed in 1961 which was trained by Mary Slatter, the assistant organist and a teacher at the East Anglian School for Girls, in Bury St Edmunds.

When the Enthronement of Bishop Lesley Brown on 21 April 1966 was due to be televised, the men's section of the choir had grown and improved but there was a desperate shortage of boys. As there was now a competent girls' choir it was agreed that the girls

could take part but on condition that they would be out of sight of the television cameras!

Over the years I've also sung in the Bach Choir, the Operatic Society, the Abbot and Kirby Consorts and the Ailwin Singers. I've always been keen on jazz and since 2000 have spent much more time playing the trumpet. Being in the Cathedral Choir is a musical experience you can never forget.

Choir boys' concert in the Eastgate Mission, 1959

Can you name any of them?



# 130 Years Ago

Extracts from Parish Magazine printed by Catling & Ranson, 8 Lower Baxter St. Price 2d.

The Vicar was Canon Harrison whose address is given as 'Abbey Ruins'.

The Organist was Edward Iles, who came from St Bartholomew's, Dover, in 1883 and left to teach singing in London in 1892.



Canon Harrison (bottom left), who became the Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway in Sept 1888

Choir Annual Expenditure to March 31st, 1888 was £146 8s. 8d, including:

	£	s	d
Organist's Salary	80	0	0
Organ Blower, Sundays	7	0	0
Organ Blower, Week Days	2	11	6
Washing Surplices	4	18	0
Choir Boys	22	8	8
Repairing Cassocks		10	6
New Hymn Books	3	5	8
Walker – Tuning Organ	7	17	6
Expenses of Oratorio	11	11	9

The Vicar congratulated Mr Iles on being elected a Fellow of the College of Organists and also on the unmixed pleasure which was given by the performance of Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise" which was a great musical treat.

## Fundraising Ceilidh

The FOCC Ceilidh saw a spectacular evening of dancing in the nave. The Cathedral brimmed with music and energy; and dancers of all ages, beginners and old hands, joined together for a wonderful evening of terpsichorean delight. The event raised over £1000 and from feedback it is hoped it will be repeated. Special thanks to Trevor Smith, the caller, and the band for providing such a fun and memorable evening.



# Old Choristers

**Peter Clayton**



After retiring as Head Chorister I enjoyed every opportunity Mr Thomas gave me to come back and sing and I learnt a great deal through joining the Cathedral's Youth Choir and helping out on the back row of the Cathedral Choir.

Whilst reading Music at Durham University my prior singing experience put me in great stead to enjoy a whole variety of choirs. In my first year at university I found myself in the small tight knit community of St John's College Choir, singing early music by candlelight in the Norman Chapel of the Castle with Durham Polyphony; singing in the popular university Chamber Choir including a concert on the river as well as the Cathedral's The Consort of Singers. In my second year I took on a Choral Scholarship at Durham Cathedral and with 8 services a week, my sight reading certainly got a lot better! On completion of my undergraduate degree I undertook a Master's Degree in Composition at

Durham whilst singing up the road as a Lay Clerk in Newcastle Cathedral and working with local primary schools through the government's Chorister Outreach Programme.

Since graduating and becoming a Music teacher, I have fitted in a few different choirs, from local choir groups to the London based Chantage. A particular highlight was singing in a late night prom at The Albert Hall in a new and very whacky performance!

I have now been a teacher for seven years and I lead a very busy and exciting Music Department at The Hertfordshire & Essex High School in Bishop's Stortford. Singing is a big part of the school and it is a pleasure to support my students become confident performers. I was very proud to recently put on a fantastic production of Les Misérables as it reminded me of how supportive and positive my time was at County Upper where I played Marius in their production. I will always be grateful for my time at St Edmundsbury Cathedral; being a Chorister is the best start to a musical education that anyone can ask for!



## From the Back Row

### John Lambert

My father was born in Woodbridge but his family de-camped to Kent when he was a baby. In consequence I was born and brought up in Kent, but I came back to Suffolk over thirty years ago whilst also retaining a pad in London. I have been a Lay Clerk in this Cathedral for nineteen of those years although a medical emergency three years ago took me out for a few months but this 'outage' proved that [a] the choir can do quite nicely without me, and [b] the thoughts and prayers of my colleagues and friends here and in the wider congregation helped me to get through a rather depressing chapter.

