

Blackburn Cathedral 8th February 2015
Music & More
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**Laying of the FOUNDATION STONE
of Cathedral Court**

On a cold February afternoon a large congregation gathered in the cathedral, with clergy, choir, the **Lord Lieutenant** and legions of gold-chained Mayors, to see the Bishop of Blackburn, **The Rt. Revd. Julian Henderson**, lay the Foundation Stone of the new Cathedral Court.



The Dean welcomed us informally before the service began, saying that 'Many of us have wondered if we would live to see this day!'



The music was, of course, splendid, with fine hymns: The processional was *Christ is made the sure foundation*.

The Office hymn was, *O King enthroned on high*, which was sung at the laying of the foundation stone of the Cathedral extension on 7th October 1938.

And after the stone had been laid and blest, we sang, as we returned to the cathedral, *Christ is our corner-stone*.



The first Lesson taken from the Book of Joshua, where he describes the taking of twelve stones after the Israelites had crossed the river Jordan, and using those stones to mark the place where they would camp, was read by **Mr Peter Turner**, Chairman of Blackburn Cathedral Developments, who oversaw the massive planning and financing of the whole concept of our new Cathedral Close.



The second Lesson, from the first Epistle of Peter, began, *Come to him, a living stone*. This was read by the Cathedral Architect, **Mr James Sanderson**.

Some of the choir and organ music was by Blackburn Cathedral musicians:

Responses by **John Bertalot** (DoM 1964-82)
Festive March for organ by **Henry Smart** (organist of Blackburn Parish Church 1832-38) which was played by **Shaun Turnbull** as we processed from the Cathedral to participate in the laying of the Foundation Stone.

The motet sung at the end of the service by the cathedral choir, directed by **Samuel Hudson**, was '*God be in my head*' by **Herman Brearley**, Blackburn Cathedral's first organist, 1926-39.

Other fine music included Stanford's *Evening Canticles in C*, Brahms' *How lovely are thy dwellings fair*, and immediately after the Bishop had blest the Foundation Stone, Bruckner's *Locus iste a Deo factus est* (*This place was made by God*).

But it was the Dean's Sermon, given before the ceremony outside, which put the whole service in context. So here it is in full, interspersed with photographs of the ceremony:

The Dean's Sermon

Our Purpose.

(Joshua 4. 1 - 10)

Dean Jocelin stands at the Crossing of the Cathedral in the murky half-light of a winter's day. The Master Builder is at his side. Both pore over the plans for the new spire. The wind echoes around the spire above, the stone shrieking and the timbers creaking as the spire ascends heavenwards, octagon upon octagon. Whilst the Dean looks increasingly satisfied, the Master-builder is worried for the Cathedral does not have foundations strong enough to withhold the pressure of the new spire. Its shadow falls on the world below and most darkly on the Dean himself.

Such is the introduction to William Golding's classic, 'The Spire', which tells of one man's obsession and the folly he creates. The spire will always be a danger and certainly sees off the old dean, who dies on the last page of the book.

Golding contrasts the focus on the spire with the needs of the world outside – a chilling reminder to what we should be about.



Compare this story with the purpose of the Israelites which we heard of in our first lesson, forging through the Jordon to take possession of the Promised Land. They built a memorial to the event so that their children might remember and they built it from the stepping stones in the river. They too were driven by a vision to occupy their inheritance under God - but it begins as a vision which looks outwards, not inwards.



Dean Emeritus David Frayne extreme left, next to Hon Assistant Virger, Brian Newton.

The Wilderness Years.



We meet today to remind ourselves that we must look outwards. We are no longer playing with ideas, blue-

sky visions, and empty dreams of a cash cow which might keep us all comfortable. That may have been an inward vision 10 years ago but it soon changed into an evangelistic opportunity.



The Bishop blesses the stone

Yes, like the Israelites, we have had our wilderness years. From within, we have grumbled and accepted disappointment, stagnation and many a white knuckle ride in Chapter whilst also enduring cynicism and disbelief from without. But really this is a wonderful story of partnership, for which Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is justly famous. The diocese has been sympathetic and the bishops unstintingly supportive but when the first estimate for the project arrived – several million pounds bigger than anticipated - it was our local MP who came to the rescue together with friends from Westminster and the Homes and Communities Agency in particular.



The Dean says: 'Bishop Julian, in the name of those who work on this building and of all gathered here, I ask you to set this stone.'

Our local council caught the vision and continue to support us into the future. Unlike Dean Jocelyn's spire, this Cathedral has been built upon the financial support

of post-war Lancashire folk and the Foundation Stone itself – like our transepts - is taken from Longridge Quarry.



The Bishop lays mortar to set the stone



It was appropriate that this was followed by prayers led by the Canon Sacrist, Andrew Hindley, who has borne, and continues to bear, the day-to-day running of this mighty project.

The Promised Land?

