

Sing Joyfully

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter



Vol. 6 No. 10

November 2018

November

- On Saturday afternoon, 3 November, we sing Evensong in the church at 5 pm.
- On Thursday 22 November, all available choristers will accompany the attendees at the Thursday Lunch Club in singing Christmas Carols at their final meeting for the year.

October

St James', King Street, Sydney

Twenty Swiz choristers sang Evensong at St James on Wednesday 17 October. We sang Colin Brumby's *God be in my Head* as an introit, Psalm 22, canticles by Herbert Brewer, and Malcolm Archer's *And I saw a new Heaven*. The Bible readings were presented by two of our choir friends, John Kerr and Bruce Kinghorn. The congregation was small, but the joy of singing in St James was huge. St James' generous acoustic space is a joy to experience. And the refreshments put on by Rosemary Semple afterwards are an equal joy. A little bird has whispered to us that she doesn't do this for all of the visiting choirs. Look forward to a return visit next year.

RSCM Sydney Choirs' Festival re-born

It must have been about fifteen years ago that the NSW Branch of RSCM held regular annual "Sydney Choir Festivals". Head Office in the UK used to send an English Cathedral choir director out to the colonies during their long summer vacation, and the local RSCM Branch would have the visitor direct a workshop somewhere in the Sydney. But the time came when Head Office no longer found the funds to support the annual project and the flow of visitors ceased. The festivals continued for a few years, with local directors, but then they quietly ceased.

This year, we are fortunate to have had Dr Stephen Darlington, recently retired director of music at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, visit Australia.

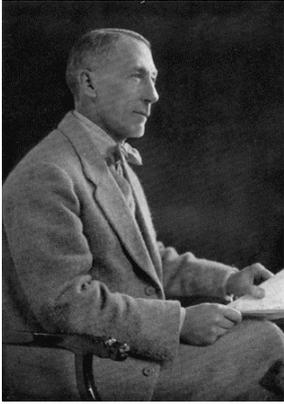


Dr Darlington in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford

Five Swiz choristers joined around 25 others on Saturday 20 October at St Andrew's Cathedral (even though the North Shore trains weren't running). It was an all-day event, starting at 10:30 am and running through to 5 pm. The music was all composed by Hubert Parry and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Parry died in October 1918, so the festival was a recognition of that centenary. Vaughan Williams was a student of Parry's.



With a Voice of Singing



One Sunday during October, the choir sang a bright anthem composed by Martin Shaw – *With a Voice of Singing*. Martin Shaw has been largely forgotten these days, but was a very well-known English musician in the early twentieth century. He studied for a year under Stanford at the Royal School of Music. He was a great friend of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst and John Ireland. In 1908 he became organist at St Mary's Church, Primrose Hill where Percy Dearmer was Vicar. Dearmer wrote hymn texts, some of which may be found in *Hymns for Today's Church (HTC)*. The two of them edited numerous editions of *Songs of Praise*, a hymn book first published in 1925.

Shaw's musical interests were much wider than church music. Throughout the 1920s, 30s and 40s, Martin Shaw taught and wrote music for plays and festivals including the first Aldeburgh Festival for which, at the request of Benjamin Britten, he contributed the anthem *God's Grandeur*. He published over 300 works, including opera, chamber and instrumental music, cantatas and, perhaps his best known work, *The Redeemer*, a Lenten cantata.

Shaw was Director of Music for the celebrated dancer Isadora Duncan, conducting for her European Tours in 1906 and 1907.

He composed *With a Voice of Singing* in 1923 as a commission for the annual festival of the Rochester Diocesan (Church of England) Church Choirs Association, a diocese in the county of Kent and province of Canterbury. The piece is dedicated to Charles Hylton Stewart, then Organist and Master of the Choristers at Rochester Cathedral.

Martin Shaw composed or arranged no less than fourteen hymns in HTC. One hymn that does not have his name attached to it is *Morning has Broken*, but Shaw was the person who asked Eleanor Farjeon to write words suitable for the Gaelic tune Bunessan, there being no other known hymn tune in this 10-9-10-9 dactylic metre.

He died sixty years ago on 24 October 1958, aged 83.



Salisbury 2020

The choir has accepted an invitation to sing services at Salisbury Cathedral, from Monday 17 to Sunday 23 August 2020. The Cathedral holds one of only four surviving copies of the original 1215 Magna Carta. The other three are held at The British Library and Lincoln Castle. Salisbury Cathedral's copy is said to be the best preserved of the four.

