



Rochester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association.

HISTORY OF THE CHOIR OF ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL

Editor :James Strike

Chorister 1950-1952.

604

Rochester Cathedral was founded in 604 when Archbishop Augustus ordained Justus as Bishop of Rochester. The first church was a simple stone building, the outline of which can be seen marked out on the paving at the west end of the present Cathedral.

The earliest record of singing in the Cathedral is attributed to The Venerable Bede; monk, scholar and historian, who cites, in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, Book IV* :

‘When Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus arrived in England in 664, sacred music was only known in Kent. And when Putta was consecrated Bishop of Rochester in 669, he was extraordinarily skilful in the Roman style of music which he had learned from the disciples of the Holy Pope Gregory’.

Bede goes on to say:

‘From that time they began in all the churches to learn sacred music, which till then had only been known in Kent’.

1077

Gundulf was appointed Bishop of Rochester in 1077. A skilful builder, favoured by the king, William I, for the construction of the White Tower of London.

During his thirty years as Bishop of Rochester he re-built the Cathedral and built the great Gundulf Tower by the North Transept. *(used at one time for the Choir Practice Room)*

Palmer, The Cathedral Church of Rochester, p.121.

1082

In 1082 Bishop Gundulf founded the Benedictine Priory dedicated to St Andrew.

A.F.Leach, Medieval Schools.

There seems little doubt that in the days of the monastery the Monks had ‘Song-boys’ or ‘Cloister-boys’ and gave them instruction.

Rev. R. Johnstone, Rochester Cathedral Choir School. p.2.

‘It was his (Bishop Gundulf) custom to celebrate two Masses each day... The first for the commemoration of the Saint’s Day Festival. The second for the Departed. At this he desired only his monks and a

few boys to be present. Nothing was sung until after the Gospel; he then raised his voice and intoned *Oremus*, and immediately the boys with their sweet, clear voices took up the Offertory Chant, *Domine Jesu Christe*. Gundulf sitting on his sedilia listening to their sweet singing was himself in tears at the thought of God's love.

Vita Gundulfi, twelfth century, by an anonymous Monk at the Rochester Priory, translated by the nuns of Malling Abbey, p.33-34.

1108

Bishop Gundulf, 1024 -1108. , '...on the day of his departure from this present world, he left more than sixty monks, reading well and singing with excellence in the service of God'

Textus Roffensis.

1122

It is thought that the scribe of the manuscript of the important early book '*Textus Roffensis*' was the Precentor of Rochester Priory, monk Hunfid.

Armand De Filippo, Textus Roffensis, Pitkin, p.6.

1130

The Cathedral was badly damaged by fire which broke out during the Dedication Service to celebrate completion of the building work.

Speculation continues as to the cause of the fire. Was this action by the English against Norman authority? The King, Henry I, grandson of William the Conqueror, was at the cathedral for the Dedication. There had been constant conflict of control between Henry and the bishops of the English cathedrals.

1185

Cathedral Records refer to the presentation of an organ at Rochester as early as 1185.

A Short Account of the Organs of the Cathedral in Programme of Five Organ Recitals, May, 1957.

1137

Cathedral damaged by fire.

1179

Another serious fire in the Cathedral.

1215

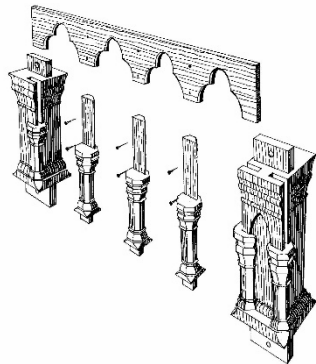
Life in the Priory was disrupted as King John's soldiers took over the church and monastic buildings during the siege of Rochester Castle.

1227

The Quire of Rochester Cathedral was built in the early thirteenth century and first used in 1227 It is remarkable for being enclosed from the side aisles with solid walls which gives a contained setting for the services and singing.

The choir stalls at Rochester date back to the early thirteenth century.

Regrettably, these rare medieval examples have been altered over the centuries and there is now little of the original to be seen. However, the trefoil-headed form work of the early timbers is still visible beneath the Lay Clerks seats.



*Charles Tracy. Drawings and Carpentry Notes, Cecil Hewett.
from: Friends of Rochester Cathedral Annual Report for 1994/5 .
p.19.*

1535

Myles Coverdale completed the first English translation of the Bible in 1535, which gives us the wording of the psalms as we now know them.

1540

Although the Dissolution of the Roman Catholic Monasteries began in 1536, it was not until 1540 that Henry VIII closed the Priory Church at Rochester.

1542

In 1542, Henry set up a 'New Foundation' for eight of the Monastic cathedrals; this including Rochester, where the 'New Foundation' was incorporated under the title 'Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary'. This made provision for a Master of the Choristers, six Lay Clerks, and eight Choristers. The New Foundation also made provision for a new Cathedral Grammar School; now known as The King's School.'

G. H. Palmer, The Cathedral Church of Rochester, p.19.

The choristers from the Priory Church did not transfer to the newly formed King's School but remained separate where they were trained and educated under supervision of the Precentor.

1547

In 1547, Edward VI came to the throne; an ardent Protestant. He immediately repealed the Catholic Doctrine and enforced the Protestant Service through 'Homilies' sent out and read in every church. These suppressed Catholic regalia and suppressed the singing of 'popish' Plainsong.

1549

In 1549 Edward VI issued the first English language 'Book of Common Prayer'; its purpose, to ensure the use of 'One Common Order for the Protestant Service'. It set out ardent Protestant doctrine; but notes in the rubric did allow for singing, with instructions; 'said or sung where there be clerks'.

'...musical settings of the Mass, the motets, and other sacred music wedded to the Latin language, were completely ruled out. It was therefore necessary to provide new music for the Anglican Service in the cathedrals'

E. H. Fellows, English Cathedral Music, p.7.

It was a busy and difficult time to train the choristers to sing the new settings and anthems.

Alan Mould, The English Chorister, chapter 6

It is recorded that Nicholas Heath, Bishop of Rochester, made substantial demands on the choristers: 'They were to sing a Lady Mass with polyphony every day of the year, on Principal Feasts they were to sing the whole gamut of High Mass, and after Compline, a prycksong anthem'.

Alan Mould, The English Chorister, p.83

(prycksong: to mark; ie. The music was written down in full as opposed to chanting)

...'the choir at Rochester sang polyphony for evening votive antiphon and on most days at Lady Mass, also the latter being amplified with subordinate organ polyphony'.

Patrick Collinson et al, A History of Canterbury Cathedral, p. 428.

And W. H. Frere, The Use of Sarum, vol ii, p.235.

With a strong association of Gregorian Plainsong with the Catholic Latin Rite, a new form for singing the psalms had to be found. New Psalters were printed in the English language set out in meter to be sung in a form which we would now call 'hymn tunes'. Many books of Metrical Psalms were printed, notably the editions of the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter. The vernacular poetry was sung un-accompanied and in unison, to popular common measured tunes. This was the first time for the congregation to join in church singing.

1550

John Merbeck composed a setting for the new English wording of the Communion Service. This set simple music to the words, with only one note for each syllable, thus allowing the congregation to contribute to the singing of the service.

1552

In 1552 Edward VI issued a revision to the Book of Common Prayer which enforced an even more austere Protestant doctrine and omitted all references to music and singing in the services. This was a difficult and low time for the Cathedral Choir.

1553

Mary I comes to the throne; an ardent Catholic. The Book of Common Prayer is repealed and the Catholic Liturgy restored. Choirs were re-convened, Choristers had, once again to change the language and the music.

1558

Queen Elizabeth I ascends the throne. She re-establishes the Church of England's Independence from Rome and sets up a Commission at Westminster Abbey, to discuss the conflicts between the Catholic and Protestant doctrines.

The case for the Protestants was presented by Edmund Geste who later became Bishop of Rochester.

1559

Elizabeth re-introduces the Book of Common Prayer. This edition retained Coverdale's wording of the psalms but reaffirmed the strict, ardent doctrine of Edward VI prayer book of 1552. However, to seek wider acceptance, Elizabeth issued some personal 'Injunctions'. These, which were read in churches throughout England, allowed a more liberal doctrine, safeguarded the choirs and encouraged music in the services; subject that 'the singing may be plainly understood as it were read'.

It is from this date that the name of the Cathedral Organists at Rochester are recorded. The first being JAMES PLUMLEY.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1560

In 1560, Edmund Geste was appointed the first Protestant Bishop of Rochester, He was an Advisor and close Confidant of the Queen. His position and reputation as a careful advocate must have given protection to the Cathedral Choir at Rochester against the 'Calvinist' group of Bishops who were intent to abolish 'all curious singing and the playing of organ in church'

Henry Dugdale, The Life and Character of Edmund Geste,
and
Roger Bowers, ibid, p.40.

1565

In 1565 Bishop Edmund Geste sends advice to Archbishop Parker on the wording of Coverdale's psalms for the new edition of the bible. 'I have not altered the translation but where it giveth occasion of an error, as in the first psalm at the beginning, I turn the preterperfit tense to the present tense because the sense is too hard.'

Dugdale, ibid, p.141.

Geste was offered the See of York but chose Rochester to be close to Archbishop Parker and near to the Elizabethan Court at London. Rochester Cathedral and its Choir became well known and well respected.

1577

PETER ROWLE appointed Cathedral Organist.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

THOMAS CHURCHMAN appointed Cathedral Organist, 1577-1579.

1579

THOMAS HILLYE appointed Cathedral Organist, 1579-1588..

1588

ROPER BLUNDELL appointed Cathedral Organist, 1588-1599.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1592

The chant 'Rochester Tune', by the Court Musician Richard Allison, is one of the new 'Tunes' included in the Metrical Psalter 'Whole Booke of Psalms', published by Thomas East in 1592. The first few editions of the Psalter refer to this chant 'Kentish Tune': later editions name it 'Rochester'; probably for the Cathedral's reputation under Bishop Edmund Gests and as a place known for good singing of the psalms.

