

SMC 1914-1918

This year we commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War in 1918. The first issues of the St Michael's College Magazine in July and December 1918 recorded 47 names of former pupils on the Roll of Honour who had served, together with 4 prisoners of war, 2 who were discharged and 15 who were killed.

Several of these 68 names recur in the last half century of the college. Perhaps readers may know whether they were related:

Roll of Honour : RA Benson, CE Boulton, AFR Brown, EM Drummond, RM Hopkins, PT Loft, EF Murray DCM, Ivor Powell, GH Prevost, CJ Price, GAR Thursfield.

Discharged : JW Hampton

Died : EPW Brown, WJH Brown, O Hall, AH Pearson, JH Spencer, AB White.

Some details of two of the ten are included to represent their contemporaries who experienced St Michael's :



Lieutenant Elliott Blair Grasett of the 28th Punjabis Regiment

His memorial at Prestbury Church, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, states that he was killed in the 3rd line German trench, gallantly leading his men at the Battle of Loos on 25th September 1915 aged 25.

His death is recorded at Neuve Chapelle Memorial, Pas de Calais, 56605413.

War grave Memorial 36461.

His father Rev James Elliott Grasett, was Vicar of Allenshore, Herefordshire for 46 years.

Lieutenant Ian Moorhouse Metcalfe of the 3rd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment was killed on 1st Nov 1917 aged 20.

His name is recorded on the Loos Memorial, Pas de Calais, Panels 64 & 65. He was the son of Henry Longden Metcalfe and Catherine Anne Metcalfe, of "Simla", Hatherley Rd., Kew Gardens, Surrey.

ST MICHAEL'S A CENTURY AGO,

from the Magazines of July and December 1918.

Rev Ernest Swann was appointed Warden in 1917. He had been organ scholar at Corpus Christi College Cambridge, a schoolmaster for 8 years and a priest for 20 years, including being a Minor Canon and Succentor of Ripon Cathedral, so was eminently suited for the role. He initiated many significant improvements to the college. The numbers of boys rose from 23 to 32 in 1918 "a larger number, so we understand, than at any previous time in the school's history."

The Chapel had a new boiler "the comfort experienced last winter was ample testimony to the effectiveness and success of the work." 19 new settings of the services and 38 new anthems were added to the choir music. An electric blower with oil-powered engine and dynamo replaced the hand-pumped action.

"Great changes have taken place in the old Fives Courts. The larger one has been turned into a Gymnasium ... and the following apparatus has been installed : parallel bars, lugg rail, climbing rope, trapeze and rings. A vaulting horse is being made..." "The other Court is now a Carpenter's Shop and has been supplied with a fair quantity of good tools, with three ordinary benches and a long bench at which three boys can work at the same time."

Each boy gets about two hours a week practice in the gymnasium and two hours in practical work. These two places were found to be "very useful on the few wet days we have had when football was impossible."

“The half-term holiday on Monday Nov 4th took the form of a ‘ramble’. After an early breakfast we walked to Tenbury Station and from there took train to Cleobury Mortimer. A walk down the line and a climb on to the road brought us within reach of an aerial coal carrier and there some exploration was made. Poles and standards on the side of the road simply *must* be climbed. After we left Clows Top the weather became rather trying, a steady drizzle doing its best to depress our spirits, and we made the best of our way to Neen Sollars. (*about 3 miles - Ed.*) A tuck shop was discovered on the way where the tuck was not rationed, and so jaws kept time with feet as we jogged along. Neen Sollars in sight was a great relief but we found ourselves with 2 1/2 hours to wait.... here was an inn close by where we dried the outer man by the fire and regaled the inner man with lunch and ginger beer Six of the party decided to walk on rather than wait ...” (*No mention is made of whether these six walked all the 8 miles back to the college.*)

“There is such a lot one can do at a station - climb signal standards, go into the signal box and handle the levers, feed the horse in the siding. Everyone was weighed at least twice until the station-master kindly but firmly stopped the use of the scale... At Tenbury a brake had been ordered to complete the outing and all voted that we had had quite a good time, in spite of the weather.”

