

Alison Grant interviewing Ian le Grice

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AG My name is Alison Grant, pupil barrister at the Department of Business Innovation Skills and member of the Inner Temple. Today, 18 September 2013, I'm recording for the oral history project the memories of a gentleman who has had a long association with the Temple, specifically with the Temple Church itself. Would you like to introduce yourself and give a brief chronology of your time in the Temple?

ILG My name is Ian le Grice. I first encountered the Temple and more specifically the Temple Church in 1957 when I came for an audition to join the Temple Church choir as a treble. I was successful and did join the choir and sang in the church choir from 1957 until 1963. And then in 1982 I was appointed assistant organist of the church a post which I held until I retired from it last year, 2012.

AG Thank you. If we go back to 1957 when you say you auditioned for the choir itself, how did you come to be at the audition for the Temple?

ILG Well it was a rather curious set of circumstances that unfolded. I had been having piano lesson from the local piano teacher in Purley in South London as it now is – where I grew up as a boy – and I was singing as well as my parents in the local congregational church choir, and the lady who taught me the piano heard me sing in the course of bring in oral training and thought perhaps I would benefit from joining a choir with a considerable reputation such as the Temple Church choir had and still has.

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Unbeknown to me and my parents, she and her husband had a family friend, Alan Colgreen who was an alto in the choir and in fact had been a treble in the choir in the interwar years. And without any knowledge on my parents part she contacted Alan to find out how an audition could be arranged and he put her in touch with the late George Thalben-Ball who was the then director of music and organist of the church. And Thalben-Ball wrote a letter out of the blue to my father with no explanation merely saying he would like to hear me sing – could I go to the church on such and such a date. We went up there not really knowing what this was all about and met Thalben-Ball and I had voice tests and played the piano a little bit too and he then explained the relationship between the church and the Inner and the Middle Temple and the City of London School and explained that the next step as he would like to accept me in the choir was for my parents to arrange with the school for me to have an entrance exam, if I was successful, I could join the Temple Church choir, I would go to the City of London School and this wonderful scholarship, the two Inns in equal shares paid my school fees for the time that I was singing in the choir. So that's how it all began.

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AG Before your surprise audition, was a musical career something that was an intention of yours at the time, because you would have been quite young would you?

ILG I joined in September, the autumn term of 1957 when I was ten years, nine months old, so just sort of coming up to secondary school age. No, there was no... I don't think I had any ideas as to what I wanted to do at that time and in fact as time went by and I was becoming increasingly drawn to the idea of going into music my

father like so many before him I think, was rather concerned that this might be a route to lifelong poverty I think, so no there was no thought of music but I was singing in the choir at my school and my parents both sang and played the piano, so there was music in the household and we used to go to concerts from time to time. It was a home with music in it.

AG It must have been a big change for you, travelling from Purley into the Temple, for a new school, and essentially a new way of life. Can you remember how you felt back then?

ILG Yes it was very exciting, I remember being quite thrilled. Funny little things stick in your mind. The uniform of the City of London School is the City of London coat of arms and I remember going up to Gamages in Holborn, who supplied the school uniform – being quite proud of this blazer at the time that I was shortly going to have to wear. And also the adventure of going up to London. Many of the – it was in those days – the fathers of childhood friends worked in London, I always thought that everybody worked in London; nobody's fathers seemed to work locally. So the idea of going up to London for school and going on the train every day – far from seeing it as an inconvenience, was a great adventure and fortunately my father worked in, first of all Thames Street and later in Queen Victoria Street, only a stone's throw from the old City of London School building next to Unilever House.

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So to start with, in fact for most of my time, we went up on the train together, but as I got more confident about travelling I would make my own way home and got used to the underground and working my way around the London transport system. I found it an exciting prospect, slightly daunted initially by the sheer size of the school after the school I'd been attending and the large Victorian building. But it was a great adventure.

AG As a member of the Temple choir what were the expectations outside of school towards the choir and training with them?

ILG What happened was we had a in those days a practice usually in the practice room, what would now be called a choir vestry on Mondays, from four till about ten to five and the same on Tuesdays and then a short practice on Friday followed by tea which was usually in the kitchens of the Middle Temple dining hall, but sometimes at – there was a Lyons Teashop in those days in Fleet Street, sometimes we'd go there. And then a full practice with the gentlemen of the choir from six o'clock to about ten to seven. That was the norm. Again in those days – it's changed in recent years – on a Sunday morning, I think it was ten o'clock for the 11.15 service so we had a rehearsal for about three quarters of an hour or so on a Sunday morning. So it did a little bit interfere with any after-school activities at the school, you were a bit limited in what you could do.

