

# New College Choir Association

Newsletter – July 2011



## Editorial

As most of you are aware, Chris Hodges is doing cutting-edge research into how many jobs it is possible for a man to do simultaneously. He has yet to reach a conclusion, but unfortunately has got to the point where he has had to step down from CHASSOC. I know we all appreciate the hard work he has put in, both for the Association and the Choir, over the years. I have been particularly aware of the burden of responsibility as I have attempted to put this newsletter together, and still have to face the prospect of labelling and stuffing envelopes on my own. Well actually I have the option of assistance from a four and a six-year-old, so if your label is upside down then you'll know I have had to call in reinforcements!

Many thanks to everyone who has sent in news, information or reminiscences. Particular thanks to Edward, James, Jeremy, Chris, Ian, Caroline and Hilary for their contributions below. As I'm sure you're aware none of this would be possible without the continued hard work of Caroline and Colin, and I'd also like to thank Ben Sheen for all his input and the fantastic new website. Speaking of which I hope, like me, you have been enjoying the webcasts. Call me a heathen if you will, but I especially like the fact that you can jump directly to the bits you wish to hear.

It has been another fine year for the choir with the launch of their own record label, NOVUM. Mozart's *Requiem*, which was recorded last summer, has been very well received and I've had a lot of positive feedback from everyone who has heard it. At Easter the Choir recorded a Couperin disc, due for release soon, and there is talk of Haydn and Britten recordings to come.

As I hope you know, all the Choir's recordings are available to buy on the website (or via College) and it is worth stressing that buying direct enables the Choir to make future recordings so please do get your copies from there, rather than elsewhere. Better still, sign up for an E<sup>b</sup> subscription to receive the latest disc each year!

In May we had an informal 'younger' meeting in London, and it was great to see everyone who came along to that - I hope that we can arrange another one soon. Quite a number of us attended a Gaude and evensong recently, with some 'spirited' singing of *Blest Pair of Sirens* – many thanks to Andrew Tusa for gathering us together and Edward for allowing us to join in. The next official gathering will be around October 2012 – more details when we have confirmed the date.

On a personal note, seeing all your news has been most enlightening and it's great to see how you are all getting on and where life is taking you. I am often struck by the warmth of feeling towards the choir and the College from members (perhaps I may recoin the word 'neophiles', though as Prof. Summerly will no doubt point out it is never just 'New', but always 'New College') and the lasting impression that a few years has left with us all.

As a parent, sending your child to be a chorister is not an easy choice, even for those of us who have been there ourselves. It is something I have been considering carefully myself as my elder son will begin as a probationer in September at Peterborough Cathedral (where I can confirm that the female alto James mentions in his article below is certainly very good). However, I think Edward puts it rather splendidly, and to wonderful accompaniment, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4AWsEH8hTU> (or search for “treble chorister” on youtube.)

I do hope that you enjoy this issue and do please keep me up to date with what you are doing. I know that not quite everyone has email, but if you can let me know your email address it will really help with sending out quick reminders and collecting news. Do please feel free to write if you would prefer though. If you enjoy reading what everyone else has been up to, then I’m sure they would love to hear your news, no matter what it may be, musical or non-musical. Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter, especially those who have done so without too much cajoling!

*Henry L'Estrange, Editor*

## **Subscriptions**

I am sure that many of you sigh wearily at the inclusion of begging material in every piece of correspondence from College (I know I do) but CHASSOC subscriptions are merely to allow us to print and post the Newsletter and occasional requests and reminders. Many thanks to everyone who has sent a subscription or set up a Direct Debit. It would help if you could please use a Banker’s Order – send the attached form to your bank (and ideally confirm to me that you have). The alternative of a cheque is of course perfectly acceptable if you prefer.

You will remember that there are two subscription options:

B <sup>b</sup>	£5.00 annual
E <sup>b</sup>	£17.50 including a CD

We will be posting out this year's disc (Mozart *Requiem*) shortly to those who have subscribed to the E<sup>b</sup> membership. Please let me know if you don’t receive one but think you should.

If there are any problems, please do just contact me! Email is easiest for me but you are most welcome to call or write if that is easier for you:

[chassoc@softtop.co.uk](mailto:chassoc@softtop.co.uk)

The Woodlands, Boston Road, Gosberton, Spalding, Lincs PE11 4NU.

Tel 01775 840075.

## Organist's entry - some recent goings on

A good time to start is October 2010, when we presented a Gala Concert to a packed St John's Smith Square to mark the inauguration of NOVUM, the Choir's own record label. The programme reflected the Novum releases, one of that month and the other forthcoming. The first, Monteverdi's *Vespers* (appearing exactly 400 years to the year of its 1610 publication) has subsequently been voted the best mid-price version in a very crowded and distinguished market (BBC '*Building a Library*'). We hope that the second, Mozart's *Requiem*, will do equally well. It is important, however, that critical recognition translates into sales, and your support of this venture is going to be important to its success, both for the CDs you might be inclined to purchase, but also for the recommendations you make to friends. As you can judge, a part of the policy is to have New College Choir tackle some of the great landmarks in the sacred choral repertory. But our next release (October 2011) will be deeply recherché: motets of Francois Couperin, some of which have never previously been performed or recorded. So we shall diversify. But crucial to the enterprise is the way in which the Choir takes centre stage, being entrusted with the solo work, and revealing its ability to traverse a wide ranges of styles and idioms. We are also taking a collegiate view of the packaging: using where we can relevant views and artefacts belonging to New College. The Mozart *Requiem* release is particularly rich in images of the College's associations with commemoration. Downloads from our catalogue are now available, but I hope that most people will prefer to buy the CDs, since visually they have much to offer.



Enough of CDs. But not enough of technology. We have come to the end of our first year of webcasting (one service a week). One of our academical clerks has been up to his neck in this. Every Saturday morning, earlier than any self-respecting undergraduate would consider being seen, Ben Sheen and I meet in the organ loft to choose 'the service of the week'. There is then some post-production (getting rid of the noise of scraping feet, and closing up gaps), and we are off. We get some feedback, all of it positive. If you have any comments, please let us have them - but don't tell us you prefer different tempi, or that the tenors are too loud. Trinity Term's services will all stay up until October, so you have plenty of time to taste and see.

Another bit of the technological business of the Choir has been the building of a new website. Colin Gordon's fantastic site was constructed under very different circumstances, and he was keen that we should move forward. In so doing, we decided to take a rather cheap and cheerful but highly functional option: a Weebly contract. For less than a fiver a month you get the use of their package; and with it our redoubtable Ben Sheen has constructed a new site which went live at the beginning of May. Do visit if you haven't already; [www.newcollegechoir.com](http://www.newcollegechoir.com). You can make up your mind whether you like it or not, but I'll be very surprised if you don't. Behind this initiative lies the dedicated and highly proficient work of Colin, whose site was greatly admired for its wealth of information, including a detailed presentation of our many CDs (track-listings, reviews, sound-clips), and an on-line sales facility long before any other choir began to offer the same. A great deal of the content of the new site drew on the old one. We all owe him a huge debt of gratitude for this, as for so much he has done for us over the years.

Now onto the non-virtual world, the world of people. One thing that on this occasion should not be left until last is recognition of the service of clerks and boys who have left the Choir at the end of Trinity Term 2011. During the last three years we have had a tenor line to dream of. These guys have stoked the boiler in no uncertain manner. Zarlino opined in 1565 (it was received opinion) that of the four elements, water was the element associated with the tenors. If 'true', this was a very wet idea, and has nothing to do with today's experience: the tenors are the fire in the belly of the Choir. (A long and tortuous digression calls; this will have to wait for another time.) Nick Hewlett (layclerk) and Nick Pritchard (academical) are the two tenors in question, who have added colour and weight and levels of energy rarely encountered in choirs. NH goes on to manage an exciting and challenging educational project in South Korea; NP has a full order book already, and will undoubtedly feature on the international opera circuit before the end of this decade. In addition, we have lost an alto layclerk, Rory McCleery. He has also been with us for three years, and contributed mightily to the vocal and musical acumen of the alto line. He juggles a demanding portfolio existence, and among other things will now have time to pursue his doctoral research with increased vigour. In the loft, Lawrence Thain steps down after three years as organ scholar. He's off to a Law conversion course [that's a typo I'll keep]. Who knows, he may return to the sane and uplifting world of professional music. He could with impunity: he has a fantastic technique, utterly dependable in the loft, and utterly dependable in so many other ways as part of the 'executive team'. The top line has also seen its inevitable departures. Two of the boys have ended their days still singing superbly for us in voice change (Dominic Baum and Nicholas Doll). Edward Swash gets prizes for the tidiest room on tour as well as exemplary commitment, and Jonty Ward goes out with an international reputation established for his solo work, including the remarkable singing on our recent *Mozart Requiem* recording. Let there be no doubt in anybody's mind: these are the guys who make it happen; without them we would be stuck. All of you reading this Letter will have been responsible yourselves for making it happen in your time. The thank-yous need to be loud and constant.

It has been a year without a permanent chaplain. In the Fall of 2010, Dr Jane Shaw left for the prestigious post of Dean of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. Her tenure at New College was marked by a deep sensitivity for the traditions of worship in the Chapel, coupled with a distinguished career as historian and church-leader. Her high profile in the media, and her lively ways made the Chapel a place for intellectual encounter as well as prayer. It took the College a little while to find anybody who could live up to her qualities. We now have a successor in the person of Dr Erica Longfellow, priest and scholar from Kingston University, Reader in English, and an alumna of Oxford University. Meanwhile, we have been blessed with the service of at least four priests during the interim!