There came a point in time when the Israelites, having endured the wilderness for 40 years, had the courage to cross over the Jordan and take up residence in the Promised Land. Now is the time, the kairos moment, to take this bold step which has been long in the coming. Now is the time to civilize the muddy car-park, the obsolete toilet-block, the leaking roofs of St. Mary's House. This Foundation stone is a stepping stone into that future, a future I'm sure that will not be milk-and honey but it will enable us to build a religious community, so rare in the church today. It will be a community focussed on prayer, on work, on hospitality and I hope lots of fun. It will be secure but it will not be a laager. We shall not be hiding behind the barricades but using the foundation stone as a stepping stone into the community: 'no other way'.



Building materials ready to be assembled the next day.



The vision has also been developed by our hard-pressed consultants who spent so much time working at risk. They gathered round the table monthly, wondering if they might ever get paid and each time looking thinner. But something drove us on.

Was it fear of failure, arrogance, necessity? The consultants around the table – all battle-scarred men and women of the world – might agree that corporately the reason could be something to do with God. (It was certainly nothing to do with rapid economic progress!) I hope it was God's doing, for it felt that way to this religious observer. In the words of T.S.Eliot, commenting upon this very same period in the history of Israel:

'Often halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning, Yet following no other way'. (Chorus from 'The Rock' VII)

Following no other way. That way is to move outwards: to reclaim the High Street, to bring back the heart-beat to this strategic cross-roads, to fulfil the vision of William Temple who chose this place as his headquarters for the new diocese.



The Bishop used the words spoken by The Princess Royal in 1938 whilst setting the stone commemorating the construction of the Transepts and Crossing: 'In the faith of Jesus Christ we set this stone, to be a memorial of the beginning of

this work, and the mark of the assurance of them that build. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.'

If you visit the Temple Mount in Jerusalem you can stand at the Wailing Wall, the most sacred place in the whole of Judaism. Here you will find devout men and women standing at prayer as they place their intercessions on scraps of paper pushed into the cracks between those colossal stones. My hope is that Cathedral Court will be a porous membrane, a permeable community, secure yet flexible, allowing its members to go out and those in need of support to pass through.

Allow me to close with a prayer adapted from Bishop Thomas Ken:

*O God, Make the doors of this Court wide enough
To receive all who need human love and
Fellowship, and a heavenly Father's care;
And narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and hate
Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block to
children*

*Nor to straying feet,
But rugged enough to turn back
The tempter's power:
Make it a gateway to thine eternal kingdom. Amen.*



AND FIVE MONTHS LATER...

THE BISHOP 'TOPS OUT' BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL'S HUGE NEW EXTENSION - 15/7/2015

CATHEDRAL Court, the £6 million extension to Blackburn Cathedral, has been 'topped out' at an official ceremony in the Cathedral grounds.



The Bishop of Blackburn, Rt Rev. Julian Henderson, prepares to lay the final tile during the topping out ceremony at Blackburn Cathedral's new Cathedral Court building.



Seen here are (L-R) the Construction Group site manager, Chris Murphy, Dean Armstrong and the Bishop.

The ceremony took place at the top of the new building to mark the completion of the external structure. The main participants climbed a scaffold to a high platform from where Bishop Julian placed in position the final roof tile.

A short ceremony then took place during which a blessing for the building, for the construction work still to come and for the workers doing that construction work, was said.

Speaking afterwards Bishop Julian said: "This is an important day for the Cathedral and the clergy and staff who worship and work here.

"A lot of hard effort has brought us to this point and I pray the new Cathedral Court will, when finally completed, be used to further the work of God and his Kingdom in the heart of the rapidly changing heart of Blackburn and further afield.

Cathedral Court will provide a library, refectory, conference room, an enclosed cloister garden, underground car park for 50 cars, four townhouses for the Dean, 2 cathedral canons and the director of music, six apartments for cathedral staff and six

accommodation units for organ and choir scholars. The building is expected to be completed by October and is the first major new cloister building for a Cathedral in more than 500 years.

It is part of the massive Cathedral Quarter development which has been transforming Blackburn town centre since construction started last April. The £34million scheme includes a hotel, office block and a public square, work on all of which is well advanced.

Dean Christopher said: "This has been a momentous day for the Cathedral and we are delighted to reach this point in the construction of Cathedral Court. The main structure is now in place and you no longer need to use your imagination to envisage what the final building will look like in reality!"



Lord Shuttleworth (R) said he was 'exciting' to attend the ceremony adding: "This is a tremendous project that has taken many years to bring to fruition. The whole County looks to its Anglican Cathedral and it is exciting to see the building growing here in this way at the heart of the local community and as part of a wider multi-million pound regeneration project called the Cathedral Quarter here in Blackburn town centre."

And afterwards the folk who came to watch the ceremony, with the Bishop, the Lord Lieutenant, the Dean and the members of the construction team, toasted the completion of this part of the work with a glass of wine.



Thanks to Ronnie Semley, Diocesan Communications Manager for much of this page, and to Canons' Virger, Alex Barnes for the final photograph.