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It didn't affect your normal schooling but it affected sometimes games or other activities. But it worked pretty well, I think in the main. But that was our normal weekly routine, I think.

AG As you said, it interfered somewhat with after-school activities, but did you enjoy it? Tell us a little bit more about the choir itself.

ILG I did, in the main enjoy my time at school, there were lots of characters among the staff and fellow pupils. Being in the centre of London of course we were

drawn from mainly the suburbs I suppose, but north, south, east and west and because there were lots of scholarships of all kinds we had a rich mixture of people who were quite affluent I suspect and people who were less well off. We had a lot of Jewish boys – there was a big cultural spread. It was a fascinating experience at the school and then of course the Temple was like going into a completely different world. I always think we boys who were privileged to sing in that church and choir always felt the Temple was somehow a little bit separate. It didn't have the discipline structure of school – and of course a slightly old world feeling about it with the gas lamps and historic buildings. It was like going into a sort of wonderland. It was a special experience to a young boy, just to go to the Temple.

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AG Can you tell us a bit more about the Temple at that time, 1957.

ILG We had the Master of the Temple, equivalent to the vicar if it was a parish church, which it's not – in other words the priest, the main Anglican priest was a man called Theodore Richard Milford. I think he had been a co-founder of Oxfam and he also spent much of his life in India, he was quite an interesting and very friendly character. He got himself into trouble a bit with both Inner and Middle Temple by going as a witness for the defence in the celebrated Lady Chatterley's Lover case at the Old Bailey. It was thought at the time it was totally inappropriate for the Master to be involved in such a thing and they were cross with him – I think he was, not ostracised exactly, but they weren't very happy about it. I learned only recently from a bencher that apparently thy got close to considering whether they would sack him – I'm not sure how that sounds given it's a Crown appointment – somebody pointed out if they sacked him it might amount to witness tampering, so they backed off rather suddenly. So there was the Master then a lovely man called Henry Bell, who was the Reader effectively – the assistant priest. And then of course the towering figure for we boys was Thalben-Ball, a legend in his own lifetime. He was I suppose if not the finest, would rank among the finest organists of the... well he had a long career over a half century in the 20th century, both as a solo player and a wonderful accompanist of church choirs, and a wonderful choir trainer – his ability to mould his choir was second to none and highly regarded by cathedral church organists and choir masters throughout the land and he was a delightful person. We all thought of him as a sort of uncle, grandfather, he was very kind and had a great sense of fun in addition to his colossal musical skills.

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So it was a very happy place to spend a childhood. We got up to all kinds of pranks, which we shouldn't have done, but those were less supervised days. I have very happy memories of the church and the choir.

AG Can you tell us a bit more about the actual time you spent with the choir and how the rehearsals and how the training would pan out.

ILG We had a routine of practises, Monday, Tuesday and Friday and then tea in the kitchens of the Middle Temple dining hall, usually, occasionally it was Lyons Teashop up in Fleet Street. And so we would work on the service music. In those days it was always Matins, and so there was a psalm to be learned sometimes more than one, a setting of usually the Te Deum and the Jubilate and usually a substantial anthem, and we would work on these during the course of the week. And then of course there was a very big carol service – it's been trimmed down in length in recent years but in my day we used to sing each Christmas a good chunk of parts one and two of Bach's Christmas Oratorio, this was almost a tradition,

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as well as carols, and the carol service would last for two hours, so there was a lot of music which all had to be learned alongside the normal Sunday music as you approached Christmas time. On Good Fridays we regularly did a live broadcast of litany and communion and then repeated it live in the church as the church service on Good Friday. I don't think there were any other particular services that we were involved in other than weddings and memorial services for members of the Temple or their immediate families. We weren't particularly good boys, conscious very much of the work of the Inns of Court – of course the Inns underpinned the whole thing, they took great pride in their duty, in the Charter of James I to maintain the service, and they obviously did it in a grander way than they were minimally obliged to do. As boys we would occasionally meet the odd bencher or be greeted by a bencher around the courtyards of the Temple, but I don't think we were really very aware of the work of the Inns.

AG As well as the music you said you had a lot of fun going there, it was a bit of a wonderland. Can you tell us more about that and the sort of thing you'd get up to as boys?