We have enjoyed some excellent touring in recent months, and you can read about one of them below, or in more detail by digging deep in the website (there are layers and layers of information there). Lying before us in the Autumn we have visits to Perugia, Cyprus, Belgium and Rome, all between now and Christmas. In the middle of September we will be singing *The Creation* in the Sheldonian as part of the University's alumni weekend.

My final word returns me to the subject of the Novum label. I would like you to feel this is your label. With your support we can record whatever we (you?) want. Help us to make it a real success! And when you want a Choir CD, please order it from us (on line). We may charge a pound or two more than Amazon (because they avoid VAT by operating out of the Channel Isles), but the difference it makes to the Choir is considerable.

Ending on a personal note, much of the foregoing would not be happening were it not for the help and expertise of Caroline, my wife. If you admire the design of the CD covers, for instance, you are admiring her work. If a foreign agent gets a note about our programmes, logistics or contractual needs, it will have come from her. Most of the organisational activity of the Choir in the domain of concerts and recordings is managed from her computer. And within the day-to-day routine of the Choir, she creates schedules, keeps chorister parents fully involved, and allows me time which I've rarely had to be a musician who can reflect on his work. That said, whether I shall ever get the time to practise the organ is doubtful. So if the Choir is doing well at the moment, you have two of us to thank!

*EH*

## **The Choir on Tour – December 2010**

*Darmstadt – Bolzano – Merano – Verona – Rome*

**Wednesday 15:** As we leave Savile Road, it is looking very much its normal self: grey tarmac and double-yellow lines. We have the customary surprises at airport security when hitherto unsuspected quantities of liquid are discovered in the choristers' hand-luggage, despite all our attempts to get them to think through their possessions. At least this time (as once in the past) it isn't metal chains. One of the clerks arrives sans passport, but, by correctly guessing the tribe of the Ugandan security guard and telling the man on the desk that he was doing a concert for orphans, he manages to get a new one from the passport office in a record three hours. He misses the flight of course, but finds another and joins us at midnight. On arriving at Frankfurt-Hahn, I use a phrase from the St John Passion on the German bus driver, who thereafter thinks I'm completely fluent (a big mistake on both our parts). These travel days go very quickly: the next thing we know night has fallen and we are on the outskirts of Darmstadt. At the hotel, the year-5s have their first experience of hanging up a few clothes, putting suitcases out of the way, and settling down to sleep with a colleague (who might possibly snore).

**Thursday 16:** 'Continental' breakfast comprises a seemingly endless selection of choices; if only the human metabolism were different, but it isn't, and we all know that within a couple of hours the boys will be feeling hungry again. By 11am we have walked out to a Jugendstil Russian Orthodox church, one of the few bits of the city to have survived the war. It is now bitterly cold, and the thought of being warm again more than overlaps with the thought of lunch. We make it to the Zoo Bar, and from there back for our siesta. The boys are generally very co-operative about this bit of the routine - at least half of them do go to sleep. Then the weather sets in: a strong and chilling wind brings the snow racing around corners and stinging the face. It is cosy enough in the Stadtkirche, and the audience is also very warm and practically clears us out of our carol CDs. But as we settle to bed the travel prospects for the next day look uncertain: blizzard conditions have certainly arrived, and the TV news suggests that Germany is grinding to a halt.

**Friday 17:** We leave an hour earlier than scheduled, with a feeling that crossing the Alps might be a bit of a feat. The snow is certainly thick on the ground, but not clouding the air. Hannibal invades our thoughts. As it happens, we soon get ahead of the weather front, and the motorway is clear. Arriving in the Southern Tyrol, we find the Stiftung St Elizabeth (a modern conference centre planted in the middle of an orchard). Not a flake of snow is to be seen, just the biting cold. Comfortable rooms, good amenities, and a fabulous cook. The miracle of the day is that the choristers have cheerfully lasted 10 hours on the road without getting rattled, impatient or sick: not once did I hear, 'are we nearly there?'

**Saturday 18:** A text message from Oxford reports five inches of snow in as many minutes. In Nals, daylight confirms that the snow now disrupting life in the UK has made it only to the surrounding mountain tops. Nevertheless, the iceman is on today's itinerary. He was found in the 1990s by a couple of mountain walkers, treated as a crime scene and then handed over to the archaeologists. What is truly fascinating about the iceman is the picture that emerges of his way of life 5000 years ago from his clothing, tools and accoutrements.



The Bolzano museum has put this picture together in an exemplary fashion, and our charming guide is the icing on the cake. The evening's concert is the only gig we have in a concert hall. It is a good space, but far too big for the numbers that turn out: less than half the hall's capacity.



**Sunday 19:** Merano, one of the well-known watering holes of the Southern Tyrol, is a short bus ride in the other direction. It has the Christmas market to die for. We spend 90 minutes juggling scarves and gloves with purses and parcels. The choristers show a heart-warming concern to get something really nice for their parents. Temperatures are again below zero, and we are pleased to get into a warm restaurant, not least because the Duomo has no heating. But it does have a

fabulous acoustic. The local radio station records the concert, and our German camera-team makes a video. We come away thinking that Merano must be wonderful in the summer.

**Monday 20:** It's a short run to Verona. Our accommodation is where we have stayed before: high and imposing rooms and a really splendid downstairs restaurant. We don't get to see anything in Verona other than a friendly Pizzeria and a fine Franciscan church. Everything goes according to plan, including the arrival of some visitors from the UK, though regrettably others have had flights cancelled.

**Tuesday 21:** Now onto the final phase: four concerts down and another to go. The choir is singing really well, and the music is very comfortably in the memory, so the challenge of performing in the capital city is one we can face with equanimity. Low cloud had impeded the view of the Apennines, but everything in Rome is brilliantly illuminated, including the run up the Via della Conciliazione to St Peter's Square. The choristers' jaws drop audibly. This is a taste of the high life. We are in a real Palazzo, with its garden courtyard, arcades, and sumptuous décor. Of course, the boys pretend this is perfectly normal.



**Wednesday 22:** We have been invited to sing at the Angelus by Dr Courtial, who has the run of the Vatican, or so it seems: the Swiss guards fall back as a man; we are ushered into the corridors of power. Once in, it is very homely, with a delightful reception from the Cardinal and his staff, after our rendition of Grieg's *Ave maris stella*. Then the payback: a visit to the crypt of St Peter's and to places where no ordinary visitor may

roam. The solemn highpoint is a view of Peter's bones over which the basilica has been constructed, and on which 'rock' the whole of Western Christendom built. A crude inscription and the age of the bones all point plausibly to AD67, just as convincingly as Hadrian's remains in the Castel Sant'Angelo point to a second-century emperor.



What remains of Peter is set in a simple earth-covered niche behind the sumptuously decorated and embossed ceilings and walls of the earlier Roman basilica. From there, up a flight of stairs into the central space of the present basilica, and a performance of Josquin's *Ave Maria* facing Bernini's magnificent baldacchino. Then a visit to the archive of the fabric of the basilica. Where we are standing is where Bernini executed his plans and drawings. The bookcases contain the complete archive of documents relating to the construction and maintenance of the basilica over the centuries, all in their original wrappers, each inscribed with its year and category of material. It is all



rather too much to take in. As we leave, Dr Courtial points out the huge restoration project on the North side of the basilica, funded by his Foundation. It becomes very obvious why he can walk into the Vatican as he would into his own house. Lunch and rest and onto St Ignatius, with a quick peep at the Gesù and the Pantheon. St Ignatius is a riot of baroque splendour, brilliant golds and reds against soft eau de nil pilasters. It makes a perfect setting visually and acoustically for our final concert. The front row of the audience boasts at least one cardinal, and HM ambassador. The singing is of a very high order, and Dr Courtial is sure that we are the best choir in the world (The *Gramophone* just puts us in the top 20). The clerks return to their hotel terrace and a well-earned drink; we return to tend to a couple of sick children.

**Thursday 23:** Bags packed and left in the lumber room, and on to the no.81 bus, which takes us the long way round to the Colosseum. As we go, the day is warming up, and on the top of the Palatine Hill some of the choristers are down to sweatshirts. Somebody mentions 19°C. San Clemente is on the itinerary: it is the best of the Roman medieval and Renaissance interiors, with a glittering 12th-century mosaic apse, and marble choir stalls of even earlier date. The Forum is a difficult space to decipher: it too easily presents as a pile of overturned masonry. We do our best to evoke the people who lived there, and the scale and splendour of Roman civic architecture 2000 years ago. The counter-intuitive moment is having an ice-cream on the Via dei Fori Imperiali two days before Christmas. There is no decent underground network in Rome since all attempts to build new lines are thwarted by the discovery of new archaeological sites, so it's back to the buses to find there is no service to St Peter's from the Piazza Venezia. It takes us a little while to identify a service that will take us to the river. We have a round of bridge at the airport before the flight home. It's always a relief to see everybody climb aboard for the last leg; it's a double relief to know that Gatwick is open for normal service, though we could have done without the delay which results in a very nocturnal meeting in Savile Road, this time with yellow lines nowhere to be seen, and a large snowman looming in the near distance. We think of singing a carol, but it seems more important to get to bed.

*Abridged from an article on the website by EH*

## **The story of webcasting at New College**

*by Nancy-Jane Rucker*

New College Choir is the first in Oxford to launch regular webcasts of choral services. Each week one service is selected for webcasting, and undergoes a small amount of editing to add the details of the music and readings. You will find regular services of choral evensong, as well as major festivals and the Choir's carol services. At the beginning of each term the list is replaced with the first new service and will build up as the term progresses.

The process of fitting 21st century technology into a 14th century chapel hasn't been without its challenges, since medieval buildings weren't quite designed for microphones and cables. The project became viable with the development of a microphone system with the capability of being suspended from the roof and lowered to recording height above the choir. Metres of cabling have had to be laid externally along the chapel roof, to connect the microphones to the recording equipment and computer in the organ loft – some distance from the choir stalls in the chapel below!

