

Title: Bridget & Kate Interview

Creators: Rick & Julia Goldsmith

Project: 'The Close in Living Memory: Hereford Cathedral
Close oral reminiscences''

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Interviewee: Bridget Eastaugh & Katie Cave-Browne-Cave
(speakers, female)

Interviewer: Marsha O'Mahony & Julia Goldsmith (speaker,
female)

Camera & Sound: Richard Goldsmith (male)

Producer: Julia Goldsmith

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Transcript:

(00:00)

Bridget introduces herself, widow of John (Bishop of Hereford) who died 20 years ago. They came to Hereford in 1974 when her kids were aged 4, 6, and 8. Her eldest son he was a chorister. They had 16 very happy years in Hereford, with their children going to Cathedral School, just out the back door.

(00:40)

They could fish on the river wye, the sad thing was there was a charter where you could catch the fish with the net. They thought they would do this the week before leaving and fill up the deep freeze. Unfortunately John died before they left the palace so they never did it.

(01:01)

There was also the charter that, if he saw a welshman in hightown he could cut off his ear, and if he found a welshman with one ear (Bridget says she might be getting this slightly wrong) he could shoot him dead but it had to be with a crossbow. This story was when they were at a bishops meeting in London, and John had told the speaker of the house, which was repeated with the exclamation that he would be careful coming to Hereford!

(01:45)

These were charters that were never revoked, which was fun.

All of the money from the mayfair used to go to the Bishop in medieval times and then the City council became a bit miffed by this and agreed to pay the bishop so many bushels of wheat in lieu of, and that's how the opening ceremony of the mayfair started. Measuring it off to make sure the city council weren't doing down the bishop.

(02:23)

Katie introduces herself, daughter of Bridget and John Eastaugh. John was bishop of Hereford from 1974 - 1990. She has a lot of memories of being in and around the Cathedral, the Close, the Bishop's palace and Cathedral School - it was her home for 16 years.

(02:46)

She remembers growing up around the Cathedral as totally normal, as it's what she knew. There were lots of other families there as well, the then headmaster Barry Sutton had a family whose children were similar ages and they're still in touch today. There were Archdeacons with kids, Vicar choirals, Canons and so forth all of similar ages with families- which was a somewhat of a unique time in the history of the Cathedral as the hierarchy would suggest you are in your 'mature' years in your career in the church but they all had young families. So they had a fantastic time, and played all around the Cathedral precincts, probably doing things they shouldn't have done. (03:45) Such as climbing the scaffolding, definitely not allowed, working out how you could walk from the Palace to the Cathedral without touching the ground - which can just about be done but you do need a bit of scaffolding there to do it. All quite

innocent things and charging around. (04:05) They were very strict on not cycling on the close though, there was a verger called Gittings, if he saw you on your bicycle you may as well have been welsh given her mums previous story! Things were quite strict around the Cathedral so you couldn't get up to too many horrendous antics.

(04:34)

Bridget recalls one of the great things they did every year, starting in their second year when it was the friends festival who was preaching said he had been a chorister and always looked up at the Bishop as somebody way above him. So the Bishop thought 'oh I must do something about this' so he always gave them a party and it was sausage and mash. Therefore they always had an annual Christmas party with all the Choristers and it was always sausage and mash, ice cream, christmas pudding, coke and a little of something stronger for the adults - and then games. They played these wonderful dressing up games and the great one was having a donut on a string and you have to eat with your hands behind your back and you mustn't lick your lips or you're out! They had a lot of fun with the Choristers, and with their eldest son being a chorister they knew them all initially.

(05:43) Being a parent around the Cathedral was normal, you just got on with it. It was a fabulous house to be in and they did have the Cathedral school. Later on they then started having in girls and they hadn't got a girls' boarding house - so they had the girls living in the top rooms, goodness knows what they got up to with Jamie (her oldest son) better not to ask. There was a lot of connection with the school.

(06:30)

Katie talks about how the bells marked the passing of the day. You woke to the sound of the bells, they'd call her father in to worship first thing in the morning. You could lie in bed and hear the bells on a Sunday morning at ten to 8 and jump out of bed quickly put your clothes on and be in the Cathedral just as the service was about to begin. So you could get away with doing church in half an hour literally! It was great, being obviously deeply religious as you were *jovial cough*.

The quarter, half hour and quarter to was sounded so the Cathedral bells are a special sound now, but were irritating as a child as well. Sunday afternoon they were playing games in the garden and this horrendous cacophony of bell ringing practise would rain down on top of you - it was very loud and could go on for almost 3 hours to ring the changes.

(07:46)

Bridget tells the story about the bells. There was this special occasion when they were going to ring the changes, which takes three hours - which is quite an effort and could rather wreck a Sunday afternoon. There was the thing where if you make a mistake that finishes it, and after about 5 or 10 minutes somebody made a mistake and it was absolutely wonderful as they didn't have to and the bell ringers were obviously very upset but we were quite delighted.

