



250 Years
of Archbishop Robinson's Library

Cathedra



A Year in the life of St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh

Issue 15, Spring 2022

Cathedra is published by the Friends of Armagh Cathedral,
c/o Armagh Robinson Library, 43 Abbey Street, Armagh BT61 7DY.

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Website: www.stpatricks-cathedral.org

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Regular Services in the Cathedral

Weekdays except Wednesdays	Matins	9.30 am
Wednesdays, Saints' and Holy Days	Holy Communion	9.30 am
Sundays	Holy Communion	10.00 am
	Sung Eucharist	11.00 am
	Choral Evensong	3.15 pm

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The Friends of Armagh Cathedral

Cathedra is the annual magazine of The Friends of Armagh Cathedral. It is intended both to keep in touch with the members of the Friends and to be a window through which others can see something of the life of the Cathedral in the previous year. It is free to members, and can be purchased from the Cathedral shop.

The Friends of Armagh Cathedral was established in 1938. It is a registered charity, whose aims are to bring together in a fellowship of loyalty and devotion all who care for the ancient foundation of the Cathedral Church of St Patrick, Armagh and its continuing witness to the glory of God, and to assist in the maintenance and preservation of the Cathedral for posterity.

Membership of the Friends gives you the opportunity to help the Cathedral. You can take part in events organised by the Friends, without necessarily being involved in regular worship in the Cathedral. Anyone who wishes to support the aims of the Friends may join. Membership is a way to support one of the most ancient institutions in Ireland: a cathedral standing on one of the earliest Christian sites, tracing its foundation to St Patrick in AD 445.

Applications to join the Friends or other enquiries should go to:

Friends of Armagh Cathedral,
c/o Armagh Robinson Library,
43 Abbey Street, Armagh BT61 7DY

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Contents

Foreword	2
Editorial	3
Highlights from 2021.....	4-10
The Friends in 2021	10-12
Music in the Cathedral	13-16
How Armagh played second fiddle to Drogheda for 500 years	17-21
Interview with Carol Conlin, Assistant Keeper, Armagh Robinson Library	22-28
Regular Services in the Cathedral	inside back cover

Cover picture: Archbishop Robinson holding a model of his Library

Foreword

Dear Friends,

We all hoped that 2020 would see the end of the Coronavirus pandemic and none of us expected that it would dominate yet another year, but it did! In looking back over 2021 there were some very dark times but also signs of light and of a brighter future beyond Covid-19.

The year began with the Cathedral, just like other church buildings, closed for public worship. It was very significant it was at Easter that congregations could once again return to in-person worship. On Easter Sunday, there was a real sense that, as we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Cathedral and other places of worship had also in a way been resurrected to do what they were designed to do – be places where people could gather to worship God. Thankfully after Easter we were able to keep the doors of the Cathedral open and the congregation slowly returned. It has been such a joy to be able to see people face to face again, though at times it has been difficult to recognise even the most familiar of faces behind a mask!

With a backlog of ‘big’ services, September began with my installation and that of the Archdeacon of Ardboe, followed a few days later by the enthronement of the Archbishop of Armagh. Although only small congregations were present due to seating capacity limitations during the pandemic, these special occasions were no less important and marked the historical importance of continuity of ministry on



the Hill of Armagh. In October the eyes of the whole country were focussed on our beloved Cathedral while we hosted a *Service of Reflection and Hope to mark the Centenary of the partition of Ireland and the formation of Northern Ireland*. The service was broadcast live across the network on BBC1 and RTE1 and more information about that event is included in the Highlights from 2021 section later in this edition of *Cathedra*.

We have endured much throughout the pandemic but also have learnt much about the world and ourselves. In the years to come as we look back upon the Covid years, as well as the sickness and sadness, may we remember the prayerful support that the Church of God provided and the strength and encouragement our faith gave us which helped us to weather the storm.

I am pleased to commend this edition of *Cathedra* to you. It provides a small insight into Cathedral life alongside some very interesting articles which set in context the work that goes on in Armagh. A very sincere thank you to Drs John and Gillian Faulkner, our editors, who despite the trials and difficulties of recent years

have managed to produce another excellent magazine. I hope you enjoy reading it and I look forward in time to hopefully seeing you in the ancient and beautiful Cathedral Church of St Patrick, Armagh.

*Every blessing,
Shane*

Editorial

One of our purposes in this newsletter, as always, is to report in outline on what took place in the Cathedral in the past year. There is however also another purpose, which is to place what is happening now in a much longer time frame.

When Richard Robinson came to live in Armagh as Archbishop, he took a very bold step. As Ted Fleming writes in his article in this issue, Robinson’s predecessors had been based in Drogheda for some 500 years. A long exile it was indeed; 500 years back from now takes us to a time less than half way into the reign of Henry VIII. One of the main reasons, it seems, was that Armagh was considered too dangerous. Our small city has a chequered history of plunderings, sackings, bombings and civil unrest, but through all these it has always emerged once again as a centre of religious and cultural activity and learning.

In this issue, we look more closely at the significance of Robinson’s return to the primatial city. We interview Carol Conlin who is the Assistant Keeper of the Library

which Robinson founded some 250 years ago. Carol gives us an insight into what the Library is like in the 21st century. Robinson’s vision of a university may not yet have been fulfilled, but he was certainly far-seeing. The functions both of universities and of libraries have evolved, but they remain as embedded in society as ever.

As we write, war rages in Ukraine and the incidence of Covid is increasing once again; it is tempting to focus on the short term and concentrate resources on fighting each outbreak of trouble as it occurs. But the stories of our city and institutions and the example set by Archbishop Robinson himself show how much we can benefit from a longer view.

With great sadness, we would like to record one other matter. Late in 2021, the much-loved Secretary to the Friends, Mary Caldwell, lost her husband Alan. We extend our sympathy, and by proxy that of all *Cathedra* readers, to her and her family.

Gillian and John Faulkner

Highlights from 2021

January

The Cathedral was closed for public worship due to the Covid-19 pandemic but thanks to the hard work of a number of clergy associated with St Patrick's, members of the congregation received weekly service sheets with a short sermon via post or email. Diocesan Services were available online each week via the Diocesan Facebook page and website.

