

THE

# RECORD

Issue 2, 2011

WCCS Old Boys' Association



Memories of the  
Choir School

Life at Westminster in the 1940s



## Welcome to this 2nd edition of The Record

It has been a tremendous year for WCCS OBA, and it is a real delight to see so many old boys starting to come back to OBA events.

On top of a fabulous concert and CD launch in March, celebrating the music of Colin Mawby, we ended the academic year with a packed Cardinal Hume Dinner, fittingly held on 17th June; the anniversary of Cardinal Hume's death.

The school is going from strength to strength - recently awarded Outstanding by OFSTED in every category, and heavily oversubscribed for day boys and choristers. If you are ever passing by, I'd encourage you to drop in and say hello! I am most grateful to the Headmaster for his continuing support, and also to the executive committee who have worked so hard to make this year such a success. We say goodbye to Julie Buclez and Lisa Digrandi, thanking them for all that they have given over two years, and welcome Dora Della Gheradesca as our new Vice-Chair.

I am very proud of this 2nd edition of *The Record*, since a large part of the content has come from the old boys themselves - treasured memories, photos, pictures and even some old school reports!

Remember to check in to the OBA page on the school website every now and then, and encourage everyone who you may still be in touch with to make themselves known!

Nicholas Morrell  
Chairman WCCS OBA

# OLD BOY NEWS!



### John Harriman

Has recently produced *Record Flight*, with his Latin Jazz Quintet *Heads South*. Copies just £8: [www.headssouth.com](http://www.headssouth.com)

### Papal Visit

As we celebrated the anniversary of the visit of Pope Benedict to the UK, we found these pictures from the last Papal visit in 1982!



### Oliver Burrows (1984-9)

Oliver's son, Arthur, has just started as a probationer in Year 4. Has he started a family tradition?!



### Congratulations

To Lionel Woodward (1961-66) for 25 years of service as a referee with the FA!

### Dr John Piper (1949-54)

Thank you to Dr Piper for sending in this oil painting of the choristers.



### Harold Hughesdon

At the age of 90, flew over from Minnesota with his daughter Helen Mary to join us at the Cardinal Hume Dinner!

### Outstanding!

The School has recently been awarded Outstanding in the latest OFSTED report. Pop in to say hello and find out why!...



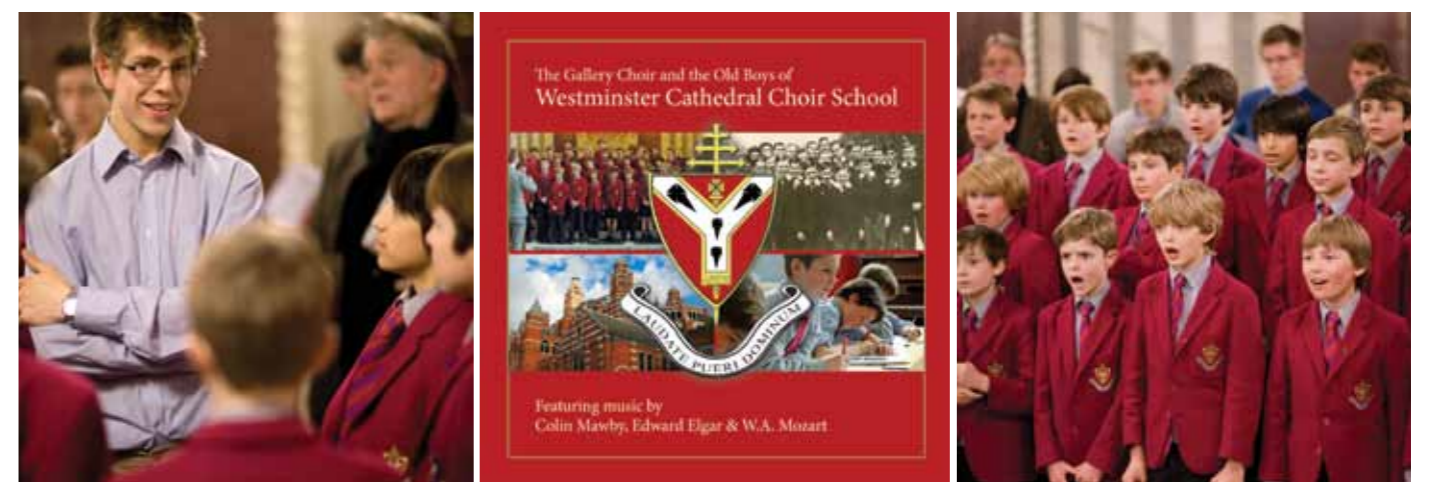
### Welcome

A warm welcome to our new Vice-Chair, Dora Della Gheradesca.



