

# Blackburn Cathedral

**Music & More online supplement - 2015 No. 8**  
**The Cathedral Organists' Association Conference at**  
**King's College, Cambridge, 11-13 May 2015**



**Blackburn Cathedral was strongly represented at the Cathedral Organists' Association's 2015 Spring Conference in Cambridge – no fewer than five present or past Directors or Assistant Directors of Music from Blackburn Cathedral were there. Read on!**

**Samuel Hudson**, the present Director of Music, drove **John Bertalot** (DoM 1964-1982) to that fair University City where they had both been organ scholars during the present and past Millennia.

That evening we enjoyed dinner with last year's Blackburn choral scholar, **Nic Walker**, who is now choral scholar at Homerton College, Cambridge where he is studying music, and singing in the fine choir of Selwyn College.



Nic has already had a distinguished musical career: he had been Senior Chorister of Chichester Cathedral and Head Boy of the Choir School, and before coming to Blackburn he was Deputy Head of School at Charterhouse! His effervescence is as contagious as ever!



The conference began the next afternoon and, on entering that incomparable Cambridge Court, the first colleagues we met were (L-R) **Marcus Wibberley** (from Hexham Abbey) and the present and past distinguished DoMs of York Minster, **Robert Sharpe** and **Dr Philip Moore**.

Philip had composed a superb anthem for the magnificent service of interment of the bones of **King Richard III** in Leicester Cathedral a few months earlier. Philip is a prolific composer and most delightful friend

We were welcomed by our host, **Dr Stephen Cleobury**, the legendary DoM of King's.



Stephen is seen here welcoming **Dr June Nixon** and her husband, **Neville Finney** from Australia. June was, for forty years, Director of Music of Melbourne Cathedral where her superb voluntary choir of men and boys sang *daily* services.

*Melbourne was the only cathedral in the Southern Hemisphere to be able to achieve this, thanks to Dr. June's remarkable gifts of music, vision and pastoral care. She was awarded a well-deserved Lambeth doctorate of music for her outstanding and unique achievements.*

We then repaired to the Keynes lecture theatre where we heard a presentation on the new recruitment, training and musical progression of Cambridge choral scholars.

The panel was most distinguished.



L-R: **Dr Sarah MacDonald**, Director of Chapel Music at Selwyn College, King's choral scholar **Patrick Dunachie**, **Stephen Cleobury**, voice teacher at the Royal College of Music and King's College, Cambridge, and **Toby Ward**, King's choral scholar.

The 'messages' of that fascinating hour were:

(i) Potential Cambridge choral scholars no longer apply directly for scholarships. Instead, once students have been accepted by their colleges, they are asked if they would like to apply for a choral scholarship. (Some of us auld-tymers found this incomprehensible!)

(ii) All choral scholars are given vocal training. This was good – and its fruit was clearly noticeable when we heard Stephen's choir during those two enriching days.

We then repaired to the chapel for an exhibition of historic mss. of King's music where we took the opportunity (with photoshop) to

record Blackburn's presence in that incomparable place:



L-R: **Samuel Hudson** & **John Bertalot** with former Blackburn Asst. DoMs: **James Davy** (now DoM at Chelmsford) **James Thomas** (now DoM St Edmundsbury) and **Ben Saunders** (now DoM Leeds RC Cathedral and Diocese.)

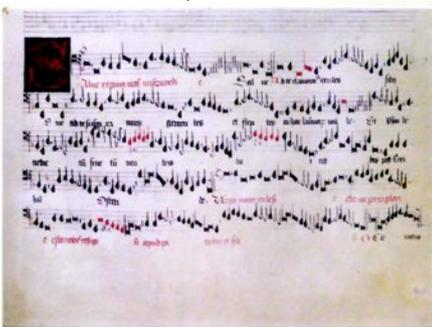
Two former distinguished DoMs of Blackburn were unable to be present: **Gordon Stewart** (who teaches 12 Cambridge organ scholars once a fortnight, including all three King's organ scholars) and **Richard Tanner**, DoM of Rugby School.

The exhibition of manuscripts was held in the Chapel's side vestries. They included not only extracts from the **Eton Choirbook** from the early 16C. (See also next column.)

