

Issue 47 - Spring 2019

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the Spring edition of Alban Notes which you'll find has rather more content than usual, so I encourage you to grab a coffee, sit back and keep up to date with ECA news since our last edition.

Recent weeks have been dominated following the sad news of the death of our President, Peter Hurford who passed away on 3rd March at the age of 88 after a long period of illness with Alzheimer's disease.



Peter Hurford
President

Peter was Master of the Music between 1958 and 1978 at St. Albans where he and his late wife Pat were very influential regarding many aspects of Cathedral life, significantly raising the profile of Cathedral music worldwide.

We are all very much aware of Peter's enthusiasm and commitment to life at St. Albans, with the raising of the standard of music in worship, the founding of the International Organ Festival and the design of a new Cathedral organ. As someone who thoroughly enjoyed choir camp each year, I must mention it was Peter who founded the annual trip to Luccombe in Somerset, close to his home town of Minehead.

But it is not for me to suggest what life may have been like under his tutelage, as many of our members knew him personally and far better than I. I am very grateful to members who have provided tributes and to our co-opted secretary Simon Trott for collating responses and sharing them with the Hurford family. Michael, Richard and Heather continue to be in our thoughts and prayers.

I hope you enjoy reading the tributes we have received from members over recent weeks, remembering or learning what life was really like under the baton of Dr Peter Hurford OBE. (see below).

Peter's funeral service took place in the Quire a few weeks ago which was a private family occasion. The choristers of the Cathedral Choir sang beautifully, all having been given special permission to be absent from the various schools they attend. Music included Peter's own "Litany to the Holy Spirit" and all of the organ music was (of course) by Bach. At the end of the service, Thomas Trotter, who was a close friend and a pupil of Peter, played the St Anne Fugue.

In memory of Peter, donations are welcomed for the St. Albans Cathedral Music Trust via the following link (accessible until 30th June):

<https://mydonate.bt.com/events/peterhurford/490546>

Please make a note of the various dates mentioned in the following items as there are a number of opportunities for ECA members to meet and contribute over the next couple of months.

As we enter a busy period for members who are at school, college or university I would like to wish, on behalf of the committee, our very best wishes to all those studying for exams at this important time.

Richard Lilley
Chairman

Member News

On Saturday 30th March anyone from anywhere was invited to come together to learn Stainer's **The Crucifixion** in an afternoon with Andrew Lucas, for a performance at the Cathedral in the evening. The publicity material went on to read..... *"an ability to read music is helpful."*

Two things came to mind:

- firstly, reputations could be at stake: this was to be a performance of a well-known choral work in the Cathedral, potentially attended by many, on the lead up to Easter with a mixed ability choir.
- secondly, such an opportunity provides ECA members who, for a variety of valid reasons as careers develop since leaving the choir, may not have sung a note in years.

The assembled choir of approximately 60 singers was supported by several ECA members from across the generations and a few members of St. Albans Bach Choir. I thoroughly enjoyed singing once more with fellow ex-choristers and was treated to wonderful solos by Thomas Johnson (2008-2015) and Oscar Bates (2015-2018). Other soloists included David Martin-Smith (tenor) and Ciaran Yeo (bass) who are both current Lay Clerks with the Cathedral Choir.

James McVinnie (Organ Scholar 2002-2003) returned once more to accompany the choir, who delivered a performance to be proud of, which was conducted by Andrew Lucas – reputation maintained!

I'll keep an eye on future similar events and let members know of such opportunities via Alban Notes. It's a great way to come together to sing once more in the Cathedral.

Commonwealth Service

A small group of ECA members, Louisa Kataria, Thomas Johnson, Gus McMahon, Ali Snailham and Lucy Walton, and a number of current choristers were fortunate enough to be part of a small choir performing for Her Majesty The Queen at the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey.

Conducted by Marie Price and joined by the Sub Dean Mthr Abi, they sang a range of songs that reflected the musical variety of the Commonwealth. Former St Albans Organ Scholar and current Westminster Abbey Sub-Organist, Peter Holder was on duty as organist for the service.

Recollections of a St. Albans Abbey Chorister – Trevor Jarvis

I am delighted to advertise details of a 50 page book published by ECA Committee member Trevor Jarvis (1956-1961) with a foreword by Michael Milbourn (1958-1962). This beautifully presented account of life as a Chorister under Master of the Music Peter Burton and Peter Hurford, details the regular routines, choir duties and expectations, special occasions and is complete with several photographs and drawings from the era.



Trevor Jarvis
ECA Committee member

When asked what prompted Trevor to write his memories of being a chorister he said:

"Firstly, I suppose, because my time as a treble in the choir occupied so much of my day for the best part of five years, which made a greater impression on me than my schooldays ever did. Secondly, I was prompted to record my long-standing respect and admiration for Peter Hurford, who formed such a major part in my musical development.