When Bridget and the family first came they used to start at half past 6, which was a bit of an effort, but then they stopped and it wasn't until 7 when they started ringing.

(08:35)

Katie talks about her father. To her he was very loving and very generous, strong memories of going into his study at the end of the day and him sitting on one side of his desk and Kate the other - just talking about what had happened during the day. He worked from home, which was somewhat unusual at the time, so he was always around but there were many family times that he wasn't there because he'd be at the other end of the diocese at confirmation or some church related event. He was a very warm and giving man, and large in both spirit and stature! He knew how to enjoy life as well as appreciate the quiet times, quite a strong presence.

(10:00)

Bridget talks about her friendship with Abie Morris. She can't quite remember how they met him, she met Shady and Becky Scarret through the shooting gallery, but Abie must have had one of the other stalls and they built up a relationship as he went up the local showmans guild hierarchy and he would have been more in contact with the likes of the Bishop. There was a time when the south Wales division were having their AGN and they had it down at Porthcawl, and they invited John and Bridget and put them up at the hotel with a bottle of gin and bottle of whisky in the bedroom and they weren't quite sure to pocket it or not, though they left it behind. They sat there at this marvellous table, with a bottle of red, white, whisky and so forth and it was so much fun.

(11:41)

When it was the centenary they had this big dance at the Grosvenor House Hotel and John was asked to be the principal speaker. They showed their generosity in front of the main table and in front of the band they had all these horses, not live, which they would then give to children's wards of hospitals afterwards. For instance like in Leominster, in the morning they would have all of the children who were mentally handicapped and have the horses there especially and give them rides. They were very generous with that and were just great family people.

(12:35)

How they got to know the Scarret family was that Katie had gone around with the au pair that they had then to the shooting gallery. If you did well you could save up your points until the end, on the last day Katie went around with John and they couldn't believe that this curly headed little tot was the Bishop's daughter and that's really how they got to know them ("Excuse me! Bishop's daughter, but actually hit all the little targets and won the cards!"). It just sort of went on from there, they just had more fun with the showmans guild and that, many of them came to her husband's funeral, and they still keep in touch there's always Christmas cards back and forth, with these two families in particular.

(13:50)

Katie talks about the magic of the fair appearing overnight. You went to bed and the street was the usual scene, the following morning you wake and the whole place has transformed. There's an eerie silence, as of course nothing is happening at 6 in the morning as they would get up to check that it was indeed there. Very strong image of the helter skelter bright red and

yellow opposite the library and the big wheel always stood out. It was an extraordinarily magical thing to see, and then the anticipation through the day of waiting for the fair to open and eventually 4 o'clock would come with some tedious speeches for a small child to have to endure and then off on the dodgems and the whole fair would just spring to life!

(15:08)

Katie talks about how her father loved the fair. It took him back to his days in the east end of London, and he loved the people there too. A very different type of person to the typical Herefordian, some very rough diamonds, a different type of life ethos. Very strong on family and supporting other showmen, community.

(16:00)

Bridget talks about how John had strong friendships with the showmen through the mayfair. John was then made an honorary showman, so when he retired he would have been able to have a little stall and sold goldfish or given them as prizes - but sadly he died too soon so they never got to have their own stall. When the showment came, about two months after John had died, still invited Bridget to the opening and gave her this wonderful clock and a little silver saddle all inscribed with 'in memory of John Bishop of Hereford' and they've been in touch ever since. It's been a long, happy relationship and she is always asked to the opening to this day and they are very loyal.

(17:02)

Bridget talks about the opening ceremony and handing over the bushels. All dues from the mayfair originally went to the Bishop, and the city council became a bit miffed by this and it became that they agreed the city would pay the Bishop so many bushels of wheat in lieu - which is how it started. The mayor in '76 was a historian and knew about that which is how the ceremony got started - with the mayor coming from the parlour, and the bishop coming from the palace and standing on the cart with the weighing to make sure the council hadn't done down the bishop. The president of the showmans guild was there and they're a guild like any city guild and are over 100 years old now and also have a lot of tradition there, afterwards they all got in the dodgems and zoomed all around - from then the tradition went on.

(18:13)

Everyone always thinks the Cathedral is the bishop, but of course it isn't; it's the dean and chapter. There were some people who rather complained about it but John supported the dean that it should be there. They are sad this year as when Bridget saw them recently (at time of recording) the dean was saying that they can't have the ceremony there this year because of all of the alterations and such which meant the ceremony had to be held down at All Saints Chapel.

(18:50)

Katie recalls that when all of this happened there was a bit of animosity towards the fair when they came in, especially from the traders. It attracts the wrong sort of person, so they say, or that it causes litter and damages et cetera, et cetera. The fair was in danger of being thrown off the streets of Hereford and pushed down to the George V playing fields or the Racecourse

which would give it a very different field. It's obviously a very different fair than it would have been hundreds of years ago, but it's a part of tradition and a part of life and we need to work out on how to get along together and her father was very keen to make sure that community actually accepted different elements of society and didn't exclude them. Fair people get some bad reputation, but there are extremely good people who are part of the fair and that to try and bring the fair and show they are part of the community was the reason John and the Dean were keen to have a ride on the close. That was the time when the fair was at the greatest risk of being thrown from the streets and it was a show of support.