Now, fully recovered, at the age of seventy-three, my singing 'career' is nearing its end, so when the FOCC asked me to consider writing something about the music in my life it got me thinking about all sorts of hopes and beginnings, but all of them very sketchy.

I seem happily to have sung in churches and cathedrals from an early age, and was very much taken by the beauty of the music. I have always loved the psalms, for example -the florid language and those rather mesmerising little Anglican chants. It was to be many years before I was able to instruct later generations that the psalms contain so much lurid material that no singing opportunity should be missed. I do remember early singing lessons; my first organ lessons; having piano lessons on the biggest grand I had ever seen; and then a rather curious bearded man teaching me 'cello.



Still with my treble voice I landed the part of "Mr. Pig" [it was always meant to be] in the Kent touring production of Noah's Flood. I do have fond memories of the music and the various venues, and of Mrs. Pig. I can also recall the end, though not the event,-being on stage in Ashford at the age of fifteen when my treble voice became too unreliable. I was not happy.

I remember my angst-ridden teenage years when I had no satisfactory singing voice, and my piano became what I can only describe as my confidant in all the desperate highs and lows of life at that time. Then for a year or so I tried out my 'alto' voice, not very successfully nor happily, until I settled into my tenor voice. I found myself singing in a couple of chamber choirs, and then a bit later studying conducting and running a village choir of my own. I also conducted a small orchestra for a while but this was scary and was never to be repeated!



I can remember a family holiday in the Channel Islands, on Sark, when someone came to the door one Sunday morning to say that the organist could not get to the island because of fog; I was volunteered. A little while later the same someone came back to say that the priest could not get across either, so would I please make up a morning service, and take it and play for it. Peak career!

I served Articles in Maidstone, and as the county town had a rather nice parish church [All Saints] overlooking the river I was pleased to be appointed Singing Master under a very interesting Director of Music who gave me great freedom and support. It was a fabulous place, and after joining Southwark Cathedral, I continued there for a while racing back to conduct Evensong on a Sunday.

To keep my hand in, on the vocal side Phyllis Sitchel [she of the BBC Singers] became my voice coach, and I even began to do things away from the church scene. I had a go at local opera, though when the press described me as a 'light tenor' I knew the writing was on the wall. I had many bookings for soloist work, even filling in on one occasion for another sick soloist, having to have a fast car take me from 'my' performance to the other one whose start had been delayed. And it was a different work!

My career in finance could only be furthered by taking up a post in London. I was missing choral singing and decided to see what opportunities there were. I went to see Harry Bramma at Southwark Cathedral and Douglas Guest at Westminster Abbey to see whether I was good enough and whether the musical workload could be fitted into a merchant banking

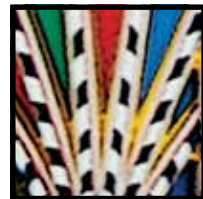
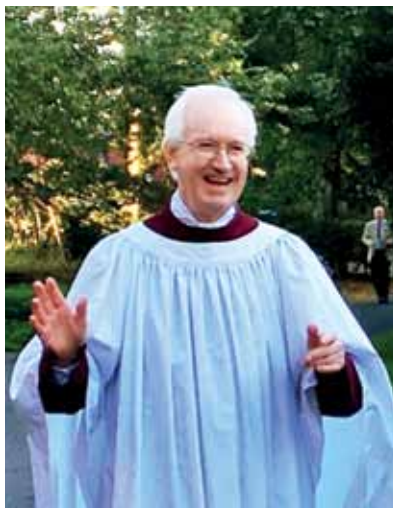
career. A few months later I was invited to take up an appointment at Southwark.

I well remember my last service at Maidstone where the Director of Music played us out to "Good bye" on the organ. How lovely! Southwark was lovely too, in its way. Borough Market was, how shall I put it, not so well developed in those days; carrots, cabbages and chants all had to mingle in a single south London plot - a divine soup [or an unholy mess according to some]. The Cathedral Choir was provided with lunch on Sundays, and boys' parents took it in turn to serve; when Timothy West and Prunella Scales took their turn with the ladles we were all amused. My time there was wonderful and much good music was made [although the sub-dean did not like me very much, and spilled communion wine down my front much to the consternation of the robes' mistress!].