February

Public gatherings for worship were still not possible which meant that the installation of the Dean could not take place in the Cathedral on 14th February as planned. Although not installed in his

seat in the Cathedral, the new Dean was conferred with the rights of the office by means of modern technology. Twelve people, located in different places around the country, seated in front of their computer screens, witnessed the new Dean, the Very Reverend Shane Forster, make the declarations and be officially welcomed to his new role as Dean of Armagh and Keeper of Armagh Robinson Library. An historic event on so many different levels!

March

As well as sending out weekly orders of service from the Cathedral office the new Dean made weekly services available by video on the Cathedral Facebook page and



The new Dean's conferment took place on line

Cathedral website. Although members of the congregation could not be present in the building, at least they were able to see inside St Patrick's, but for the Dean it was a lonely start to public ministry on the Hill of Armagh. We were grateful to Cathedral Choir member, Adam Reaney, who provided some beautifully sung hymns appropriate to each week's service alongside the musical talents of our Organist and Director of Music, Dr Stephen Timpany, who played some voluntaries appropriate to the season.

April

By the end of Holy Week we were able to return to in-person worship in the Cathedral for Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and Easter Day. Restrictions were in place with regard to seating capacity, social distancing and the wearing of face coverings, but it was a joy to be able to gather together to celebrate the feast of the resurrection. On 9th April, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh died and, in the days following, a memorial service was recorded in the Cathedral with the Cathedral Choir and the Archbishop. This service was used on the Church of Ireland website as the national service.

May

A new pattern started to establish itself in how we could manage to have the Cathedral Choir present to sing at services during the restrictions. The Choir was divided into three sections: the gentlemen, the young men and the boy choristers. Each of these 'pods' would take it in turn to lead the choral aspects of our worship and even when present in small numbers, two-metre social distancing had to be practiced between singers. On Sunday 16th May the Diocesan Mothers' Union Service took place with only a small congregation present but the service was videoed and made available on the Diocesan Facebook page.

June

On 9th June the BBC Radio Ulster Sunday Service was recorded in the Cathedral for broadcast the following Sunday. There was no congregation present. The service was recorded in one take. It became the

Spring returns to the Hill of Armagh



Cathedral in the Snow



first celebration of Holy Communion recorded in a church building to be broadcast on the radio in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. Sunday services began to run very smoothly again and the congregation adapted well to the new way of doing things amidst the restrictions. The number of people present on a Sunday in the Cathedral started to grow as people regained their confidence at coming into a gathering.

July

During the summer months the services were said while the Choir was on holiday. The Priory Singers sang Choral Evensong on the last Sunday of the month.

The Archbishop and Dean with the new Archdeacon of Ardboe, the Venerable Elizabeth Cairns



August

The choir of Bangor Abbey sang at the morning Eucharist on one of the Sundays and were accompanied in Armagh by their own rector. The Charles Wood Festival of Music and Summer School took place in the Cathedral with a much smaller choir than usual and a mix of online and in-person events. On Friday 27th August Choral Evensong was recorded for BBC Radio 3 as part of the Festival, and in the evening a special concert was held in St Mark's Armagh as part of the Charles Wood programme to mark the 250th anniversary of Armagh Robinson Library.

September

The new season started with a record number of special services all crammed into a week! There was the Commissioning of Parish and Diocesan

Readers, followed a few days later by the Installation of the Dean of Armagh and the Archdeacon of Ardboe, followed a few days later by the enthronement of the Archbishop of Armagh. All three services took place with greatly reduced congregations due to the restrictions, but they were in-person which meant a great deal after nearly 18 months of having to negotiate online services and strict protocols. There was definitely a sense of there being light at the end of the tunnel and that things were starting to improve!

October

Harvest Thanksgiving took place on Sunday 3rd October and we were delighted

Armagh children meet Prime Minister Boris Johnson



The Archbishop knocking at the door of the Cathedral prior to his enthronement

to welcome the new Archdeacon of Ardboe, the Venerable Elizabeth Cairns as the preacher at the morning Eucharist.

The following weeks all seemed to focus on the preparation and delivery of one of the most significant national services that

Armagh Cathedral has held in recent times. Earlier in the year the Church Leaders Group (Ireland) whose membership includes the two Archbishops of Armagh, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the President of the Irish Council of Churches decided that a special service should be held to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland. It was not

to be a celebratory event but one rooted in peace and reconciliation which truthfully acknowledged that 2021 would be viewed in different ways by different sections of the community and in the two jurisdictions on the island. It was decided that it would be a *Service of Reflection and Hope to mark the Centenary of the partition of Ireland and the formation of Northern Ireland*. As it was an event driven and led by the Church Leaders it was decided that it would be appropriate for it to be hosted in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, the site of St Patrick's great stone Church, in the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. Her Majesty The Queen and The President of Ireland were both invited to attend but sadly in the end neither was present due to The Queen taking ill and the President declining the invitation for personal reasons. However, Prime Minister Boris Johnston was present along with the Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney.



Dr Sahr Yambasu preaching at the Centenary Service

The gentlemen of the Cathedral Choir and a children's choir comprising children from local schools led the choral aspects of the act of worship. Young people from secondary schools across Ireland delivered the readings and shared their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future.

Children lead the procession carrying a light of hope



Prayers were led by individuals who were directly impacted by conflict in Ireland. The Church Leaders then shared the journey that had brought them individually and collectively to this time and place and reflected very honestly that the churches could have done more in years past to bridge divides and speak words of peace in the midst of conflict. The President of the Methodist Church Revd Dr Sahr Yambasu delivered a very powerful sermon and then all present took part in an act of commitment to strive for peace, seek healing of past hurts and to work together for a brighter future.

Symbolically a light of hope, a lantern containing a living flame, was carried through the Cathedral by a group of young people before the Church Leaders together pronounced the Blessing and everyone sang the hymn *Be thou my vision*. The service was broadcast live on television on BBC 1 across the whole of the UK and on RTE1 across Ireland. The congregation was limited in number due to the restrictions but was representative of government, church and those involved in peace and reconciliation work in Ireland down through the years. It was a momentous occasion which displayed raw honesty, reflected on the past but looked to the future in hope with our young people leading the way.