# *Laudate Pueri Dominum!*

WCCS OBA hosted the première of *Laudate Pueri Dominum* by internationally-renowned choral composer and previous Master of Music, **Colin Mawby**. The piece was commissioned by the Old Boys' Association, and performed by the Gallery Choir of Westminster Cathedral Choir School. Order the disc from our online school shop if you missed out...



WESTMINSTER  
CATHEDRAL  
CHOIR SCHOOL



AMBROSDEN AVENUE  
LONDON S.W.1

L Rossi  
CRICKET FIXTURES  
SEASON - 1960



Captain:  
J. HAHESSEY  
Vice-Captain:  
B. WEEKS

# Archives

Many thanks to Simon Morgan and Leo Rossi for sending in reports, photos and a prospectus from their time at the school. Keep them coming!



HEALTH

The health and diet of the boys are regarded as a matter of first importance. As a result, the small self-contained infirmary is hardly ever in use.

LIGHTING AND HEATING

The lighting and heating of the School are completely modern and efficient. The latter is maintained by means of a central heating system throughout the School all the year round. There is a constant and plentiful supply of hot water, each boy having a minimum of two hot baths each week.

CLOTHING

Each boy must be provided with certain articles (see Clothes List) of which the School is not responsible for the purchase. No responsibility is accepted for any articles of clothing which are not marked. All enquiries with regard to the list are addressed to the Sisters.

PIANOFORTE

Lessons in the Pianoforte are given if desired—and provided there is a successful Music Mistress in a charge. The fee is three and a half guineas per term plus the cost of any music provided for the student.

LETTERS

All boys are obliged to write to their parents once a week, on Sundays, and they may write as often as they wish.

Their correspondence is regarded as completely private. No kind of censorship is exercised by the boys, unless in certain circumstances it is specifically requested by their parents. In addition to his usual effects, each boy should bring with him at the beginning of the term a supply of stamped and addressed envelopes. This will greatly facilitate the prompt despatch and arrival of his weekly letter boxes.

L Rossi  
FOOTBALL FIXTURES  
SEASON 1959-1960



Captain:  
J. HAHESSEY  
Vice-Captain:  
M. RONAYNE



Westminster  
Choir

LAUDATE  
PUBER  
DOMINUM

REPORT for the HALF-YEAR

RANKING: July  
NAME: LEO ROSSI  
CLASS: Senior 'B'

THE SCHOOL

The School was opened in Archbishop's House by Cardinal Vaughan on October 1st, 1901.

It was determined that the new Cathedral at Westminster should carry out the full liturgy of the Church and a character which makes it unique in this country. For the boys have the privilege of participating in the full liturgical life in a manner that is in keeping with the most ancient traditions of the Church's history. They should acquire therefrom an integrity of character which is the fruit of a Christian approach to education in the fullest sense. Besides this, the school has become famous elsewhere. A number of old boys of the school have become prelates and others have found that the solidity and width of their training has prepared them admirably for all other walks of life.

The present School buildings erected by Cardinal Bourne were in use from September 1906 until 1940 when the School was closed on account of the war. It was reopened in January, 1946, and a Chapel was added where the boys are able to say their prayers before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Choir School accommodates thirty-two boarders.

Boys are received between the ages of eight and ten years, admission depending to a great extent upon the result of a Voice Trial given by the Master of the Cathedral Music and the passing of an Entrance examination in general subjects. Some boys are ever admitted as servers.