The chants are in sixteenth century notation, with each of the four parts written in a different clef, and each part printed out separately.



These Metrical Chants are in 4,4,6 : 4,4,6. metre for singing the 'hymn verse' style of writing of the psalms.

1599

JOHN WILLIAMS, the elder, appointed Cathedral Organist, 1599-1609.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1600's

Music in the English Court flourished during the reign of Elizabeth I. Its flowering was encouraged and influenced by Italian Court Music. New forms of madrigals made use of a variety of poetic meter. This in turn led to a freer and more lyrical singing of the Metrical Psalms in cathedrals. For example, Sternhold's metered wording for psalm 6, '*O Lord, in thy wrath reprove me not*', was set as a four-part polyphonic arrangement by Orlando Gibbons.

This is a time for careful diplomacy. Should the choir sing the Psalms to 'metered hymn tunes' with the congregation; or could they sing Coverdale's wording to specially composed settings, such as William Byrd's setting for the Ascension Day, psalm 24, *Lift up your heads*.

The rigid meter for the Metrical Psalms was seen as plain and basic. Shakespeare ridiculed this in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with 'Nick Bottom' and other rural lads, prologue 'all in sixes and eights'.

There is no clear evidence for the origin of the Anglican Chant. Whatever its origin may have been, the Single Anglican Chant probably dates from early in the seventeenth century.

E. H. Fellows, ibid, p.18.

It is generally thought that the Anglican Chant evolved as a simple harmonized version of Plainsong.

However, Powell Metcalf, writing in 1874, considered that The Anglican Chant derived from the Metrical Chants as 'Catholic' Gregorian Plainsong was forbidden at the time. He explains how : 'The two secondary 4's are taken out of the Metrical Chant to form the 4,6 : 4,6. metre of the Anglican Chant as we now know it.'

Powell Metcalf, The Origin of the Anglican Chant, in, The Musical Times, August, 1874, p.547.

The freedom to break free from the rigid meter of the Metrical Psalms can also be traced back to the emerging Italian Opera. 'Parlar Cantando', singing speech, seeking to capture the rhythm and inflection of the spoken language. This form allowed for 'recitative' and gave freedom for singing the poetry of Coverdale's wording of the psalms.

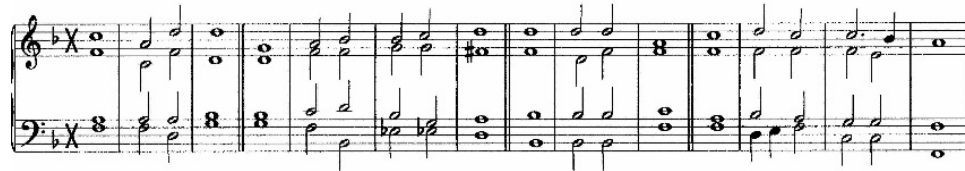
Reference: Claudio Monteverdi, Choir Master, St. Mark's Venice, Opera 'Orpheus, 1607.

Batta, Opera, p.330.

The new musical form of 'Recitative' from opera was also taken up in the composition and structure of the Verse Anthem.

This freedom to recite part of the text of a verse allowed the Anglican chant to grow as a simple harmonized version of the Gregorian Plainchant Modes.

Thus, Richard Allison's metrical chant 'Rochester Tune' (*see note date line 1592*) would become an Anglican Chant:



1609

JOHN ROBINSON appointed Cathedral Organist, 1609-1614.

1614

JOHN HEATH appointed Cathedral Organist, 1614-1663.

1635

In 1635, an otherwise unknown Lieutenant Hammond, undertook a tour of the cathedrals of England to write a critical description of the architecture, then the organ, and then to comment on the choir. For Rochester, he wrote "Her Quiristers, though but few, yet orderly and decent".

Alan Mould, The English Chorister, p.107.

1644

The conflict between King and Parliament during the first half of the fifteenth century led to a series of Parliamentary Ordinances to eradicate high-church practices in the Anglican Church. This relentless abolition of 'idolatrours forms of worship' heightened with the Ordinance of 1644 which included : ... 'organs and organ frames to be taken away and utterly defaced'.

Julie Spraggon, 'Puritan Iconoclasm in England 1640 -1660', London University, p.80 and 268.

Before Parliamentary Soldiers were able to destroy the Cathedral organ at Rochester: ... 'the people took it down themselves and hid it away in pieces.'

Paul Hale, 'Rochester Cathedral Organs, 1185-1089.

It should be remembered that 'English organs, before the Restoration of Charles II, were small in size; there were no foot pedals, no large pipes and their mechanism simple.'

Andrew Freeman, 'English Organ-Cases, p.14 and 18.

1660

Samuel Pepys visited Rochester ... 'and there saw the Cathedral, which is now fitting for use, and the organ a-tuning.'

Diary of Samuel Pepys, 10th April.

1661

Details of the burial of a German Prince at Rochester in 1661, records:

‘The body was met by the choir who sung the Te Deum and Nunc Dimittis.’

G.H. Palmer, The Cathedral Church of Rochester, p.27.

1663

WILLIAM ROTHWELL appointed Cathedral Organist, 1663-1672.

1672

CHARLES WREN appointed Cathedral Organist, 1672-1673.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1674

DANIEL HENSTRIDGE appointed Cathedral Organist.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1679

The name and dates of all the choristers who sang in the Cathedral Choir at Rochester are known and recorded from 1679.

The first recorded name is William Davison.

1698

ROBERT BOWERS appointed Cathedral Organist, 1698-1704.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

It is at the end of the sixteenth century that the Anglican double chant is introduced.

E.H. Fellows, ibid, p.18.

1704

JOHN SPAYNE appointed Cathedral Organist, 1704-1721.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1721

CHARLES PEACH appointed Cathedral Organist, 1721-1753.

1732

An inventory of items in Rochester Cathedral taken during the time of

The Dean Rev Dr Herring lists items of the choir:

‘six books for the lay clerks some of them much decayd’

‘four quarto prayer books for the choristers bought anno 1727’

‘Dr Crofts’ Musica Sacra 2 vol’

‘four books, viz counter tenor, tenor, bass, treble, decayd, and one large service book for Mr Dean’

‘three books for the organ’

‘six short folios, called Tomkins’

Another entry refers to the lighting of the quire:

‘one hanging brass candlestick with 24 branches and a chain’

Kent Archive Office DRc/Elf8.

1735

The Organist’s House, 7 Minor Canon Row.

Numbers 1 to 6 were built in 1723; number 7 added in 1735



1753

JOSEPH HOWE appointed Cathedral Organist, 1753-1780.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1780

RICHARD HOWE appointed Cathedral Organist, 1780-1790.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1792

RALPH BANKS appointed Cathedral Organist, 1791-1841.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

When Ralph Banks moved from Durham to Rochester he records in an organ book, 1790, that “for the past twelve years, a mere seven anthems had been sung for the Sunday repertoire, while the morning and evening canticles had been Aldrich in G and Rogers in D, sung on alternate weekends”.

Alan Mould, The English Chorister, p.148.

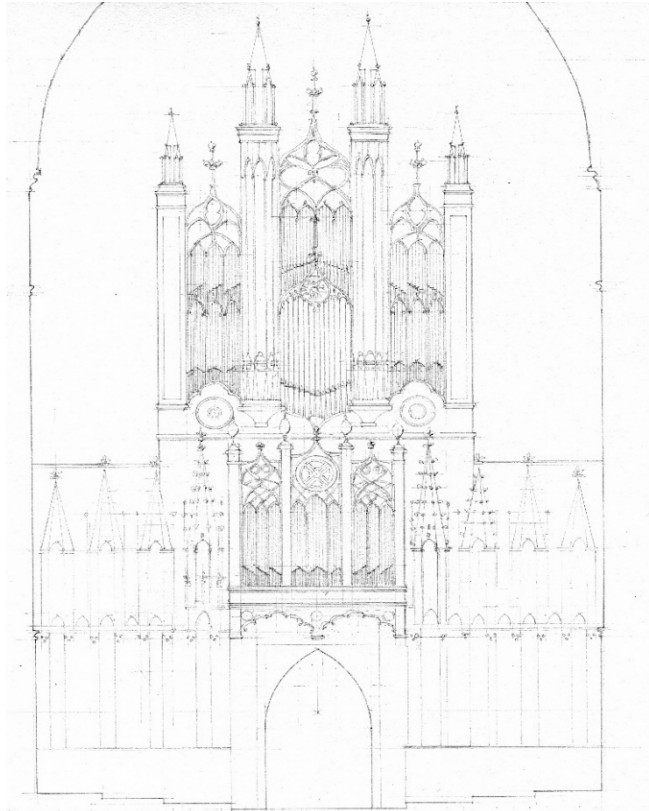
There is indication from other foundations that the Sunday repertoire was limited. It may be that Chapters wanted their Sunday congregations to be familiar with the music; perhaps for ready understanding of the words or even with a view to their joining in singing the service.

Alan Mould, The English Chorister, p.314.

1800s

Ralph Banks found the organ in a terrible state. He demanded a new organ for the Cathedral and was responsible for building the Samuel Green Organ. The organ case was designed by Rev. Ollive, Rector of Grays, Thurrock, who had previously designed the case for the Samuel Green organ at Canterbury Cathedral.

Paul Hale, The Organs of Rochester Cathedral. p.13.



The Samuel Green Organ, drawing by James Strike, based on early photographs.