November

We held the annual Remembrance Service on Sunday 13th November and were then delighted to be able to welcome the members of the Friends of Armagh Cathedral to Choral Evensong on Sunday 21st. The Advent Carol service took place on the last Sunday of the month.

December

Advent and Christmas are always busy at the Cathedral but this year, although many of the usual Carol services and events could take place, they were on a much smaller scale or in a different format. The Royal School Armagh held their annual Carol Service in the Cathedral with only the school choirs and sixth formers present in order to reduce the numbers present to comply with the coronavirus legislation. The service was videoed and uploaded to the school's Facebook page where it was viewed by a large number of people who, in normal times, would no doubt have been present at the service. The young men of the choir hosted a Carol Service, and then the Gentlemen and the boy choristers sang at the Nine Lessons and Carols, before the year ended with the traditional Crib service and Christmas Day communion service with the Archbishop present as celebrant and preacher.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with the sick and fearful and particularly with the bereaved. We sadly said farewell to a dear couple, Canon Colin and Mrs Belinda Moore, who had been connected to the Cathedral throughout their earthly lives and who were present with us Sunday by Sunday in recent years in retirement despite various trials and tribulations. Belinda died in

Colin and Belinda Moore in 2017



September and Colin died on Christmas Eve which was exactly three months later to the day. We give thanks for their faithful witness and friendship. We remember all connected with our beloved Cathedral who died last year, continuing to remember their families and loved ones in our prayers.

These highlights provide only a snapshot of 2021 which was in many ways a year of transition. During it we moved from lockdown to strict restrictions which by the end of 2021 had eased a little. We

realised how important it is to gather as a community for worship and that we will never again take for granted our ability to meet together for services in the Cathedral. We give thanks to God for his presence with us in the midst of the storm and for the comfort and encouragement that is given and received through the Church and through the community associated with our beloved Cathedral of St Patrick on the Hill of Armagh.

Shane Forster
Dean

The Friends in 2021

As far as the Friends were concerned, 2021 began much like 2020 ended. The Covid pandemic was still with us, and most social activities for the Friends were ruled out. The year called for more creativity than ever as virtual meetings became the norm.

Through the medium of Zoom video conferencing the Management Committee of the Friends of Armagh Cathedral was able to meet four times. Our first committee meeting of the year was on Friday 26th February, when we met with our new Dean and chairperson, The Very Revd Shane Forster. This was an opportunity for us to welcome the Dean and his family to the Hill of Armagh and to get to know him. We had a very productive meeting with some forward thinking plans around the publication of the next issue of *Cathedra*, our financial situation, membership, the re-establishment of the Kenneth Hamilton Memorial Flower Fund, the use of emails,

events, and future branding of the Friends.

In our three further meetings at intervals throughout the year we continued to reassess the options and plan ahead. Reluctantly we concluded that, because of their inherently social nature and the constantly changing guidance from the two governments, it would have been inadvisable for us to organise any ambitious outings or other events for our members. The Dean produced new branding for the Friends' logo, which was uploaded onto the Friends' section of the Cathedral's website. He encouraged the use of the diocesan magazine *The Ambassador* as a good tool for promoting the Friends, and also greater use of email for contact with members. At the time of writing, we have members at 166 postal addresses but only 46 of these have an accompanying email address. So if you are a member and we do not have your email address, do please send it to our membership secretary at the address on

the back cover. It is much easier, quicker and cheaper to keep you in touch that way than by post, and you will still receive *Cathedra* and important notifications by post. We are compliant with GDPR protocols.

The Friends' Annual General Meeting was postponed from its usual spring date in the hope that we would be able to hold it in person, but this proved impractical. Eventually, we bowed to the inevitable and held it virtually on Thursday 18th November with the Dean chairing it from his office. It was particularly interesting to hear his account of the first nine months in his new position. He had faced a great challenge to get everything running again in the midst of a pandemic and associated restrictions. During Lent, services had been on line from the Cathedral without the congregation being present, so he was overjoyed to welcome members of the

Friends and other people through the great West door on Good Friday and on Easter Day. It seemed very appropriate that people were allowed back into the building for the feast of the Resurrection, life after death and light in the midst of the darkness. He reflected on the Cathedral congregation, currently small in number but with a very strong and committed core of members. His hope was that in years to come we will be able to increase our numbers as we offer a very special, traditional form of Anglican worship, which is becoming scarcer throughout this island.

One other event that we were able to arrange was the annual Friends' Festival Service, held in the Cathedral on Sunday 21st November as a service of Choral Evensong, with the Dean as preacher. We were privileged to have the voluntary Diocesan Singers helping to make this a memorable event. Many compliments were paid to both the Choir and their Director the Revd Canon Dr Peter Thompson, Assistant Organist at the Cathedral.

2021 was a financially unusual year for the Friends. Cathedral admission income and shop sales were many times higher than in 2020, an indication that when some Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted, the volume of visitors to the Hill of Armagh increased and people were less apprehensive about going out into the community again. On the other hand, income from these sources remained well down on earlier years, and there was no income from fundraising events. On the plus side, the Friends' Christmas card depicting the boy choristers and gentlemen of the choir was a great success

Organists Board funded by the Friends





New Safety Rail in Military Chapel, also funded by the Friends

and sold out. The Friends paid for various consumable and technical items used in the Cathedral, but their most significant payment was £1850 for the Organists board and safety rail in the Military Chapel.

Cathedra was produced as usual, albeit that it was circulated somewhat later than normal. Sponsorship through advertising in *Cathedra* was problematic as our circulation was markedly impacted by Covid.

Finally on behalf of the Management Committee sympathy is expressed to the relatives and friends of former Friends who are no longer with us, now resting on another shore.

Thank you to you all and to our extended community of Friends for all your support during 2021 and throughout the pandemic.

