

Title: Ted Parnell & Tim Pryse-Davis Interview

Creators: Rick & Julia Goldsmith

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

Subject: Autobiography, Living and working around Cathedral
Close in Herefordshire, Heritage

Publisher: Catcher Media Social CIC

Tags: Cathedral Close, oral history, heritage, PV,
participatory film-making, community film, Herefordshire

Identifier: Ted-Parnell-&-Tim-Pryse-Davis

Interview Date: 2010, Hereford

Interviewee: Ted Parnell & Tim Pryse-Davis (speakers, male)

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

Camera & Sound: Richard Goldsmith (male)

Producer: Julia Goldsmith

Language: English

Type: Video

Width: 1440 pixels

Height: 1080 pixels

Scan type: Progressive

Stereo/Mono: Stereo Mixdown

Duration: 37 min 55 seconds

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Transcript:

(00:00)

Ted introduces himself and talks about the requirements of being a vergers and his career spanning from 1968 - 1985.

(03:25)

Tim Pryse-Davis introduces himself, arriving at the Cathedral as a vergers in 1996 after the queen opened the Mappa Mundi building. Talking about his role in contrast to Ted's.

(04:15)

Tim talks about the Close as a public space that belongs to the Cathedral - and managing it.

(05:26)

Tim talks about the unfortunate side-effects of it being a public area.

(06:30)

Ted continues this topic, talking about the close keeper that was around in his days. Talking about how one man did all of that until he died in 1978.

(07:25)

Ted talks about the Easter Monday tradition of putting the chain across the Close.

(08:00)

Tim talks about how that tradition is no longer practised.

(08:21)

Ted recalls skirmishing with the cyclists on the Close. Three of them giving the cyclists two chances to dismount before being knocked off.

(09:06)

Tim talks about the amount of cyclists that are on the Close today, and how they couldn't get away with such a practise now. Though exclaims it's not as bad as cars and that they're not the greater evil.

(09:58)

Ted remembers the ghost of the butler that haunts the cloisters - and talks about the first time he heard it. 4:10pm and 6:50pm every day. It's said to originate from a butler who died in a fire trying to save the silver. The new occupants have also experienced the same thing.

(11:40)

Tim talks about other ghosts on the Close, including of one that is to appear in his house that Tim has avoided so far. Though he saw a mysterious shadow one evening in the Cathedral that has no earthly origin.

(14:08)

Ted talks about his first experience in the Close, going out after dark after it had been raining and shooing some men on the grass away as it was taboo. The next day his superior told him not to worry as it was only fishermen collecting worms for bait, they do it every time it rains. It would be like a silver blanket with worms after the rain.

(15:08)

Tim remembers accidentally asking the bishop's wife to move from a reserved seat.

(15:45)

Ted talks about the winter of 1983 - which had three weeks of very hard snow. The snow on the Close had frozen outside the archdeacons door closed while he was away in Cornwall.

Ted had to find his way in to fix a leak and save it's contents. As well as when it thawed there were many leaks around the electrics, and the new wallpaper in the cloisters fell off,

(20:40)

Tim talks about when the Cathedral claimed the Close from the time after medieval times, and how its use has shifted from private back to public. Ted talks about how Cyril the groundskeeper would relocate dog foul to the footpaths to encourage dog walkers to keep them on a leash and off the grass.

(22:15)

Ted recalls Cyril Jones the groundskeeper used to pollard the trees every two years until the council put a preservation order on them. All pollarding was stopped, and keep off the grass notices had to be removed. From this point (1977) there were more people on the grass.

There used to be four benches on the close, but they were sometimes vandalised and taken away some time after Ted retired.

(24:17)

Tim recalls a fundraising event for the Cathedral which was a picnic on the Close in the presence of Prince Charles and there was a surprise rainstorm.

(25:30)

Ted remembers similarly of an organist from Toronto giving a concert during the fair, and a thunderstorm drove everyone inside the Cathedral.

(27:12)

Tim recalls his first three choirs festival when a big tree on the close was split in two by the weather.

(27:50)

Ted remembers an oak tree on St. Johns Square. Tim remembers it was eventually taken down as it was dying, when excavated it was found that half of the roots were up against a water tank that was put there in a war. That was put there to commemorate Charles and

Diana's wedding, with the placard being discreetly removed when they divorced.

(29:45)

Ted talks about the Cider Festival, when the Cathedra was decorated like a flower festival. With people dressed up to re-enact the battle of Hereford. As well as the all-steam fair on King George's Playing Fields.

Bulmers paid for the organ to be rebuilt in 1977 which started the connection that led to the Cider festival being hosted.

(32:11)

Ted remembers when the Close was updated in 1977.

(33:51)

Ted recalls when there was a police chase right through the Close, breaking the gates. This happened twice over his career. Tim recalls seeing two suspicious cars that were discreetly unloading into one another one evening.

(35:00)

Tim talks about the odd bit of vandalism that still happens, and the increased use of the Close by revellers. Saddened by the amount of litter that's come with it, that seems non-combatable.

(36:30)

Tim talks about how the best part of the job is to be associated with the Cathedral and to be a part of it's legacy.

(36:50)

Ted looks back on his career and life with his family at the Cathedral fondly.

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.

Watch the video interviews on the vimeo showcase:
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/7908663>