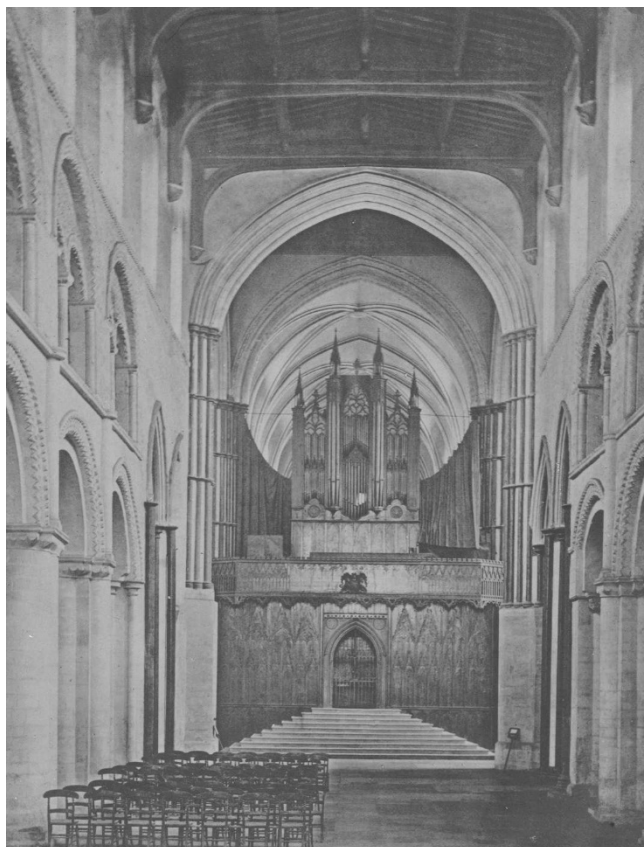
The organ case appears to have been an impressive, albeit unscholarly, collection of Gothic style details.

An early photograph of the Quire in the early nineteenth century looking towards the Samuel Green Organ. It shows the timber carved hoods over the Dean and Canons' stalls but predates the red 'lion' painted wall tiles and the gas chandeliers.



photograph by kind permission of Paul Hale.

The Nave side of the Organ.



Photograph: Medway Archives.

A tinted drawing of the Quire, looking East. This shows how the early choir-stalls continued eastwards across the transepts. The Choristers' stalls look rather sparse, albeit, the Lay Clerks seem to

have cushions on their desk. A plan of the Cathedral dated 1860 shows these stalls across the transepts still in place.



from the front cover, Friends of Rochester Cathedral Report, 1994/5.

1825

The small room over the fourteenth century Prior's Gate was, in 1825, used as part of the King's School. Shortly after this date it was used by the choristers of the Choir School.

G. H. Palmer, The Cathedral Church of Rochester, p.61.



Priory Gate, drawing by Edward de la Cour.

1841

HENRY EDMUND FORD, Dr. appointed Assistant Organist, 1841.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

JOHN LARKIN HOPKINS appointed Cathedral Organist, 1841-1856.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1843

In 1843 the number of choristers was increased from eight to twelve.

1845

WILLIAM MAKEPIECE, appointed Headmaster of the Choir School, 1845-1887.

From 1845, the Choir School made use of the front room of a house on the north side of Minor Canon Row. (on the site of the present Choir School building, now named Garth House) The old timber framed house was owned by the Chapter and used as the residence for William Makepiece, Headmaster of the Choir School.

Alan Mould, The English Chorister, p.239. and Rev Johnstone, A Short History, p.2.



Minor Canon Row, Image, BBC Kent, Local History, 10 July 2009.

1851

PHILIP ARMES appointed Assistant Organist, 1851-1856.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

Documents in the book, *The Whiston Matter*, (the legal dispute between the Headmaster of King's School and the Cathedral Chapter) record that in 1851, the room over Prior's Gate was offered to Mr. Meeres, the man selected by the Cathedral Chapter to, hopefully, but unsuccessfully, remove Revd. Robert Whiston as Headmaster of the King's School. The room may, therefore, have been unoccupied at that time.

Ralph Arnold, The Whiston Matter, p.110.

The legal dispute between The Cathedral Chapter Choir School and Revd. Robert Whiston, Headmaster of King's School was used in part by Anthony Trollope for story and character *John Bold*, the Warden, in *The Barchester Chronicles*.

Ralph Arnold, The Whiston Matter, Rupert Hart-Davies.

1853

The Revd. Griffith, Precentor in 1853, was a great supporter of the music at the Cathedral. A considerable number of bound volumes of church music were presented by him to the Choir Library. Thanks to him, Rochester was among the first to introduce Wesley's Volume of 'Cathedral Anthems'.

Paul Hale, The Organs of Rochester Cathedral. p.17.

1856

JOHN HOPKINS appointed Cathedral Organist, 1856-1900.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music

1859

FREDERICK BRIDGE appointed Assistant Organist, 1859-1865.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1865

ALFRED ALEXANDER, appointed Assistant Organist, 1865-1869.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1870

'JOHN JASPER'. In 1870, Charles Dickens used the 'Choirmaster' of Rochester Cathedral (Cloisterham) as the central character of his last and unfinished novel 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood'.

Revd. Robert Scott was appointed Dean in 1870, a renowned Greek Scholar and Master of Balliol College, Oxford. He had strong Tractarian ideas and commissioned the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott, known for his ardent use of plain early gothic, to submit plans to remodel the Cathedral. Gilbert Scott's re-ordering of the cathedral included new stalls in the quire, and restoration of the painted lions and fleurs-de-lis on the walls above the stalls,

1875

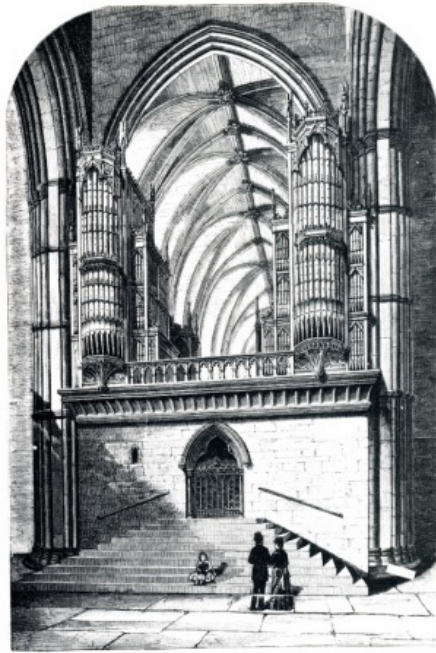
Gilbert Scott's re-ordering of the Cathedral also included his design for a new large double Organ Case, split to each end of the choir screen to allow an unbroken view of the roof line through the cathedral.

The new organ of 1875 was built by J. W. Walker and Sons. The pipework, which included some pipework from the earlier Samuel Green instrument, was squeezed with difficulty into the new divided organ case.

This drawing also shows the plain walls of the choir screen prior to the Dean Scott memorial statues of 1888.

Paul Hale, The Organs of Rochester Cathedral, p.18.

G. H. Palmer, The Cathedral Church of Rochester, p.91.



drawing, Kent Archive Office.

1880

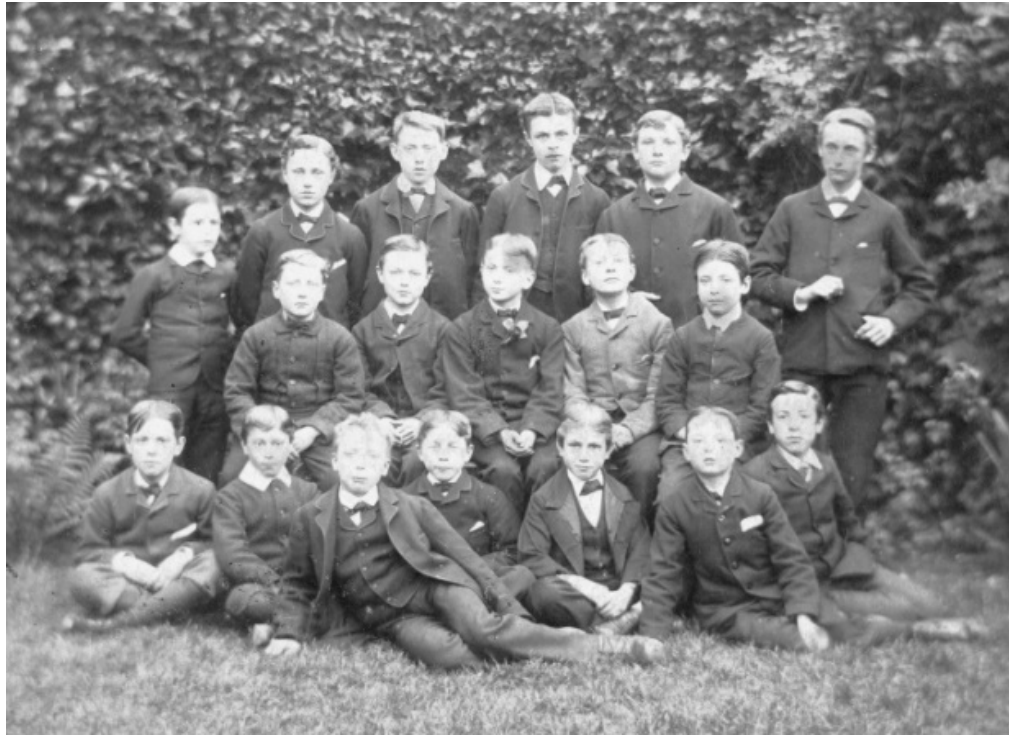
In 1880 the oak choir stalls were added to the nave.

G. H. Palmer, The Cathedral Church of Rochester, p.35.



1882

The earliest known photograph of the Choristers, taken in 1882.



1887

PERCY W. TALBOT, appointed Headmaster of the Choir School, 1887-1895.

During the nineteenth century there was social pressure and political action to improve the education of children. As part of this movement, a new purpose built Choir School was built in Minor Canon Row to replace the old timber framed house over the south cloister range Frater Sub-vault of the old monastery.