I have attempted to show the daily routine of being a probationer under Peter Burton, then a chorister under Peter Hurford, and to give some idea of the repertoire in use during this period. Included in these recollections are memories of the annual choir camps in Somerset, which did so much to engender a team spirit outside the choir stalls.

Perhaps this small book will awaken memories amongst my fellow choristers and give a picture to more recent generations of what life was like in the choir sixty years ago."

This 'must read' for all members, regardless of age or generation, will be available at our AGM in June at the discounted price of £6 (RRP £8). I'm sure Trevor will be pleased to sign copies too if you ask nicely.

Death of John Pettit

John joined the Cathedral Choir in 1940 when he was evacuated during the war and was head of Cantoris. He remained a chorister until 1945 and was a close friend of Roger Clifford who was head of Decani. He passed away on 9th April 2019 aged 89.

Choir News

From Andrew Lucas, Master of the Music

It's been a relatively quiet term, but as always the Holy Week and Easter services dominate the end of term, which is always made better when Easter is late. This year the choirs have each had a week's pre-Easter break that has made Holy Week seem like a breeze when compared with a year ago. Between the choirs we have been able to cover more of the Holy Week services with the Cathedral Choir singing at the Chrism Mass for the first time in decades.

This term's highlights have been the girls singing with the Oxford Girls choir (Frideswide Voices) in a return joint Evensong with them after our girls went to Oxford to join them last year. Meanwhile the Cathedral Choir sang a very successful evening concert in St Andrew's Bedford in March (see below), which is a good warm up for our coming tour to Italy (Fano, Loreto and Pesaro) on the late bank holiday weekend in May.

We are, of course, saddened by the death of Peter Hurford, but we look forward to celebrating his life at the memorial Evensong in June and a month later in the Three Choirs Concert in the IOF in July (Monday 15th July).

Ash Wednesday

In March, the senior girls of the Abbey Girls Choir were joined by the Abbey Singers and the Lay Clerks to sing the Ash Wednesday Choral Eucharist, conducted by the Assistant Master of the Music, Tom Winpenny. Music included Allegri's Miserere (ex-AGC Pheobe Wakefield (2011-2017) and Louisa Kataria (2009-2015) combined with Neil Baker and Ciaran Yeo in the solo quartet), and music by Leighton and Tallis.

Concert at St Andrew's Bedford

The church of St Andrew's, Bedford has a wonderful acoustic and a splendid new organ (by Harrison and Harrison) and made a perfect setting for a concert by the Cathedral Choir on Saturday 9th March, conducted by Master of the Music, Andrew Lucas.

It was extremely well received by the audience and some very welcome compliments in a review of the concert by local composer and organist, Paul Edwards:

"Through the great generosity of the Cathedral Music Trust, to whom the St. Andrew's community is most grateful, we were treated to a concert of outstanding excellence in every way.

Every virtue of choral singing was displayed: faultless intonation, excellent tone, blend and balance, crystal-clear diction (and I was sitting at the back of church), perfect ensemble, admirable variety of dynamics, intensity and fervour when needed, and tenderness and sensitivity by turns.

In every piece, one felt that the choir's communication skills and firm commitment to what they were singing came across constantly."

The full review can be found here - [Paul Edwards Concert Review](#).



Cathedral Choir
In concert at St Andrew's, Bedford

Dates for the Diary

Bank Holiday Monday 6th May

Lunchtime Concert given by the Cathedral Choir at **1pm**. A concert to raise funds for the choir tour to Italy, visiting Fano, Pesaro and Loreto, at the end of May.

Also the Abbey Girls Choir will be singing Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral.

A Social Gathering - Thursday 16th May

Following a successful ECA social evening in London last year, we look forward to meeting ECA members in St Albans on Thursday 16th May at the **Lower Red Lion** pub, Fishpool Street, **from 7pm**. This is an opportunity to revive connections with fellow Ex-Choristers in an informal setting. We wish to encourage participation from ex-members of both the girls' and boys' choirs, of all generations.

Regarding practicalities, we will meet in the slightly larger section of the pub to the right as you enter. For anyone driving, the NCP Car Park on Drover's Way (behind Marks and Spencer) is free from 6pm. Do come along!

Choral Eucharist - Sunday 2nd June

The ECA has been invited to sing Choral Eucharist as Exquire on Sunday 2nd June at **11.15am**. Our Honorary treasurer Jeremy Meager has agreed to play the organ and Honorary Life Member David Ireson will conduct once more.

I am aware this date falls within very important exam periods for several members but hope you will be able to support this opportunity to sing once more in the Cathedral together. A rehearsal will take place on Friday 31st May for those who are able to attend (details to follow).

