

St Albans Cathedral Ex-Choristers Association Annual General Meeting Chairman's Report

The Association's year from July 2009 to June 2010 has been a fallow year with few activities and therefore not much to report by way of major developments and successes.

2009-2010

We have continued to issue our quarterly newsletter *Alban Notes* to well over 400 people by e-mail or post and once again we have been fortunate to receive donations from members to help with financing. Our website has been maintained with ongoing news and forthcoming events and, where possible, we have tried to support the publicity of Cathedral Choir and Abbey Girls' Choir Events.

We also contributed an information page to the national Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations' website and an annual report from St Albans is included in the annual magazine, *Once a Chorister*

With some considerable regret we reported the death of Raymond Hughes MBE who died in August last year at the age of 95. Raymond sang with Willie Lewis Luttmann in the 1920s and his family has very kindly donated some of Luttmann's original music scores to the Cathedral archive.

In December six members sang with the Abbey Singers under the direction of Tom Winpenny for Carols on the Hour – we enjoyed it and I hope so did the singers and congregation

At the beginning of the year we welcomed as new members of the association former choristers Jeremy Howarth, Toby Taylor, Alfie Bates, Fraser Hulbert and former Abbey Girl Choristers, Beth Eyre and Emily Almond. Who had completed their service

We also welcomed Lee Ward who was Organ Scholar from 1991 to 92. Lee is now the Director of Music at The London Oratory School and Hampstead Parish Church; David Radcliffe and Nigel Nethersole, both former trebles & head choristers in the 1960s, Dr Jago Morrison, former treble in the 70/80s and Roland Deller, former alto lay clerk from 2006 – 2009.

This year we are publishing the 2010 Year book and we thank Christopher Freeman for sponsoring the production and distribution costs in memory of Margaret Freeman, Choir Mum and wife of John Freeman, former Assistant Organist.

In May my wife and I had great pleasure in entertaining Peter & Pat Hurford to lunch on the occasion of Pat's 80th birthday and a photo marking the occasion will appear in the next *Alban Notes*..

We are following with interest the musical careers of Tom Blackie who is a Choral Scholar at Norwich Cathedral and will go up to St. John's College Cambridge next term; Bradley Smith, already a Choral Scholar at St. Johns and Claire Innes-Hopkins who will complete her second year as Organ Scholar at Peterborough Cathedral this summer. We wish them all well.

Once again, as your committee has attempted to maintain interest in the Association I have to report that the general response of members to communications during the year continues to be disappointing. It is quite frustrating to spend time and effort telling members what's happening with the association and the Cathedral Choirs and when notices of events that really require a response (even a negative) I hear receive few replies. I wonder sometimes whether members are receiving our communications. Perhaps they are not reading them or they are not really interested are just can't be bothered to reply.

Reflecting on the activities of the Choirs we have been fortunate to experience two truly magnificent concerts in the last year – the IOF Three Choirs Concert with Westminster Abbey and Kings' College Cambridge and the High Sheriff's Three Choirs Concert with Christ Church Cathedral Oxford. They were spectacular both musically and visually and we are immensely proud of our Choirs. The BBC broadcast of Choral Evensong in October last year was quite stunning. Unfortunately plans sometimes go awry and the Abbey Girls' Choir tour to the USA which was in all musical aspects very successful suffered from volcanic ash and their departure from Miami was delayed for some 10 days. On the bright side it provided an opportunity to see the choir and the Master of the Music on BBC news.

During the year work has continued on the Cathedral Choir photographic and sound archive – some of this work will be on display later at the reception. My thanks to John Adams, Rogers Covey-Crump and Alan Herbert for contributing to the sound archive.

Last year I said that I felt that there was an opportunity to make our biennial reunions a celebration of the foundation of the two choirs in April 1877 and January 1996 as well as an opportunity to sing in the Abbey and meet up with old friends. We have started this process with the "Order for the Day" which members will collect from Gemma and Hannah with their name labels before the rehearsal for Evensong.

2010-2011

Turning to the future, there are a few challenges to be tackled. We are holding a major fund raising concert in the Abbey on 18th September 2010 and your new committee will be moving ahead with the preparations shortly after this AGM. The success of this venture will depend largely on the participation and support of our members as well as ticket sales to the public.

Getting to grips with new technology has been fun and we now have our own Facebook page – a web-based facility clearly favoured by the younger element. Efforts will be made in the coming year to use Facebook as an additional vehicle of communication.

I should like to thank the outgoing committee and particularly those who are leaving us this time – David Martin-Smith who wishes to spend more of his time with his family and Rosie Cooke who is due to be married very soon!

Finally I should like to thank our Patron, The Dean, our President, Dr Peter Hurford and our Honorary Members for their encouragement and guidance during this last twelve months. I should also like to thank Andrew Lucas, Master of the Music, Moira Dean who is also the Dean's PA and Gemma Saunders, Music Department Secretary for their support.

I have expressed my own willingness to remain as Chairman for another year and if my appointment is confirmed today I look forward to meeting and working with the incoming committee.

Thank you.

Malcolm Bury – Chairman

11th July 2009