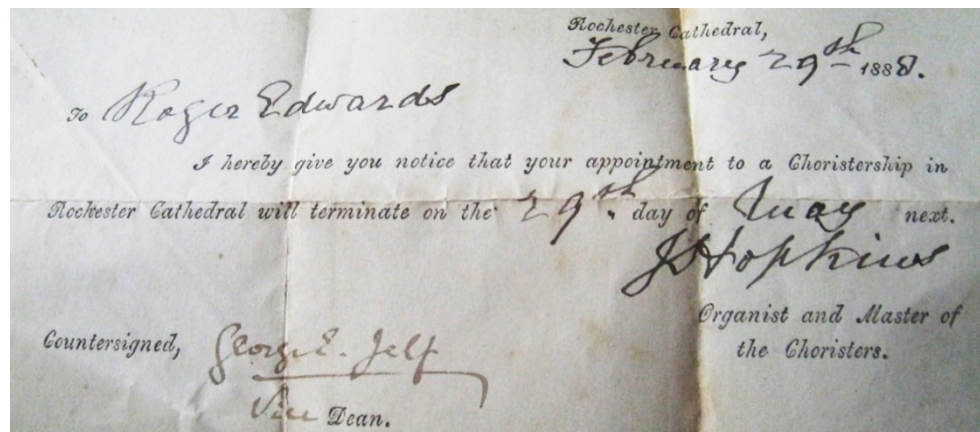
The building is now named Garth House.

The new Choir School was opened in 1887.



1888

Sample of notice given to choristers when leaving the choir.

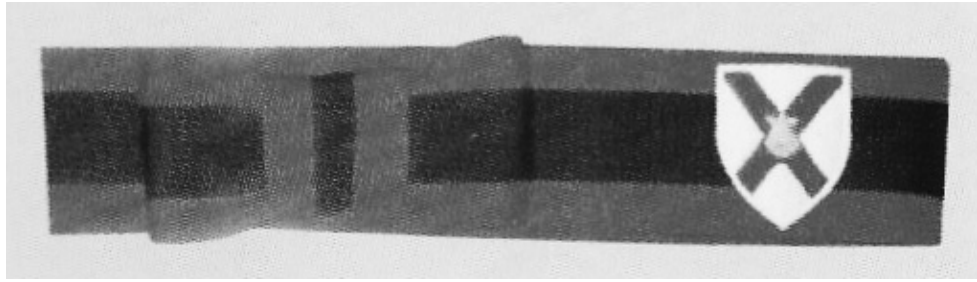


1890

In 1890 Eton Suits were introduced with mortarboards with red tassels.

The Choir School Colours were red and black

Choir School red and black boater band.



From: Brian Nolan, 'Roffensian Dress and Regalia' p.12.

The red and black Choir School colours give the origin for the present day RCOCA red, black, and green tie.



1895

Rev. EDWARD JACKSON NASH appointed Head Master of the Choir School, 1895-1907.

1899

GLANVILLE HOPKINS appointed Assistant Organist, 1899-1901.

1900

BERTRAM LUARD-SELBY.. appointed Cathedral Organist, 1900-1916.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

Founder of Rochester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association, in 1909.
Composer of the music for the School Song 'Carmen Roffense' 1914,
(Lyrics by Canon William Parker, Head Master, KSR, 1913-1935)

1902

HECTOR E. SHALLCROSS appointed Assistant Organist, 1902-1908.

1903

Photograph of the organ console. with signatures by:
Bertram Luard Selby, Charles Shallcross, Charles Hylton Stewart and
H A Bennett



1905

The Cathedral Organ was rebuilt by J. W. Walker and Sons.

1906

The choristers with Bertram Luard-Selby.



1907

Rev. HAMILTON SMYTH COBB appointed Headmaster of the Choir School. 1907-1909.

1909

Rev. OSCAR HARDMAN appointed Headmaster of the Choir School, 1909-1913.

Rochester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association, ROCA, was formed in 1909 by the Organist, Bertram Luard-Selby. It is one of the oldest 'Old Choristers' Associations in the country.

Meeting of Rochester and Canterbury Old Choristers, at Canterbury.

STANDING from Left, Harold Ring,-,E.S. Forster,-,G. Cook,-,A.

Prior, A.Scoones, C. Hewitt,-,R. Cooper, Sid Ruck,-,-,-. SEATED

from left, -,Bertram Luard-Selby, The Dean of Canterbury,-.



1910

Rochester, ROCA, was one of the founding members of the national 'Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Association' in 1910. The Federation Annual Festival was held at Rochester in 1914 and 1935.

1911

Boys of the Choir School in 1911,

Headmaster, Rev. Oscar Hardman.

Percy Whitlock, standing, third from left end.



Reminiscences of a chorister, Arthur Brown, 1911 to 1916:
'when the choir went to sing in Cobham church for the wedding of the Earl of Darnley's daughter, we were taken in a wagonette drawn by two horses'

and:

'it was the custom to be 'initiated' into the choir: There were large cellars below the school, part of the monastic foundations; they were damp and unlit. New boys were told that a large dragon lived down there; the door was opened at the top of the stairs and sounds of roaring could be heard. Reluctantly, I went down into the pitch darkness, where I was seized and frightened by a group of older boys before setting me free'.

1913

Rev. WILLIAM EDGAR MORGAN appointed Headmaster of the Choir School, 1913-1918.

1914

Rev. George Barrington-Baker, Acting Headmaster while W.E.Morgan was away on Military Service.

The school song 'Carmen Roffense'. Words by Canon William Parker, Head Master, King's School. Music by Dr. Bertram Luard-Selby, Cathedral Organist. The chorus, known by all from the school, 'Sing we then the School of Roffa'.

The national 'Federation of Old Choristers' Associations' was held at Rochester in 1914.

A parcel of tobacco was sent from Rochester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association to the Old Choristers who had volunteered for Service in the Great War.

The names of the Old Choristers who volunteered for Service are listed in the Committee Meetings Minutes 5 December 1914.

The work of the Association was 'held in abeyance' during the War, from Committee Meeting 18 December 1914 to Committee Meeting 13 February 1920.

1916

Non-singing boys were introduced in 1916 to increase the size of the Choir School.

ARTHUR CHARLES LESTOC HYLTON STEWART

appointed Cathedral Organist, 1916-1930

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

Hylton Stewart was away from the Cathedral during 1918, enlisted into the Army Pay Corps. (see; 1918, Hilda Milvain)

Composer of over seventy Anglican Chants; and compiler of the Chant Book

see Anglican Chant Index, book ref 153.

1918

Rev. FREDERICK HARRISON appointed Head Master of the Choir School, 1918-1919.

HILDA MILVAIN appointed Interim Organist, 1918.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

Interim Organist, for six months, at Rochester Cathedral during the absence of Hylton Stewart who was away for military service.
probably the first women to be appointed as a cathedral organist.

1919

Rev. RUPERT JOHNSTONE appointed Head Master of the Choir School,
1919-1937.

Johnstone was the last Head Master before the Choir School was closed in 1937.
author of the booklet 'Rochester Cathedral Choir School'.

ALFRED H. ALLEN appointed Assistant Organist, 1912-1920.

1920

PERCY WHITLOCK appointed Assistant Organist, 1920-1930.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

The Old Choristers went on a ramble with tea at the Rose and Crown at Hartlip.

Money raised towards the cost of re-casting bell no 4 in memory of Bertram Luard-Selby who had died on 26th December.

1922

'Starting in a small way with an extract from 'Hamlet' in 1922, the School Play became an established event at the end of the Christmas Term with three performances given in the School Hall.'
Revd R. J. Johnstone, Rochester Cathedral Choir School, p.5.



The Choir School main hall with stage and proscenium arch.

1926

The Choir School, performance of 'As You Like It' shepherdess, Frank Smith. clown, Jack Wright.



The earliest known recording of Rochester Cathedral Choir was made in 1926.

a 12 inch, 80 rpm shellac disc, Columbia Label (Catalogue number 9165)

Recorded in the Cathedral, 1st November 1926, via a dedicated phone line to be cut in the Columbia Studio, Westminster, London.

Side one was of *Stanford, Magnificat in Bb*, and the reverse side '*The Old Hundredth hymn, All people that on Earth do Dwell*'..

The conductor was the then Director of Music, Charles Hylton Stewart; and the organist, the young Percy Whitlock.

The well delivered, staccato performance gives a clear example of the rigid tempo and strict discipline preferred for the musical style of the period.

This is considered to be the earliest gramophone recording within a cathedral using electronic microphones and a live telephone line to the recording studio in London..



1929

The Oxford Psalter was first published in 1929. Charles Hylton-Stewart, Cathedral Organist at Rochester was one of its three editors, with “much valuable help” from Revd. R. Johnstone, Headmaster of the Choir School and P. W. Whitlock, chorister, and Assistant Organist.

The Choir in 1929



1930

‘A Collection of Chants’ by Hylton-Stewart, *Cathedral Organist*, 1916-30.

250 chants allocated to the 150 psalms. 36 chants by Hylton-Stewart. This Chant Book used by other Cathedrals copy with *The Anglican Chant Appreciation Society*.

HAROLD AUBIE BENNETT appointed Cathedral Organist, 1930-1956.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

JAMES LEVETT, (Joe) appointed Assistant Organist, 1930–1976.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1931

The Choir School in 1931.



1932

Choir School, Sports Day, 1932, in front of the King's School Pavilion on the Paddock.



1934

The size of the Choir School increased to 40 pupils with 'non-singing' boys.



Photograph presented to the Old Roffensian Society by Sally Hale, whose father, Denis A. S Hale; a non-singing boy, 2nd pupil back row.