ILG Some of it I can hardly say I'm proud to recall! [laughs]

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We were left on Fridays... mostly on Mondays and Tuesdays after practice we needed to get home and get on with our homework but of course on Fridays we had tea at half past four and that didn't take very long, hungry boys we devoured our tea fairly quickly. Tea was always triangular shaped pieces of white bread and butter, with strawberry jam and endless cups of tea. We were allowed cake; you could have as much bread and butter and jam as you liked, but only one cake. That would start at half past four, we made our way to the kitchens of the Middle Temple dining hall; usually Doctor Thalben-Ball would come over a few moments later and ask somebody to say grace and then we would have our tea, which would probably take about a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes. Then we'd ask to be excused and he'd always let us go, then we were left unsupervised till we were required to be back at church for a full practice with the men at six o'clock. Sometimes we would play rounders or cricket in the Inner Temple gardens, not always to the pleasure of the head gardener, I think as we scuffed up the grass a little bit. Sometimes we would get up to various pranks going up and down in the lifts in the first sets of chambers – there were no security locks on the doors in those days, you could walk into the hallway of the chambers and go up and down in the lifts, so we used to do that sometimes. I seem to remember people climbing up the scaffolding that was then surrounding the Round Church, which was still being restored.

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I can also remember which I embarrassed to [laughs] recall but on occasions penny bangers – fireworks – were thrown at printmakers in nearby Tudor Street and heaven help you if they caught you. There was a certain rough justice about this that no adult who was in charge of us knew anything about but they'd give you a pretty solid thump sometimes if they caught you. So there were lots of games... A game called commando, a version of PE I suppose, where two boys would count up to fifty and wear their school caps; everyone else would run off around the Temple with a cap but not wearing it, and the two would chase after the others until... as you were caught you'd put your cap on so more and more people were eventually chasing one person, and you were not supposed to hide but you could dodge and run around

within the confines of the Temple. So those were some of the harmless and some perhaps less harmless activities that we got up to as boys in that gap between the two Friday practices. We also sometimes did things externally. I remember ... I say externally, in addition to the services. I think in the summer I remember that we had what were called invitation concerts, I don't whether they alternated between Inner and Middle Temple but they certainly took place in the dining halls of the two Inns. Informal I think usually Saturday or Sunday afternoon concerts, primarily I think benchers and members of the Inn and their guests came, they weren't public concerts, there were done just with the choir and Doctor Walker residing at the piano. We also occasionally did concerts outside and went to other churches to take part in various events.

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I remember on one occasion, about half a dozen of us were invited to sing on the soundtrack of a Bolton Brothers comedy film and we all had to go to Shepperton Studios for this film which was called *The French Mistress*, light-hearted – tremendous fun. During my time we actually made serious recordings as a choir. The first one was a recording of Christmas carols, these were all for HMV, I think that was. They were all on vinyl discs at that time. With the option that you could buy mono or stereo – stereo had not become the norm, I suppose in the late 50s, early 60s. In my time we did first of all a carol recording, a full length twelve-inch disc, and then there was a small extended play seven-inch vinyl recording, just a couple of anthems and organ solos and then there was one called – a big record again – a long playing one – Hymns and Organ voluntaries from the Temple Church. And another one called Music of the Service, which had settings of the canticles and anthems on it. so we had the excitement and the monetary rewards because we all got royalties from these records, so that was hard work. We used to go to Bush House during recording sessions to have lunch over there, in the BBC in Aldwych, and then it was Saturday all days to do these recordings and Sundays, a quick lunch then all day Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening. So I think we worked quite hard. [laughs]

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AG Did you get any recompense for your hard work?

ILG We weren't paid for doing our Sunday but we were getting tremendously valuable indirectly, in that we were getting our school fees paid. We were paid for extra services, for weddings and memorial services – and there was a gradation, not every boy was paid the same amount. The head boy got more than the [?], then the senior boys, and then the juniors and so on I think I got seven shillings as it then was, 35p in present day money, which was, and I consider I was getting about two shillings a week pocket money – 10p at the time, this was a lot of money. You felt very pleased to receive it. So yes if you're talking about financial recompense yes we did for weddings and memorials but not for our normal Sunday services.

AG And you were with the choir as a boy for quite a long time. How did you progress through that time?

ILG I went in – it was a very curious thing, compared with modern day practices. Everything was so informal my parents never had a letter or a contract even to say that the whole arrangement of the link between the Church or the Inns rather, well the Inns and the Church and the City of London School, that was never put in writing and I remember my father being quite fearful that he might get a bill for my school fees which he wouldn't be able to afford.