King Henry VI founded two colleges here and at Eton. He provided for music at each of them.

An Eton choirbook survives from the early sixteenth century. This extract from it shows a voice part of the antiphon 'Salve Regina'. It was composed by Robert Hacomblen, Provost of King's under Henry VIII. The text is in praise of the Virgin Mary who was prominent in the devotions at both Eton and King's.

Henry VI ordered that at King's a choir of six men and sixteen boys should sing daily at the chapel services. They gathered round a lectern which held the choirbook. The lectern given by Hacomblen still is in the main chapel



... but also a list of the King's organ scholars from 1931 (the year that Boris Ord began his incomparable reign as DoM) to 2007. Many of these scholars have become internationally honoured musicians.



The current King's organ scholars are (L-R):



**Richard Gowers** (former King's chorister)  
**Douglas Tang** (former Hereford organ scholar) and  
**Tom Etheridge** from Eton.

Choral Evensong was, of course, superb.

It was noticeable that the tone of the choral scholars was especially robust. This was due, in large measure, to the singing lessons that Cambridge choral scholars receive these days.

The music was all by King's musicians:

12 TUESDAY

5.30 p.m. EVENSONG

Introit 11 Laudate nomen Domini Tye  
Responses Tomkins  
Psalms 62 Martin 63 G J Elvey  
Magnificat and Nunc dimittis  
Short Service Gibbons  
Anthem Salve Regina Hacomplaynt

The anthem, *Salve Regina*, (which lasted some 15 minutes) was especially thrilling – for two reasons:

1: The choir semi-recessed Westwards from the stalls so that they stood in a semicircle facing Stephen Cleobury, who stood between the stalls, facing them. i.e. they were in 'concert' formation.

2: Because the anthem was by a 15C scholar and Provost of King's.

(His name could be spelt in various forms:

**Robert Hacomplaynt**

Hacomblen, Hacomplayne, Hacomblene, Hacomblen.)

Provost Robert H. [sic] had donated the handsome **Lectern** which graces the Chapel, from which lessons are still read.

His music is most demanding; involving rapid melismas and much intricate vocal writing.

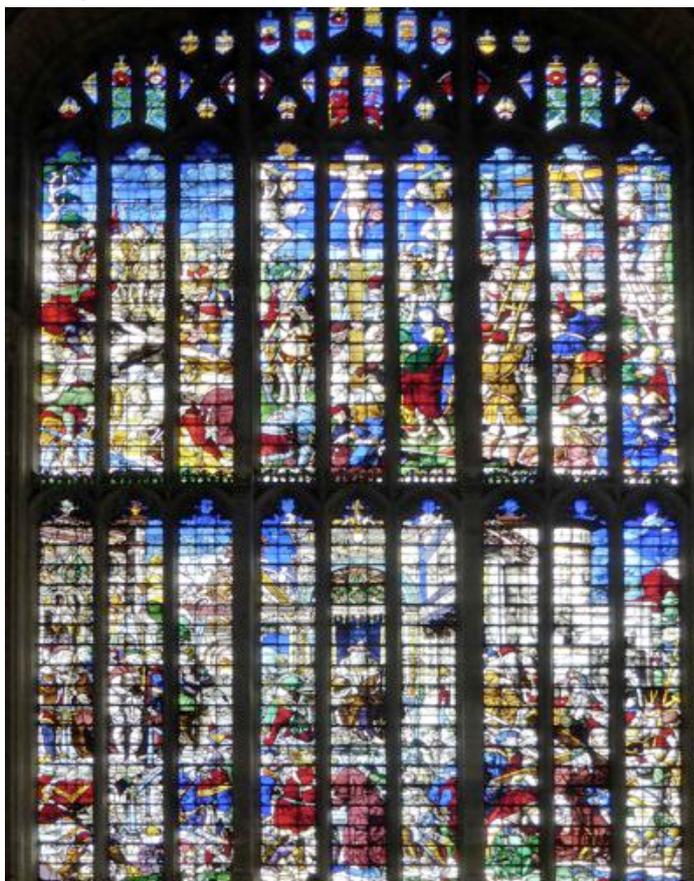
No wonder the choir stood where they did, for they needed to hear each other closely!