A centenary of scarlet cassocks and Head Chorister medals

“Members of the Choir have now been supplied with cassocks and two new sets of surplices. The men’s cassocks are black and the boys’ scarlet. Although red is a royal colour, we can find no reason for this colour being exclusively adopted for royal foundations; and as scarlet is the S. Michael’s ‘colour’, and harmonises with the colour scheme of the Chapel, it has been adopted at S. Michael’s.

The appointment of two Choir Monitors has been initiated, and the two Senior Choristers, who at present hold this office, are Lancaster and Pile. Special silver badges have been struck, bearing the S.Michael’s crest and these are worn by the Monitors over their surplices and are suspended by a blue ribbon.

The badges become the property of the Monitors when they leave, and will be inscribed on the back with their names and dates of membership in the choir, so that they may be retained by them as mementoes in after years.”

Six years later the Head Chorister was Noel Kemp-Welch. As it is now a century since the Head Chorister medals with their blue ribbons were introduced, probably many will have been retained by recipients or their families. However, the custom of having them inscribed may have lapsed during the second world war until the early 1950s, though if so then this was revived by Kenneth Beard and Noel Kemp-Welch by the centenary in 1956.



NOEL KEMP-WELCH arrived at St Michael’s in 1919 and entered the choir in the autumn term 1920. He was a chorister from 1921 to 1924 and Head Chorister in his last year.

The 1924 magazine states that three of the choristers, Kemp-Welch, Ensor and Hare, had accompanied weekday services and played voluntaries after some Sunday Evensongs. Ensor died two years later while at Clifton and was a contemporary there of Charles Beresford’s father. Hare went on to Brighton College and, like Noel Kemp-Welch, was later ordained as a priest.

After leaving St Michael's, Noel Kemp-Welch went to Aldenham and later was a Choral Scholar at King's College, Cambridge with Boris Ord. They are shown here in 1933 with King's Chapel in the background.



He then went to Cuddleston and was ordained in 1935. After serving in St Dunstan's parish in Liverpool he returned to King's as Chaplain in 1939 and married Stella on 29th September. She had studied at the Royal College of Music and was an accomplished violinist and soprano. She was proud of being a pacifist.



In 1940 Noel was appointed priest-in-charge at Tilehurst, Reading, then later Vicar of Chaddleworth in Berkshire.

In 1947 he was appointed as Warden of St Michael's and led the college for ten years, including the centenary celebrations in 1956.

His achievements in the challenging post-war years included raising the funds to facilitate the re-building of the organ. His musicianship and sensitivity in leading the daily services were exemplary. Kenneth Beard wrote "We remember his energy and enthusiasm ... his ready humour and kindness to staff and boys ... his gentlemanly manner and thought for other people."

While at St Michael's Noel and Stella adopted Anthony and Philippa as infants. After St Michael's they all moved to York where he was Chaplain of St Peter's School.

HANDEL'S SCORE OF THE MESSIAH



Handel's 'Messiah' at St Michael's College Library 1976

left to right

Dean Yarranton 1971.3 - 1976.3 : Dan Burlingham 1970.3 - 1976.2 :
Anthony Lewis 1973.2 - 1976.3 : Tim Wackett 1971.3 - 1977.2 :
Guto Davies 1972.3 - 1976.2 : Stephen Brown 1971.3 - 1977.2.

Many of us had the opportunity to see Handel's original conducting score of the 'Messiah' when it was at St Michael's between 1867 and 1985.

Handel composed the 'Messiah' in 23 days between 22nd August and 14th September 1741, while he was in Ireland at the invitation of the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Devonshire, and the Governors of three charitable institutions. The text mainly came from his friend the librettist Charles Jennens. However, Handel did not always agree with Jennens, who considered that parts of the overture were 'unworthy' of the oratorio.