Mary Caldwell
Hon. Secretary to The Friends

*We expect a bright tomorrow; all will be well,
Faith can sing through days of sorrow, all will be well;
On our Father's love relying,
Christ our every need supplying.*

Mary Bowly

Music in the Cathedral 2021

THE CATHEDRAL CHOIR

We were all delighted that Canon Shane Forster had been appointed the Cathedral's new dean, and looking forward to his arrival on the scene. Canon Forster had been a chorister at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast and has a deep interest in, and knowledge of, cathedral music and liturgy, all of which augurs very well for the future. The Choir hope that Dean Forster will be fulfilled in his new calling and we all look forward to working with him.

On 18th February, I was involved in recording excerpts from the Cathedral's extensive sheet music collection, and talking about some of the musicians associated with the Cathedral. This was one of eight videos from the Robinson Library which was funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Organisations Emergency Programme. In addition to choral music, the music collection contains solo songs and instrumental works and comprises 429 items.

In February the Cathedral community and organists and church musicians throughout Ireland were greatly shocked to learn of the untimely death of Mr David McElderry, Director of Wells-Kennedy Organ Builders, who maintain the Cathedral organ. David, along with the late Christopher Gordon-Wells, was responsible for the very successful rebuilding of the organ in 1996, which resulted in our cathedral having one of the finest organs in Ireland. David's meticulous tuning and attention to detail



David McElderry

in the years since then have ensured that the organ always sounded at its very best for liturgical and concert work, and was chosen as the main competition instrument of the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition.

I wish to sincerely record my thanks to Mr Adam Reaney, a gentleman of the Choir, for agreeing to record a selection of hymns and psalms which were used in the online services for Lent during Lockdown in Spring 2021. Adam has a deeply resonant voice and sings with conviction and precision and his efforts ensured that the Cathedral congregation had access to high quality vocal music for services at a very

Adam Reaney



gloomy time for everyone, just before the rollout of the first vaccine began.

As spring evolved, restrictions eased somewhat, and the gentlemen of the Choir were able to resume singing for the Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday services. Rehearsal time was very limited and had to take place in the Cathedral immediately before services. It is a credit to the skill and experience of the gentlemen of the Choir that choral music in the Cathedral resumed seamlessly, despite the gentlemen not singing together for over three months. At a time when most Irish cathedrals had only one Sunday service, Armagh was able to maintain two Sunday choral services from Easter to the end of June, before the summer break.

In May a further relaxation of restrictions allowed the choristers and young men to resume practices, for the first time since March 2020. My concerns about some boys not returning to the Choir were unfounded, as in the event everyone returned. However, in the intervening fourteen months, many of the senior choristers' voices had changed, resulting in a large number of 'new' tenors and basses. I was also delighted to welcome Timothy Forster to this section of the Choir and Mr Ken Abraham to the gentlemen of the Choir during the year. Initially practices took place, socially-distanced, in the Cathedral, as the Music Hall was too small. This brought its own challenges, as the boys and young men had to get used to singing two metres apart, when they were accustomed to standing around the grand piano in the Music Hall. Thankfully rehearsals were able to resume in the Music Hall again in September.

From Sunday 23rd May, the three different sections of the Choir – choristers, young men and gentlemen of the Choir -- were able to sing separately at the Sunday services. The boys and gentlemen of the Choir sang their first service together on 27th June, and at the time of writing (February 2022), it is still not possible to have the whole choir singing together.

In June, the first Sunday Eucharist on Radio Ulster since March 2020 was broadcast from the Cathedral with music provided by the gentlemen of the Choir. The young men recorded music for a service of Holy Communion which was used for the online Sunday diocesan service in July. The men and boys also recorded hymns for use for the online opening service of the Church of Ireland General Synod, at the end of September.

September was the beginning of a very busy period for the Choir. The young men sang at the Commissioning of Readers – the first Diocesan occasion since the start of lockdown in 2020 -- while the gentlemen of the Choir sang at the installations of Archdeacon Cairns and Dean Forster, and the enthronement of Archbishop McDowell, which had been deferred from February 2020.

It was a great honour for the Cathedral to host the Centenary service for the formation of Northern Ireland in October, and for the gentlemen of the Choir to sing at this prestigious service. Planning started early and a decision was made that, due to social distancing requirements, the number of singers would have to be restricted. The gentlemen rose magnificently to the occasion, singing Chilcott's *An Irish*

Blessing and Shaun Davey's *The Deer's Cry*, featuring the solo voices of Adam Reaney and Helena Hendron respectively. Microphones were secreted in the Choir stalls and the amount of electrical and technical equipment, and lights, in the Cathedral was astounding.

This year the boys and men were able to sing the full range of Advent and carol services. It was particularly good to have an Advent carol service this year, as this had to be cancelled in 2020 due to a two-week lockdown. Another special feature of Christmas at the Cathedral this year was a carol service sung by the young men, who also read the lessons. Evensong on Christmas Eve was sung by the young men and gentlemen of the Choir, their first time singing together since the start of the pandemic.

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THE DIOCESAN SINGERS AND OTHER MUSICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Last year's report from the Diocesan Singers began "2020 was indeed a strange year...", and the same could be said of 2021. We were preparing for an Epiphany carol service in January 2021, but a further period of lockdown and restrictions put an end to that. Our first opportunity to sing together as a choir was in May, appropriately during the Easter season celebrating the "re-birth" of the choir after so many interruptions.

Once we returned to the choir stalls the Singers went from strength to strength. Because of the long break we sang into July for the first time, taking just one

The Choir year ended in a most convivial and pleasant manner, with the gentlemen of the Choir singing at the 10am Communion service on 26th December to mark a significant birthday of Canon Martin White, the Cathedral's Organist Emeritus.

It has been another extraordinary year for the Cathedral Choir, but, please God, we are beginning to emerge from the pandemic. I remain ever thankful and grateful for the commitment of the boy choristers, the young men of the Choir, the Choir parents and the gentlemen of the Choir for their faithfulness and dedication over the last year.

Stephen Timpany
Organist and Director of the Choristers

month for summer holidays. The repertoire grew significantly in 2021, introducing the evening service in A flat by Basil Harwood, and anthems by Gustav Holst, Richard Lloyd, the Tudor composer Christopher Tye, as well as Charles Wood's magnum opus, *O thou the central orb*.