Magna Carta

In 1215 the soon-to-be project manager of a new cathedral in Salisbury, Elias of Dereham, who was present at the sealing of Magna Carta at Runnymede, was given the job of delivering at least 10 of the 13 known original documents and brought one to Old Sarum, the precursor to Salisbury Cathedral. When relations soured between the church and the military at Old Sarum, Elias, who had become a Canon there, was asked by the bishop, Richard Poore, to oversee the building of the present Salisbury Cathedral (beginning in 1220) and he moved Magna Carta to the new building.

Magna Carta has rarely left Salisbury since then, one exception was in February 2015 when all four surviving copies of the Magna Carta were put on show at the British Library as part of the 800th year anniversary.

Summary

First—and most importantly for the people who wrote it—the Magna Carta was designed to get the barons and the king to leave that soggy meadow, Runnymede, without slicing each other up with their big, sharp swords. It contains several clauses about the release of prisoners and about everybody going home happy and with all their limbs intact.



Second, the Magna Carta was a list of grievances that could easily have been titled, "Things We Hate about King John." It's a long list, but most of the complaints come down to the fact that King John was abusing his ability to make up new taxes, claiming pieces of the English countryside for himself, and punishing people without letting them stand trial. A lot of the clauses are King John promising not to pull those sorts of shenanigans anymore in every detailed way that the barons can think of.

Finally, the Magna Carta ends with some bonus clauses clearly written by an overachieving baron angling for some extra credit. It specifies that to enforce all the other clauses there needs to be a council of 25 barons to basically keep King John (who they still don't trust) in line.

(<https://www.shmoop.com/historical-texts/magna-carta/summary.html>)

You can visit the Magna Carta exhibition at Salisbury Cathedral while we are there:
Monday – Saturday: 9.30 am – 5 pm, Sundays: noon – 4 pm.

Happy viewing!



The Valley of Vision

At 8 am on the second Sunday in October the small choir, directed by Meg Matthews, presented the world premiere of a new anthem composed by the renowned Peter Hamilton.

We asked Peter about the work, entitled *The Valley of Vision*. He suggested that we ask the Rector; he had simply taken the text from a prayer that Roger had used in a Swiz Mail several years previously, a prayer that Peter saw as crying out to be set to music.

The text is a prayer, taken from a collection, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, edited by Arthur Bennett. The author was a Canon of St. Albans Cathedral, sometime Rector of parishes in Hertfordshire, and was for seventeen years a tutor in Biblical Theology and Christian Doctrine at All Nations Christian College. He died in October 1994 aged 79.

Arthur had always loved history and had been intrigued by the early Puritan movement. His hunger for spirituality led him to study many works by the Puritans. He found them a rich source of blessing in his own walk with God. Many of the early Puritan Christians had left some of the Hertfordshire villages and towns for New England. In due course, he produced the collection of Puritan prayers and devotions that was “drawn from the largely forgotten deposit of Puritan spiritual exercises, meditations and aspirations.”

The full text of the prayer is:

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, You have brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see You in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Your glory. Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision. Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Your stars shine; let me find Your light in my darkness, Your life in my death, Your joy in my sorrow, Your grace in my sin, Your riches in my poverty, Your glory in my valley.

Peter's composition for three female voices is all about the words. There is no time signature; there are very few bar lines, and then only at the end of complete phrases. It is a very fitting vehicle for the lovely text.



VOICE
for **LIFE** **And the RSCM singing awards**

Submitted by Pamela Summers

You might have noticed that I've been wearing a medallion on a green ribbon on my choir robes. I'd like to tell you about that award and the Royal School of Church Music *Voice for Life* scheme, and to encourage you to think of doing this yourself.

Voice for Life is a framework for choral singers to further develop vocal skills, musical understanding and knowledge of our repertoire.

There are five levels in the scheme, for singers of any age from beginners through to advanced singers, starting with a preparatory level for brand new, inexperienced singers.



There are four workbooks to work through (five if you count the White preparatory one). After you complete the Light Blue workbook, you are eligible to wear the RSCM medallion on a light blue ribbon (on the left of the photo below). After you complete the Dark Blue workbook, you are eligible to wear the RSCM medallion on a (wait for the Red



it...) dark blue ribbon. And so it goes workbook and the Yellow workbook. All of these

can be completed without sitting any exams. The workbooks are currently £4.95 each and can be purchased

online from the RSCM shop: <https://www.rscmshop.com/voice-for-life/vfl-workbooks.html>.

The RSCM Singing Awards run in parallel with the Voice for Life scheme.