There have been moments of excitement and anxiety, standing on the chapel roof (and enjoying the view of Oxford spread out below), to watch the College maintenance team fit the cabling, and see the microphones descend for the first time from their nest high up in the roof to hover almost invisibly above the choir stalls. Traditional ways have adapted to the new: the organ loft has a recording desk and laptop nestling next to the volumes of Bach and organists' shoes, and the readers at evensong have had to learn how to negotiate microphone switches as well as the prose of the Old Testament.

The most exciting challenge has been to perfect an authentic New College sound, recognisable to everyone who knows and loves the choir's 'live' evensong. The organists double as recording engineers: when the choir is singing full tilt they are able to raise the microphones higher within the roof space, to descend again for the more intimate polyphonic repertoire. One of the choral scholars has learnt state-of-the-art editing techniques, and now acts as the post-production editor for each service, so that the listener is presented not only with the appropriate sound, but the details of the music and readings for each service.

Webcasts are now a regular feature of the life of the chapel, and we value the growing body of our regular online listeners as much as those in the pews. It keeps the choir in touch with former members of the college and brings its work to the attention of musicians the world over. Webcasts of evensong are now being heard by patients in the Oxford hospitals, and we hope to make this facility more widely available.

Please visit <http://www.newcollegechoir.com/webcasts.html> to hear the webcasts.

## **Male alto versus female alto**

*by James Bowman CBE*

The inevitable has finally happened – and I’m actually surprised that it has taken this long. Peterborough cathedral has appointed a female alto Lay Clerk. As a long-standing member of the male alto fraternity, it could be assumed that I would come out with all guns blazing, and denounce the whole thing as ‘a gross betrayal of a long and honourable tradition’, ‘an insult to the memory of many loyal servants of the Anglican church’ etc. etc.

But wait... I’ve thought long and hard about this before putting pen to paper, and I feel strongly enough about the pros and cons to want to air my thoughts in, I hope, a measured way. I certainly don’t want to initiate a shrill debate, similar to that which raged around the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury cathedral.

Female altos in a cathedral choir are not an unknown species. Some readers may remember that during the war years, and well into the 1950s, Chichester cathedral had two ‘Lady Altos’ – I think it was during the time of Horace Hawkins (correct me if I’m wrong). At service, they sat rather demurely, in the stalls adjacent to the choir, both wearing hats, and they neither robed nor processed in with the choir. Presumably this situation arose because of a shortage of available male altos, due to the war, but, the fact that they remained after peace was declared would suggest that they did the job rather well and that there was no need to replace them. I have no idea as to their ages, but people who actually saw and heard them say that their voices blended well with the rest of the choir, even if they weren’t exactly outstanding singers. I suspect they were ladies ‘of a certain age’ who were only too happy to help out during the emergency. But, not an eyebrow was raised and no-one questioned their presence. I would love to know more about them.

However, the male alto has existed unchallenged for centuries in cathedral and collegiate choirs, and that has been, and still is, the tradition; the English, quite rightly, love and respect such a tradition. After all, the great composers of the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries all conceived their works with the male alto in mind, and herein lies a problems with the female voice. Many of the alto parts lie very low in the voice, especially where they are divided. The Cantoris part frequently stays below the stave, and the male sound is deemed more suitable to carry the line, particularly in a choir of just six lay clerks. However, even a really good low male alto is hard to come by these days, as the vocal technique of many young altos tends to favour singing in the higher register. One often hears glowing reports of ringing high notes – ‘wonderful – he can sing up to top A!’ So what! - that’s not much use during the average weekday evensong. A good solid sound from A down to bottom G is far more useful in a cathedral choir. The great Alfred Deller never ventured up to those dizzy heights. Interestingly enough, old recordings of cathedral choirs made earlier in the last century often feature male altos with astonishing low notes, but not much at the top. For example, New College, for many years, had a very distinguished alto lay clerk, known to this writer, whose range gradually decreased over the years, so much so, that latterly his top note was only a G. But his lower register remained unimpaired and he was able to descend to well below bottom G in his falsetto – a godsend when singing Byrd and Tallis with divided altos. There are female altos that can also plumb

these depths, with the requisite volume, but they are few and far between. The late Helen Watts was a fine example.

But, and it is a big 'But', the male alto has been regarded in many cathedral choirs as a necessary evil to be tolerated, and no more, even though many of them are perfectly good singers. Quite recently, an alto in a provincial cathedral said to me sadly 'The organist never speaks to us. He addresses the tenors and basses on musical points but we are always ignored'. It's interesting to note that in, for example, music by Stanford, the altos are rarely exposed. Take his fine setting of the *Te Deum in C*. The basses are allotted the phrase 'The glorious company of the apostles praise thee' Next the tenors sing 'The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee'. Now you might expect the altos to be given 'The noble army of martyrs praise thee'... But no, this goes to the boys. The poor altos are passed over. Stanford, with his fabled acid tongue, is, to my mind, making a point. Why didn't he bring the boys in for the climax at 'The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee'? Cathedral altos must have rejoiced when Dyson in D appeared and they were finally given that tiny phrase... 'Throughout all generations'. One must accept that the average cathedral alto in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century made a pretty mediocre, if not downright unpleasant sound. There is the famous story about the alto who was singing the little recitative in Purcell's *Thy word is a lantern* – 'The ungodly have laid a snare for me' An elderly canon said loudly 'I wish to God they had caught you'. There were exceptions. Freddy Hodgson, who sang at Tenbury, Lincoln, Lichfield, Windsor and the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace, had a sweet, mellifluous voice right up to his death, but many of his contemporaries were certainly not of the same standard. It is an inescapable fact that the male alto voice does deteriorate with age, simply because the muscles surrounding the vocal chords become weaker as time goes by and the falsetto technique requires those muscles to be finely tuned. I have heard some ageing altos in my time, and it's not a pretty sound. You can understand why, for many years, the high alto phrase 'One who never changes' in Parry's *My soul there is a country* was always given to the Cantoris boys; it was simply beyond the reach of some singers. To be fair, Parry wrote the piece with female voices in mind, but it has always been a staple item of the cathedral repertoire, and the problem had to be addressed. When I joined New College choir I made sure straightaway (with the supreme arrogance of my youth) that this phrase was given back to the altos. David Lumsden readily agreed. This potentially explosive situation would never arise with female altos.

But then, the poor chaps probably never had a singing lesson in their lives; they discovered that they could sing alto, auditioned for a cathedral choir, and probably stayed there for the rest of their singing days. The salaries paid in the 1920s and 30s were more than adequate to live on. That situation is completely reversed now. Male altos are recognised by the music colleges; they receive excellent tuition and develop sound techniques. But they can't exist on the very meagre salaries and in the absence of other employment few singers stay in the same choir for more than a few years. More often they are lured to London with the promise of fame and fortune. In fact, London is positively awash with excellent male altos, the majority of them originating from Oxbridge college choirs. St Paul's and Westminster Abbey are never faced with a shortage of candidates whenever they have a vacancy and this also goes for Southwark, the Temple Church and the Chapel Royal. So where does this leave the provincial choirs, that all these talented young singers have turned their backs on? I believe that female altos are now poised to come to the rescue of what is slowly but

surely becoming something of a problem – I won't yet dramatise it into a crisis. I know of at least two cathedrals who have recently lost both their altos. I had an email from one organist who asked me if I could recommend any young singers in his area, as he was about to become alto-less. Another cathedral had a vacancy and there was only one applicant, who was appointed simply because there was no-one else. Thirty years ago, had there been this shortage, then it would have been quite serious, but with the advent of mixed choirs, starting with Trinity College, Cambridge, a new pattern has emerged. Trinity, closely followed by Clare College, very sensibly opened the alto line to both male and female singers. If a suitable candidate presented themselves, they were elected, irrespective of their gender.

The excellent Eton Choral Courses, run by Ralph Allwood, have a large part to play in this change. Both boys and girls who want to apply for Choral Scholarships are encouraged to apply, and for those who want to sing alto, the experience of singing together creates a completely natural atmosphere – the 'ghetto' approach is being broken down.

The norm in most Oxbridge choirs now is to have male and female altos singing together, each blending with the other. Neither sex seeks to dominate the other; the overall sound is what matters. Anyway, they have probably all been cathedral choristers in the past. I recently heard an excellent CD of anthems by S S Wesley, recorded by the choir of Clare College, and I was hard pushed to identify the gender of the alto soloists – I had to consult the CD booklet to find out. I was greatly impressed, for instance, by the soloists in *Ascribe unto the Lord*. There is some tricky writing in the quartet 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness' which can tax a male alto quite severely. It was written with men in mind, but on this occasion the two girls acquit themselves extremely well, without in any way resorting to vocal histrionics – they just get on and sing it, as to the manner born.

So, what conclusion am I hoping to draw? Obviously, in common with the traditional London foundations, there is little likelihood of the big Oxbridge Five changing. Some years ago George Guest was lamenting that he had been unable to elect a first rate male alto to his choir at St John's, because the candidate lacked the requisite grades in his A levels. Ralph Allwood suggested to Guest that he knew just the person to fill the vacancy – a singer with an excellent voice and a good sight-reader. He felt that 'She' would fit admirably into the St John's choir. George Guest was silent for a moment, and then said 'Did you say She?' Yes, said Ralph. George's reply was classic – 'That's all very well, but what would we do about showers when we are on tour?' I think that rather sums up the attitude of the well-established all-male choirs. But cathedral choirs, faced with a dearth of male alto applicants, may well feel that the time has come for them to adapt to changing times, and Peterborough has bowed to the inevitable and appointed a female alto, who by all accounts fills the post admirably. I am not advocating the eclipse of the male alto – I have a great loyalty to a long and uniquely English tradition, and I hope it will continue to flourish, but at the same time I am glad that there now exists a viable choice.