The Rector of the Cathedral reserves the right to refuse admission to any boy whose parents are such as to



The following articles are by the School with an exception

1. All Choir Deans
2. All Sons and Daughters
3. All Educational Officers

# President J.F. Kennedy at Westminster

Memories of President John F Kennedy's visit to Westminster Cathedral - 5th June 1961

The Summer of 1961 saw much activity at both the Cathedral and Choir School: Francis Cameron, who had succeeded George Malcom as Master of Music two years earlier was in turn replaced by Colin Mawby in an "Acting" capacity. Meanwhile at the Choir School, it had been announced that there would be a change of Headmaster with Fr Thomas (Tommy) Kilcoyne, who had held that post for eight years being replaced by his deputy, Fr (later Canon) Herbert Veal. Elsewhere, Cardinal William Godfrey was involved in several trips to Rome in preparation for the 2nd Vatican Council that was due to open in October of the following year.

In a wider world, John F. Kennedy had become President of the United States of America in January and was making his first trip to Europe. He had already met Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna and General Charles De Gaulle in Paris. This visit to London, whilst including talks with the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan and a dinner at Buckingham Palace with The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, would also include a family event.

There was a great sense of excitement when it was announced that both the President and Mrs Jackie Kennedy would be visiting the Cathedral to act as godparents at the Baptism of their niece, the daughter of Mrs Kennedy's sister, Princess Lee Radziwill, which was to take place in the Crypt. The

Radziwills lived close by and in later years, members of the Kennedy family, particularly Robert, were often photographed going to Mass at the former SS Peter & Edward Church in Palace Street.

In the days leading up to the visit, the Cathedral seemed to be teeming with Secret Service agents, combing the place for security at a time when, compared to nowadays, security was generally far more lax.

Bearing in mind that this was the height of the Cold War, a hotline had to be in place to order retaliation, should Russia launch a nuclear strike whilst the President was in the Cathedral. On this occasion it was set up in the office of the Administrator's secretary, Mary Quinn.

The plan was for the President and Mrs Kennedy to be met at the door of Clergy House and escorted by the Cardinal, Administrator and other clergy to the crypt for the ceremony. As they passed the Sacristy, the boy choristers were assembled there to sing George Malcom's "Benedic Anima Mea". In the moments leading up to the procession passing, there was much excitement among the boys. It seemed, the President was within earshot when Colin Mawby instructed the boys not to shout out the slogan of the time "Ban the Bomb". This being the time when CND and the Committee of 100 under the leadership of Bertrand

Russell had recently been set up and were staging high profile events that grabbed the headlines at the time.

As the procession returned from the ceremony, the boys sang again as it passed the Sacristy en route to the Clergy House Common Room where, after having been presented to various people connected with the Cathedral along the long corridor, a short reception was held at which Jacqueline Kennedy is alleged to have remarked to the Administrator, Mgr Gordon Wheeler "Those cute little choir boys". So impressed was she that she asked that an extra day's holiday be given as a token of thanks. Needless to say, this was enthusiastically received!

Little did anyone know that this particular presidency was to last less than two and a half years more. Many people claim to remember exactly where they were and what they were doing the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated. I am sure that those of us who were present on this historic day at the Cathedral will also have vivid memories of the only visit of a serving President of the United States of America.

Paul Tobin  
Chorister 1956-62  
17th April 2011

# Cardinal Hume Dinner 2011

A fantastic evening was had by all, and many thanks to the Chairman of Governors, John Gibbs, for his hilarious speech!

The next OBA Mass and dinner will be held in June 2012.



## The Cardinal Hume Award

Congratulations to Felix Scrivens!

This award is presented by the Old Boys' Association to a current pupil who has demonstrated generosity, commitment, helpfulness and good humour during his time at WCCS.

# Cardinal Hume Centre



This year, we welcomed Cathy Corcoran, Chief Executive of the Cardinal Hume Centre, to our annual Cardinal Hume Dinner. Cathy gave a moving speech about the work that the Centre does to help those less privileged than ourselves.

The Centre really needs volunteers! The OBA committee popped along for a few mornings, and we found it to be a thoroughly rewarding and enjoyable experience.

If you think that you can spare a few hours a week, then this is an excellent way to bring your own skills and talents to help those who are disadvantaged get back into the world of work. The Centre relies heavily on voluntary work, and I would really encourage you to consider approaching the Jobs Club.