A highlight of the year was singing for the annual service for the Friends of the Cathedral in November, which included Charles Wood's evening canticles in E flat, and the Leeds-based composer Tim Knight's setting of *I was glad*.

The 2021 Charles Wood Festival of Music and Summer School made a welcome return to Armagh, albeit in a hybrid form, with quite a number of events remaining online, and a limited number of socially

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Charles Wood Singers

distanced live events. The first half of the week was spent in the Cathedral (behind locked doors) recording a CD, which is a wonderful record of the Festival's endeavours and an important way of promoting the work of David Hill and the Charles Wood Singers. The cover of the CD (to be launched in May 2022) features a beautifully evocative and unique photograph of the Cathedral — it is worth ordering a copy just for the cover, and then a few more copies to give away as Christmas presents! There was also the traditional BBC Radio 3 broadcast of Choral Evensong, another highlight of the annual cycle.

Unfortunately the issues around Covid-19 and the fear over unnecessary gatherings meant that in 2021 there were none of the usual round of concerts, recitals and visiting choirs, but the hope is that these will be even more appreciated when they return in due course. The one positive to come from all of these challenges is that none of us can take the gift of live music for granted ever again.

*Peter Thompson
Assistant Organist*

How Armagh played second fiddle to Drogheda for 500 years

St Patrick founded his Great Church (Cathedral) at Armagh circa A.D. 445, intending it to be the hub of Irish Christianity. His successors, Bishops of Armagh, witnessed the growth of Armagh as a seat of Christian learning, which by the late seventh century, had the distinction of having some 7,000 students, many coming from the continent of Europe, and in turn going forth as missionaries, and earning for Ireland the epithet 'Island of Saints and Scholars'.



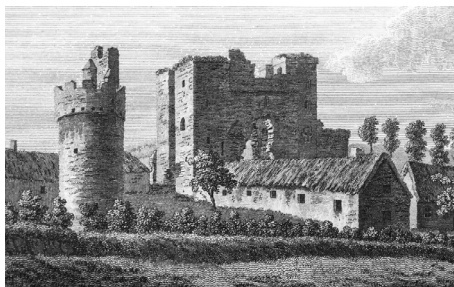
This lifestyle was rudely interrupted by the incursion of the Vikings in the ninth century, plundering the monasteries and disrupting the lives of people. A further upset came with the invasion of the Anglo-Normans in the late twelfth century. About the same time, conflict between the chieftains in Ulster and the killing of King Murchertach Maclogainn of Tir Eoghain in 1196 by the O'Neill sept, allowed the O'Neills to become the dominant dynasty in central Ulster, where their territorial expansion encroached upon Church lands, leading to ongoing tensions with the Archbishops.

It was probably in the late twelfth century that the Archbishops felt themselves constrained to change their principal place of residence from Armagh to Termonfeckin, County Louth, within the greater security of the English Pale.

When the Anglo-Normans came to Ireland in the early 1170s, they proved themselves to be industrious and innovative. Hugh de Lacy was granted the fertile lands of

Meath, which had been impoverished by conflict. Here he established a well-structured system of administration, and, needing an outlet for the local produce, built the town of Drogheda on a suitable green site by the river Boyne, constructing a quay where merchant ships could dock. He also built a sizeable Church, primarily to serve the Anglo-Norman settlement; it was dedicated in honour of St Peter, and had a lofty spire which locals considered to be the highest in the world!

Termonfeckin, where the Archbishops took up residence, is an ancient Christian settlement dedicated to St Fechin, a seventh century saint who founded a monastery here, about four miles north-east of Drogheda. The Archbishops used St. Peter's Church as a Pro-Cathedral for episcopal purposes that would normally have been served by the metropolitan Cathedral of Armagh. As a result, the Archbishops seldom visited Armagh in person, as it was situated *inter Hibernicos* (within the Irish), leaving the Irish Deans



The Primate's Castle at Termonfeckin, demolished early 19th century.

and Cathedral Chapters to act as their commissaries in that portion of the Armagh diocese.

The disruptive influence of the O'Neills and their vassals, who continued to encroach upon the Armagh See lands with the consequent loss of rents, helped to impoverish the Diocese. In 1367, Archbishop Milo Sweteman, at Termonfeckin, received a message that the Dean of Armagh was afraid to leave his Church (Cathedral), due to threats made by Donald O'Neill, because he was loyal to God, St Patrick, the Church of Armagh and the Archbishop (*Register of Sweteman*, folio 17 verso).

Again, in April 1466, Archbishop John Bole went to Armagh, where his horses were stolen by the O'Mellans (keepers of St Patrick's Bell), who owed him rent for lands near Armagh. His Grace promptly retaliated by excommunicating them until his horses would be returned to him (*Register of Octavian*, folio 249 recto).

Over the period 1230-1559, eighteen Synods were held at Drogheda, most of them at St Peter's Church, and a number of bishops were consecrated there; while between 1404 and 1625, eight Archbishops of Armagh were buried there,

but none are recorded as having been buried at Armagh. While in residence at Termonfeckin, they usually worshipped at St Peter's Church. On August 19th 1456, Archbishop John Prene warned the Vicar that those who sang at Mass were negligent in their duties, causing scandal by their chatterings (*garrulaciones*) at Mass, and being absent without permission. He warned them to amend their ways under penalty of excommunication (*Register of Mey*, Liber IV, folio 19 verso).

After the Reformation in the 1530's, the Archbishops of Armagh continued to reside at Termonfeckin, the last to do so being Henry Ussher, who died in 1613. His successor, Christopher Hampton, built an episcopal residence in Drogheda town, and he was followed, in 1625, by the renowned scholar James Ussher, who, in 1640, travelled to Oxford to pursue his studies and was still there when the Irish rebellion broke out in 1641, the insurgents having plans to burn him at Drogheda using his own books for fuel. He remained in England during the Commonwealth. Oliver Cromwell landed in Dublin and proceeded to Drogheda, which had remained loyal to the King. He breached the walls on September 11th 1649. Many citizens took sanctuary in the tower of St Peter's Church, but the soldiers carried out the seats, broke them up, piled them up against the tower and set them alight. The floors of the tower collapsed, and the five bells came crashing down. The Church was severely damaged, and many people lost their lives therein.

