

## Setting high standards in Salisbury



On Tuesday 4 August, we sang Choral Evensong in Salisbury Cathedral. Ironically, having sung at cathedrals all around the country in recent years – at Durham in the north, Truro in Cornwall and Canterbury in Kent, for example – this is the first time in decades (to the editor's knowledge) that we have sung here. It was good to be joined by a number of friends from the Abbey for the service.

We sang the canticles to Herbert Murrill's dramatic Evening Service in E. The anthem was Ralph Vaughan Williams' lesser known gem *O how amiable are Thy dwellings*. This began with a verse for trebles and, after a more agitated middle section, it concluded with an affirmatory verse of the hymn *O God, our help in ages past*.

The psalms set for the day, 22 and 23, were prepared carefully and sung with sensitivity. Following the Creed, we enjoyed the Responses by Humphrey Clucas as they echoed around the building. All too soon, with the final Responses, the service was over.

Having visited Belgium in May, we did not embark on a choir holiday this month as usual. We are, however, already looking forward to our tour of the North next year, as we support the George's Trust sponsored walk along Hadrian's Wall.

*Welcome to the successor to the Choir's newsletter, Keynotes. eNotes will primarily be distributed online as a PDF file, although paper copies will be available upon request for anybody who doesn't have Internet access. I hope you enjoy it.*

Dominic Brenton, Editor

### Robert Fielding writes

Gosh, looking back, that was a busy term! Festival Evensong at Sherborne Abbey, a Choral Evensong here with the choir of St. Peter's Bournemouth, Ascension Day, joint items with recitalist Carlo Curley and the trip to Belgium! I don't think I have ever pushed the choir so hard and yes, they never failed to deliver.

In June, George's Trust was launched, one of its aims being to support the training and development of our young gentlemen on the back row. George O'Brien had been the first boy to 'migrate' to the back row in my time and I referred to this, as well as the long line of excellent Head Choristers in which he followed.

We worked hard at the end of term for the visit to Salisbury mentioned above. This Cathedral is on my 'patch' and so it meant a lot to me when the choir sang with commitment and flair. Thanks to

those who attended.

FORAC have once again been supportive in planning ahead and providing the financial backbone that enabled us to go to Belgium. Choir Mums have also produced some excellent choir teas for visitors – many thanks and much appreciated!

We shall be back in the stalls very soon and I am thoroughly looking forward to getting to grips with some new music (look out for *Pied Beauty*, a lively G.M Hopkins poem set by me for Harvest).

The boys will begin their collection of points for themselves, their team and their side. Last term, Cantoris triumphed once again. Christopher Williams' team won with Chris taking highest senior chorister prize and Barnaby Taylor highest Junior prize. Well done both!

Well done also to Simon Grant who gained a Merit mark for his Grade V organ exam. I think we may hear him playing a voluntary or two very soon. Many thanks to James Eaton for his excellent playing and support all through the term and we look forward to more of those wonderful Gospel improvisations!

Best wishes to Dominic on the launch of *eNotes*. It looks excellent and will, I am sure, be widely read and appreciated.

## Hitting the right note in Belgium



At the end of May, we visited Belgium to sing two concerts. The first took place in Blankenberge, a seaside town near Zeebrugge, and the other right in the heart of Brussels.

We sang music ranging from motets by the Tudor composers William Byrd and Thomas Mudd to anthems from the present day; much of the music was unaccompanied. Two pieces that the audiences particularly appreciated were by Belgian composers: the St Joseph Mass by Flor Peeters and César Franck's much loved Panis Angelicus.

To our surprise and delight, the Vicar joined us in Brussels. An experienced singer, his support was not just moral – he joined the basses to sing in the concert.

In addition to our singing engagements, we enjoyed a tour of the canals around Bruges, as well as a visit to a chocolate factory and a brewery. In Brussels, adults visited the iconic Atomium monument while the boys enjoyed thrills and spills at a nearby water park. The boys spent their final morning on the beach at Blankenberge competing against each other to build the best sandcastle.

Robert comments: 'The choir produced some stunning performances and enjoyed singing in the two wonderful churches. We were made very welcome and thoroughly enjoyed our visit. I was very pleased and proud of the way our boys behaved and sang – they were a credit to Romsey Abbey.'

## Bournemouth choristers help celebrate Breton link



On Sunday 14 June Romsey Abbey Choir was joined by choristers from St. Peter's Church, Bournemouth, to sing for a service to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twinning of Romsey and Paimpol, in Brittany.

The first visit by boys from Bournemouth, it was arranged by David Coram their Director of Music, who was Assistant Organist

at the Abbey until last summer. Along with his wife, Alice, he has been busy rebuilding the Bournemouth choir after it had suffered a sharp decline in membership..

This was the first time that many of the boys from Bournemouth had sung with another choir. We hope they enjoyed the experience. In August they went on their first choir holiday to St. David's, Wales.

### Finally, why not...

Join our *Facebook* group (search on-site for Romsey Abbey Choir), follow us at [twitter.com/abbeychoir](https://twitter.com/abbeychoir) and, with Christmas shopping in mind, don't forget to shop online via [easyfundraising!](#)

## Dates for your diary

### Important services

4 Oct	6.30pm	Harvest Festival Choral Evensong
25 Oct	6.30pm	Patronal Festival Choral Evensong
2 Nov	7.30pm	Bereavement Service
8 Nov	6.30pm	Choral Evensong with Sherborne Abbey Choir
29 Nov	6.30pm	Advent Carol Service
20 Dec	6.30pm	Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
24 Dec	11.45pm	Midnight Eucharist
25 Dec	10am	Christmas Eucharist
3 Jan	10am	Epiphany Gift Service

### Concerts

11 Sep	7.30pm	Organ recital by James Eaton
25 Sep	6 pm	Concert in the Park (George's Trust)
2 Oct	7.30pm	Organ recital by Anthony Pinel
24 Oct	TBC	Weaving God's wisdom

### Social events

11 Oct	TBC	Friends of Romsey Abbey Choir AGM
9 Jan '10	TBC	Epiphany Supper
24–30 Aug 2010		Choir Holiday to Newcastle, Hexham and Carlisle, in association with George's Trust

### Congratulations to...

- ❖ David and Alice Coram, on the birth of Lydia Natalie, 7lb 6oz, on 19 August.
- ❖ John and Hazel Clarke on their wedding on 5 September – we were delighted to sing for it.
- ❖ James Garland, Joshua Hillier and Nicholas Riley, admitted as full choristers on 6 September.
- ❖ Recent Head Choristers Ben and Joe Taylor – excellent A-Level results propel Ben to study Geography at Loughborough University and, armed with likewise impressive GCSE results, Joe has just started at Peter Symonds College.