After a few years Suffolk beckoned and I moved to Tuddenham St. Martin. There was much that I needed to do with the house and garden so, with regret, I left Southwark. It was not long before Sundays at home began to feel strange; I missed all that glorious music. I joined the choir of St. Mary le Tower in Ipswich, a wonderful group of people, with a surprisingly large repertoire. I shall always be grateful to its Director of Music, who encouraged me to help direct and conduct the choir. At the 1998 Suffolk Organists Association dinner I met James Thomas and we must have got on as he asked me to audition for the Cathedral choir. My only note of the event ended "Expenses only; no stipend; no perks". My first rehearsal was 8th January 1999.



What does it all add up to? Not much in terms of achievement I suppose but music, and especially church music, has always been an important part of my life. I chose merchant banking over music as a career but music, above all else, has helped form who I am. When I came out of hospital three years ago I tried to set down a list of my important goals so that I could at least make some effort to achieve them. Point seven on that list reads – “To continue singing until the time when the pain and effort begins to outweigh the sheer joy of expressing myself musically”. Joy indeed.



## 50 Years Ago: 1968

- **Provost Waddington** on a two-month preaching and lecturing tour in USA.
- **Communion Settings:** Ireland in C, Darke in F, Byrd 3 part, Hurd Missa Brevis (Girls' voices), Stanford in F, Wood in the Phrygian Mode, Willan in D, Merbecke (Treble voices), Jackson in G, Oxley in E (Men's voices).
- **Mr Hugh Allard**, one of the younger choirmen, has recently completed two years with 100% attendance. Remarkable as he was living in Norwich and now comes all the way from Stowmarket.
- **£7,500 legacy** from Mr F W Choat for clergy and choir stalls in the new choir.
- **Sweet singing in the Quire** The choir sang in the new choir for the first time during the Friends Festival on 20th July. Programme: Lord, remember David – *Oxley*, Let all mortal flesh – *Bairstow*, Christ is made the sure foundation – *Purcell*.
- **Funeral of Stanley Snell**. Choir member – man and boy. He ran the Choirboys Club.
- **Paul Beamish** is both choir table tennis champion and snooker champion.
- **Vincent Price** regularly attended the Cathedral during shooting of *The Witchfinder General*. Provost John Waddington did not enjoy its showing at the Abbeygate Cinema – ‘The story was incredibly sordid and unpleasant – only a sadist could possibly have enjoyed the film.’
- **New Choir Robes for 1970 Appeal** £109 15s. raised towards the £400 target. £37 from 14 choirgirls on a sponsored walk from Cathedral to Stowmarket on 16th June organised by Miss Slatter. It took 8 hours to do the 20 miles (by a devious route)!
- **Engelbert Humperdinck** was on the same plane as Harrison Oxley when he set off for his October Concert Tour in USA.
- **Peter Oxley** admitted chorister. There were 27 choirboys and 13 choirmen.
- **Sandra Beamish**, the Head Girl, recently passed ‘O’ level music.
- **Harrison Oxley** conducted the Bach Choir’s performance of the B Minor Mass.
- **Floods** in September broke down the wall between Abbey Precincts and the Abbey Gardens. Eastgate suffered greatly.
- **Wedding** of the verger, Mr C Davies. He was 86 years old.
- **Cloister Hall booking charges:** Morning or Afternoon 10/6; Evenings £2 2s; Whole Day & Wedding Receptions £5 (includes use of kitchen and crockery).

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please help us support the Cathedral Choristers and the Cathedral Choir

The St Edmundsbury Cathedral Choir works to the highest standards to provide music for the Cathedral's services. The choristers' commitment averages around 13 hours per week and includes three mornings before school. There is no Cathedral choir school and the boys attend many different schools, some travelling considerable distances each day to attend practice.

The choristers are very dedicated and show tremendous commitment, often at the expense of other interests and in addition to their school activities. The Lay Clerks are all volunteers and sing four or more services each week. The FOCC's primary objective is to raise funds to support activities that augment the choristers' music education and provide special experiences for the choir, such as tours, recordings, concerts and visits.