## Embroidery classes

by Jeremy Pound (1979-85), currently deputy editor of *BBC Music Magazine*

Take six years as a New College chorister, add the passing of time and a journalist's love of elaboration, and one can come up with some pretty impressive claims to fame. Twenty-six years after I sang my last evensong, I'll gladly regale friends, colleagues and musical acquaintances with how I once recorded a disc alongside the legendary Dame Joan Sutherland, and how Sir Roger Bannister personally selected my treble solo of *In the Bleak Midwinter* as one of his Desert Island Discs.

Both could so nearly be true (ditto my boast that comedian David Mitchell played Tiny Tim to my Scrooge in the NCS production of *A Christmas Carol*)... but almost certainly aren't. Yes, Dame Joan did famously sing *Athalia* in our 1985 recording of Handel's oratorio, but I don't remember us ever being in front of the mics at the same time; and I suspect it was just some Radio 4 producer who randomly chose my Darke artistry on Sir Roger's behalf.

What is completely true is that I never once sat on Cantoris - my entire time as a treble was spent on the top line and on the southern side of the chapel as a Dec stalwart. By my calculation, that's around 650 evensongs all told. And, what's more, when lapses of concentration and/or acts of fiendishness saw me sitting out services on the naughty pew - an all-too-regular occurrence - that was on Dec too. The view across the way may have altered with the year-on-year change in personnel, but the ever-present Can landmark of Colin Gordon became almost etched on my memory.

On the whole, though, my New College recollections are episodic rather than generic, occasionally finding themselves jogged by my current line of work. Writing a recent obituary of the great Robert Tear, for instance, I couldn't help but bring to mind the occasion I told his wife I thought he was 'a bit rubbish' after a concert at the Sheldonian - in my defence, I knew who neither he nor, more importantly, she was.

Nor, whenever I read about tenor Tim Robinson wowing audiences in opera houses across the globe today, can I forget (or remotely forgive) that it was he who sent me trudging mournfully back to the pavilion, having clean-bowled me first ball in the 1983 Choristers vs. Clerks cricket match. And then, penning a travel piece about Oxford, I'm reminded of our dubious treatment of the fine arts. Should we really have whiled away those long minutes between recording session takes in the ante-chapel by decorating Epstein's statue of Lazarus in an array of scarves, gowns and motor-cycle helmets? Hmmm. It was quite amusing at the time, mind.

Whether or not my New College generation was a vintage one is not for me to judge, but I don't imagine that trebles as exceptional as, say, Jonathan Brown or Daniel Johnston come along every five minutes. And there were some pretty tasty voices in the back rows too - alto David Hurley, now of the King's Singers of course, and tenors Rufus Müller and (gritted teeth here) Spoilsport Robinson spring most instantly to mind.

And did I enjoy it? Sporadically, I'd say. The music itself, though, has left a lasting impact of which I'm hugely appreciative. Even in a job that involves listening to Beethoven sonatas, Mahler symphonies and Strauss operas on a daily basis, little has



quite the same impact for me as, say, a Palestrina mass, a Harris motet or, above all, the soaring arches of a Howells gloria. And then there's the sight of the stained-glass windows reflected in the glass swell box of the organ as Elgar's *The Spirit of the Lord* brings a summer evensong to a glorious close. That, I'd venture, is a musical experience that is second-to-none.

## **Doctor H K Andrews - "Ken"**

*by Christopher Hobart*

Dr Andrews was born in Comber, County Down on 10 August 1904. He was educated at Bedford School and RCM, then followed Music Doctorates at Trinity Dublin and New College Oxford. He was Organist and choirmaster at Beverley Minster 1934-38, New College 1938. He was lecturer in music and subsequently Fellow of New College and Balliol and taught at the RCM. He died in Oxford on 10 October 1965.

Ken came to New College in autumn 1938, direct from Beverley Minster, in succession to Doctor Sydney Watson. He was a tall gangling figure, some 6 foot 4 inches in height with his hair parted just off centre and pipe frequently clenched in his teeth. He was essentially a very shy man, which was evidenced in his somewhat awkward sloping gait. As a musician he was a perfectionist, with absolutely no time for the second rate. He instilled in us boys a desire and determination to achieve the best possible in everything we sang – and to work hard to achieve it. He had an uneasy, rather abrupt manner and was economical both in praise and criticism, but he left us in no doubt when we fell short! On the other hand, he recognised and acknowledged work and effort and there was always an underlying warmth which led us to respect and to like him.

What is more, he guided the choir to what we felt was an excellence in performance, which brought us satisfaction and great pride in achievement. He taught us to love the music of Byrd at a time when this was unusual. In 1940, we sang the Allegri *Miserere*, for the first time ever in New College, from manuscript copies he wrote himself into the rather cumbersome books the choir then used for new psalm chants. No printed version existed. He had a certain "earthiness". He often talked of his Beverley choristers with affection and of their down to earth Yorkshireness. I remember him quoting "I've got the squits, sir", when a Beverley chorister was caught short with a runny tummy in choir practice!

We had been used to the charm and friendliness of the delightful Sydney Watson, under whom the choir was undoubtedly happy and at ease and initially we missed him. But we were aware that Dr Andrews was aiming at a higher level of performance than had been our custom, and that we were achieving that aim. The men on the other hand (at that time only one Alto, Tenor and Bass on each side) were less happy. Faults were corrected, often publicly. This was hard for them to stomach and not good practice, unless it was understood and accepted. There were departures to join Christchurch Choir. I remember one occasion when the choir had to repeat an entire evensong in the choir vestry, after the service, the performance being considered significantly below standard. This did not happen again in my time.

Under Ken Andrews, the choir progressively improved, from an already high base, and in 1940, we were asked by the BBC to sing the weekly Wednesday evensong on the Home Service. That 1940-41 series ran, as I remember, to some 40 services. This was a source of great pride for all of us. Dr Stanton, the BBC's Head of Music, came several times to visit us, on one occasion bringing us a giant box of chocolates. He was very popular!

Such treats were rare, and as war-time rationing took effect, the regime at New College school grew more spartan. So when treats occurred, they were real highlights. Before the war, at Christmas 1938, we were entertained to a Christmas party in the Warden's lodgings (at that time H.A.L. Fisher) by Mrs Fisher and her daughter Mary, where charades were a key feature. We had a similar party with Warden Spooner's daughters in their home opposite the Parks. More importantly Ken Andrews had us home to his bachelor house in Iffley, for tea supplied by the college kitchens. That was a feast. Afterwards the dining room table was cleared for games of Blow Football. While Ken continued to invite us annually, at some time, the other invitations were not repeated over my years (1937-41).

Other memorable occasions were singing for the Gaude dinners in Hall, in the minstrels' gallery. The last of the Gaude dinners was in 1939, when we feasted on roast chicken and strawberries, but there was then a long gap until after the war. There were also picnics. The picnic I remember in 1938 was to the White Horse hill near Uffington, where we were driven in their cars by Ken Andrews, Sir Hugh Allen and Alic Smith, later to become Warden. Inevitably, petrol rationing brought an end to such outings.

Doctor Andrews was a major influence in my life, above all for his single-minded pursuit of excellence. When he arrived at New College, he immediately recognised our name "Hobart pronounced Hubbart!". I found that he had known my father in the early 30s when a curate at Chalfont St Peter in Buckinghamshire. (Dr Andrews was then organist at one of the sister churches in the Gerrards Cross Group). By chance I had also come to New College School from the prep part of Bedford School, where Ken had his secondary education.

I had a decent voice and was a very hard worker – which appealed to him. But I was not a great musician. He placed me next to Kit Whelan, who was a secure and excellent musician and chorister - thus he drew the best out of both of us. At the end of my last term (summer 1941), he gave the two choir prizes for that year (senior and junior) to the pair of us, of which I was very proud. It was not anticipated and it was unusual since the junior prize normally went to a promising junior chorister and I was a "corner boy". It was, I have always felt, because I was leaving and in recognition of that "hard work" factor!

Dr Andrews was very kind to me personally. He kept in touch, in his minute hand writing, with short letters, which was I believe unusual, and took a special interest after the loss of my leg in 1942. He visited me when in hospital and gave me a copy of Kipling's *Stalky and Co* – no doubt to stimulate the revolutionary spirit. He had found out that Peter Maxwell and I had biked down to MCS for a swim at midnight in the Cherwell, three days before the end of my last term!

I have always felt that his presence in the SCR was helpful when in 1946, I applied for a place in College to read Modern History. I was not only welcomed but set an exam and then granted a useful Exhibition to assist my father's meagre clerical salary and I was awarded the Longstaffe Exhibition in 1948 – £30 for a member considered to have “general merit”. At the time it was a very useful sum. I see Ken Andrews' backing in all these helpful contributions to my life. During my time at College he invited me to dine with him at high table every year - sometimes a little daunting. Thus my relationship with New College has played a key part in my life right up to the present day, particularly through CHASSOC activities, which is a source of great pleasure and still very much alive today.



**Dr H K Andrews at New College**

Taken in the garden in front of the north face of the old city wall. HKA standing, in his habitual Irish Tweeds, Sir Hugh Allen (hatted) and Sir William Harris, (composer inter alia of *Faire is the Heaven*) seated. Both Allen and Harris were former organists and choirmasters at NC. *Thanks to Colin Gordon for this photograph.*

## **The Royal Maundy**

*by Ian Parrott (1941 –1942)*

I had the great privilege and honour to be a recipient of the Royal Maundy at Westminster Abbey on Maundy Thursday, April 21st 2011.

My name was submitted by The Dean of Westminster, The Very Revd. Dr John Hall. Why, How?