Please get in touch with Flora if you are interested:

Contact Flora Swartland:  
floraswartland@cardinalhumecentre.org.uk  
www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk

## FOR THE RECORD Memories of the Choir School 1946-49



Michael Walshe, February 2011

On the 28th January 1946 some eighteen or twenty boys assembled at the refurbished premises of the School which had been empty since 1939 due to the outbreak of the Second World War. I was one of those boys and though older than most (thirteen and a half) my voice had not yet broken and like four or five others of about my age had been chosen to form the senior element in what was, in effect, an "instant" school. Auditions had taken place a few months previously though frankly I have no memory of mine or of meeting any of the other boys (save one, Brian Cole, who lived near me in Hertfordshire) before that first day. However, I do have the most vivid recollection of being taken into the Crypt Chapel which seemed to be bathed in golden light. This had an immediate effect on me. I was told this would be where we would have Mass each morning. There is some uncertainty as to exact numbers but a photograph taken in 1946 shows 24 boys of whom four are not in cassocks or cottas but in grey flannel suits. I think these were probably day boys but as this was an official photograph I am surprised that they were not in Marlborough suits: the compulsory wear for special occasions for the rest of us. I remember being measured for my Marlborough suit at Kinch & Lack.

All the choristers were, of course, boarders. The dormitory was at the top of the School and was pretty Spartan. Our facilities were much

as described by Mr Peter Holt in his article in the previous issue of *The Record*, though I believe in my time there was only one bath and one lavatory in the washroom four or five steps down from the dormitory. Since those days many alterations have taken place and two floors have been added providing amongst other things the boarders with sleeping accommodation probably not much different from that which they enjoy at home. In one corner of the dormitory was a separate small room big enough to take a bed with a window from which it was possible to observe not only the playground but also the flats in Morpeth Mansions.

This room was the preserve of the Head Chorister /Senior Prefect (the said Brian Cole) and I inherited it when he left.

Initially the School was run by Father Herbert Crees (Headmaster) and Father Ronald Shepherd who I think shared all or most of the teaching between them until two more priests, Father Kilcoyne and Father Whitney, joined the staff.

The Choirmaster and Organist was Mr William Hyde who had the daunting task of converting within six weeks twenty or so boys with little or no previous choral experience into a unit worthy of singing at The Solemn Entry of Cardinal Griffin into the Cathedral which was to take place on the 10th March. This was to be the first occasion since 1939 that boys voices would be heard in the Cathedral and it was his motet '*Sacerdos et Pontifex*' which we sang as we processed up to the High Altar on that day. This must have been a very proud moment for Mr Hyde but thanks to his coaching I think we rather took it in our stride, (no pun intended!). Incidentally, the description of Mr Hyde in Peter Holt's article portrays a rather jollier person than the rather serious one we came to know. None of us would have

suspected him of getting up to pranks on the Cathedral organ!

It also fell to Mr Hyde to prepare us for our first experience of singing the liturgy of Holy Week, which at that time was all in Latin and of which by far the longest ceremony was on the morning of Holy Saturday. It must be remembered that this was a decade or so before the reforms brought in by Pope Pius XII.

Midnight Mass that first year was of course a very special and exciting occasion for all of us but I have another reason for remembering it.. After the Mass I was asked by Mr Hyde to stand by his right while he played the Apse Organ (which was coupled to the Grand Organ) as the congregation was leaving the Cathedral. I was to be ready to turn pages for him. I have never forgotten the thrilling experience of watching him playing and hearing the glorious sound of Widor's *Toccata* (which I had never heard before) as it reverberated round the Cathedral that night. That Christmas and all subsequent ones we spent at the school as we did not go home until after Vespers on the Feast of The Epiphany which may I remind some readers was on January the 6th. Talking recently with some of my contemporaries I have the impression that we weren't particularly upset by this. Certainly for an only child (as I was) there was much more fun to be had at school than at home.

One particular memory I have is of a hilarious evening which must have been during the Christmas "holidays" when we were entertained at the piano in the Song School (now the Refectory) by Fr Gordon Wheeler (later to become Bishop Wheeler) including a very spirited rendering of '*Ain't she sweet*'.

*The complete version of this article is available in the Old Boys' section of the School website.*

# Keep in touch

Please keep your details up to date - use the form on the OBA section of the school website:  
[www.choirschool.com](http://www.choirschool.com)

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