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There was no communication at all. And then I went to the school. The school was quite normal in its practices, but I can tell my parents when the first day of term would be, so I went along to the school with no idea really how I was supposed to be starting at the choir, and then a boy came up to me in the playground and introduced himself and said he was the head boy of the choir and asked me my name and said he'd got the right chap and he said, can you come to the Church Doctor – Doc we used to call him, Doctor Thalben-Ball – is starting practices next Monday or whenever, so that's how it started. I went along and everybody was very friendly and as I say I was a probationer for I think two Sundays and then as often happens, boys' voices break over the summer when they're not routinely singing, and the Doctor had to ask somebody to stand down whose voice had clearly gone, and I got into the choir as a junior boy after about two Sundays I think. I can't now remember fully how it happened but there was a certain amount of boys called juniors, a number called seniors, and then there was a head boy over the whole lot. I can't even remember quite how that came about, there weren't any particular responsibilities except the head boy had to represent the boys whenever that was necessary and I think the senior boys were supposed to see that the junior boys behaved themselves and helped them if they were floundering. So that was a broad outline of how it worked, I think.

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AG And you obviously progressed onto the seniors, did you become head boy?

ILG I did yes, I succeeded Robin Lough, I sung I think immediately after. Robin and I had quite a lot of solo work for quite a while as we became more senior in the choir – when there were big solos to do, we were the ones who tended to do them, and duets sometimes.

AG And do you remember any occasion you said the head boy represented the boys in the choir, do you remember any occasion?

ILG Yes if we'd been badly behaved and there'd been a complaint for example, as did happen on one or two occasions I'm ashamed to say... one notable and perhaps notorious one, was where we – I use the word 'we' loosely – I can't now remember whether I was part of this or not... We used to manage to throw what we used to call 'water bombs': folded exercise paper you could somehow pour water in and seal them up, you used to get these through the windows of the Cock Tavern in Fleet Street, the back windows, with all the Temple near Goldsmith Building. I suspect that they fell into a hot frying pan the other side of the window, possibly risking scalding the cooks or the chefs. They used to get very cross and they used to throw boiling fat back through the windows on us, or hoping to hit us. It got to such a pitch that the manager came round one day and there was an awful hullabaloo about this. Of course Doctor Ball was completely oblivious to the things going on. I think the head boy of the time, I can't remember who it was, had to go round and apologise, but it was all amicably resolved with an apology.

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But then there were other occasions: the distinguished Judge, Lord Diplock, I'm not sure he was a judge at that time, probably not, but his wife used to give the boys a tin of toffees every year at Christmas and they lived together in the Temple and it was the duty of the head boy – I remember going with Robin on one occasion, and

being invited in for a Christmas drink with Lord [Naper], I think he was Sir Kenneth [Diplock] at the time, into their flat – so it wasn't all mischievous.

AG Not all being told off...

ILG Not all being told off.

AG And you were saying that you left the choir in 1963, can you tell us a bit about that?

ILG It was simply that my voice had begun to – I think the modern term is 'change' – but we used to talk about breakage in those days, as happens to all boys sooner or later. It was a sad time. I think like any next stage, it was going to be life at school but without the close link with the Temple. We had a particularly close knit group of boys, we used to go on summer camps together in Dorset for many years and there were strong friendships which have lasted through our lives, but you weren't going to see each other day by day at Temple and even though you would all still be at school, two or three years gap in school you were less likely in a big school to run into each other. So it was quite a wrench.

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Although of course there was nothing to stop you coming along to the services and some of us did on the Sundays. But Doctor Ball always used to try and smooth it over. He was almost uncomfortable about asking boys to stand down because he knew that we often got quite distressed by this, and he'd say, oh come up in the organ loft after the service... this really began I suppose the start of ... I wouldn't say I had a special friendship with him... but the start of a very valued friendship in that I was going to the Royal College of Music on Saturday mornings for much of my schooling and I took up the organ as well as the oboe and the piano, when I was sixteen. So I was beginning to develop organ playing a bit and he would sometimes get me something simple to play – a chord for an unaccompanied anthem while he went down to conduct and I suppose after I'd left school and gone to the Royal College of Music full time, as a full time student, he'd get me along and get me a bit more to do and if the choir was doing a broadcast, or perhaps you'd perhaps like to play the anthem or one of the canticles if he wanted to conduct something. So I gradually crept in, again no formal arrangement, to being a sort of unofficial assistant organist, there was no assistant organist. Some organists at the time taught... but as I say it was probably convenient for him and terrific experience for me to have someone that he could call on now and again to perhaps play for a wedding if he couldn't do it or as I got older. So that went on really until he retired at the end of 1981 and John Birch was appointed to start in January 1982.