Currently only a few members have replied so please consider supporting this event and contact our co-opted secretary, Simon Trott indicating your voice part and availability for the rehearsal and/or service. **secretary@stalbanseca.org**

Annual General Meeting - Saturday 15th June

Our AGM will now coincide with the memorial service for Peter Hurford (see below). The meeting itself will be held at **1.30pm** (prompt) in the Chapter Room of the Deanery on Saturday 15th June. The building works for the new visitors centre will be nearing completion although there is unlikely to be any parking available within the environs of the Cathedral or Deanery. Further details will be circulated in due course.

Memorial Evensong for Dr Peter Hurford OBE - Saturday 15th June

A Memorial Evensong to commemorate Peter's life will be held on Saturday 15th June at **4pm** in the Quire.

All members, family and friends are invited to attend this service of Evensong with music by Peter himself (the psalm chant and "Litany to the Holy Spirit"), responses by Rose, canticles by Howells ("Gloucester Service") and "Lord let me know mine end" by Maurice Greene as the anthem. An address will be given by Chris Hazell (who was Peter's producer at Decca).

There will be refreshments available after the service. I look forward to seeing you then for an opportunity to come together and remember Peter.

ECA Tribute to Peter Hurford (1930 - 2019)

Master of the Music, 1958 to 1978.

St Albans was fortunate in January 1958 when a musician of Peter Hurford's calibre took up the post of Master of Music in the Abbey.

As I reflect now as an adult on my time in the Abbey choir, I can't fail to be impressed by Peter's vision and energy for every detail of the choir culture, his insistence on music-making of the highest standard, and at the same time as developing and maintaining his own talent as a world-class performer and recording artist.

The following series of recollections by fellow musicians who worked under Peter illustrate the dedication expected of us, and how profound an impression our time under his leadership has left on our lives. Choir camp cannot be overlooked for its importance in cultivating the sense of a choir 'family', and how Lay Clerks as well as choristers were encouraged to participate.

My thanks to all contributors, and my apologies if I have cut your favourite stories.

Simon Trott

ECA Hon Secretary



Peter and Pat
Cambridge, c1956

Trevor Jarvis (Chorister, 1956 to 1961)

Having started as a probationer in October 1956, I was fully expecting to be made a chorister in September 1957 but, because of the untimely death of Peter Burton in July of that year, this was deferred until the arrival of the "new man".

Peter Hurford started at the beginning of January 1958. He soon made us aware that he was very much a "new broom". We were soon made aware that he was a strict disciplinarian, with a sharp tongue when needed. There was a noticeable tightening up of behaviour as well as a raised level of expectation, which required standards to be met, before being admitted as choristers. However, we all looked up to him with both respect and considerable affection and would do our best to meet his expectations of us.

We were all issued with a booklet written by Hurford entitled "Guide for Probationers and Junior Choristers". As well as the rudiments of music, principles of chanting and knowledge of the different forms of service, we were also required to learn by heart the Lord's Prayer, the General Confession as used at Mattins and Evensong, the Apostle's Creed, the General Thanksgiving and the Wedding responses.

Under Hurford there was a distinct widening of repertoire, with a marked decrease of many of the Victorian and Edwardian items - and volumes of such were taken off the shelves of the choir library. These volumes were beautifully bound and lettered St Albans Abbey Choir on the cover, but unfortunately contained music which was of either little musical worth, or had totally gone out of fashion. There was an increased representation of both modern and Tudor composers, including plainsong and fauxbourdon settings of the period. We were also introduced to the music of Kenneth Leighton, with his setting of the Te Deum (not immediately popular with the boys) and Herbert Howells. The first example of the music of Howells we tackled was his setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis Collegium Regale.

With the boys, a lot of practice time was spent on perfecting a plainsong style from scratch, singing through all the examples at the front of the Plainsong. Systematically working through all examples in this fashion was somewhat tedious, but Hurford obtained the distinctive style he sought. Once perfected, Tuesday Evensong, which was always boys' voices, became a fully plainsong service (with the exception of the anthem).

Much rehearsal time was also spent in developing a pure head tone as well as clear articulation. The stress that Hurford laid on absolute clarity of diction did lead to somewhat exaggerated consonants; exaggerated to us maybe, but a necessity in such a large building. I remember him telling us to make sure that an imaginary aged aunt, sat at the back of the Nave, could hear every word. We were also taught to remember the sequence "BTM" which stood for breath, tummy, mouth, before starting singing. "Think the note before singing it." was a favourite injunction of his. (*Ed. To this was later added 'P' for pitch, probably necessitated by the high E entry in "Litany to the Holy Spirit"*).

(Extract from Trevor's new booklet 'Recollections of a St.Albans Abbey Chorister', now available).



St Albans Cathedral Choir
13th April 1961

Rod Argent (Chorister and Lay Clerk, 1956 to 1962)

It was with great sadness that I heard of the passing of Peter Hurford.