I live in a small village just north of Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire and our Church is St Peter & St Paul in the ecclesiastical parish of Alconbury-cum-Weston (Alconbury Weston being an administrative parish). The Church is a joint patronage with the Bishop of Ely and the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. I was nominated from the Church Council. Recipients are now pensioners selected because of the Christian service they have rendered to the Church and Community.

In 2000 a group of us formed a secular organisation, The Friends of Alconbury Church whose objects are to promote and assist in the care, maintenance and preservation of the Fabric, Fittings, Ornaments and Furnishings of the Church. I have been Chairman since its inception and to date over £41,000 has been raised. This, I gather, was the reason for my nomination.

As the Sovereign celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday on the day, there were eighty-five men and eighty-five women presented with the Maundy Gifts. They consisted of two purses: one Red containing a specially minted £5 coin with the obverse showing the Duke of Edinburgh and a Fifty Pence coin with the obverse showing the logo to be used for the medals at the 2012 Olympic Games, originally “an allowance for clothing and provisions”, given in kind. The other purse, White, contains the small Maundy silver coins – 1p, 2p 3p and 4p pieces totalling 85 pence.

The Service can be traced back to the 12th Century (the distribution of Alms and the washing of feet) and the word Maundy is derived from the Latin *mandatum* meaning commandment. The Service started with the words “Jesus said, I give you a new commandment...”

It was just co-incidence that I am also an Old Chorister of the Abbey, having sung at two of these Services in 1938 and 1939. It was very nostalgic and emotional when the Psalm was sung to the same chant by Walter Alcock that I knew.

Because of breathing difficulty and using Oxygen my son (my “Companion”) wheeled me majestically up the special ramp into the Main West Door! My two guests were a very great friend and my Granddaughter. After the Service, Recipients and Companions were given a Lunch by The Dean and Chapter.

When Her Majesty was handing me the purses, The Lord High Almoner informed her that I had sung at the Coronation of King George VI which she found very interesting and I explained that I was an Abbey Chorister.

It was a memorable “once in a lifetime” day.

## Whodunnit?

by Caroline Higginbottom

Strolling round the Cloisters on a fine misty day in November 2010, in the company of Dr Matt Jenkinson (NCS historian and skilled photographer) searching out images that might connect the recent recording of Mozart's Requiem with College's 18<sup>th</sup> century past, I was struck by one particular autograph gouged into one of the



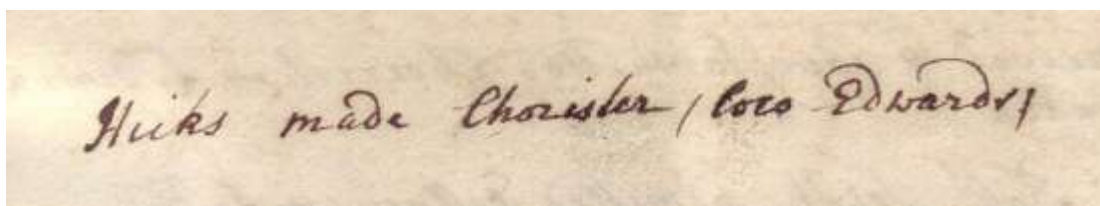
sandstone cloister arches. Neither a formal plaque amongst the many such memorials to former fellows, nor a hastily scratched rough set of initials, this carefully etched, hand-crafted graffito reads:

W. Hicks/ Decm yx/1738

Whoever drew the letters had taken considerable pains to incise them deeply and with precision, and moreover to surround the whole with an

ornamental border. How long did it take him to chisel these letters and figures on 9 December 1738 – a Sunday as it happens? Did the perpetrator return more than once? Did he blow on his fingers to keep warm? Who indeed was Hicks? Clearly not the Warden of the time, nor a fellow, who would know better than to deface the stonework. Perhaps an early 18th-century tourist who had taken a fancy to this form of fugitive memorial. But more than likely, a College member.

The chances of knowing which College member seemed slight, since there are no college records of commoners and only a few of scholars. Initial enquiries drew a blank. No-one appeared to have taken note of this 18th century autograph, and certainly no-one seemed to have knowledge of this individual. But then Jennifer Thorpe, College Archivist, turned up trumps with the one, and only one surviving New College School roll for the whole of the 18th century. On that roll, whose date is entirely compatible with the engraved date, stands the name 'Hicks', in red – signifying, to our delight, that he was a chorister. Furthermore the bursar's Long Books for the period show the typical allocation for chorister upkeep for a certain Hicks starting in 1732, and going through to 1739 – at which age he plausibly stopped singing. Even better, the records for Hicks extend to a minute in the Warden's hand: 'Hicks made Chorister loco Edwards'. We have the moment of his election AND his very personal message for posterity.



## **John Hunt Austin (1917-2010)**

*by Hilary Anne, his daughter*

John died at the end of last year after a short illness, having become frail with dementia, but nevertheless enjoying all aspects of life (notably, listening to Bach arranged for guitar) until the last days.

John was born and lived in Acocks Green, Birmingham, with his mother, a concert pianist, who was widowed when John was very young. The youngest of three (David, Elizabeth and John) he followed his brother David to New College School as a chorister (1927-1932) under Francis "Franny" Carter, where his love of choral music was nourished (closely followed by a love of cricket and later hockey); he then went on as one of the "Magdalen Boys" to MCS though continued to board at New College - whilst Colin Hamilton Baynes was Headmaster, and then went on to study P.P.E. (and sing as an Academical Clerk) at St Peter's Hall, until World War II intervened.

John was stationed in India as a gunner officer and spoke very affectionately of the Indian people with whom he worked, practising the Gujarati he had learned there in later life whenever he could! He met Sanchia at Larkhill on his return and they married in 1946 and settled in North Leigh, where their first daughter Elizabeth was born, then moved to Kirtlington, where they had two more girls, Hilary and Frances. John finished his undergraduate studies, taught for a short time at New College School and worked on medical statistics for the Oxford Regional Hospital Board until 1953, when he was offered a job with Shell at Waterloo and the family moved to Bromley, Kent, selling Walton's Cottage in Kirtlington to Michael and Eileen Groser. He was an active member of the Church there, helping with the Choir and Sunday School and also became an enthusiastic gardener. His daughters absorbed his love of music, and have vibrant memories of singing with John in harmony on all car journeys - long and short - undertaken through their childhood years, progressing from the News Chronicle Song Book through Hymns Ancient and Modern to Bach's *St Matthew Passion*.

After 25 years with Shell, John took early retirement when they were 'down-sizing' and moved back to Oxford, to Harcourt Hill, undertaking a post-graduate Diploma in Statistics at age 55, then commuting to the Civil Service College in Belgravia, where he taught for a few years, before settling into a less challenging working routine with the Church Diocesan Board of Finance in North Hinksey, also enjoying trips abroad with Sanchia to visit Elizabeth - by then in the Middle East (Oman) with her husband - and Frances who married Antoine and moved to St Germain en Laye near Paris.

John and Sanchia very much enjoyed being back in Oxfordshire and renewing friendships; John expanded his knowledge of organic gardening (and composting) and had a wonderful vegetable garden; Sanchia ran a playgroup in East Oxford and taught playgroup tutors around Oxfordshire.

After many happy years, with many children and grandchildren's visits, John and Sanchia moved to a smaller house in Horton cum Studley; John joined the Studley Singers there and cultivated his slightly smaller vegetable garden. They had several trips to the Middle East and New Zealand - John's last trip there was to his grandson's wedding in 2006, aged 89. They moved to a smaller property in Tackley in 1994



where Hilary's son stayed with them whilst he was a 6th form pupil at Bloxham School. After Sanchia died, in 1996, John looked after himself and his garden independently for some years until Hilary came to live with him when he was getting a little tired and forgetful. He continued to enjoy travelling to London, Paris and Spain with Hilary and her children.

John was very content to be so close to many favourite Oxford places, in his last years, and to take part in New College Old Boys festivities and functions - as well as joining in with Oxford Hawks Old Boys reunions.

The schooling and singing experiences of his early life gave him a positive and adventurous attitude and it was a joy for him to stay in touch with the institutions whose teachers had inspired him as a boy. When he could attend services, listening to the Choir of New College gave him great pleasure.

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Bob Lowrie adds "I first met John in the early 1980s, when he arranged a musical get-together at his home, and invited some old friends including Dr Sydney Watson (organist of Christ Church for many years and, before that, organist of New College), Frank Green (lay clerk 1950-75), Michael Groser (lay clerk 1955-82), and myself. He was a devoted follower of the choir and regularly attended CHASSOC reunions.

He was a statistician by profession, and was also keenly interested in science, especially chemistry. As a pupil at Magdalen College School he was taught by Col John Simmonds, my own erstwhile mentor, and was proud when his own grandchild attended the school. John would regularly phone me for advice in helping his grandson with his science homework. Needless to say, John's knowledge of church music was also impressive.

Colin Gordon and I celebrated his 90th birthday (and one or two others) with lunch at a restaurant; age had not dimmed his wit nor sharp memory, and our meetings were always convivial. I was sad to learn of his death."

## News

**Peter Wallin** (29-30) writes that he turned 90 in January, and has reluctantly given up one of his choirs, mainly so that he only has two nights a week leaving his wife alone. "I still sing with the Bury Bach Choir – last concert Elgar's *Dream* and the next Purcell's *King Arthur*. Never done it nor heard it before – not to be compared with *Dido*, I feel, but it is early days and must wait for the whole work. I also sing with the Suffolk Church Singers, in churches in Suffolk which need money (all of them, of course!) to aid restoration and maintenance. A great variety and the organs (or lack thereof) make for interesting performances! Lighting, or lack of it, is often a problem and, with my age, this is vital! I do not depend entirely on knowing everything by heart!!! I shall keep on exercising the "bellows" as long as possible. It is good to hear the choir continues to thrive. Just had *The Creation* given to me for my b'day. I love these works performed by small groups."