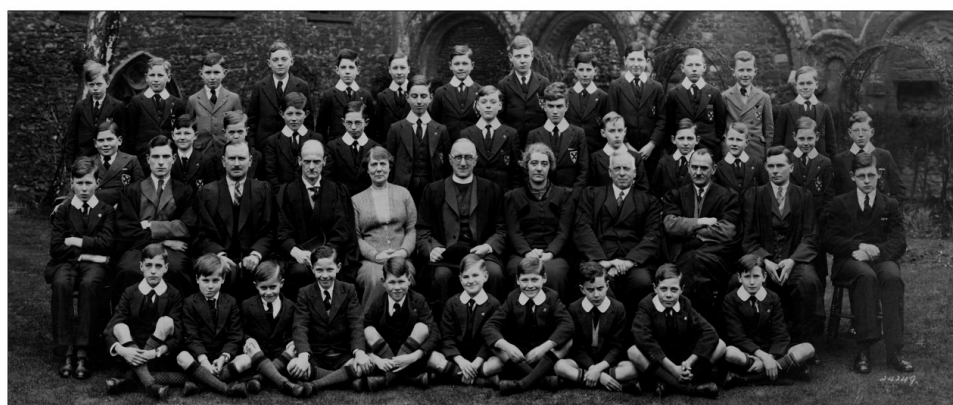
The Cathedral organ underwent a major overhaul.

1935

The national 'Federation of Old Choristers' Associations' was held at Rochester in 1935.

1937

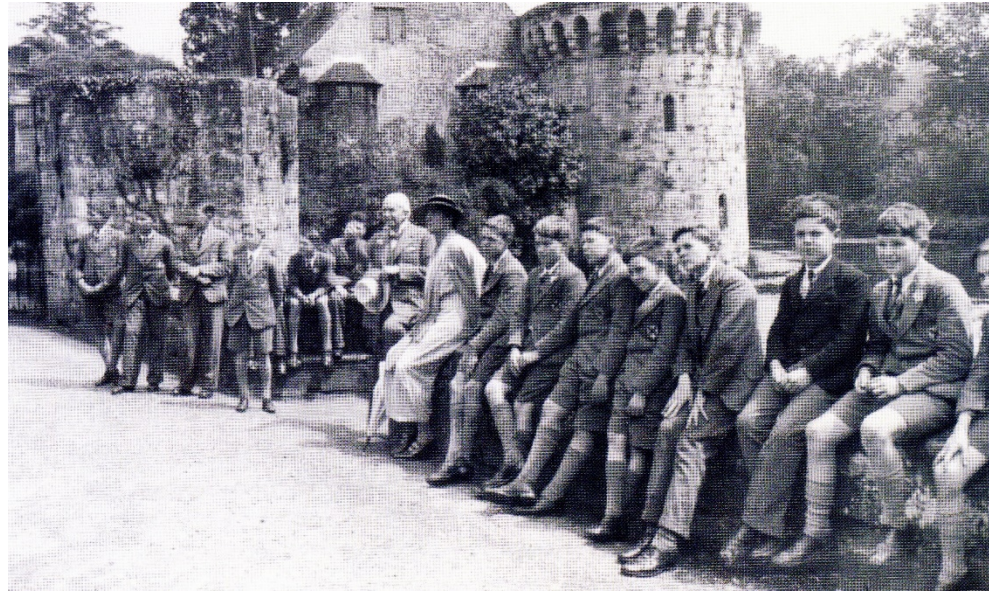
Headmaster, Rev. Rupert Johnstone. Cathedral Organist, H.A. Bennett. Of the 38 pupils, twelve would have been Cathedral Choristers and up to six Probationer Choristers. The remaining twenty are non-singing boys.



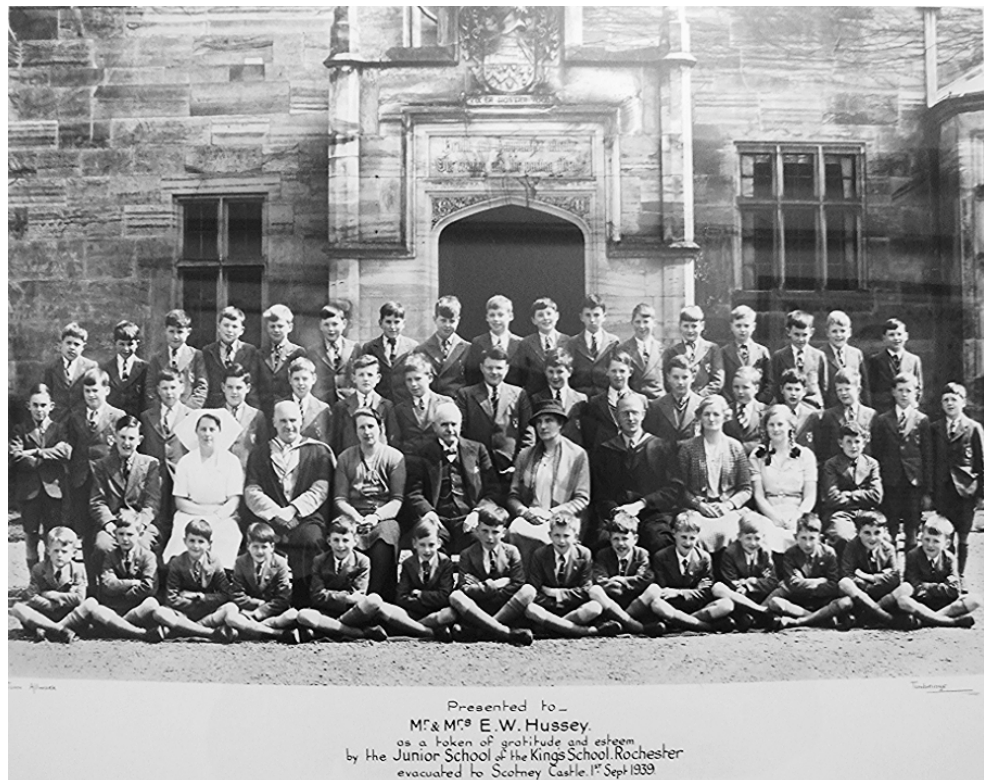
In 1937 the Cathedral Choir School was closed by the Dean and Chapter for reasons of economy. The boys were transferred to the King's School.

1939

By the beginning of the Second World War the Cathedral Choristers were part of the Junior School of Kings. In September 1939, the whole School was evacuated to accommodation around the village of Lamberhurst in rural Kent. The Junior School boys were welcomed into Scotney Castle by the owners, Mr and Mrs Hussey.



Simon Shreeve, in OR Magazine, December 2024, p.36-39.



Rebecca Carter, in 'Scotney to the Rescue'

The whole School came together on Sunday mornings with a service in Lamberhurst Parish Church.

1940

Nine months later, with the worsening of the war the whole School re-located in June 1940, to join with King's College, Taunton, Somerset.

During the period of evacuation, services at Rochester Cathedral were sung by the Lay Clerks.

1942

In the summer of 1942, it was deemed safe to re-open the Junior School at St Margaret's House, and full Choral Services were resumed in the Cathedral on 28th December 1942.

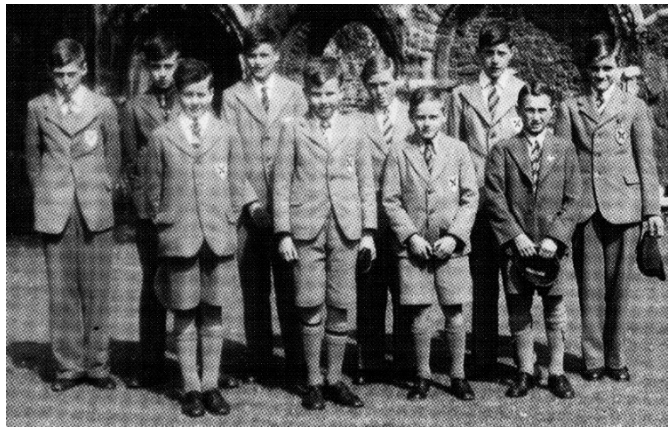
In 1942, the choristers went, in full robes to Shorts Brothers Sea Plane Factory on the banks of the river Medway to sing in the works canteen.

1944

On Sunday 12th March, Chorister John Arthur Clarke was cycling home after Evensong, when he was tragically killed in a collision with a bus at the junction of Vines Lane and East Row. A memorial service, sung by the Choristers, was held in the cathedral.

Tom Gurney, in OR Magazine, December 2024, p.14

Choristers, summer 1944.



*back row: Palmer, Lloyd, Prince, Nelson, Horwood, Robinson.
front row: Brush, Blatchly, Perryman, Robbie.*

One Sunday, just before the D-Day Landings, 6th June 1944, a service was broadcast from the Cathedral to Rochester in America.

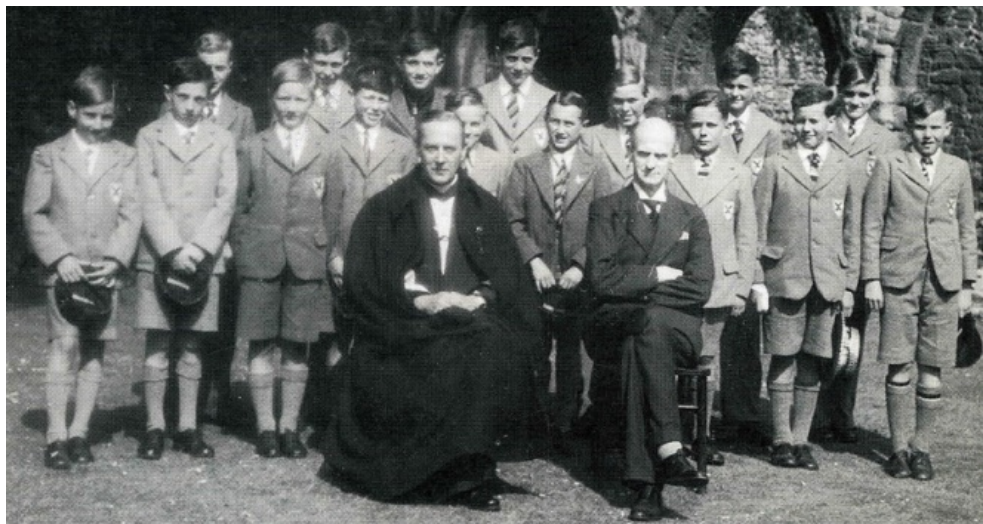


H. A. Bennett, Bishop Chavasse, BBC Reporter, Dean Crick.

The music library was in a small room off the South Transept. The 'Music Boys' had to assemble boxes of music for the week and take them over to the Minor Canon Row Choir School in a large wooden box with long handles, affectionately referred to as 'the coffin'.