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And then John Birch asked me if subject to the two Inns agreeing if I would like to be his assistant in a formal capacity. It had to pass the parliament of the two Inns but that did happen and so I started there in October 1982 as assistant organist.

AG How did you see the Temple Church and the way their choir and the music was organised... that change over that time?

ILG I think if you like the basic structure hasn't changed hugely but a lot of things have changed. Thalben-Ball's style of organ playing, style of accompanying was I think rooted in a fairly sort of early 20th century style and he clearly liked that and saw no particular reason to change but there was a huge upheaval in the 1960s in music generally. A great interest in what has become known as authenticity and in doing

research into how composers envisaged their music and how it would have been performed at the time it was written, particularly with regard to 18th century music. So in a way we were in a bit of a time warp, and the Temple as a whole in the 50s was still a bit behind the times. There were still benchers who would come to morning service in morning dress when that had long gone from the general public except for weddings and possibly for funerals.

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John Birch, I think one of the great things he did when he succeeded not only was I very pleased to have been appointed there officially and have more to do but he widened the repertoire, he introduced more modern music, 20th century music and peculiar music which we never sang in the Thalben-Ball days. He also introduced a more professional group of singers in what one might call the back row – the altos, tenors and bass, the adult make singers. In the Thalben-Ball days it had been a lot of ex-choristers had gone into the back rows over the years but these weren't professional singers, these were by and large people who did other jobs, not to say they weren't good singers, but they weren't actually professional singers. It was a rather an upsetting period because John Birch decided to re-audition them all and most of them were casualties of this re-auditioning and he put a lot of much younger, more professional people in the back row. So that was a big change in John Birch's time ... and then after about 15 years John retired and was succeeded by Stephen Layton who at the age of about 30 I think was already making a considerable name for himself as a very fine choir master and organist, but principally choir master.

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This was a whirlwind. He was like a tornado coming in. I was perhaps a bit of a casualty, seen as becoming a bit long in the tooth. He didn't abandon me though he clearly found me a bit of an old fuddy duddy to deal with. He got permission to bring a slightly younger man still in, James Vivian, which actually worked very well because James and I got on extremely well and then of course in time Stephen went to Trinity College, Cambridge where he now is director of music and James was appointed to succeed him and proved to be again a very fine organist and choir master in a tradition of very fine organists and choir masters. So that's a sort of brief outline of the choral directors. I suppose over those years too, as I got older and felt a bit more part of the furniture and got to know some of the lawyers a bit more, and with the general move into society towards greater informality, I got to know some of the people who run the church, who form what we used to call the choir committee, I think it's now called the church committee – I believe it's the only joint committee of the Inner and the Middle Temple, the equivalent of the parochial church council if it was a parish church. It's the committee that runs the church – got to know some of the benchers and the benchers very kindly invite the choir and the clergy organists to dinner once a year alternately of course.

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That is a very happy and jolly occasion always and a chance to meet some of the lawyers.

AG How have you seen the experience of the boys who joined the choir change from... would you say it's changed from when you joined as a boy in 1957 to what happens now?

ILG I think in many ways it's essentially the same. I mean in detail it differs I think but the arrangements for the boys' practices are still held weekdays after school, I

think the days are a bit different, they no longer have to come so early on a Sunday morning – little details change. What has changed is that during... I think it was first introduced in Stephen Layton's time – the boys all receive individual coaching singing lessons from a singing teacher who comes in. They come out of the practice one at a time for a few minutes of vocal coaching and the junior ones are also helped so they can catch up more quickly with the repertoire of music that's being rehearsed. There's also a system of giving them instruction in theory of music actually working through writing music down, learning the notes on the staves, learning about clefs and rhythms and note values – basic theory so that it will help with their music learning and the speed with which they can assimilate the music that they've got to do. I think they are now or at least in James Hugin's time – they've taken on quite a lot of recordings and taking part in promenade concerts; there is quite a lot more form to do than perhaps in my day, although as I say we did do recordings from time to time.