Peter's magnificent musicianship and playing were hugely important and inspiring to me as a young chorister. I was already a treble in the Cathedral choir when Peter joined as a young and immensely talented and enthusiastic master of the music. He opened up for me a vast landscape of music.

I remember as perhaps a thirteen year old, singing in a gloriously mounted performance of the [Bach] St Matthew Passion in The Abbey - with full forces; chamber orchestra complete with tympani and trumpet. I can still remember to this day how I melted into that wonderful first chorus: that one powerful moment - along, of course, with Peter's truly magnificent organ playing - instigated the beginnings of a love of Bach which has lasted a lifetime. And not just Bach - the exposure to some of the greatest music ever written stretching over a period of 400 or more years. And, of course, his enthusiastic endorsement of what at the time was regarded as very daring and avant-garde music was so exciting to young and impressionable ears!

I've been immensely lucky in having been able to earn a wonderful living all my life from a very different field of music, but I know that my years in the choir under Peter's inspirational tutelage laid the foundations of a feeling for harmony, a sense of structure, and the sense of adventure in music that it would have been very difficult to have gained anywhere else. I know it's been incredibly valuable to me, and I am immensely grateful.

Rev. Martin Freeman (Chorister and Head Boy, 1964 to 1969)

I was made Head Chorister in January 1969 and left the choir in September, aged fifteen and a half when 'O' levels were beckoning.

I thought that normally Head Choristers were also to have been good soloists, but that didn't apply to me. I was in awe of other boys who could sing the solos in Stanford in G, "Blessed be the God and Father", Nine Lessons and Carols, etc. without any apparent evidence of nerves. One boy I mentioned this to said that he simply shut out everything else when he was singing solo.

Discipline was very tight in the choir; it was much more than just turning up and singing. We had regular processional practices and shoe inspections, conducted usually by the Head Boy. He was also able to award 'conduct marks' for misdemeanours such as lateness and talking when we were supposed to be silent. This meant that money was docked from our quarterly pay. Unlike choristers in other places, we were not allowed to read books during the sermons! Mr. Hurford trusted the Head Boy and [Woollam] Scholars with a lot of responsibility. For example on Good Friday the middle hour of the Three Hours Service was sung by the gentlemen with Mr. Hurford conducting, so the Head Chorister was responsible for processing the boys over to the Abbey Institute for their lunch and then getting them back in time to process back into the Nave for the third hour (Evensong).

We were always known by our surnames. Mr Hurford and all the clergy were addressed as "Sir". My three brothers were also choristers so I began as "Freeman Three" and progressed to being "Freeman One" as my elder brothers left the choir. For a single weekend in 1964 there were four Freemans in the choir when Andrew joined as a probationer and Christopher was valedicted at Evensong on the Saturday. Our Father, John Freeman was also Assistant Master of [the] Music under Mr Hurford.

Choristers progressed through the hierarchical structure of the choir: Probationer, Junior Chorister, Singing Boy, Senior Chorister, [Woollam] Scholar, and if you were lucky, Head Chorister (or Head Boy). Even at choir camp the assignment to tents was by grade.

We were taught to concentrate and not to be distracted. One on occasion, before a special service a number of people walked through the choir room as we practised, and some of the boys were distracted. I remember Mr Hurford saying to us that "...even if the Queen were to walk through the vestry during Choir Practice we were to carry on singing and take no notice".

If April Fools' Day fell on the day of an early morning boys' choir practice (*Ed. 8:00am*), there was a lot of fun and games which Mr Hurford entered into. We would all hide so that it would look as though no one was there when the Choir Master entered the vestry. The clock would be put back an hour. Peter would enter and start the practice as though nothing was amiss and then we would gradually reappear and go to our places. In revenge, the warming-up scales were played either much higher or much lower than we could sing them. An alarm clock would go off in one of the cupboards during the practice. (*Ed. Readers, respect the innocence. This would have been about the same time that Theresa May was doing her cavorting through that legendary cornfield*).

The almost military disciplined regime continued at Choir Camp, which Mr Hurford started at Luccombe in 1958. "Reveille", "Cookhouse" and "Last Post" were played by a solo bugler from our ranks. There were daily tent inspections, and meals were cooked over the camp fire, and eaten in the "Tentacle" (the marquee) or outdoors if the weather was fine enough. There was a water party

duty to a nearby fresh water spring using a water cart (nicknamed "Ben Hurford's chariot"). The days consisted of coach outings and walks on Exmoor. Even when it was wet, Mr Hurford said that it was better for us still to go on the walks than to sit in camp and get bored. On the Sunday we put on our suits and walked to Luccombe Church where we robed to sing for Eucharist and Evensong. After Evensong we enjoyed a slap-up tea provided by the villagers. We also had an annual Christmas "treat" which consisted of a trip to the circus or a play in a London theatre.