It is recommended candidates follow this pathway:

White workbook – Light Blue workbook – Dark Blue workbook – **Bronze Singing Award** – Red workbook – **Silver Singing Award** – Yellow workbook – **Gold Singing Award**

Each Award has its own medallion and coloured ribbon as you can see in this photo.



So far, I have completed the first three workbooks, and then I went for my Bronze Singing Award. I was examined for it by an accredited examiner in New Zealand while I was at the RSCM 2018 Summer School in Auckland in January this year. Our own Meg Matthews is also an accredited examiner for the Bronze and Silver Awards.

Each award has its own syllabus, regulations and music lists.

You can read these in full at the RSCM UK website: <https://www.rscm.org.uk/start-learning/voice-for-life-and-singing-awards/>

But to give you a rough idea of what I had to do for the Bronze Award, here is a quick summary. I needed to:

- sing for the examiner a hymn, a psalm and an anthem selected from a set list
- sight sing two phrases of music and clap out a rhythm pattern of a phrase of notes and rests
- do some ear tests including naming intervals
- answer questions about the anthem I sang such as explaining the meaning of the text, when the music and words were written and by whom, describing the mood of the piece and explaining in which part of our morning service we would sing the anthem
- quote a few words from the psalm I sang and explain their meaning
- bring a service sheet to show the examiner and explain where music of different kinds occurs in our service
- pick a church season or festival (I picked Pentecost): show knowledge of the relevant Bible story, name a psalm or hymn which would be appropriate for the season explaining the meaning of relevant words in the text
- describe the layout of our church and the significance of the altar, font, lectern and pulpit
- describe what inspires and motivates me as a singer and my responsibilities as a choir member in the services I sing at, and
- provide a written reference from Phillip, endorsed by Roger, stating my contribution to the choir and mentioning at least one RSCM workshop/event I participated in.

There was quite a bit to do as you can see, but I learnt a lot while preparing all of this.

I would really encourage anyone interested to do some workbooks and then consider if you

might like to undertake a Singing Award exam as well. The workbooks are pitched for children as well as adults to use, so you need to overlook some of the too simple language in them. There was a lot of music theory in them, which was very good revision for me plus quite a bit of new information I hadn't learned before.

I'm happy to help if anyone has any queries about *Voice for Life* and the RSCM Singing Awards. I have also purchased the Bronze Collection music book which I'm happy to lend to anyone going for their Bronze Award.

Pamela Summers



A message from Anne Apin

I feel compelled to impart information regarding a covert operation which has been active in the choir room for some time. It has been operating almost completely under-the-radar, but, in the interest of full disclosure and adherence to choir protocol, I must bring this to your attention.

You may or may not know that I am always one to two hours early on Thursdays and Sundays fiddling with files in the loft, but recently became aware that I was not alone. I discovered certain goings-on in the adjacent choir room. Here were robes being individually numbered, assessed and graded for condition and registered against the choristers' names. Necessary repairs were noted and a sewing machine actually brought onto the premises midweek to deal with these as well as whipping up more collars. Field work was undertaken to establish contact with a dry cleaner whose charges for the said robes would be reasonable. No stone has been left unturned in establishing an efficient system linking administration, maintenance and accountability in the Robes Department.

The perpetrator of these shenanigans is no other than our delightful, mild mannered Robe Mistress, Lois Fortescue. Who would have thought she could have been so devious! She pleaded with me not to expose her, but I was resolute and recommend sentencing Lois to at least one hug from each chorister, just to let her know that she cannot get away with such devotion to duty without consequences.

The Robes Mistress's job is not an easy one, and we have been privileged over the years to have had a series of excellent volunteers for this position. Who could forget the indefatigable Lorraine who hovered lovingly over our robes and hangers? And then, the brave Irene who stepped up (or was she pushed?) to fill those shoes so efficiently, as well as expending much time and energy sourcing fabric for our shirts.

All in all, we are one lucky bunch of warblers, so don't go easy on the hugs!

Love you all, Anne.



Choir program - 2018

Date	Venue	Time	
Sat 3 Nov	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong for the persecuted church
Thu 22 Nov	Swiz	12pm	TLC lunch carols
Sat 1 Dec	Swiz	5 pm	Advent hymn festival
Mon 10 Dec	RNSH	Lunchtime	Carols in the atrium
Thu 13 Dec	Swiz	11 am	Service of Solace & Consolation

Note that nothing is final until the actual day has arrived, so please be mindful of possible changes.