On October 9th 1657, during the Commonwealth, the Mayor and Corporation of Drogheda petitioned the



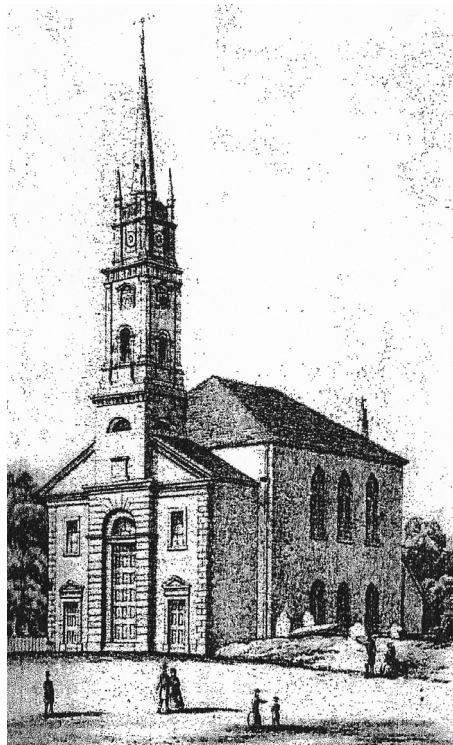
Drogheda ca 1718, by William van der Hagen

Lord Protector for the rebuilding of St Peter's Church at the expense of the town treasury, but in 1660, the steeple was tottering and dangerous (*Corporation Minute Book*). However, on the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, the newly appointed Archbishop John Bramhall gave £100 for repairs so that worship could be resumed in the Church. When it was being furnished anew, to continue serving as a Pro-Cathedral for Armagh diocese, a bishop's chair ('cathedra') was required. So a fine oak chair was made, bearing in relief on the splat the date 1661 beneath the arms of the Diocese of Armagh, above which is a bishop's mitre, and all surmounted by a crown, which signifies the restoration of the Monarchy. This chair is now in the sanctuary of St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh and used by the Archbishop on special occasions, a valued link with diocesan life as it was over three hundred years ago. A similar chair, bearing the date 1664, but with secular emblems, and which most likely came from Drogheda, is now also in Armagh Cathedral beside the Bramhall chair.

The corporation of Drogheda provided liberal financial support to St Peter's Church, taking responsibility for the salaries of the two vicars choral, the parish clerk and the sexton; and in 1699, they purchased 'purple gowns to attend Mr. Mayor (to church) on Sundays'. However, the medieval building with the passage of time gradually deteriorated, and in 1748 was replaced by the present larger square-shaped building in the Roman-Doric style of architecture, with a massive tower and spire, and furnished to fulfil its role as the

Archbishop Bramhall





St Peter's Church, Drogheda, before rebuilding

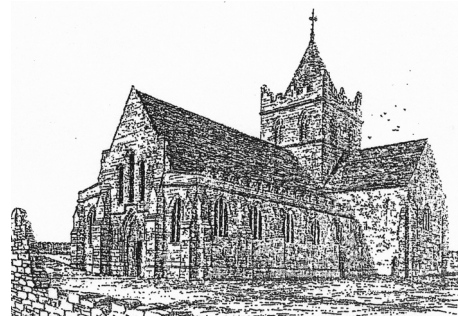
Pro-Cathedral of the Diocese of Armagh. Towards this work the Drogheda Corporation donated £300, and Archbishop George Stone gave £500; he, however, being deeply involved in the affairs of State, had his principal residence in Dublin at Henrietta Street, which came to be nicknamed 'Primate's Hill'.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, little had happened to encourage the Archbishops to take up residence in their metropolitan city of Armagh, as civil unrest continued to impact upon church life. In 1566, during the rebellion of Shane O'Neill, Armagh Cathedral due to its commanding strategic position was used as a fortress by the Earl of Sussex, Lord Lieutenant. He surrounded it with a

wall having loop-holed battlements. Some 30 years later (1595), it was used as a garrison post by Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy, while campaigning against Hugh O'Neill, 2nd Earl of Tyrone. Furthermore, it was convenient for the Archbishops to reside at Drogheda, the most southerly part of the Armagh Diocese. Being appointed by the Crown, many of them in return were involved in government administration based in Dublin, some thirty miles distant.

In 1765, Richard Robinson, Bishop of Kildare, was translated to Armagh, and this became a turning point in the life of the Diocese. In 1268, Archbishop Patrick O'Scannlain (1261-1272) had reconstructed Armagh Cathedral into its current cruciform layout, but had administered the See from Drogheda; he died at Dundalk and was buried at the Dominican Abbey in Drogheda. Over the next 500 years, his successors most of whom resided at Termonfeckin and more latterly at Dublin, then continued to administer the Diocese from Drogheda with St Peter's Church as their pro-cathedral. The northern and larger part of the Diocese was left *inter Hibernicos*

The crumbling defensive wall of the 1560s, which surrounded Armagh Cathedral prior to the restoration of the building in the 1830s.



The Bramhall Chair

(amongst the Irish), to be administered by a succession of Deans and Chapters of Armagh Cathedral, acting as their commissaries. It was Richard Robinson (Lord Rokeby) who took the decisive step of coming to live in Armagh, and, in order to rejuvenate the run-down city making it a place worthy of its metropolitan status, he erected a number of fine Georgian buildings, for which the city is rightly acclaimed.

Also, importantly, but less publicised, is the fact that Archbishop Robinson transformed the life of Armagh diocese, by repairing the Cathedral, and restoring it to its rightful place as the hub of his administration; to which end he also built an episcopal palace in the demesne, as a residence for himself and his successors. He built a registry on Vicar's Hill, for the safe keeping of church records, including the valuable medieval Primatial Registers (in Latin), which had been compiled and

kept at Drogheda. He likewise brought to the Palace about ten portraits of his predecessors as Archbishops of Armagh, which had been accumulated at Drogheda and which now grace the Synod Hall at Armagh.