I look back with gratitude for the opportunity to sing in such a wonderful building in which the monks had sung the daily services for many centuries, and to become familiar with church music both ancient and modern as well as to participate in "big" services like Ordinations, Diocesan Choirs Festivals and major festivals with processions all the way round the Cathedral.

I recall Mr Hurford's words at the end of his "Guide for Probationers and Junior Choristers" which ended with the words: *"Be proud of what you are, or will be: a Chorister in a great English Cathedral."*

David Radcliffe (Chorister and Head Boy, 1960 to 1966)

I remember Peter most fondly. He was a huge and stabilising influence on a young grammar school boy. My father had died when I was six, and as a youngster straight out of the east end of London, looking back, I now realise he was probably one of a very small group of people who kept me on the straight and narrow, in those days (and beyond).

We used to have long chats (especially when I was Head Boy) as he smoked his cigarettes by the gravestones outside the vestry. We had a lengthy chat before he appointed me as Head Chorister, and looking back as an adult, I recall a couple of messages from Peter which I remember him imparting to me, and which were to help shape my dealings with people throughout my subsequent career: *"Always treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. Not everyone can be right, but at some point, a decision has to be made, and whether it proves right or wrong, you have to believe it, and to be able to persuade others as well."* and *"Sometimes you will know a mistake has been made. That is the time to own up to it. Making a mistake should never be punishable, providing it was honestly made. Not rectifying it will always cause more harm."*

Simon Trott (Chorister and Organ Boy, 1967 to 1972)

For the post of Organ Boy there were no applications, auditions, nor enhanced pay rates or union representation. Nevertheless, my heart swelled with pride when Mr Hurford asked me to take on the job after my predecessor's valediction.

Responsibilities included setting out the organist's hymnbook and psalter at the piano before choir practice, and at the organ console before every sung service. In addition to this mundane but not risk-free task I was expected to 'whizz' up the spiral stairs during the final hymn in readiness to turn pages for the closing organ voluntary. This was a task requiring intense concentration, and when Mr Hurford detected me shuddering with apprehension faced with two pages of semiquavers, reassured me by saying "Just follow the pedal line, lad, there are fewer notes". It also illustrated to a 13-year-old Grade 3 piano student that cathedral organists also write their fingering onto their score.



St Albans Cathedral Choir, 1971 with Peter Hurford.

The Dean was The Very Revd Noel Kennaby.

To stand at the cathedral organ console when it is being played is a thrilling, even visceral experience with sound emanating from left, right, behind and above. The varied sounds of the different stops are much more distinct by their immediacy, and watching the stop knobs being drawn, I would begin to recognise for example, the Grand Cornet V, Gedacktpommer 8, and, ah yes, the Pedal Bombardon 16 which was more of an industrial 'rattle' when you were standing just a few feet from the pipes.

At St Albans, we were (and still are) fortunate to participate in the IOF. As choristers we were entitled to an IOF 'blue card' giving us free access to festival concerts and events. This of course opened up to us a whole new dimension of music-making in the Abbey beyond the regular cathedral musical fare: early music and viol consorts, brass ensembles, gamelans, madrigal singing, cabarets, etc.

Of particular excitement to me were the exhibitions of 'small' organs where organ builders from the UK and abroad were invited to exhibit their work, varying from tiny portable instruments up to moderate two manual stand-alone chamber organs, all of which were demonstrated by a resident organist and even used in formal concerts. (*Ed. More on the IOF in the Summer edition of Alban Notes*).

A particularly magical IOF concert item for me was a short dance piece by Michael Praetorius played by Peter Hurford on a historic table organ made by the German maker Haase in 1684, with the Precentor operating the manual bellows. The audience was entranced, and the tiny sound of this delicate instrument with its rattling keys was all that could be heard in the vast space of the Abbey.

Peter Pearson (Bass Lay Clerk, 1959 to 1987 - and Camp Master)

After singing in the summer holidays with my former choir from Welwyn Garden City, I was invited to audition for the Cathedral choir by Peter. After a few tests, he offered me a trial period of one month. He either forgot when that time was up, or found out that my tree-felling axe and deep excavation skills were excellent and could be very useful at Choir Camp. He also mentioned that after the Friday choir practice the Choirmen met at the White Hart.

Here are some memories as "Camp Master" of Choir Camp from 1960:

After several formative years a regular and superb site was made available by Farmer Bill Partridge for the annual Choir Camp. It had a supply of fresh water and even a running stream providing scope for washing and cooling facilities, e.g. storage for crates of milk.



The Campsite in Luccombe, Exmoor

Tent equipment and accessories, cooking equipment; spades, pit axes, tables and benches, which were stored in the village hall and farm, were moved to the site on a trailer and tractor by farmer Partridge and his sons, aided by members of the choir's advance party which consisted of a few men and ex-Choristers who had arrived by car about 3 days prior to the start date of the camp.

