



ALBAN NOTES

ST. ALBANS
CATHEDRAL

St Albans Cathedral Ex-Choristers Association
THE CATHEDRAL AND ABBEY CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN

Affiliated to the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers Associations

Issue 56 Spring 2025

Message from the Chairman

In this edition we welcome new Director of Music **William Fox**, and bid fond farewells to a trio of musicians who each helped build on and expand St Albans' rich musical traditions.

After 26 years in office, Master of Music Andrew Lucas led his own, full-throated Valedictory Evensong in the Quire on 7 July, combining the current boys and girls of the Cathedral Choir with a strong showing of ex-Choristers, across many generations. This was followed by drinks and good-humoured reflections in the North Transept.



Richard Lilley
Chairman

We also say farewell to Assistant Master of Music and Director of the Girls' Choir **Tom Winpenny**, after a remarkable 16-year term, and to organ scholar **Oliver Morrell**. Both are set fair, we are sure, for further success in their respective careers, and we wish them all the best.

A New Direction

As we prepare these latest Alban Notes, William Fox sets forth in his role as Director of Music, and we look forward to bringing you his reflections in subsequent editions.

He could hardly be more eminently qualified. William joins the cathedral after six years as Sub-Organist and Assistant Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral and previously held organ scholarships at Wells and Hereford Cathedrals, and Magdalen College, Oxford. William is a teacher and performer, recently working with the Gabrieli Consort & Players, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the City of London Sinfonia.

In these early, no doubt challenging days, William has embraced all aspects of cathedral music, including directing the Bach Choir. Further vocal collaborations between the ECA and the cathedral choirs are touted, so stay tuned for updates!

Glorious Music, Challenging Times

First, however, we must acknowledge St Albans' debt to **Andrew Lucas**. His 26 years here were marked, as for his predecessors, by a timeless liturgical cycle – the build-up to Christmas, Good Friday and Easter each year – but also major occasions such as the funeral of Lord Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, tours, recordings, and the ongoing, subtle process of maintaining and renewing the cathedral's musical life, from recruiting singers, to performing new works.

What came through in his remarks on 7 July was the seriousness of Andrews' commitment to the role over so many years, and his personal dedication to the choristers and their development. As he takes up an interim post as musical director at Winchester, we wish him all success and happiness, in this role and the years ahead.



Member News

Tom Winpenny

This year also sees the sad departure of Assistant Master of Music and Director of the Girls' Choir Tom Winpenny, after 16 remarkable years. Tom has made his mark, accompanying daily services, nurturing the girls' choir, and championing the organ in performances of new works, and old, around the world.

Oliver Morrell

After a very successful two years at St Albans as Organ Scholar, Oliver has been appointed Sub-Organist of Winchester Cathedral, starting last September.

New Members

At the end of the last Summer term, we gained four new members: Selma Klemming, Ethan Roberts, Harry Stewart, and Romilly Veal. We welcome them and hope to see them in the Abbey Singers and future ECA events.

In the Autumn term, lay clerk **Simon Barton** stood down, and at Christmas, **Derek Harrison** retired from the choir. We welcome both of them to the ECA.

Obituaries & Tributes

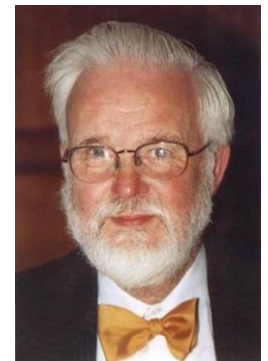
John Adams (*Alto Lay Clerk, 1960 to 1980*)

In June 1960, John Adams joined St Albans Abbey Choir after being persuaded to audition by Cantoris Lay Clerk John Tournay, whom he went on to succeed as a Lay Clerk for 13 years. John sang under Peter Hurford and Stephen Darlington, retiring in 1980.

He had previously been an alto in the choir of St Mary's Church, Ware and had been encouraged when Dr Alwyn Surplice of Winchester Cathedral came to hear the church choir just before the 1958 RSCM Festival held at the Abbey.

John was Adam House Master (Adam and Fayrfax houses were a tradition soon to disappear) and had fun with cricket matches, treasure hunts and carol singing at the hospital at Christmas. He was also a keen camper and joined the advance parties for the early annual camps at Luccombe. An avid 'techie', John made many personal recordings of the Cathedral Choir both in rehearsal and in services. Many of his recordings have been captured in the ECA sound archive.

In 1961, John married Maureen at the Abbey. They had three children, Mark, Tessa, and Lesley. Mark joined the Cathedral choir in 1973, and later became a Woollam Scholar.



John Adams





St Albans Cathedral Choir 1978

John Adams is back row, 3rd from the left. Mark Adams is to the right of Peter Hurford (centre)

John enjoyed the ECA reunions, not only meeting old friends, but also realising that he could still sing. He was a member of the Alban Singers and also Competition Secretary for the 2001, 2003 and 2005 International Organ Festivals.