1945

The Choristers of 1945, Dean Crick and H.A. Bennett.

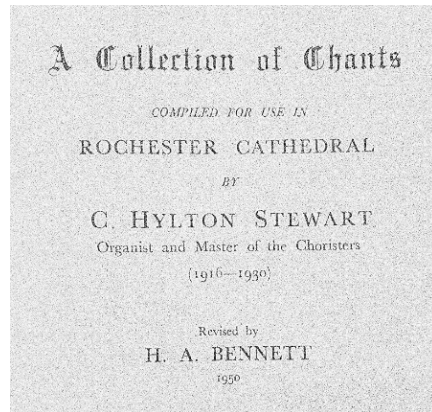


1950

The Cathedral was still heated by large cast-iron coke stoves. There were, from time to time, altercations between the Organist, H. A. Bennett and the Vergers for their rattling and stoking the stoves before the end of the organ voluntary at the end of Evensong.

The Quire was lit by gas chandeliers. These made strange noises, and there are tales of the musical pitch for singing being adjusted to blend with the 'whistling' lights.

Hylton-Stewart's 'Collection of Chants', 1930, revised by H. A. Bennett.



1951

The Choir sang for the funeral of the 24 young cadets tragically killed on 4th December 1951, when a double decker bus ran into a Company of boy cadets from Chatham Division RMCC.

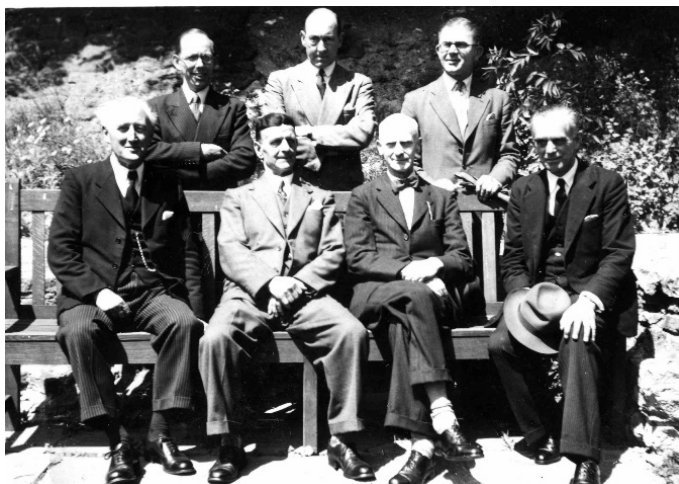
1952

The choristers in front of the Choir Screen prior to the Christmas Carol Service.



from the left: Robert Dacey, Glyn Davis, Howard Taylor, Richard Parrett, Anthony Johnson, Arthur Watson, James Strike, Francis Coomber, Malcolm McLaren, Gerald Holt (Head Chorister) John Ashdown, Thomas Lowman.

Lay Clerks, 1952.



Standing: Austin, Mellor, Grant. Seated: Wilkins, - , H. A. Bennett, - .

1953

Choristers 1953



*Standing: Thomas Lowman, Clifford Parrett, Arthur Watson, Richard Parrett, Anthony Johnson, Glyn Davis.
Sitting: Anthony Reeves, Gerald Holt, John Ashdown, Howard Taylor, Malcolm Mc Laren, Robert Dacey.*

Annual Dinner, 1953.



Standing: -, Headmaster Ernest Davies, -, Bishop Chavasse, Dinner Chairman, Dean Crick, Canon Vizon, -, Organist H A Bennett.

Left table, outside: Joe Levett.

Right table, inside: -, Reginald Littlejohn, -, Francis Coomber, Thomas Lowman, James Strike, Malcolm McLaren.

1956

It is unusual for a photograph to be taken during a service. This captures the daily singing of evensong regardless of the season or the number of people in the congregation. It was not common practice for the choir to be conducted; simply a tap of the forefinger by the Senior Lay Clerk when necessary.



The Choir of 1956, outside the north door of the Cathedral, on the occasion of the retirement of Harold Bennett as Organist and Master of the Choristers for twenty-six years.



*Back row: Jeremy Gadd, Richard Waldron, Christopher Elphick,
David Holloway, Kenneth Ashby (Crucifer), Roger Farman,
Anthony Brooker, Colin Whyman, Graham Mitchell.*

*Middle row: Don Stephenson (Head Verger), Bill Grant (Bass
Decani),*

*Roger Cranmer, Ian Henderson, Nigel Proctor, Alan Pope,
'Bunny' Austin (Alto Decani).*

*Seated: Mr. Mellor (Tenor Decani), Mr. Wilkins (Tenor Cantoris),
Rev. Canon Vicary, Very Rev. Thomas Crick (Dean),
Harold Bennett (Organist and Master of the Choristers),
Rev. Canon Ball, Ron Dominey (Alto Cantoris),
Mr. Kettle (Bass Cantoris).*

*Probationers: John Cramp, Mark Laming,
and Michael Jarman (who did not continue to become a
chorister.)*

ROBERT JAMES ASHFIELD, Dr.

Appointed Cathedral Organist and Master of the Choristers, 1956-1977

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

When Dr. Robert Ashfield became as Organist and Master of the Choristers in 1956, he changed the boys Eton collars to ruffs.

1957

In 1957, work was carried out on the organ by J. W. Walker and Sons. This scheme transformed the rather restrained 'old worthy' instrument of 1905 into a more colourful, brighter, and when necessary, more powerful instrument.

Scott Farrell, The Cathedral's Organ, in, Friends of Rochester Cathedral: Report 2015/2016, p.14.

And details in Hale, The Organs of Rochester Cathedral, p.30-33.

1959

Choir Practice moved from the Old Choir School in Minor Canon Row to the second floor of Gundulf Tower in the Cathedral.

1960

The Choir of 1960 in the Cloisters.



far left, Joe Levett, and far right, Dr. Robert Ashfield.

1961

The Choir, with Choristers from the Chapels Royal, at the Royal Maundy Ceremony at Rochester Cathedral.



1968

A game of Conkers between the Choristers and Students of the Theological College.



1969

The Choir, 1969,



seated, left, Dr. Robert Ashfield, and right, Joe Levett.

1976

DAVID POULTER appointed Assistant Organist, 1976-1981.
Chorister 1964-1968.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

The Cathedral Choristers have their own school tie.

1977

BARRY FERGUSON appointed Cathedral Organist and
Master of the Choristers, 1977-1994.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

1979

Choral Evensong BBC broadcast from Rochester Cathedral, 28th
March.

During the winter, when the heating was limited, the Choristers and
Lay Clerks were provided with black cloaks to wear over their
cassocks and surplice.

1980

Rochester Cathedral Choir Association formed. 'to provide assistance
and encouragement to the choir'.

Choral Evensong BBC broadcast from Rochester Cathedral, 19
November.

Choristers sang at the Royal Albert Hall Carol Concert, Sunday 17th
December.

1981

The Choir gave a concert at Battle Church, Sussex.

Choral Evensong BBC broadcast, 19th November.

1982

PAUL HALE appointed Assistant Organist, 1982-1989.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

Easter Sunday Mattins BBC broadcast.

1983

In April 1983, the Choir, together with Canterbury Cathedral Choir, went on tour to the German Democratic Republic as part of the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. The combined choirs sang at the Church of the Holy Cross, Dresden and the Churches of St Thomas and St George, Leipzig.

Choral Evensong BBC broadcast from Rochester Cathedral, 7th December.

1984

Choral Evensong BBC broadcast from Rochester Cathedral, 16th November.

1986

The Choir of 1986 in the Crypt, led by Barry Ferguson.



Choral Evensong BBC broadcast from Rochester Cathedral, 22nd October.

1987

The Choir gave recitals at Penshurst Place, Kent, and at the Guildhall, Rochester. The Choristers also took part in a Christmas Concert at the Albert Hall, London.

And in the same year, the choir travelled to Carlisle Cathedral to sing at the Installation of the Dean Canon Henry Stapleton who had previously been the Precentor at Rochester.

1989

The organ was rebuilt and expanded in 1989 by Manders, with a new Choir Organ added on the north side facing the quire.

Photograph, taken around the statue 'Mary and Christ Child' in the Cloister in 1989 with the choir in blue cassocks.



Measures put in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the choristers as set out in the Childrens' Act 1989.

1990

The choir of 1990. with Barry Ferguson and Roger Sayer.



Choristers sang in the Carol Concert at the Royal Albert Hall, Sunday 23rd December.

Rebuilding the Cathedral organ completed.

1991

Rochester Cathedral Choir with the Choir from Southwell Minster.

An 80th Birthday Celebration for Dr Robert Ashfield.

Director of Music, Rochester Cathedral, 1956 – 1977; previously, Rector Chori at Southwell Minster, 1946 – 1956



In 1991 the choir went on a European Tour with sixteen choristers and nine Lay Clerks. Performances were given at: St. Josef's Church, Trier. Musikschule Chapel, Konstanz. The Fraumunster, Zurich. St. Andrews, Zurich. Notre Dame de Paris, S. Severin, Paris. and S. Christophe de Javel.

Celebration Concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London with the combined choirs and orchestras from the seven King's Schools founded by Henry VIII in 1541.

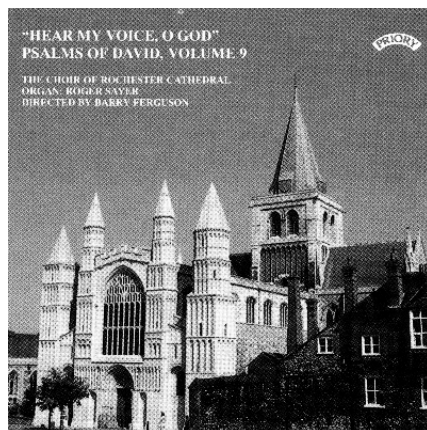
The Old Choir school building, Garth House, listed Grade II by English Heritage.