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But yes I think there's more direct musical education going on perhaps. The boys now don't all go to the City of London School. That was beginning to become a problem even in the Thalben-Ball days: boys' voices breaking every earlier. My parents and I suppose I in a sense in that I seemed to go on for a long time, but if you are going to a secondary school where you are merely eleven when you start and your voice breaks at thirteen, you've only got two years you're of use in the choir and understand what's expected of you and becoming proficient at doing it when sadly your voice changes and you can't really do much. Boys do seem to be maturing younger. It was therefore felt necessary to have boys join the choir at a younger age, to take them even as young as seven and that's very difficult in central London. There aren't many schools I think in the immediate neighbourhood; you haven't got a residential population any size nearby. But they do, they travel in, links have been made with a number of schools and boys travel in and I think I'm right in saying that all credit to Stephen Layton to this, he in discussion with the benchers, arranged for a kind of portable scholarship where they would get that proportions of the City of London School fees that would have been paid can be paid to whatever school they are at if they are at an independent school and if they are at a state school the money can be held and then used to provide higher or further education, later on.

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I don't mean they can have it as cash but for education purposes. Certainly I'm more aware of the great interest among the members of the church committee in the boys' education, they're not just seeing it as a way of recruiting boys for this choir, for this church, they want to take an interest in who the individual boys are progressing, which is a very nice encouraging link between lawyers and the church.

AG Of course one of the changes that's happened over the years is the creation of the post of assistant organist, which was created for yourself. What does that post involve? How did it come about?

ILG It was probably not uncommon in the interwar and perhaps immediate post-war years for there to be, whatever label you like to give him, an organist and choirmaster as one person. And the ensemble between choir and organ was a little bit left to chance – there was no conductor as such. At the Temple Church Thalben-Ball would nod in a mirror and the head boy would pick up the nod and the nod would be passed across the two sides of the choir.

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That worked surprisingly well. If you hadn't got a conductor you have to listen and be very alert. If you've got a conductor you've got a focal point to follow which is probably on balance better, but sometimes you become lazy as a result. The modern way was to have and is to have in all churches, in cathedrals, where there's any sort of musical tradition: the director of music, sometimes organist, master of music, whatever he's called, the boss organist, the senior man or woman, does very little organ playing – they conduct the choir and usually have responsibility for the recruitment of the choir and for the music of the church as [inaudible]. The sub-organist or assistant organist or associate, primarily does the accompanying the organ playing for the services and so really that was my main role – John Birch got me along, he would conduct, I would play. Sometimes he might like to play a voluntary or something but I did the bulk of the playing. If someone wants to be away for any reason there is a spare person there to cope if need be. Occasionally I would take boys practices or play for weddings if John Birch wasn't available. That was the thinking and the Inns went along with it and it's never reverted to the old pattern.

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AG So you'd have had in your role a close relationship with the organ in the Temple. Tell us about the organ itself.

ILG The organ is a fine example of an English cathedral style romantic organ. It was built I think about 1927 by Harrison & Harrison, a very fine firm of organ builders, a Rolls Royce firm of organ builders I'd go so far as to say – they're based in Durham – and it was commissioned by a man called Lord Glentanar, who lived in Glentanar House, more like a castle, an enormous building in Scotland. He was an organist, an organ enthusiast – the story I hear, though may not be accurate, is that he had this organ built for his daughter's wedding and it was put in the ball room of this enormous home of his. Whether it was really just for the wedding – it seems absurd when you consider the enormous cost of this quite magnificent organ. But at any rate, it was installed there and it stayed there for many years but it was very rarely used. And the story goes that Thalben-Ball who had been up to play and knew Glentanar slightly had a chance meeting with him, in Liverpool Street Station – they were both waiting for their respective trains and spotted each other and had a chat; this was some time after the Second World War. Thalben-Ball said, How's the organ at your house?

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He said I'm thinking if giving it away, it's hardly used, it's falling into disrepair, it's a waste, it just sits there. Thalben-Ball said, if you really are thinking of giving it away, I know who can give it a good home and that's the Temple Church, because the old organ had been burnt out in the Blitz in 1940, certainly damaged beyond repair. Well, I don't know what happened but I think the Inns had to bear the cost, probably not an inconsiderable cost of transporting this organ but the organ itself was given to the Church and it was installed in a great rush for the reopening and rededication of the church after the war, in 1955 and never fully installed as the organ builders would have liked because organ builders of any calibre will make slight modifications according to the acoustics of the particular building and moving it from Scotland to the Temple Church, it didn't have the modifications made that they wouldn't have liked. Only recently, it's undergone an enormous rebuilding and slight modification. Its basic integrity, basic sound hasn't changed but without going into technical detail one or two more spots been added and a number of aids for the player have been put on; essentially it's the same instrument but in wonderful playing condition.