**John Platts** (38-44) writes that he contributed to a recent publication by the College. As many people know, the College has published a beautiful book about the College and I was asked by the editor whether I would like to have the inclusion of my article about New College in the Second World War which I wrote in 1997. I willingly agreed and, with a few extracts for space purposes, it was included almost in its entirety. Having had a number of books published myself, I know the editorial difficulties. I'm sorry that they had to leave out my favourite anecdote about **Ted Hetterley**, Decani Alto, who was in the AFS, who was rushed through the streets of Oxford, claxons blaring, to get him to New College in time for a live BBC broadcast of Choral Evensong. "I was subsequently invited to attend a dinner in Hall in February to celebrate the publication but, in view of the weather and my age, I had to decline. I did however attend a very enjoyable Gaude last summer - a real geriatric gathering. I managed to purchase from the SCR Butler an excellent bottle of New College port who insisted in carrying it to my car and told me we were the nicest group of old members they had entertained for a long time. So we must have done something right!"

**Frank Chandler** (43-46) emails "the latest news is that a new little publishing company, already knowing some of my organ music, asked if they could print and publish it. You won't see it yet in music shops; but it's available on the internet from Nymet Music. *Prelude: Veni Creator* and *Prelude and Fugue (Eheu! Fugaces!)* are already available (£6 each). Several Devon organists play my stuff now. They are now going to set up in print my "A Village Organist's Little Organ Book" with ten pieces in it. (At nearly 80, I didn't hang around still hoping a major publisher would be interested. I don't want money – just the joy of having my music known and used – and being present whenever and wherever it is played or sung.). *Prelude and Fugue* will be played by the Exeter Cathedral Assistant Director of Music at a recital next Winter. He played the *Prelude* at the Cathedral earlier this year. On June 23rd, we went to the Cathedral because *Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face* was the anthem at Solemn Eucharist again. Exeter loved it and premiered it in March – so it's two hits in one year! The retiring voluntary was *Veni Creator*. On June 25th, at a concert I organised at Parkham, near Bideford, another recent work of mine was premiered by one of the best chamber choirs in this part of the world - *A Springtime Garland* - a cycle of four unaccompanied part songs, setting words by Robert Herrick. The revival of my little Kenyan opera (*Ondieki the Fisherman*) in a Nairobi theatre

has had to be postponed until early next year. There are still medical problems, but nowhere near as bad as they were and the medics arrested that rapid alarming weight loss. I still seek solace and lose the hot pain by going up to the church and playing the organ, which I play once a month for services. I love playing and exploring Bach, especially 'The 48', the gentler ones, at home on the piano, and some of the organ works. There is nothing you can't learn about counterpoint from 'The 48'!"

**Dean Tapley** (43-48) and his wife Angela now live in a converted barn at Wingham, a few miles out of Canterbury. He writes "We have three sons two of whom are married and have produced four grandsons between them. The male line seems strong - no sign of a girl anywhere. Angela and I attended one of last Christmas's concerts in New College Chapel. The boys were quite superb. I can't think that we reached anything like that standard in my day. I am still singing, my 69<sup>th</sup> year of singing, currently in the Canterbury Choral Society where I have been a member for some 25 years. This is hard work but most enjoyable. We do four concerts a year in Canterbury Cathedral under Richard Cook's strict discipline. We are due to perform Elgar's *The Kingdom* shortly, to be followed by Rachmaninov's *The Bells* coupled with Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* as the final concert of this year's Canterbury Annual Festival in October.

**Michael Crowe** (46-51; LC 60-61) is currently chairman of the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club ([ocmc.org.uk](http://ocmc.org.uk)) and regularly performs with them as a singer and recorder player.

**Mike Trevanion** (46-49) was in a performance of the Rachmaninov *Vespers* by the South West Festival Chorus in Bath Abbey in February, but had to miss out on their performance of the Verdi *Requiem* in Birmingham last month. He reports that "there are rumours, but as yet little fact, about a possible SWFC winter tour to 'somewhere warm'! Could be to hell and back?" He also attended evensong recently which was lovely, with the late sun illuminating the chapel.

**Dickie Dutton** (47-49) writes that when he was at Sandhurst, his mother persuaded me not to parachute. However, last year he discovered Cooling Church - see Chapter One of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. "The setting of this church moved me emotionally in a way I can't explain, but I vowed then and there to raise money for its further restoration, hence this tandem parachute jump on the 2nd July in my 76th year. Do visit it when you are near Gravesend on the Hoo Peninsula."

**Gavin Beaumont** (48-53) was in chapel recently and found the music stunning as usual.

**John Walkley** (52-56) write that "life here in Scothern, Lincolnshire, is pretty good with retirement involving singing in the local choir, parish council stuff, golf and quite a bit of partying. I meet up on occasion with **Chris Timewell**, **Allen Thomas** and **Kit Villiers** for tiffin, maybe punting or possibly golf and these events are always most agreeable. Last year Anne and I made it to our Golden Wedding and there is a video of our Golden Wedding vows on Youtube – Google 'Walkley golden wedding' or visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV0xorKDqiw>. The vows must be worth a look since movie maker Ridley Scott selected them for inclusion in his much

acclaimed film *Life in a Day* which is made up of events which happened all over the world on 24th July 2010. It premieres in the UK on 14th July.”

**Richard Dubber** (56-61) emailed that he came across the new Choir website a few weeks ago and has listened to one or two of the webcast already. “I must say I think the quality of the sound (and of course the choir) is outstanding, and it is a wonderful facility to have, just at the touch of a button, in the comfort of my own home. **Mr. Sheen** has done a fine job. I was recently in Chapel attending evensong prior to the NCSOBC Dinner and was surprised to see how discreet the microphones were. I have to admit that most of the musical conversation I was involved with that evening was concerning the relative merits of various models of Fender Stratocaster with an old school friend, rather than anything more appropriate to the surroundings, but we agreed the choir was in excellent form, and the organ piece at the end of the service was both a surprise and a joy.”

**David Wright** (OS 56-57) met up with the editor recently (meeting the criterion of ‘nearest member’) and we had an enjoyable pint and a chat about his time under **HKA** and **Meredith Davies**. He was at school with **Bob Lowrie**, and then after his time at NC spent over forty years as Organist and Choirmaster at St Botolph’s Church in Boston. **Rogers Covey-Crump** was a chorister during his time, and by chance he met him recently at a curry house in St. Albans, where they were able to reminisce.

**Colin Macbeth** (58-61) is presently training journalists at the scurrilous Red Pepper in Uganda: He writes “not a day goes by without a litany of bonking, shafting and other amusing/disreputable activities. Good fun actually - despite a 6.45am start which sees me crawl out of my hovel in Bukoto, Kampala, at 5.45 - good for the soul, I imagine, but a bit of a struggle for a poor singing 62-year-old. Also having fun coaching and reporting cricket - under the name Alice Kibao - mainly the women's teams, which adds to the amusement. We have quite a decent choir and organist at All Saints Cathedral, Nakasero - very C of E! And Uganda itself is still very British - trips to the beach at Entebbe, a quiet cigarette by the Nile, a few bombs at the rugby ground, that sort of thing. Blighty is blown away but I don't forget the good times. I even once had a dream of Butch and Meredith Davies (beating someone)! Cheers, m'dears”

**Richard Day-Lewis** (LC 59-61) writes that he has “been lucky with lettuce, strawbs, rasps, courgettes, mange-tout, spuds, but best of all was eating asparagus for three weeks this year. I am back on skis after the hip replacement. Last summer I helped Martin Elliot (Magdalen) at his summer school in Tuscany, which enabled me to visit Barga where I spent five weeks 40 years ago as an opera student on a course run by John Eliot Gardener. Happy memories!”

**David Pettit** (OA 59-60) writes “I still have so many happy memories of my association with New College Choir, first of all during **Meredith Davies**’ last year as organist when I acted as an assistant organist to **Christopher Robinson** – he was also helping out at Christ Church and I was organ scholar at Keble. On the Whitsunday that year (1959) both **Sydney Watson** and Meredith were away so Christopher had to cover Christ Church Evensong, I played at New College and I had to get a ‘dep’ in at Keble – an interesting chain-reaction. The following year, **David Lumsden** kindly offered me the post as Assistant and I had the enormous pleasure of teaching the choir

a tremendous amount of new repertoire – quite a bit of it I had to learn too. This was for a few months coupled with teaching piano at the school after **Ian Harwood** and his wife left. I'm now semi-retired but still teaching at the Royal Academy of Music; I have one day with the Orchestral Conductors and Choral Directors (the course admirably run by **Paddy Russill** – another former assistant organist) and a day with the Organists. The main two areas of instruction are Aural and Keyboard skills and I've devised some fairly tricky aural games to test and tease the students. Although way past retiring age I'm so fortunate to be able to keep up my own keyboard playing, though I gave up the organ some time ago to concentrate on the piano. My wife (Angela Malsbury, clarinettist) and I are about to celebrate our 46th Wedding Anniversary."

**Stephen Tayler** (61-67) has been mixing for the new album *Director's Cut* by Kate Bush, which has recently entered the UK album chart at number 2. You can read about it here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_Tayler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Tayler).

**Jim Helsby** (62-65) emailed "the shop that I own (York Beer and Wine Shop) celebrated its 25 anniversary last year with a specially brewed, limited edition, oak-aged, smoked porter, a few individually numbered bottles of which are still available should any ex-choristers be interested in speciality beers, and be planning a visit to York!" He would also be delighted to hear from anyone who has converted any of the early 1960s discs to CD or computer format, since his vinyl copies are rather old and scratchy.