Also, as an outward and visible sign of the continuity of the episcopacy, he was careful to bring from St Peter's Church in Drogheda the Bramhall oak chair ('cathedra'), bearing the episcopal insignia and date '1661', and the emblem of his episcopal authority. All of these actions of Archbishop Robinson served to unite the ancient Diocese of Armagh after the divisions of more than 500 years.

*Stop friend of worth, nor pass unheeded by
The crypt where Rokeby's honoured ashes lie.
On every side where'er we turn our eyes,
Behold memorials of his bounty rise.*

(*Armagh, a Chronicle*, by Lt Col. Blacker. Armagh 1848)

W E C Fleming

Archbishop Robinson



Interview with Carol Conlin

Anyone who attends the Cathedral from time to time or who has visited Armagh Robinson Library, is likely to have encountered Carol Conlin, knowingly or otherwise. Carol is the Assistant Keeper of Armagh Robinson Library, and a very familiar presence on the Hill of Armagh. We asked her to tell us more about herself and her role in the Library.



Carol Conlin

Carol, please would you start by telling us a little of your background: for example, were you born and reared in Armagh?

I am a native of County Armagh, having been born in Portadown and baptised in St Mark's Portadown. My family moved to Armagh when I was seven, and Armagh has been my home ever since (although I have lived and worked abroad). I attended St Mark's at first, and became a member of the Cathedral congregation in the 1990s.

While you clearly belong here, has your family been in the County for generations?

While Armagh City has been my home since I was 7, both sides of my family have strong attachments to St Paul's Parish, Tartaraghan, going back over many generations. My mother was baptised in St Paul's, attended the church school, sang in the choir and was a founder member of the GFS. Her affection for St Paul's never weakened and she took every opportunity

to support the parish through attending services and fund-raising events. My father's people were also faithful members of St Paul's. However, he was born and brought up in Cardiff, as my grandfather's job had led him there. When my father was a little boy and was asked what he wanted to do when he grew up, he regularly said

that he wanted to go to Ireland. It had become a magical place for him and when, at the age of 18, he visited County Armagh for the first time, St Paul's Tartaraghan was a special place to see. During that visit, while staying with a family relative at Eglishe, he was introduced to my mother whose family farm was next door. They began writing to each other, became engaged and were married in St Paul's.

Carol with her parents



Three of their 6 children were baptised there, and both parents are buried in the Conlin graves, so you will understand my attachment to St Paul's.

But despite that, Armagh remains a special place for me, and always will.

If you lived in Armagh from age seven, you must have spent most of your schooldays here. What are your best memories of school in Armagh?

When we moved to Armagh, I went to the Prep School of Armagh Girls' High School and continued right through the school. I was very happy in AGHS. I was with a lovely year group and still have dear friends from those times. I also have good memories of some of the most encouraging teachers. I hope that I will not embarrass her if she reads this, but I have told her this on more than one occasion: Mrs Noelle Scott was my English teacher throughout my post primary time at the School. She was responsible for my love of Jane Austen's writings and Robert Browning's poetry and I still thank her for that. Mrs Penny McKeown taught me French and did so in a most enjoyable way, even making it fun to learn definite and indefinite articles! I love the French language and have lived and worked in Francophile countries. The other teacher whom I think of is Mrs Margaret Bownes who taught me speech and drama and Bible reading. To this day I use her teaching for public speaking and for Bible reading. I love language and the use of language. I will often stop what I am doing when I hear a well-delivered viewpoint on the radio or television. Equally, when we have visitors to the Library for whom English is not their first

language, I hope that I apply my language skills to inform and engage.

The Cathedral Congregation is now quite small and most Church of Ireland members in the City see themselves as parishioners of St Mark's. How did you become a member of the Cathedral congregation?

When first in Armagh, we attended St Mark's Parish. I attended Sunday School where I met two friends, who remain two of my closest to this day. We were confirmed together and taught Sunday School in St Mark's. My mother remained a faithful member of St Mark's Mothers' Union and of the bowls club and attended services there. My father had moved to the Cathedral when Revd Lillie was appointed Dean from St Mark's. My father thought highly of Dean Lillie and wanted to bolster the congregation in the Cathedral – so you see, there has always been a small and faithful congregation. My youngest brother sang in the Cathedral choir, so I alternated between the two places of worship. Following my father's death, my mother and I agreed that we would attend each place on alternate Sundays, and we did so. Following my mother's death, I became more involved in the life of the Cathedral and worship there. This is no reflection on St Mark's!

Carol, what was your career route to becoming a librarian?

I am not a librarian. Indeed, no-one in the Library is a librarian, which often surprises people. My degree is in modern languages, and after University I studied at the former College of Business Studies to gain a Diploma in Bi-lingual Secretarial Studies. I was keen to go abroad to use my languages. I worked at first in the



Children from Drelincourt School help to mark the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Library.

office of a liquefied natural gas company in Algeria for a few months, which was a baptism of fire! Fortunately there was a young Englishwoman there who taught the children of the ex-patriates, and she was very helpful and kind to me. After that, I moved to Luxembourg to work in the European Investment Bank as a bilingual secretary, having two bosses – one Dutch and one Italian. The broad aim was to ensure that all paperwork which they compiled was in correct English. The work was in the African, Caribbean and Pacific development programmes of the Bank, so English was the main language.

When I returned to Northern Ireland, I was appointed Arts Development Officer in Craigavon where I remained for several years. This involved arranging all sorts of artistic events, from visual arts to drama and music, throughout the Borough. One had to be scrupulously balanced between Lurgan, Portadown and Craigavon Centre in arranging venues; councillors were quick to challenge if they felt their patch had been overlooked!

When a job came up as Northern Ireland Regional Officer for UNICEF, that was an irresistible opportunity. I worked at that for ten years until a restructuring exercise did away with regional offices. One of the joys of the job was the volunteer network which UNICEF had in N. Ireland. Other organisations with global links, such as Rotary Clubs, Women's Institutes and Soroptimist Clubs were very supportive. Another delight was the opportunity to go into schools and talk about what UNICEF does – talking to children about children. Schools, and particularly the newly established integrated schools, regarded UNICEF as a neutral charity with which to consider contacts. UNICEF continues to work with other bodies such as Save the Children and Trócaire, so there was no need for anyone to see organisations like these as being in competition. Most of my work was within Northern Ireland, but I did have the chance to see a little of UNICEF's work on water supplies in Haiti, and on providing small business loans to women in Colombia and Peru.