49.48

AG I should imagine that throughout your career you've played a number of organs in different locations. How would you rate the Temple organ in comparison to other instruments you've played?

ILG The organ perhaps as an instrument is more varied than almost any other musical instrument. When one talks about playing the organ, there are organs you might find in north Germany very different to the organs you might find in an English cathedral. They've all got pipes keyboards and pedals but the quality of the sounds and the whole way design varies enormously so it's difficult to say, not always comparing like with like. I suppose I'm biased because I know the Temple organ better than any other organs though I'm not too familiar with it since its minor modifications, but it is one of the fine examples in that tradition of romantic organ building. People who like 19th century German style building will be fine for playing Bach but not perhaps so good for playing more romantic 19th century music. Eighteenth century purists if you like will probably hate it but for its purpose, for accompanying a broad spectrum of music in the services, its prime purpose, it's superb.

51.40

AG Obviously you've been part of the church for many years – how have you seen the Temple Church change over than time?

ILG If you were to say to somebody what sort of services did you have in 1957 and what sort of services do you have now, you could say you had the Book of Common Prayer service in 1957 and they still do. But we always had matins as the 11.15 principal service on a Sunday, now once a month we have Holy Communion, fully choral service, so there is that shift, which is a shift in keeping with a general trend in the Anglican church, in parish churches and cathedrals, of seeing the communion as an important part of worship and should perhaps be the central or main service at least once a month, perhaps. So it was the Master of the Temple, Joseph Robinson who first approached the church committee about making the change and it caused quite a stir at the time – they'd never done this – they always had matins. They agreed to try it out for nine months. And then they said, oh we don't like this, we can't cope. There were all kind of funny stories, they said they didn't know at which point in the service they were supposed to stand or sit, all kinds of absurd objections. So Jo Robinson didn't win that one for a while and then either he had another go – I think it was in his time that it did eventually come to stay. Congregations I think were probably very large in the early days of my time as a choirboy.

54.03

A lot of lawyers. I don't know whether I'm right but I think there were probably more lawyers living in the Temple at that time so even those who would wish to go to church would probably go now to their local churches and their visits to the Temple Church would be less frequent. Congregations may have gone down a bit at various times but currently the driving force of the present Master Robin Griffith-Jones, who is a very fine preacher and a wonderful person and does much to encourage people and let them see the church as a resource for them, whether they are lawyers or not – congregations are holding up very well I think. I think a combination of the traditional service, beautiful music, good preaching and the fine architecture of the church is a draw and attracts a wide public. There are a lot of people that travel in from quite far distances on Sundays to come to the services.

AG Mentioning architecture, how have you seen the Temple itself and the Temple precincts change over the years?

ILG Very little is the short answer to that! Apart from cleaning work on the brickwork and stonework not only of the church but of some of the sets of chambers and flats at the tops of those buildings, there has been a little bit of building which I've been fairly aware of that's been tucked away, I'm not sure that the Archive building may have been there.

56.10

And certainly as you come up with the river behind you, up King's Bench Walk, the building that immediately faced you before King's Bench Walk narrows to go up towards Mitre Court, there was a building there called Niblett Hall which used to be a barristers' common room and tea room and is now a set of chambers. And there have been little bits of changes of use of buildings I think – the Collector's office moved to various addresses in King's Bench Walk. Something we never had in my day, the music office, there are secretarial staff now who assist both the Master and the organists – that was never the case years ago, and they were in the Master's House since the inception of this idea but have now moved to an address in King's Bench Walk. So there have been changes of use, I'm not aware of any internal changes.

57.32

AG Would you say there's been any change in the essence of the place?

ILG As a boy you weren't aware. You were increasingly aware as you went through the Temple of – and were amused by – the eccentricity, the way the legal profession operates. The whole idea of dressing up for your job in funny clothes and wearing wigs, I found this wonderful. Perhaps I ought to have been an actor or something, but I remember going across sometimes to the Royal Courts of Justice and standing a few minutes in a case and thinking it was interesting and staying longer and if it wasn't go to something else. Occasionally I thought Good Heavens, that's so and so, some judge I'd seen in the church and just make out who it was under his wig. I think I was amused initially by those rather superficial things. Amused also as I became aware of the fact that you had these two Inns, I realised that the Inner Temple membership sits on the south side of the church and the Middle on the north but I remember when I was told at one time in their history the Middle Temple would only pay for a leaking roof if it was their side of the church and likewise Inner on their side, and they weren't keen to co-operate on lots of things... there were Inner Temple dustbins around with what looked like 'IT' on it, and then I realised it was the abbreviation for Inner Temple and there were dustbins with 'MT' and I thought gosh they have their own dustbins. Then I realised they have their own gardens and they didn't seem to share anything. So initially there was a fair degree of amusement about the whole way that the Inns seemed to relate to each other. As I've got older, had the pleasure and privilege of being asked to social events within the Inns and got talking to lawyers and so on, I come to realise or become more aware of the ethos of the Inns and I like to think that perhaps in some small way the church may have done some good because in a way I feel the two Inns that look after the Temple Church are like two Cambridge colleges with their college chapel.