And after that memorable service, we were given a fascinating lecture on the **Eton Choirbook** from which *Salve Regina* had been edited.

The lecturer was Professor **Iain Fenlon** from King's, and it was revealed that the meticulous realisation of this amazing anthem had been done by King's choral scholar **Patrick Dunachie** whom we had heard addressing us that afternoon.

Great was the appreciation shown by us all for Patrick's consummate scholarship. We were mightily impressed.

And to finish that first day, supper was served in King's Choir School for members of the COA, followed by a serene *Compline* in King's Chapel.



**COA Day 2: Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May**

The next morning, those who felt energetic attended a choristers' practice in the Choir School led, of course, by Stephen Cleobury.

We were then given a tour of King's Chapel, which included a visit to their sophisticated recording studio in a side vestry.

The recording engineer, **Ben Sheen**, told us that all choral services were now being recorded (we could just perceive the microphones suspended over the choirstalls) so that souvenir CDs could be easily made.



L-R (below): **Dr Michael Nicholas** (ex Norwich), **Andrew Millington** (Exeter) and **Neville Finney** & **Dr June Nixon** from Melbourne.



Whilst this was happening, some adventurous members of the COA



(including **Samuel Hudson** and **James Davy**) were escorted to the roof of the chapel, from where they enjoyed superb views of the town & University.

11.30am: We gathered in the Keynes room again for the COA's AGM which was chaired by our President, **Martin Baker** (Westminster Cathedral) with **Tim Hone** (Music and Liturgy Manager of York Minster) as our efficient secretary.



It was good to see so many illustrious cathedral musicians seated so informally in one place: here are just a few:



L-R: **Dr David Flood** (Canterbury), **Dr Chris Ouvry-Johns** (Leicester), **Robert Sharpe** (York), **Andrew Millington** (Exeter) and **Canon Marcus Huxley** (Birmingham).



We were also addressed by **Andrew Reid**, Director of the RSCM, who outlined some of his adventurous plans for the RSCM:



Some of us repaired to the Copper Kettle for lunch – which is most conveniently situated exactly opposite King's.



After which we went to the chapel of St Catherine's College ('Cat's') which is next to King's College, where Professor **Edward Wickham** worked with talented choral scholars who sang Flemish music of the late 15<sup>th</sup> to early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.



This was fascinating, not only because of professor Wickham's erudition, but also because of the seemingly effortless, skilled singing of those six young men.

We recognised two of them (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> from left) as being the two King's choral scholars, **Pat Dunachie** and **Toby Ward**, whom we had heard the previous day at the COA's choral scholars' recruitment session.



It was equally fascinating to see a facsimile of two pages of music from that period with the voice parts printed separately and problematic underlying of the text.

It was from such a manuscript that Pat Dunachie had realised the *Salve Regina* sung at last night's Choral Evensong.

And after a light tea at King's we repaired to King's Chapel again for a memorable rehearsal, led by Stephen Cleobury, of King's choir for Choral Evensong,

It was so very good to watch those professional singers, men and boys alike, who, whenever they made a slight mistake, raised their hands to indicate to Stephen that they knew what that mistake was, and therefore it would not recur. That saved so much time!

13 WEDNESDAY  
 5.30 p.m. FESTAL EVENSONG WITH PROCESSION  
*Vigil* Processional Hymn 128 (t.ii)  
 Eternal Monarch, King most high  
 Responses *Leighton*  
 Psalms 97 *Goss* 99 *Attwood*  
 Magnificat and Nunc dimittis  
 Gloucester Service *Howells*  
 Anthem 39 *Viri Galilaei P Gowers*  
 Hymn 446 Sing Alleluia forth ye saints on high  
 Organ Voluntary *Alleluyas Preston*

How good it was to be able to sit in the stalls to watch Stephen conducting and to listen to the choir, as vergers lit candles. This is one of the sights of the world which we treasure.



The glorious ceiling of King's Chapel towered over us all,



and the Chapel was, of course, packed for Evensong.



The Conference ended with a splendid dinner in Hall.

**Thank you, Stephen, for two most wonderful days.**