You came to Armagh Robinson Library in 2000. What was your role then and has it changed at all?

When I first came, I was appointed for one year only as Assistant Keeper, after which the Library's Governors and Guardians offered me a permanent position. It suited me very well as I was able to live with my mother and provide support she needed in her final years. I would go home at lunch time to see that she was alright, and she would have our lunch ready! I feel that my family was fortunate in that Dean Cassidy – who was also the Keeper of the Library – was Dean when my father died and, eleven years later, when my mother died. He had a very good rapport with both of them, and he was such a fine person to work with in the Library.

My main role is the promotion of the Library as a library, a museum and a visitor attraction. I don't do this alone, having colleagues who also promote both the Library and our second building at No. 5 Vicars' Hill (the former diocesan

White cotton gloves are used to handle the old books



registry), by being front of house to meet and greet individuals and groups, or by keeping our social media vibrant and up to date. One of the initiatives we have introduced is 'A Morning on the Hill of Armagh'. This is a pre-booked, organised threefold visit to the Library, to No. 5 Vicars' Hill, and to the Cathedral. The whole visit takes about 2.5 hours. Schoolchildren particularly like trying out the white library gloves used to handle the rare books and show such respect for what they see.

If the group is large, we start with half of them in the Library and half in No. 5. Having smaller groups means they are less inhibited about interacting and asking questions. The two halves then swap places, before finally joining together for their visit to the Cathedral. I particularly like the symbolism of the two groups reuniting in order to enter the sacred space.

Please would you tell us something about the history of the Library and how it has developed over the years?

One of the outward things that has changed is our name. Formerly we were always known as 'Armagh Public Library', but in 2017 that was changed to 'Armagh Robinson Library' to avoid confusion with the public lending library and to pay tribute to our founder.

The Library was built by Archbishop Robinson in 1771, so we are now just over 250 years old. He built it for the people of Armagh, and not only paid for the cost of the building but also for more than 8,000 books to start the collection. At that time and up to his death, the Library acquired books and pamphlets on many and varied

subjects, following on the vision which Archbishop Robinson had to establish a university in Armagh. The Library's collection, therefore, was being shaped to serve students of medicine, law, theology, philosophy, science, literature and more, in preparation for a university.

Antiquarian books are still being acquired, and we also accept new books on four topics: St Patrick, Jonathan Swift, Armagh and Armagh County, Church History—not exclusively Church of Ireland history. We now have about 46,000 books. Obviously, we cannot keep up-to-date in all the fields Robinson started with, so that's why we need to specialise.

That would be a lot to read in a lifetime. So who looks after the books, and who uses them?

We are fortunate in having a group of Library volunteers who help steadily and faithfully to clean the books. They also play an important role in letting us know about the condition of the books. We

would be lost without this support. Sometimes books will need conservation work carried out beyond capacity of the Library's team. Funding is then sought to enable a paper conservator to undertake this work. I should also add that not only do these volunteers help us with the care of the books, they also help to staff the Library and No. 5 on special open days. They will welcome visitors and talk about the buildings and the collections – a pleasure to hear!

At one time, more people would have visited the library to pursue their research. In the summer months, we were wonderfully busy with academic researchers and lecturers. We kept a list of local places to stay so that we could help them find convenient accommodation. Since our books are shelved by size, not by author or subject, we asked them to give us a list in advance of what they were interested in so that we could retrieve them from the shelves and not take up their time unnecessarily.

Archbishop Robinson (bust) takes centre stage at the launch of a temporary Robinson exhibition, with (L to R) the current Archbishop, Thirza Mulder (Archivist), Robert Whan (Director), the Dean (Keeper) and Carol Conlin.



Receiving the Tourist Board's 4-star award.

In recent years, the trend has been towards remote working. Even pre-Covid, we were finding that researchers were not travelling as much as they used to as travel budgets had been cut. We were seeing a big increase in email queries. We now have an on-line catalogue which can include not only the usual details but also such things as whether there are marginalia, a book plate, or a dedication. If we get a query about anything like that, we can photograph it and email it back. We don't charge, but do suggest a donation. It saves them having to come to Armagh and maybe find that there is nothing of interest to them when they get here.

There is no doubt that the view of many people was, and I remember it as a young person in Armagh, that you only visited the Library to undertake academic research. Without dismissing previous Keepers' promotion of the Library, for me, it was Dean Herbie Cassidy who chose to

open up the Library to visitors, supported by the then Deputy Keeper, Mr Harry Carson, and that is something that I have been so keen to continue and develop. Fortunately subsequent Keepers have been and are supportive too.

The Library is a founder member of the City Chapter which is the partnership of libraries in Armagh. We work with Armagh City Library, the Cardinal O'Fiaich Library and Archive and with Irish and Local Studies Library to promote literary anniversaries together, rather than competing with each other. For the last 20 years we have worked jointly to host events to mark World Book Day and National Poetry Day and in more recent times to hold events for local schools as part of the St Patrick's Festival. We take it in turn to host the events which we promote as City Chapter events.

Apart from special events, what can you offer to would-be visitors -- is it more of a museum than a working library?

The Library sits firmly within three sectors – as a working library, an accredited museum with full status, and a four-star graded tourism venue. There is a fine blend between the reasons why people come to the Library – for academic research, for local history research, and for the pleasure of being in a superb building which has its own special atmosphere to look at the objects on display. I do not forget our building at No 5 Vicars' Hill which enables large groups to be accommodated in both buildings and for people to see examples of the glorious collections which Robinson left to the Library in his will – his print, coin, medal and gem collections!

Thank you, Carol, for giving readers an insight into the life and work of an institution that goes back three times as long as most of us will live.

To readers of Cathedra, we recommend - if you have not recently done so - take the first opportunity to make a visit. But beware: the calm, learned atmosphere may draw you back again and again. There is a Greek inscription on the façade of the Library which translates as 'The healing place of the soul'.

The Greek inscription on the façade of the Library building