In 2009, John joined the ECA Committee as the representative for the former Cathedral Choir Lay Clerks and Maureen became Honorary Secretary. Both took a very active part in ECA events and made a valuable contribution to the FCOCA 2013 Annual Festival which the Cathedral and ECA hosted.

In his spare time John enjoyed radio control model planes, oil painting, and his 60' canal boat.

John died on 30th July 2024, aged 88.

Personal tribute by Malcolm Bury, former ECA Chairman.

When I joined the Cathedral Choir as Cantoris Alto 2, I sang next to John on Sundays until I took over from him as a "Saturday Man" in 1976 and then till 1980 when he left the choir. John, who had an extraordinary voice, was one of the six senior Lay clerks who sang Choral Evensong every Saturday afternoon during term time.

He sang next to tenor Rogers Covey-Crump and later Geoff Ward, with David Hill (the old man) as Cantoris Bass.

John not only helped me settle musically but also gave me valuable information on the choir's formal protocols. John was a super person, and we remained good friends until his recent passing.

Richard Hurford (*Cathedral Chorister, 1970 to 1974*)

Richard David Alban Hurford was born in St Albans on Saint Albans Day, 22 June 1961. He was the third and youngest child of Peter and Pat Hurford.

Richard - known as Roo to family and some childhood friends - grew up in St Albans and was a chorister in the Cathedral choir from 1970 to 1974. He attended the Boys' Grammar School (now Verulam), then Leeds University where he gained a degree in Geology, Fuel Engineering and Energy Studies – the springboard to his professional career. In his views and driving beliefs, Richard was far ahead of his time in the way he cared about our planet and the ways we inhabit it. This was the environmental cause to which he dedicated his working life, in the field of energy management.



Richard Hurford

He had four daughters - all now in their 20s - of whom he was immensely proud. He was a loving and tireless father, relocating his home and work to remain close to them after the breakup of his marriage.

Richard was a gifted guitarist, singer and songwriter. He started learning the guitar in his early teens. In his retirement, he returned to it with a passion - re-writing and recording old songs as well as some new ones.

He had many other interests and hobbies, notably rocks, antiques and photography. He loved beautiful landscapes and the sea, peace and quiet. Throughout his life he returned to the places we went as children, especially west Cornwall, Devon and Exmoor, treading the paths of so many Choir Camps walks.

The tragic discovery, in July this year, that he had taken his own life was a devastating shock. At various points in his life, he experienced challenging periods of mental ill health, but we had no inkling that he might turn these feelings on himself. We'll never know why he didn't ask for help this time. From things he'd said in the past, he perhaps felt inhibited by the stigma and shame that continue to beset society's attitudes to mental ill health.

Richard was immensely loved by his family and a wide network of old friends. Collectively we have innumerable memories of him as a constant, loving and positive presence in so many people's lives. This is how we will keep him in our hearts and memories.

Heather and Michael Hurford
November 2024



Choir News

The new Director of Music, **William Fox** was admitted on 29th September 2024 at a service of Solemn Evensong.

At the same service, four new choristers were admitted, and we wish Reuben, Olivia, Elodie and Leyla well for their future in the Cathedral Choir.

Choristers in their final year in the choir - Nova, Amelia, Alby, Leo, Beau, Eva and Lucille - were invested as Senior Choristers.

On the 15th December 2024, the first Debenham Chorister was instituted. Congratulations to Delilah who was given her medal by Alison Debenham.

At the start of the new year, on 12th January, another new chorister was admitted - Bruce - and we wish him well. On the same day, history was made as **Karolina Csáthy** made her debut as the first female lay clerk (Can Alto 2) at St Albans Cathedral. Karolina is a former Lay Clerk and Choral Scholar at Trinity College Cambridge where she read music. She is also an accomplished violinist and conductor, directing her chamber choir, *Accordare* on a project-by-project basis.

Dates for the Diary

Saturday 22nd March 2025 - St Albans Cathedral Choir Quiz Night

In aid of the choir tour to Cologne in May. The quiz starts at 7pm in the Nave. Gather your friends, sharpen your wit and go head-head with clergy, lay clerks and choir parents in teams of up to eight to support the Cathedral Choir's upcoming tour to Germany.

[Click this link to book now!](#)

Saturday 29th March 2025 - ECA Dinner with Will Fox

An informal get-together with the new Director of Music. This event will be in St Albans, at around 7pm. *Email invitation to follow.*

ECA Website - Facebook - X

We hope you are familiar with our website (StAlbansECA.org) and [Facebook page](#) which have been around for some time. A recent addition to our social media profile is that of our very own X (formerly known as Twitter) account. Please feel free to follow, like, re-tweet and comment, or just keep up to date [@StAlbansECA](#).