Tents were arranged in circular formation, as preferred by Peter. At the circle's centre was a roped square within which a cross was made and erected by the senior Choristers. This was the camp focal point from which all major activities commenced, and evening prayers were offered. We ate outdoors, and in the event of inclement weather in the large marquee or "tentacle". A small marquee was [used] for storing of food and keeping firewood dry.

The Advance Party also dug latrines, made appropriate supports and erected suitable canvas screens. Now the camp was ready for the arrival of the bus and its occupants. On their arrival the boys would be shown around the site, and directed to their tents. Boys were acquainted with the camp rules, e.g.

- no chorister to leave the camp site without permission from a member of staff;

- no football or other games within the tent 'circle';
- no throwing of stones in the stream;
- no entry into roped-off kitchen area;
- boys to only access their tent;
- do not drink river water;
- silence after 'Last Post' and until 'Reveille';
- if you have a problem in the night take your torch and make your way to the 'duty' men's tent with a red light outside;
- ladies camp [is] out of bounds.

Rotas were organised for gentlemen and boys to collect fresh water, firewood, food preparation and cooking 'hygiene'.

My time with the choir changed my life, and also that of my wife Kay and four daughters who still treasure many happy memories of choir camps.

John Adams (Alto Lay Clerk, 1960 to 1980)

Several things came together in the village of Luccombe: Peter's childhood home in Minehead and his knowledge of Exmoor, the Partridges and villagers who welcomed and made it practicable, Dean Thicknesse of St Albans who retired to the Church and rests there now, and Peter's energy and instincts in taking the choir beyond the singing into closer relationships which, in turn enhanced the standards he attained with us.

I was on advance party each year along with Ron Gough and Peter Pearson who both had much experience of outdoor activities. I learned fast! We set out with Peter's meticulous planning evident in the typed sheets detailing meals, shopping lists, deliveries planned, tent arrangements, staff duties, transport, daily walks and activities for the whole week. I've still got those lists!

We set the tents in a semi circle measured by a tape from the centre around the Cross made of two big sticks neatly whipped. Into this ordered scene tumbled the choristers from the coach, the oldest helping the youngest to set up their tents and "Keep the bedding away from the 'brailings'".

Here are some particular memories of mine:

- walks on Exmoor plus packed lunches - "spam or ham" - tired legs, making sure I kept up with the probs at the front so I wouldn't be last;
- making Angel Delight for 40 or so, when Rogers and I were on cook duty, trying to whip all the packets of powder into the large number of pints of milk before it went into lumps;
- wooding parties to keep the cooking fire burning;
- everyone washing in the stream - the staff had the privilege of a specially improvised 'shower room' in the running water;
- skittles against bales of straw with the villagers;
- billies containing the remnants of boiled forehock scrubbed spotless in the stream.
- rain didn't stop anything - who remembers [when] one very wet walk by the River Barle turned into an improvised sing-song by a fire which we lit to shelter in a nearby wood!?

Evening was a special time after a very active day when everyone gathered for stories and prayers round the cross, the sun setting over Dunkery Hill, and the bugler's 'Last Post' ringing round the moors. Then, with the night staff left on duty, the gentlemen recovered at "The Ship" at Porlock Weir.

On Sunday came the transformation for the services at the Church. Suits, shoes and ties inspected. Driving skills were tested when the field had been churned up by cars, and mud being kicked up on to the Sunday Best of anyone being brave enough to give a push from behind. There was standing room only in the village church for Evensong where now the new oak door in the north porch bears witness to the many years of the relationship between the village and the choir.

At a personal level, all these experiences have had a lifelong effect on my family for which I am ever grateful to Peter.

John Tournay (Alto Lay Clerk, 1958 to 1969 - and camp bugler)

I was a Lay Clerk back in 1958 when a fresh breeze called Peter Hurford blew in to St Albans Abbey. Choir morale was at a fairly low level after the tragic death of Peter Burton the previous summer. We all quickly realised that we had a musician here who was going places, and we all wanted to go on the journey too.

Old wood was pruned from the back rows of the choir and we started to find new music in front of us which provided many of us with real challenges. Standards, both in the music and general behaviour, were a watchword to PJH and the whole choir soon moved forward and upward.

I was one of the planning team for the first camp at Luccombe which turned out to be a great success in that beautiful area that Peter knew so well. I well remember the scruffs all week who suddenly turned into well-turned-out choristers on Sunday and walked in twos up the village street to sing service in the Parish Church.

He and his lovely wife Pat were two very special people and I mourn his passing with sorrow, but also a feeling of deep gratitude for all that he did for generations of singers in the Abbey Choir.