Membership of the FOCC is open to all and is one way in which members of the Cathedral Community and the public at large can support the choir and the wonderful provision of music that is an integral part of Cathedral life.

## Friends of the Cathedral Choir (FOCC)

FOCC is an independent charity established with the objectives of

- Supporting the education and training of the Cathedral choir
- Assisting with the funding of choir tours, recordings and special events
- Promoting the art of choral music

## WHAT FOCC DOES

- FOCC's primary focus is fundraising to support the choir and this is achieved through a broad and innovative range of initiatives
- We organise a wide variety of fun and social events for the choristers, cathedral community and general public
- We promote awareness of the Cathedral Choir

## BECOMING A FRIEND

- Please join us and help support the Cathedral Choir and the musical life of the cathedral
- Fill in the application form opposite for membership or making a donation and return to us
- Please complete the Gift Aid declaration as this can enhance your membership donation by 25%
- If you are able to complete a Bank Standing Order this saves us time and expense on administration

## 500 Club

The FOCC 500 Club is another way of supporting the Friends of the Cathedral Choir. Each number costs the member £2 per month and there are three cash prizes offered in the monthly draw. If you are a winner you can opt to receive a cheque or you can choose to donate the prize to a charity of your choice.

- To join the 500 Club please complete the form on the back page.

THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT



# APPLICATION FORM

I wish to become:

- an Individual Friend (minimum £10 per annum) .....
- a Joint/Family Friend (minimum £15 per annum) .....
- a Life Friend (minimum £150).....
- a Corporate Friend (minimum £75 per annum).....

OR

I wish to make a donation.....

BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

MR, MRS, Other.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone .....

Email .....

I would like to pay by Bank Standing Order (see opposite).....

OR

I enclose a cheque made payable to

FOCC for £ .....

Signature.....Date.....

# GIFT AID DECLARATION

Please complete this declaration by ticking the appropriate box

I am not a UK taxpayer .....

OR

I would like Friends of St Edmundsbury Cathedral Choir to reclaim tax on all my donations until further notice.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that I must pay an amount of income or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax deducted from my donation .....

Signature of donor.....

Date.....

# BANK STANDING ORDER



BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

To ..... Bank

.....

Bank Address .....

Bank Post Code .....

From MR, MRS, Other .....

Name .....

Address.....

.....

.....

Post Code.....

Telephone .....

Please pay to:

Lloyds Bank plc, 28/34 Risbygate Street, Bury St Edmunds

Sort Code: 30-91-49 Account Number: 01274924

Account Name: Friends of St Edmundsbury Cathedral Choir

The sum of £ .....

on..... (date)

and every year on same date until further notice.

My Account No: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

My Bank Sort Code: \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_

Signed.....

Date.....

Name (BLOCK LETTERS).....

Please send your completed form to:

FOCC, The Cathedral Office, Abbey House,  
Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1LS

Charity No: 1146575



# Friends of St Edmundsbury Cathedral Choir

# 500 *Club*

## APPLICATION FORM

I would like to join the **500 Club** .....

I would like ..... number(s) @ £2 per month

The annual payment for this is (Nos x £2 x 12 months) £.....

Please send any prize to:

My address below .....

Or to the following charity .....

## BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

MR, MRS, Other.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone.....

Email.....

I would like to pay by Bank Standing Order (see opposite).....

OR

I enclose a cheque made payable to

FOCC for £.....

Signature.....Date.....

## BANK STANDING ORDER .....

### BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

To..... Bank

Bank Address.....

Bank Post Code.....

From MR, MRS, Other.....

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code.....

Telephone.....

Please pay to:

Lloyds Bank plc, 28/34 Risbygate Street, Bury St Edmunds

Sort Code: 30-64-22 Account Number: 26206768

Account Name: FOCC 500 Club

The sum of £.....

on.....(date)

and every year on same date until further notice.

My Account No: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

My Bank Sort Code: \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_

Signed.....

Date.....

Name (BLOCK LETTERS).....



Please send your completed form to:

FOCC, The Cathedral Office, Abbey House, Angel Hill,  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1LS

Charity No: 1146575