1.09.19

For some it will just be a beautiful building that they stroll past and think nothing of; for others it may be a place where they really do feel they want to come and take part

in the worship. Some may come just to enjoy the lovely music or to sit in a rather beautiful building and be quiet. But it does have a role for the Inns and fortunately they are very happy to support it, not just financially but by their attendance and their good will and all that they do to help, both clergy and musicians of the church.

AG When you speak about the ethos of the Inns, how do you see that?

ILG That's a tricky one! I sense that there is something that is passed on from generations, a fundamental decency, perhaps professionalism, there is that sense that whether or not you're getting a small fee for what you do or a sizeable fee, you are providing a service, it is your duty to provide a good service and sometimes perhaps to go the extra mile. There is also I think in the way that the older members of the profession treat the younger ones, the fact that there are training sessions where there is easy access across the age and its status or hierarchical range

1.02.11

seems to me something of immense value. There is also the sense of seeing things in proportion. If some junior barrister or student behaves a bit badly, does something rather silly, there is a sense of knowing when to make an issue of it and when just to say you'll get through that. I remember an incident that slightly ties in with this: it was in John Birch's day – the choir boys had been asked to sing at Lambeth Palace for the award of honorary degrees the archbishop was bestowing on various people. I went along, no I didn't go on that occasion, I think it was another occasion – I heard about this. At any rate there was a tea party afterwards and the boys were given tea in one room, which was fatal and left to their own devices. There was a terrible incident, a boy stole – or removed the key from the archbishop's lavatory and threw it in one of the ornamental ponds in the grounds of Lambeth Palace. Somehow this got attention in the press and it was when Dr. Carey was archbishop and there were all these puns – 'oh what a Carey on' – you can imagine the tabloid headlines. There was a terrible fuss and the Palace sent a letter of complaint to the Inns.

1.04.00

The benchers felt obliged to make a bit of a standing, this was not the way – they did actually make quite a fuss over that, but I got the distinct impression that privately there was a fair amount that they thought the whole thing was quite funny. I just think there is this sense of balance and of fun too. They're dealing with weighty and sometimes I'm sure quite tedious issues professionally and when they're off-duty they know how to enjoy themselves with their dinners and their parties and they're great fun. I enjoy the spirit within the Inns, it's very nice, collegiate spirit still I think, even though they don't dine together and have so many of those events as they perhaps did half a century ago.

AG We've heard some wonderful stories. If I had to put you on the spot and had to ask you for your highlight of your time in the Temple, what would that be?

ILG That has put me on the spot. Dearie me, I don't know. There have been so many small acts of kindness and generosity, I don't mean financial, I just mean advice, friendship, humour from lawyers and clergy and fellow church musicians. It's hard to find anything to single out. I suppose one of the most extraordinary things that happened was partly because it was so unexpected – playing for John Taverner's 'Vale of the Temple'.

1.06.11

An enormous work that the Inns commissioned Taverner to write, which lasts for seven hours with no break. It was just one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences to play for that throughout the night, from ten at night till five in the morning and see the sun coming up. I think it was June, summertime, the sun coming through the stained glass windows over the altar in the church, having started when it was just about light and gone through a period of darkness and then this wonderful effect in the morning – as a musical experience, that was something quite special. But I suppose it's inevitable as you get older you look back, it's something I've tried to avoid doing – thinking of the good old days all the time – I can only say that even what one might think of as routine experiences of making music with Thalben-Ball was special; he just had an extraordinary sort of magic and turned a simple, perhaps not great piece of music, into something special. Working alongside somebody of that calibre was always a unique, special experience. But it's hard to identify any one thing.

AG Thank you very much for your time today. There have been some wonderful stories and I am sure this record will go down and be enjoyed for many years to come.