1993

The choir in 1993



CD by the Choir, *Hear My Voice O God*, Psalms of David, Vol 9.



1994

ROGER MARTIN SAYER appointed Cathedral Organist and Master of the Choristers, 1994-2008

Assistant Organist, 1989-1994.

afterwards: Cathedral Organist, 2008-2013.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

WILLIAM WHITEHEAD appointed Assistant Organist, 1994-1998.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

Choir recital at Eynsford, Kent, to celebrate the centenary of the composers

Peter Warlock and E.G. Moeran

1995

The Girls' Choir was founded in 1995.

Their Début Concert on Sunday, 18th November; conductor, William Whitehead, organ Roger Sayer.

This is one of the earliest Girls' Choirs to be formed in a Cathedral.

The girls are recruited from the King's School and other schools in the area.



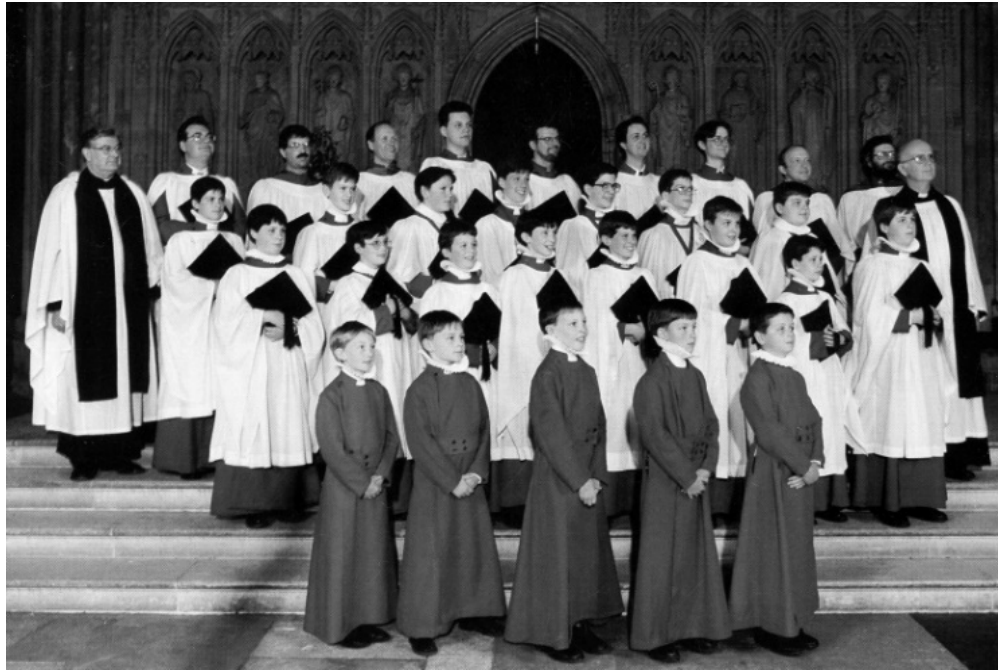
After Easter, the boys flew to Helsinki to sing in the Lutheran Cathedral. And then by ferry, to Estonia to sing in the Tallinn Concert Hall, a bilingual Eucharist in the Lutheran Cathedral, and finally, a performance at the Tartu University.

1996

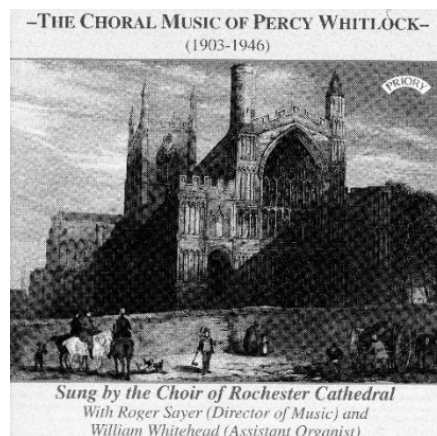
Choir visits Germany with 15 boys and 6 lay Clerks.

Concert at Eupen, 15 km south of Aachen.

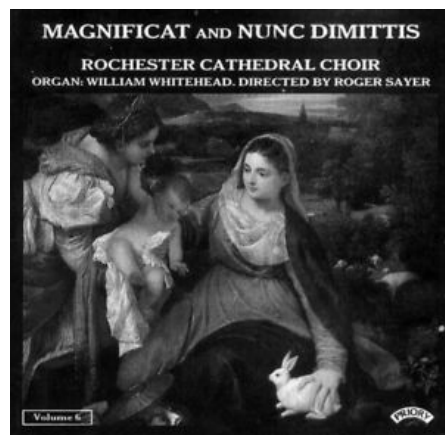
The Choir in 1996



Two CDs by the Choir '*The Choral Music of Percy Whitlock*'



And *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*, Vol 6.



Choir Carol Concert at Chatham Dockyard.

1997

The Dean and Chapter launch the 'Cathedral Music Trust Appeal'.

Easter Choral Eucharist BBC broadcast, 30 March.

Choir tour of Holland, 2nd to 7th April.

Choir Concert, St George's Beckenham, 17 May.

1998

SEAN FARRELL appointed Assistant Organist, 1998-2001.

October, Choir Tour of the North Eastern States of America was made with sixteen boys, nine Lay Clerks, Director of Music, Roger Sayer, and two sub-organists. Seven concerts were given, including Christ Church, Rochester, NY.

2000

Choir tour in August to Aachen, Germany.

2002

Choir tour to USA.

EDMUND ALDHOUSE appointed Sub-Organist and Assistant Director of Music, 2002.

2003

Charity Commission Declaration signed by the Trustees.
See names under Trustees.

2005

The Boy's Choir,



Roger Sayer, Master of the Choristers, left side.

Choir tour to Rochester, New Hampshire, USA.

7 Minor Canon Row no longer used as the Organist's House.

2006

DAN SOPER appointed Assistant Director of Music

2007

The Cathedral Chapter commissioned Ralph Godsall and Roger Sayer to produce a report 'Worship and Music Policy'. This confronted the fears about sustainability of music in the Cathedral and the importance of music being:

'The servant of the liturgy and an integral part of it. Music has a unique role in the offering of worship as a means to still the mind, uplift the heart and lead the worshipper to encounter the mystery that is God.'

The report made recommendations including a commitment to maintaining the music library, preservation of the Cathedral Organ, funding of the Choristers, and that the Director of Music should be first and foremost a choir trainer as 'an experienced educationist'.

see: From Ancient to Modern, A 21st-Century Model for Cathedral Music, Scott Farrell. Cathedral Music, November, 2009.

The Girls' Choir of 2007



back row: Anna Green, Sian Rees, Eleanor West, Agatha Elliott, Lydia Allain Chapman.

middle row: Ella McKenzie, Isabella Chambers, Miranda Allain Chapman,

Polly Andrews, Elisabeth Green.

front row: Hannah Ost, Molly Tottman. Jasmine Oshinusi, Alex Collins,

Shannon Murray, Clara Calladine. Arda Radha Lakshmi, Amelia Chambers.

photograph, Roger Vaughan

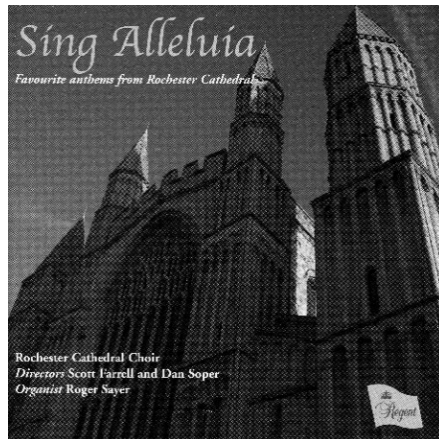
2008

WILLIAM SCOTT FARRELL appointed Director of Music, 2008-2018.

Mortar-boards no longer used by the choir.

2009

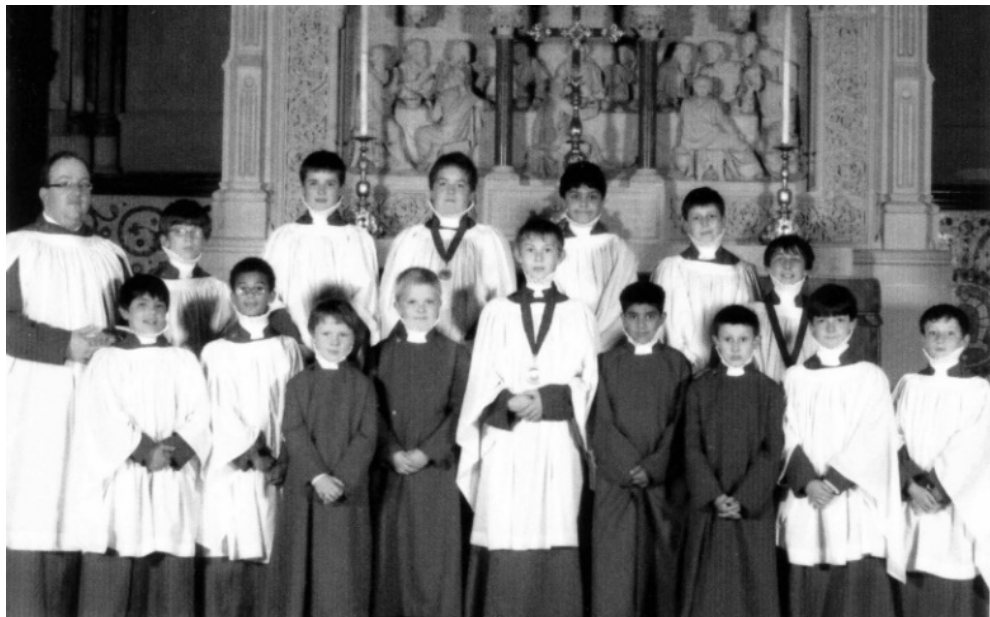
CD by the choir, *Sing Alleluia: Favourite Anthems from Rochester Cathedral*.