Luccombe Camp, c1958/59

(L to R: Norton Challenor, Rev. Stewart Cross, Peter Hurford, Ron Gough, John Tournay)

Peter Knapp (Chorister and Bass Lay Clerk, 1958 to 1970)

I sang as a Chorister and Lay Clerk in the Choir under Peter between 1958 and 1970, and after that was fortunate to enjoy a career as a singer, which took me away from church music into the world of opera.

Peter was an enormous influence in establishing my musical foundations and generous in the time and opportunities he gave me. I think of him often as I perform, practise and teach, and will continue to do so. He had that glorious quality of high-level professionalism and abundant humour which earned him the love and respect of everyone he encountered.

Rehearsals were meticulously prepared and executed but after services and concert performances we were able to relax in his company. Choir Camp at Luccombe was a particularly joyous time where he was able of course to maintain strict discipline but also relax completely and readily contribute to the prevailing sense of fun and good humour.

He instilled into us at an early age what it is to be a truly professional musician, that is, not only the need to practise hard and thoroughly know your stuff musically, but also to maintain a high level of respect and consideration for those with whom you work, and towards those whom you seek to serve.

Malcolm Bury (Alto Lay Clerk, 1971 to 1982)

When I joined the Cathedral Choir in September 1971, having experienced a tense 43 minute audition with Peter a few months earlier, the choir was already enjoying a fine reputation both nationally and internationally.

Peter was a very different character from his predecessor. He was a strict disciplinarian and set high standards which he expected everyone to meet, choristers and gentlemen alike. His general kindness could be tempered by a sharp tongue for misdemeanours by the choristers and sometimes even the gentlemen.

From Peter's first days at St Albans, a primary focus had been on achieving the highest standards in the performance of choral music, with a special emphasis on diction which is evident on the early recordings. His professionalism ensured that the choral elements of the weekly services were always up to standard but at the same time he was looking outwards for opportunities. In 1960, he sent a demonstration tape to the BBC (a copy of which is held in the choir archive), and on 12th July 1961, the Cathedral Choir gave its first [BBC] broadcast of Choral Evensong.

The choir also embarked on making a few commercial recordings, the first ones including "A Picture in Sound", "Wedding Music" and "Christmas Carols from St Albans" (on EP format) and undertook the choir's first overseas tour to France in 1977 to help celebrate the 900th anniversary of Bayeux Cathedral.



The Cathedral Choir "team", 1978

One special quality that I recall was Peter's inclusiveness - a quality shared by Pat - and was a natural role model. Whilst he encouraged individual singers to perform at their best, he didn't like "prima donnas". He also discouraged cliques and more often than not would try to ensure fairness and mutual respect within the choir. This was no better demonstrated than at Choir Camp where choristers and gentlemen shared duties and daily chores.

Camp also gave the choristers the opportunity to build self-reliance and team work, and to let off some steam after the strict regime of the choir year.

Peter also had quite a sense of humour and was a natural "ice-breaker". At the end of my audition as I was leaving the vestry, Peter said "Oh, by the way Mr Bury, do you drink beer?" to which I answered "I have been known to take the occasional glass of ale, sir", "Then I'll think you'll fit in then." was his reply!

As the former Chairman of the Ex-Choristers Association I was most grateful for Peter's support and encouragement as our President, and that both he and Pat always attended our events when they could. It was a privilege to dedicate my book, "The Choirs and Musicians of St Albans Cathedral" to him when it was launched in 2016.

Geoff Ward (Tenor Lay Clerk, 1968 to 1987)

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Peter for teaching me almost everything I needed to know about choral technique and interpretation. I remember that he didn't suffer fools gladly; if we had sung badly, the red light was on in the old song school after the service, and we got a real roasting and were told to do better next time, or else! As a result I was in fear and trembling of him most of the time, but, of course, I had enormous respect for him.

David Ireson (Bass Lay Clerk, 1965 to 2015 - and current Deputy Lay Clerk)

One of Peter's first actions was to try and get some younger singers into the cathedral choir and to concentrate the repertoire on Tudor music which did not need big voices but demanded good ensemble, diction and musicianship to sing well. I remember that we sometimes sang a hymn or very simple piece for an introit and Peter made us practise it by turning around and singing by listening rather than following a beat. This concentrated the ear and made us very conscious of tuning and singing together – essential attributes of any good choir.

When the IOF began, I was very privileged to be involved (as were several of his young lay clerks) with all sorts of practical jobs. We felt that we were really involved with the music of the place rather than just singing services. Peter also issued a blue pass to the choir with which we could get into concerts – another way in which he involved us with the music of the place.