**Stephen Lumsden** (62-69) writes "Intermusica, which I founded 30 years ago this year (1981), is a leading international artist and project agency in the field of classical music. You can get a lot of information from <http://www.intermusica.co.uk>. We represent leading conductors, instrumentalists, singers, stage directors and tour major orchestras around the world and also promote concerts. Although the Company is based in (and I live in) London, I am rarely here, travelling all over the world on behalf of my business and our clients. We are also just opening an office in Beijing."

**Derek Longman** (63-66) is pleased to say "a reasonable amount of organ playing has come my way mainly playing for Services, although I was invited last September to give a recital on an historic organ built by Andreas Silbermann in the Leonhardskirche, Basel. I'm just about able to follow services in German now although some of the traditions of the church over here are a little more difficult to understand: I'd been invited to conduct a small group of singers for a Service on Easter Saturday. We were to meet in the church and while waiting for the singers to arrive I was preparing my voluntary for the end of the Service. My practice was interrupted by the priest informing me that playing the organ before its appointed moment in the Service was tantamount to blasphemy! At this point the singers and I made a hasty retreat to a church-room to prepare. Fortunately the Service itself went well and I understand the Priest was happy with our contributions. As well as organ playing my musical activities include taking viola da gamba lessons at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (part of the Music Academy). I'm enjoying the challenge of learning a new instrument and look forward to broadening my musical horizons in the local community."

**Martin Pickard** (64-68) is Head of Music at Opera North nowadays. He reports that “**Ben Hulett** was a great success with us in the autumn singing Quint in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. I've diversified from my core profession of opera conductor into translating operas - my translation of Raskatov's weird and wonderful *A Dog's Heart* was performed at English National Opera last November, and I'm now working on translations of Tchaikovsky's *Euegene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades*).”

**Paul Drayton** (66-72) still lives and works in Cornwall. As Director of Music for Duchy Opera he has conducted Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Puccini's *Tosca* and Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*. His own opera *The Hanging Oak* (based on a story by M. R. James) premiered in October 2009. The Drayton *New College Canticles* were broadcast in BBC Choral Evensong in 2010 by the excellent choir of Truro Cathedral. A recent book, *Unheard Melodies, or Trampolining in the Vatican*, is available from bookshops and online at Amazon.com.

**Brian Kay** (LC 66-67) writes “I was recently appointed Principal Conductor of The Really Big Chorus (see <http://www.trbc.co.uk>) with which I conduct three major Royal Albert Hall concerts a year, involving casts of thousands (literally - 4000 when we perform Messiah!) and foreign trips to exotic parts of the world. I also frequently conduct Theresa Caudle's exemplary baroque group Canzona, for which the superstar continuo organist is almost always **Alistair Ross**, who was organ scholar at the time I spent my delightful year at New College - he's the best! Remembering my time at New College, I particularly recall two trebles sitting in front of me - **Howard Goodall** and **Simon Halsey**. I wonder what happened to them!!”

**Howard Goodall** (66-71) writes “a bit of news, I guess, is my CBE in the New Year's Honours, for Services to Music Education. **Simon Halsey** was awarded the cultural version of the Iron Cross in the same month!”

**Simon Halsey** (66-71) is just back from doing War Requiem with his choir, CBSO Chorus, in Germany and Holland with **Ben Hulett** as the wonderful tenor soloist.

**Patrick Wrixon** (66-67) has enjoyed attending several of the opera transmissions from The Met. He says “it is a very interesting medium in that you are not exactly going to the movies but also not really going to the opera, so very much a sort of 'third way'. However, a great way to see and hear some top quality productions. On the farm we are just completing a barn conversion into an educational facility. Sounds a bit grand but actually just a shed with good facilities for loos, hand washing and kitchen to support our farm visits. We have several groups of people including schools and colleges who come to see what we are doing in the way of food production and wildlife habitat management, and we have quite an extensive environmental scheme on the farm. As a local connection we had 20 members of The Oxford Sheep Group here a couple of weeks ago. We left Oxfordshire 40 years ago but it was good to catch up with some old contacts. We also host groups under a project--Let Nature Feed Your Senses----which includes anybody with sensory deprivation who might benefit from specially tailored rural activities. We would be delighted to welcome any CHASSOC members to the farm if they are on their travels in darkest Herefordshire.”



**Adrian Rayson** (66-68) commented on the recent evensong at Eton "I was a boy treble with NC Choir in 1968 when we sang Evensong in Eton Chapel. In the afternoon New College choristers played cricket against Kings College Cambridge choristers. I was the captain of the NC team. Years later I met a certain Bob Chilcott. He was courting a friend of mine. He was, of course, a very successful member of the choir of Kings. Talk moved to the 1968 Festival at Eton and the cricket match. "Ah," he said, "I played in that. In fact I was the Captain of the Kings team!" "Really?" I exclaimed, "I shook your hand - I was the Captain of New College's team!"

Haven't seen him for years but he used to appear at our local church in Marcham because he was married to Polly, who was a parishioner." **Murray Somerville** (OS 67-70) responded "Yes, I well remember that 1968 gathering (and you as a chorister - though I'd forgotten about your cricket prowess.) And I was there for the 2005 Eton gathering too; so sorry to be missing this year's event, particularly because I'll miss the opportunity to pay tribute to Ralph Allwood's splendid tenure. With Ralph, Edward, Stephen and Malcolm at the helm (not to mention my wife's former chorister Parker Ramsay at the organ) it's sure to be a splendid event. But will there be a cricket match?" **Bob Lowrie** (LC 60-64; 66-83) added "I have fond memories of the splendid service in 1968. David Willcocks conducted, and I remember having Bob Tear on one side of me, and **Frank Green** on the other. **David Lumsden** was sent out by Willcocks to discover where the prodigious sound was coming from - only Frank could make himself heard above a choir of eighty-plus singers. Adrian, I remember you as a chorister and, Murray, our paths have frequently crossed - I guess you are still flourishing. I don't remember the cricket - could it be that Frank and I were enjoying a pint or two somewhere?... Very likely!"

**Dara Carroll** (67-72; LC 76-79) reports that sadly he doesn't get the chance to do much serious singing these days, but still enjoys training kids and choirs.

**Murray Somerville** (OS 67-70) emails that he has just been elected to the Board of Early Music America and Hazel has just announced her retirement as Artistic Director of the Blair Children's Choruses at Vanderbilt University, effective summer 2012 - at which time he will also step down as Artistic Director of Music City Baroque, and they will retire to Hazel's hometown of York, South Carolina; where this summer he is getting underway with a project to add a Music Room to their lovely little early 19<sup>th</sup>-century house there, so they have somewhere to put the practice organ, the harpsichord and the chamber organ!

**Alistair Thompson** (LC 67-68) emailed "I had the pleasure and privilege of singing the solo part written for Gerald English in Kenneth Leighton's *Crucifixus pro nobis* with the **Michael Smedley** and the Pro Musica last month. The piece was written for the New College choir in 1961, in **David Lumsden**'s time."

**Michael Ingham** (P 68-72) and Pauline have returned to the UK after their five years sojourn in Tasmania. They are in the process of buying a house in Fendrayton, a village some eight miles NW of Cambridge.

**Mark Rowlinson** (LC 68-70) wrote in after the last newsletter: "**David Lumsden** was organist in my time at NC and during the first of my two years the new organ was being installed. Therefore most music was unaccompanied or accompanied only by a little 3-stop affair; the choir was very good that year. The following year we had the

see-through organ; the choir was nowhere near as good. It was interesting to hear the organ scholars struggling to find registrations to suit 19th-century Psalm chants and music by Stanford and Wood. For some reason I was not singing in the Ch Ch choir for evensong immediately following the opening of NC organ (at which Sydney Watson had been present), so I turned the pages for Sydney in the organ loft. Dyson in F, I recall, and Sydney looked me in the face as he was playing, taking a handful of stops in his left hand apparently at random. 'You see, Mark, you can take any handful of stops on this organ and they blend.' Only the other day I heard a new Sydney story: A man who is now a very well-known academic and early music conductor came as a teenager to Ch Ch to audition to Sydney as a potential organ scholar. He had brought a piece of Bach and on whatever organ (I don't think it was Ch Ch) the trials took place there was almost nothing resembling a Bach registration. But he chose what he thought was the nearest registration to what Bach might have recognised, whereupon Sydney said, 'If you play on that registration I won't listen.' He did play it on that registration and Sydney didn't listen. The person in question has had a wonderful career ever since!"

**Paul Hale** (OS 71-74) writes that "there is some New College organ news in as much as during my sabbatical this term I'm researching the history of the New College organs back to the 16th century, working through the whole of the college archives to do so. The collection of old organ pipes (dating from the 17th and 18th centuries), removed to storage in 1969 when the new organ was build, forgotten and misplaced for the last three decades and now rediscovered after a search of all college properties, will be thoroughly examined, listed and photographed. All this information will be contained in a book on the New College organs which I shall be drafting over the summer, with the enthusiastic support of Edward and the Warden, and published in due course by Positif Press. I am on the look out for photographic images of the organ case in the 1870s, just before its 1879 replacement by Scott, but after Willis' 1874 reworking of the old 'open in the middle' case we know from the well-known engraving." **Does anyone know of a photograph or drawing from this short period? It would be such a help.**

**David Saunders** (AC 71-74; LC 77-78) writes that "we still spend time in Europe with our camper van and Smart car. In fact we are off to Venice on Sunday and then to Greece and Corfu by ferry where hopefully it will be a bit warmer!"

**Peter Beamish** (72-76) writes that his valedictory choral evensong at New College was also DL's, so you could say that it marked the end of an era and the start of a new one under EH. He is happily living in Devon, with five children, three of whom have been Exeter Cathedral choristers.