The British Library website states :

Although 'Messiah' was the work most performed by Handel himself during his lifetime, he never used his initial manuscript in performance. As was his usual practice, he had a fair copy made for conducting, and kept the score that is in the British Library with its annotations and amendments as his own archival copy. Handel bequeathed his autograph scores and other manuscripts to his copyist, business associate and friend John Christopher Smith the elder. They passed to Smith's son and then into the possession of the royal family, for whom Smith the younger had apparently worked as a harpsichord tutor. As part of the Royal Music Library, they were deposited in the then British Museum Library by George V in 1911, and were presented to the nation by Queen Elizabeth II in 1957.

John Christopher Smith I (1683-1762/3) and John Christopher Smith II (1712-1795) were professional copyists who produced the Tenbury score from Handel's manuscripts for him to use while conducting rehearsals and performances.

Handel used it at the first performance which was a Charity Matinée in Dublin on 13th April 1742, when it was "received with fervour" (Grove). He was 59 and produced thirty-six further performances during the next seventeen years. The conducting score was revised and annotated, often in his hand. He incorporated amendments to suit the resources of each venue, including the names of the singers. In 1749 he gave an organ to the Foundlings' Hospital and subsequently performed annual concerts of the Messiah which drew large well-paying audiences.

His last performance of the Messiah was at Covent Garden on 6th April 1759, when he presided at the organ eight days before his death. He was buried in Westminster Abbey six days later and made a substantial bequest to the hospital in his Will.

The conducting copy was sold by Sotheby's on 17th August 1838 to the Ottley family. Edward's father, William Young Ottley, the Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, had died in 1836 and three significant sales of his extensive collection of engravings, prints

and books had recently taken place in 1837-8. Edward Ottley gave the copy of the Messiah to Sir Frederick Ouseley in 1867. Ouseley had it bound in brown calfskin with gold tooling by Rivieres of London in the same year.

When Ouseley died in 1889 he bequeathed it to the Trustees of St Michael's College. The original eighteenth-century blind-tooled covering leather was mounted as doublures in 1930. At this time Mr Swann was Warden and Dr Fellowes had been Librarian since 1918.



Postcard of the Library in the 1930s

Dr Fellowes (1870-1951) was succeeded as Librarian in 1948 by another renowned musicologist Dr Watkins Shaw (1911-1996), who produced a significant edition of the 'Messiah' and a couple of books about his research on the Tenbury score in 1963 and 1965. This was followed by Donald Burrows' 1991 book on the 'Messiah'. In 2006 John Butt and the Dunedin Consort made a prizewinning recording replicating the 1742 performance.

The College built a fireproof strongroom 'New Music Library' for the conducting score of the 'Messiah' and other significant books in 1955. It was one of the books acquired by the Bodleian Library in Oxford after the closure of the College in 1985.

Watching the opening of the 'New Music Library' in 1955



Boys from left to right

Nick Jones 1952.1 - 1956.2 : Tony Smith 1952.3 - died 1957.1 :
Max Unwin 1953.3 - 1957.1 : Edward Gould 1951.3 - 1957.2 :
Charles Beresford 1952.2 - 1957.2 :
Alastair.Morgan-Kilner 1950.2 - 1955.3 :
Mike Benson 1950.2 - 1955.3 : Benjy White 1950.1 - 1956.1 :
David Timmis 1950.3 - 1955.3.

The new Music Library was formally opened by Professor Jack Westrup, the Heather Professor of Music at Oxford.

Autographs of Fellows and others on the following programme include : Very Rev Seiriol Evans, Dean of Gloucester; RSN Lee; Canon MF Alderson (Sub-Warden); Christopher Hare; Edgar Broadhurst; H Watkins Shaw (Hon Librarian); Sir Percy Hull; E.Ashley; HS Brown; Rev RH Freeman; Gerald Knight (Director, RSCM); Rev Dr AV Billen; Marshall Wilson; Walter Madden (Oxford Mission, Calcutta); WW Searle; RB Winser; Rt Rev Tom Longworth, Bishop of Hereford (The Visitor of the College); Fred Miles (Bursar). *Others present included* the Rev N Kemp-Welch (Warden); KB Beard (Organist); Colonel Prescott; EA Rosier (Architect); Dr Oakeshott, Rector of Lincoln College Oxford; Lord Kilmaine (Pilgrim Trust).