Peter undoubtedly had a lighter side. I remember one occasion when several of us were going to sing "The Mermaid" at a Parish Party (or some entertainment). He came up with the idea of coming on to the stage with beer bottles which we would clink together and then sing the song. We had previously partly filled these with water so that we could produce the chord by blowing across the tops of the bottles – a clever idea except that there was rather a long time between the tuning and the blowing and in the heat of the hall there had been some evaporation. The result was a chord which not even Schoenberg would have been pleased with. Fortunately, Rogers was on hand to provide the correct note and away we went.

Peter also took the choir out into the diocese to give concerts and there was one occasion when we were coming to the end of Victoria's "O quam gloriosum" and had slowed down and made a diminuendo when the parish clock struck the hour. Peter, somewhat irritated at this interruption, brought the final chord off with a very sudden gesture which caused the final consonant to resemble an explosion rather than the gentle ending required.

One of the things which impressed me most when I went to Choir Camp for the first time was choir practice. Having been tearing about the field and behaving as boys do when off the leash, I was very impressed when we went into Luccombe church. Despite wearing shorts and T shirts the boys immediately went into disciplined mode for the serious business of making music. In those days we robed for choir practices in the Abbey, so to be rehearsing in mufti was unusual but it was as if the boys were in a different world to that of the camp field and the change in attitude was extraordinary. Yet another example of how Peter ran his choir to get the best results wherever we were.

Peter's psalm accompaniments were legendary and rightly so (in those days we sang with beaters in the stalls) and to have heard him play voluntaries after services was a revelatory experience. One improvised fugue on the hymn "Ye sons and daughters of the Lord" I have never forgotten.

I was indeed fortunate to have learned my cathedral choir singing with such an inspirational and supportive teacher.



Dr Simon Lindley (Assistant Master of the Music, 1970 to 1975)

Peter's legacy is to be found as much in the hearts and minds of his family and friends alongside the vast numbers of musicians he nurtured as much as in the hugely significant cultural legacy of his concerts, recordings and broadcasts. The published tributes, such as those in *The Times* and *The New York Times*, record his immense contribution to music generally, and music on, and for, the organ in particular.

Much less has appeared with regard to his devoted and hugely influential work in, and for, church music on the one hand, and his considerable compositional output for the both the organ and for those "in quires and places where they sing" on the other.

No-one at St Albans will need reminding of those magical choral arrangements such as "The Holy Son of God" and "Magdalen, cease from sobs and sighs" or the cheery, if not downright tongue-in-cheek, setting of "Bethlehem of noblest cities" to the original tune of Australia's great national folk song "Waltzing Matilda". All these I relished so much all those years ago and relish still.

His infectious music for Series III Holy Communion and the unforgettable Two Sentences published alongside the mass setting remain widely used; "Truly the Lord is in this place" achieves every more widespread hearings, no doubt inspired by its energy and underpinned by infectious dance-like music - a quality often found in his music for organ such as the celebrated "Laudate Dominum" suite and the exultant Paeon inscribed to Guillaume Ormond and the Truro Cathedral organ.

There were evocative psalm chants, many ingeniously wholly diatonic without resource to sugary chromatics. All this and more from his ready pen was eagerly taken up by the Cathedral Choir of the day and the classic pieces for upper voices, his Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in A and, particularly, the "Litany to the Holy Spirit" - a magical setting of stanzas by Robert Herrick, originally for unison voices and later published in a setting for SATB.

Peter took enterprise, as well as a relentless pursuit of excellence, well and truly to heart - his commitment shone through his support of the St Albans congregation as well as their acclaimed choir.

Under him we tackled the Tippett Evening Canticles for St John's, Cambridge, exquisite rarely heard English music by Martin Peerson - "Man, dream no more" and "O let me at thy footstool fall" and much else. We recorded an ARGO LP of the wonderful music of Maurice Greene in conjunction with Peter's friend Dr Harry Diack Johnstone.

His work with St Albans Bach Choir and the Alban Singers was part of his unstinting support for local music making, alongside the St Cecilia concerts and the Diocesan Choirs' Festivals.

The welcome that Pat and he and their three children provided to a rookie young assistant from 1970 remains remarkable for me personally, providing a real family environment to and within which one was made invariably so very welcome and greatly taken to their hearts.

I learned so very much, all of the time and was swept along by it all. Midweek Evensongs then involved "single manning" as well as occasions when a conductor as well as an accompanist were present. Plainsong Tuesdays were always a highlight, under the clear guidance of a senior chorister or two whose beat we followed assiduously at the keys - a factor, too, of many a Saturday

afternoon Evensong with frequent verse services and verse anthems featuring fine solo contributions by trebles as well as adults - Ward, First Service, Gibbons Second, Byrd Second were real favourites.

The cherished final voluntaries often played by the master on Saturdays were the stuff of legend, with the expressive beauty of the music fair taking the breath away.

Rest well, dear Peter, and thanks for everything.



Peter and Pat
Aldbury, 2010