Anthem composed by Barry Ferguson to commemorate the Centenary of Rochester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association. *See the Word of God Incarnate*. Text by Godfrey Goodman, Dean of Rochester, 1620 – 1624. Sung by the Cathedral Choir, intertwined with unison music for the Old Choristers.

Choir tour to Ahrweiler, Germany.

The Boys' Choir of 2009 in front of the High Altar.



2010

SAMUE L RATHBONE appointed Assistant Organist
and Director of the Girls' Choir , 2010-2014.

Choir tour to USA and Canada.

The Girls' Choir, 2010, with Dan Soper.



2012

In 2012 the Old Girl Choristers were joined and welcomed into the
Rochester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association.

2014

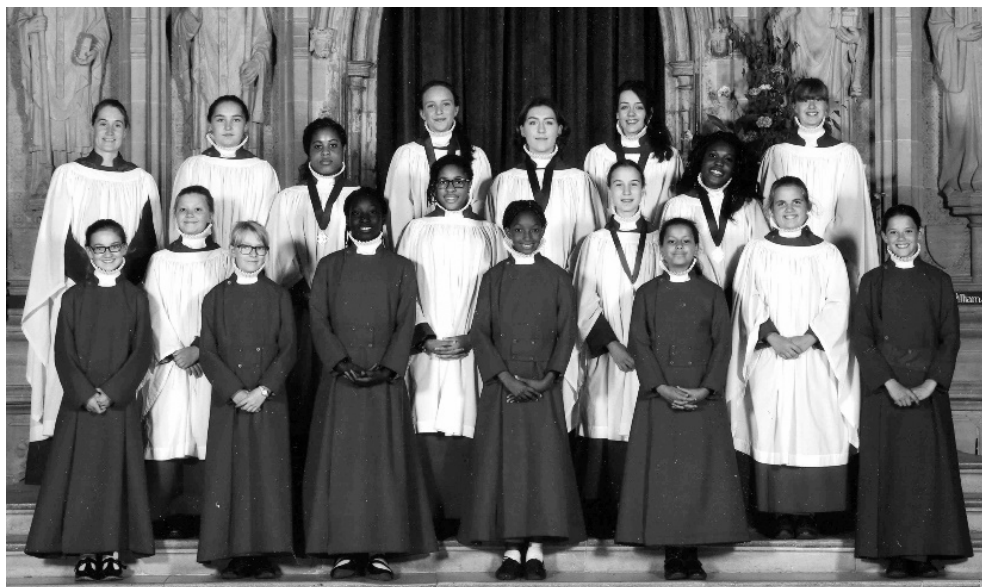
CLAIRE INNES-HOPKINS appointed Assistant Director of Music
and Sub-Organist, 2014-2018
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

2015

The Practice Room in Gundulf Tower, Cantoris boys.



The Girls' Choir, with Claire Innes-Hopkins.



*back row: Abia Richards, Samantha Onyekwere, Maddy Elliott,
Cosima Richards, Elizabeth Green, Angelica Onyekwere,
Caitlin Spooner-Lillingston.*

*middle row: Sophie Hurst, Miranda Onyekwere, Ester Harris,
Oliver Chapman.*

*front row: Lucy Davies, Olivia Hann, Jessie Bakare, Buyikunmi
Ajayi,*

Rachel Tamir Clarke, Hope Richardson.

BEN BLOOR appointed Assistant Sub-Organist, 2015.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

Choir tour in August, to Aachen, Germany.

2016

JAMES NORREY appointed Assistant Sub-Organist, 2016.
see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

2018

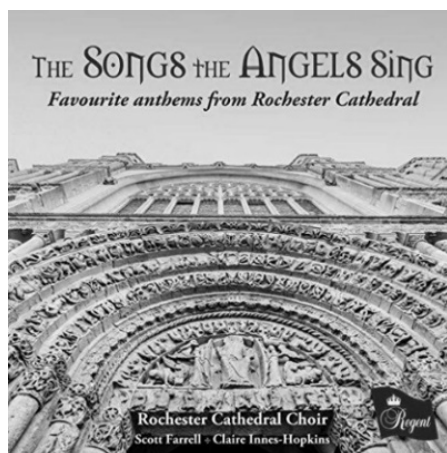
ADRIAN BAWTREE, appointed Interim Director of Music, 2018-2019

See also, appointed Cathedral Organist and Director of Music, 2022-

JEREMY LLOYD, appointed Assistant Director of Music, 2018 – appointed Acting Director of Music for 2022

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

CD *The Songs the Angels Sing*.



2019

BEN CHARLES, appointed Principal of King's School.

Lay Clerk, Peterborough Cathedral.

Assistant Director of Music, King's School, Peterborough.

Second Master, Portsmouth Grammar School.

Choral conductor and singer.

FRANCESCA MASSEY appointed Cathedral Organist and Director of Music.

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

2020

On the 23rd March, the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev Justin Welby, closed all Anglican Churches to assist the control of the Covid-19 virus pandemic.

In June the choristers participated in online rehearsal and online Cathedral Services. In September the choir was able to resume singing services albeit with socially distanced seating.

Francesca Massey, in My First Experiences as Director of Music, in Friends of Rochester Cathedral, Annual Report 2020.

Building work was carried out in the Quire and Transepts during the closure; the choir stalls covered with protective boarding.



From September 2020, The Boys' Choir and the Girls' Choir were combined into a single mixed treble line with equality for boys and girls. All choristers, both Boys and Girls, once again all coming from the King's School.

Cathedral Voice, February 2020, p.1.

The Choir under the globe in the nave as part of the exhibition 'Museum of the Moon'.



2021

Lay Clerk Choral Scholarships set up for Sixth Form pupils of King's School.

2022

The Choir Vestry and Practice Room moved out of Gundulf Tower due to fire hazard. The Ithamar chapel in the crypt used as the Practice Room.

Music Library remains in Gundulf Tower

Ruffs no longer worn by the choristers.

A copy of the original 1926, 80 rpm shellac recording of the Choir given to the Old Choristers' Association by the City of London Phonograph Society.

See note under 1926.

ADRIAN BAWTREE appointed Organist and Director of Music.
2022

see note under Organists and Directors of Music.

2024

The Old Choristers were able to resume their meetings after the restrictions of Covid over the last few years.

On 7th May, the Cathedral Choir sang in the 'Clergy Support Trust' Festival Service at St Paul's Cathedral, London. This Choral Celebration included the three Cathedral Choirs of St Paul's, Durham, and Rochester.



On Saturday 18th May, a group of Old Choristers, who had all been in the Cathedral Choir under Barry Ferguson, sang Choral Evensong. Barry Ferguson returned to the Cathedral to conduct the choir, and Roger Sayer returned to play the organ.

Pre-service rehearsal.



Sunday 19th May was the Annual meeting of the Association. A group of Old Choristers joined the Cathedral Choir to sing Choral Evensong. *Pre-service rehearsal. Adrian Bawtree conducting.*
Tom Richley, in OR Magazine , December 2024, p.34.



At this service, a copy of the 1926 Columbia Record recording of the Cathedral Choir was presented to the Dean.

This evening, we are pleased to celebrate the gift to the Cathedral of an interesting and valuable archive of music.
Just under one hundred years ago, In 1926, Columbia Records sent sound technicians down to Rochester Cathedral. They set up electronic microphones and made a recording of the Cathedral Choir. The recording was transferred, live, by telephone lines to the Columbia Studio at Westminster where it was cut into a 12 inch, 80 revs per minute, shellac record.
This recording is considered to be the earliest live, electronic recording of a cathedral choir.

A few earlier recordings of choirs had been made, but these were with the choir going to the Sound studios to stand and sing in front of a large physical recording sound horn.

Our record is listed Columbia 9165 and was issued and sold to the public in early 1927. Side one is of the Magnificat in B flat by Charles Stanford, and the reverse side, the Old Hundredth hymn, All People that on earth do dwell. The Cathedral choir was conducted by Charles Hylton-Stewart, then Director of Music, who is known for numerous Anglican Chants and the Chant Book used in the Cathedral for many years. The Organist was the young Percy Whitlock, who had been a Chorister, and then Assistant Organist, Whitlock became a well-known composer and his Toccata from the Plymouth Suite will be played as this evening's voluntary.

One of these original 1926 records has recently been found by a member of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society. Michael Curling kindly contacted Jeremy Lloyd, Assistant Director of Music, and Jeremy passed this information to James Strike, Archivist for the Rochester Cathedral Old Choristers' Association. James went to visit Michael Curling and was delighted that Michael Curling wished to give this historic and fragile record to the Cathedral. James has arranged for Alistair Taylor, owner of the specialist shop for vintage vinyl records in Rochester High Street, to transfer this old shellac recording to a modern CD disc so that it may be heard over the Cathedral sound system.

Adrain Bawtree, Director of Music, has kindly arranged for this recording to be used and celebrated as the Magnificat for this evening's service of Choral Evensong.

Our sincere thanks go to Michael Curling for the gift of this record and to Alistair Taylor for producing the CD version.

Present the record to the Dean.

May we now ask you to stand to hear and celebrate the Magnificat.

The service was followed by a Reception, with buffet, in the crypt.

Also in 2024, a fully restored 1903 Bluthner piano was presented to the school in memory of John Arthur Clarke, the Chorister who died tragically in a cycling accident in 1944.

The piano, which is used for recitals and the Choristers Practice, was donated by Mrs. Golding, John Clarke's cousin.

Tom Gurney, in OR Magazine, December 2024, p.14.

The Annual Dinner was, for the first time, held as a joint meeting of the Old Choristers with the Old Roffensians.

Saturday 5th October, King's School Hall.

An Appeal was set up to assist the funding of a new Song School and Music Hub for the Cathedral. This is to be formed through conversion of part of the building at the rear of St Andrews House in the courtyard to the east of the cloisters.