(20:31)

Katie thinks one of the great things about her father was that he wasn't embarrassed of his position, or the historic placing of that position, and felt very much that he was a man of the people. In order for the people to see who he was and where he was he always wore his cassock which was purple, but actually more on the bright pink than the dark purple side, so he was very visible in Hereford. Katie does remember on occasion going through the Close into Hightown and a lady laying prostrate in front of him saying something along the lines of 'I have sinned, please forgive me' and at the age of 6 or 7 you can imagine thinking 'what's going on?'.

(21:32)

The cassock that John wore, which they rudely referred to as his dress, was a loose fitting garment so in the wind it would flap and flow. You could imagine that as he was walking anywhere, because of his stature, he would glide through the Close and Broad Street with this great cassock flapping around him - very dramatic but John quite liked the drama.(22:11) Bridget recalls that John would even wear his cassock on the rides during the mayfair. Even on the dodgems, he always always wore his cassock, if he was going on the train he'd only wear his dog collar, but he would say sometimes you might get into a conversation with somebody and if you were only wearing a collar and tie they wouldn't realise you were ordained and then some bit of the conversation would come up and they would realise that you were ordained and they would then feel really 'oh heavens what have I said'. So he always, in public, wore his cassock and at the least the dog collar - he wasn't afraid of promoting what he was. (23:15) Katie remembers that in the mayfair you would have the bright pink of the bishop and the bright red of the mayor, and sometimes they were both large characters and you try getting those two into one bumper car... Could be a bit of a squash!

Or flying down the helter skelter, one mayor did indeed knock her father off the end of the helter skelter when they came down a little too fast as they were a touch heavy.

John really enjoyed joining in, it was all part of the fun. It would be commented on, you would hear people say 'That's the Bishop' not people who would know him, but just recognising him as a figure who was known.

(24:28)

Katie muses that going around the mayfair with her father in his cassock and others in their regalia bizarrely enough didn't seem like an odd thing, she notes she clearly had a strange childhood with people dressing up in all sorts of amazing outfits, it was wonderful. She was aware it was special, and aware that it was a ceremony but it also humanised people, sometimes these historic outfits people wear are too revered and too stuffy - whereas in fact

they are a part of living and a part of life and identify you and what you do.

(25:22)

Bridget talks about the Carousel, which was the ride that was actually put on the close, which received quite a bit of criticism as Katie was saying, to show that the Bishop also supported the Dean there was a picture of him on it actually going around. She's not sure if it squashed the complainers as you always get complainers, but if John thought it was the right thing to do he wasn't afraid of showing it.

(25:56)

There's a wonderful traditional Carousel with the horses that go up and down that is now often in front of the Cathedral at mayfair time which is a relatively recent occurrence. When Katie was little there were no rides on the Close, but due to the controversy between town hall trades and the fair - her father was very keen to ensure the fair stayed in the streets of Hereford to make sure that all strands of society were accepted and to marginalise by putting a group away from the town such as the fair people, actually reflected badly on Hereford. To make the point he worked with the dean at the time to get an appropriate fair ride on the Cathedral Close - and that was the carousel. It's a wonderful ride to go on, and he would be seen on it with his purple flapping behind him and all the other dignitaries flapping behind him and around they went.

(27:26)

Katie recalls the Eastaugh easter tradition. The Eastaugh family always had the easter bunny, a costume made by Katie's father out of old army blankets - quite terrifying as a creature. Every easter it would appear in the garden, they would later discover it was her mother Bridget, hopping around and depositing eggs. As they got older they would take it in turns being the easter rabbit for younger cousins, or for some of the younger families in the close. Katie remembers hopping across the close on a couple of occasions as the easter bunny, though she's not quite sure what others might have thought about this incredibly pagan based ritual coming in and out of the palace. Bridget remembers that it wasn't a pagan thing, it was from her mother and is from the legend that the easter hare that got to the tomb first and ran back to the disciples with the news saying the lord has risen - which is how it became a part of the family tradition, Bridget told this to her husband and he made this wonderful costume out of army blankets that they still have, and they've initiated it in Kingsland, on easter day after the services they have the easter rabbit running around the green in Kingsland.

(29:19)

In 1982 they had the goose fair, there was somebody who had been training their geese to be able to march through the town. It always started with the choristers singing, and then there was the Hereford bull and in the end they had to carry the geese and they went all down Church Street and around up Broad Street and that was the opening. Then all the different deaneries had their stalls, it was just great fun and a diocesan occasion. Though John didn't dress up as a goose!

There was one person who had got a sheep's bladder or something and was dressed up as a jester and went around banging the bishop on the head. It was all part of the fun!

This film was made by Catcher Media for the Hereford Cathedral Close project in association with In Our Age and supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

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