



eNotes



Feasting on two world firsts

On Saturday 8 January, we held our annual Epiphany Supper in the Church Rooms. The event raised over £560 towards the cost of our summer tour, which this year takes us to Wells, in Somerset.

Accordingly, it took a 'West Country' theme, with over 80 guests enjoying a hearty supper of pork casserole followed by a choice of desserts, tea and coffee.

The meal was preceded by a trio of carols sung by the choir: *Adam lay ybounden* by Boris Ord, *We Three Kings* by Ian Wicks, director of The Romsey Singers, and the first performance of *Keep us warm through winter*, a carol by one of our choral scholars, Simon Grant.

To conclude the evening, members of the choir and supporters staged a play written by Dominic Brenton, based loosely on the popular sitcom *To the Manor Born*. Hearing of an arrangement between Richard de Vere and the Dean of Marlbury Cathedral that prompts its choir to walk out, Audrey and Marjorie intervene and, in thwarting the shady deal, also give a helping hand to Romsey Abbey Choir.

At the end of the performance, Tim Sledge complimented the cast and thanked the choir mums and wives for their efficient catering. He also led applause for the choir in recognition of our contribution throughout the year – a gesture that we greatly appreciated.



'Dean' Bridget Brook with 'Marlbury Cathedral Choir' (photo: Liz Hallett)

Robert Fielding writes...

For choirs, this season just past is rich with opportunities for liturgical music. Festive services enable the introduction of at least two new items into our repertoire. This year we chose a wonderful *a cappella* piece by Paul Manz and the Spanish carol *Riu, riu chiu*. *A spotless rose*, by Herbert Howells was incredibly appropriate at the Midnight Mass this year; the choir produced subtle shading to accompany Jon Sketchley.

Among the music we will be singing this term are two new anthems: *O Lord look down from heaven* by Battishill and *My Soul there is a country* by Parry. These tend to become favourites for life, once sung.

Our boys are now developing well and a new

influx of probationers will soon be joining their ranks.

I continue to provide 15-minute vocal coaching sessions before each practice. These encourage the boys to think about breathing technique, posture, vowel sounds, consonants and tone. We also have the opportunity to use external vocal coaches for one-off sessions this year.

It was with great pleasure that Tim Sledge and I were able to appoint Mr. Adrian Taylor to the position of Assistant Organist. Along with David Coram, Keith Tomkinson and Anthony Burns-Cox – to all of whom we are very grateful for their help whilst we sought to fill the vacancy – Adrian accompanied the choir during

the Autumn, playing with great sensitivity and flair. Adrian has two sons in the choir, Barnaby and Nathaniel.

After a long period of uncertainty, we can now look forward to a productive musical collaboration.



'You didn't have far to come, then'

So quipped the Dean of at the end of our Evensong in Winchester Cathedral on Saturday 20 November. Our first visit there for several years, It was good to sing in our 'own' cathedral, having visited so many others around the country.

The music comprised Psalm 104, Percy Whitlock's Evening Service in D and Herbert Sumsion's anthem, *They that go down to the sea in ships*.

We were grateful both for the welcome from the clergy and to the friends of the choir who turned out to support us.



More firsts for the Girls' Choir

Daphne Lindsay writes

Last term was busy but enjoyable. The Wessex Cancer Trust Carol Service was a highlight of the term and a first for the Girls' Choir. The girls sang Rutter's *Nativity Carol*, *The Holly and the Ivy* by John Gardner and *O Holy Night* by Adam, with the solos beautifully sung by Georgie Wyatt and Maddy Brown. Special mention must be made of the debut as a soloist of Phoebe Blandford, who sang the unaccompanied first verse of *Once in Royal David's City*.

Christingle was, as always, a service in which the girls really enjoyed participating. Our carol-singing in Durban House nursing home was much appreciated by both residents and members of staff.

On Christmas Day, it was once again a great experience to sing with the men and boys. The new choir stalls made so much difference; the girls really enjoyed using them and having something to put their music on!

The Epiphany Gift service was another first and our ATB singers included lady contraltos as gentlemen altos were in short supply! This worked very well and we will be asking the ladies to join us again on other occasions. Our three wise men were Rob Gower, Geoff Mordan and Dick Hewett; Dick also sang the solo very ably in *Three Kings from Persian lands afar* by Cornelius.

Thank you to Robert, Jeff Williams, Tim Rogerson and Keith Tomkinson for playing the organ for the girls' services during the term.

« Photo: Jon Sketchley

Dates for your diary

Important services

30 Jan	6.30pm	Choral Evensong, Candlemas
9 Mar	7.30pm	Solemn Eucharist, Ash Wednesday
23 Mar	9pm	Compline sung by the Gentlemen
3 Apr	10am	Mothering Sunday Eucharist sung by the Girls
	6.30pm	Choral Evensong at Christchurch Priory
6 Apr	9pm	Compline sung by the Girls
17 Apr	10am	Procession and Sung Eucharist, Palm Sunday
21 Apr	7.30pm	Solemn Eucharist, Maundy Thursday
22 Apr	10am	Eucharist of the Pre-Consecrated, Good Friday
23 Apr	8pm	Easter Vigil
24 April	10am	Sung Eucharist with both choirs, Easter Sunday
	6.30pm	Choral Evensong

Social events

11 Feb	7pm	Skittles match – Choir v Bellringers, Mortimer Arms, Ower
4 Mar	TBC	Quiz (venue tbc)
5 Apr	TBC	Ten-pin bowling tournament for the Peter Brook cup
24–28 Aug		Choir tour to Wells

Choir parents' forums are also being held at about 11.20am (following the 10am Sung Eucharist) on 13 Feb, 13 Mar and 10 Apr. Do come along to share any thoughts and concerns you might have.

The Girls' Choir will be giving a concert in the Abbey on Friday 25 March at 7.30pm. This is mainly to raise funds for new robes, although we also plan to donate some of the money to George's Trust, to be earmarked for the Teenage Cancer Trust. Do come and support us.

For our regular Web updates, follow twitter.com/abbeychoir.