**Stephen Clarke** (73-77) played organ continuo in the grand *St John* with **Tim Morris**, **Dan Norman** (his son Benjy has just joined Radley as a chorister) **et al.** He writes that "life at Radley continues to be very busy; in addition to the large Chapel choir we have added a smaller chamber choir - who last Sunday tackled Bach *Singet dem Herrn* - with the help of present NC choir members **Ben Sheen**, **Nick Pritchard** and **Guy Cutting**. Meanwhile the main choir are off to sing Evensong at Worcester Cathedral next term, and have already enjoyed getting their teeth into Howells *St Paul's* - great with a choir of over 100! Also one of our tiny choristers Oscar Bennett is moving on to New College school and the choir at the end of this term, meanwhile

one of the present New College chorister leavers headed to Radley in September - Dominic Baum.

**Chris Hodges** (AC 73-76) reports that he is now moonlighting between running a research programme at the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, part of the Oxford Law Faculty, and Rotterdam, where he masquerades under the title of Erasmus Professor of the Fundamentals of Private Law (and tries not to get rumbled - what on earth are the 'fundamentals' of law? Answers on a postcard). Fortunately, the research at both venues is the same, namely working out how best to design a new civil justice system for the EU. The 2011-12 season is largely taken up with talking to a lot of ombudsmen, arbitrators and business associations who run non-court dispute resolution systems, plus their associated regulators. Many of them operate rather well, but are not well enough known: he has been flogging his research team to get a book finished for next year which will tell all, and suggest how things could be substantially improved. He advises the European Commission and the odd national minister or two on this stuff, generally making things up as he goes along, flitting frequently to London and also recently to The Hague, Copenhagen, Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Canada, New York and San Francisco. Regrettably, as a result, time for singing has totally evaporated, but he lives in hope, and is shortly to finish a 4 year stint as Chairman of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (which represents all English pharmacies in their NHS arrangements), which ought to free up some time (but probably will not). Working out how pharmacists fit best in the debacle of the NHS Lansley Reforms has taken up a lot of time in the past year. His final pharmacy duty is to attend an international conference at Whistler, Canada in August - strange to go there when there is absolutely no snow, but there will be plenty of advice on hand on which pills to take if one gets ill or goes off piste.

**Pete Caldwell** (76-83) has just been made MD of Tefen Ltd, the management consultancy. He writes "I still have time to play in the Dads' Band at the kiddies' primary school - earlier this year they put on We Will Rock You - we did 22 Queen songs and I wore a Brian May wig."

**Geoffrey Webber** (OS 77-82) writes that "the School very kindly helped accommodate Caius choir when we sang in Oxford last year at SMV, thanks to our connection via Emma Gullifer who's now completed 2 years here. The Music Faculty in Cambridge now has a M.Mus. degree in Choral Studies, and our first external examiner is **Jeremy Summerly**; visiting teachers have included **Paul Treppe** and **Patrick Russill**."

**Julian Humphreys** (78-83) is renovating an old Victorian house from top to bottom, which has been... an adventure.

**Ed Sykes** (78-83) is currently straddling the political worlds of the Palace of Westminster, having accepted employment as a freelance Hansard reporter with both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Like choral singing, what it lacks in significant remuneration it compensates for in being immensely interesting. Ed's first task was to record the Noble Lords' Question Time on the morning preceding President Obama's historic speech in Westminster Hall. The Noble Lords were more interested in discussing the merits of British Summer Time. He continues to work on pickupaproperty.com with our editor, and they shook the business world with the

news of a buy-out of their immediate competitor in June. On the domestic front, his son Toby is now 6 months old and gurgles with delight when sung at, but has not produced any notes himself as yet.

**Nicholas Adams** (79-83) writes “having spent two years at the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme, raising nearly £10M in endowment and setting up a number of research projects, I returned to Edinburgh - via half a year in Berlin, writing a book on German Idealism. The move back to Scotland feels a bit like returning to civilian life, although my current project (editing a volume on Christian theology which will be translated into Arabic for use in Middle-Eastern Universities) has some continuities with the work in Cambridge.”

**Jeremy Pound** (79-85) is still working as Deputy Ed at BBC Music Magazine which has bucked the general downward music trend by reporting an increase in circulation this year – hurrah! He writes “Kim and I living in Cheltenham, where James (3 and a half) complains daily about going to nursery, but loves it really. Within the job, I constantly bump into old NC types, as they’re everywhere. Most recently, I interviewed **James Gilchrist** over the phone, though I do also see him occasionally decked out in a cycling helmet and yellow jacket at Cheltenham Station. Quite rightly, he is continuing to get rave reviews wherever he appears – I heard him in fine form in Monteverdi’s *Vespers* in Tewkesbury Abbey last summer. **Ash Khandekar** recently wrote me a very fine article on Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*. He’s spending a lot of time working on projects in India but, as the editor of Opera Now, is still very much to be seen on the opera circuit – I saw him enjoying a glass of champagne before the premiere of Turnage’s *Anna Nicole* recently. Could probably have hit him with a well aimed bread roll, but I gather that you don’t really do that sort of thing at Covent Garden.”

**Nigel Gale** (LC 80-82) My wife Barbara & I attended evensong on 20<sup>th</sup> June this year to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We were married in the chapel in 1981 (with the editor in the front row, I believe). Edward was away on sabbatical so the choir was conducted by **Geoffrey Webber**, who also played the fiendishly difficult Messiaen *Transportes de Joie*. I can't remember who played Howells *Psalms Prelude set 1 no 1*. The responses were composed by **Adam Gordon**. Other music was the *Crown Imperial*, Durufle *Ubi caritas*, *Faire is the heaven* and the Vierne *Finale Symphony no 1* - so all fairly indulgent! I have not sung recently, but the last outing was with Ely Cathedral Choir as a very frequent extra, and on tours and recordings under **Paul Trepte** between 1990 and 1997, and in the associated close harmony group, Shades of Blue!

**Leo Carey** (81-87) is still working away at the New Yorker, while his brother **Tom Carey** (83-90) is now an associate at Slaughter and May.

**Alexander L'Estrange** (82-86) continues to be busy composing for choirs and for TV, and running choral workshops. ‘*Zimbe*’, his African/jazz choral work, has just hit 50 performances in less than 2 years since publication, including venues as far afield as Kenya, Australia, Indiana and Dunedin, NZ (conducted by **David Burchell**, organ scholar when Alexander was a naughty choirboy back in the 80s, adding major 7ths into chords whenever he thought no-one was listening...). See [www.zimbe.net](http://www.zimbe.net) for more information.

**Robert Hollingworth** (AC 85-88) is pleased to report his “Striggio CD has been in the top 5 of the Specialist Classical Chart for 13 weeks now which is a new if welcome one on me! It's nice that one can record a piece completely new to the CD world by a composer no-one had heard of and for it still to sell. Obviously it sells partly on the freak size value but once people get it and listen to it, it seems to convince. It's a very different piece from the Tallis and seeks to do different things. It's not really about vocal counterpoint and expressive dissonance but the dramatic conversation between five choirs. The recording process (**Eamonn Dougan** and **Richard Wyn Roberts** both singing) was a party from start to finish. The enlarged I Fagiolini encompassed the great and good from the current early music world with almost as many Renaissance instruments as singers. Now I just have to find the money to tour it. Sigh...”

**CJ Neale** (86-90) is now a well established *Swingle Singer* - working hard, having a lot of fun and just about making ends meet!

**Chris Chivers** (S 88-89) moved to John Keble Church, Mill Hill, London in 2010 as Vicar and was made Canon Emeritus of Blackburn after five years as Canon Chancellor at the cathedral there modelling interfaith relations locally, nationally and internationally. His latest book, *Fully alive*, commended by the Archbishop of Canterbury, was published in 2010.

**Gary Cooper** (OS 88-91) has moved to an idyllic location, overlooking the Moray Firth and close to the Cairngorm Mountains... his idea of heaven!

**Daniel Norman** (AC 89-92) is still living in Oxford with Sarah and three rapidly growing boys. He has had a busy past year including concerts in Paris, Vienna, Helsinki, Taipei and a very special experience taking opera to Srebrenica. He writes “This summer sees my Glyndebourne Festival debut in *Die Meistersinger* followed by several months with Opera North in *Madama Butterfly* and *Queen of Spades*. Looking forward to doing a couple of concerts at home - the first a *Creation* with NC in September, then the following month Schubert's *Schwanengesang* at the Oxford Lieder Festival.”

**Tim Morris** (OS 89-92) writes that he put on a *St John Passion* at Radley on Sunday 27 March. “Taking part were: **Me** (conductor), **Dan Norman** (evangelist), **Stephen Clarke** (continuo), **Will Ford** (bass solo - he did 'Eilt'), **James Swash** (tenor), **Matthew Clarke** (alto) and **Adrian Lowe** (tenor solos). Also a cheeky mention for Hannah Nye, at NC from 2004-7 reading Maths, who sang the soprano solos.”

**Oliver Philips** (89-95) emails that he is now qualified and practising as a barrister in Lincoln's Inn, where the occasional note of organ music from the Chapel brings back memories of New College. “From time to time I try to escape the world of chancery law and come down to Oxford, where the choir's singing is always a delight (and even better to be able to tune in over the internet from my desk); sometimes I even make it down to my old school haunts in Winchester, where the young countertenors now have the pleasure of being taught by **David Clegg**. A few years ago I had the pleasure of depping in the back row occasionally at New College (touring to the South of France was a rather different experience from the back row!), which led indirectly to a singing trip to Christchurch, New Zealand with **Oliver Loach** and some of the Christ

Church (Oxford) clerks - perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime experience, given that the cathedral there is now in ruins (though, admirably, its choir is still going strong). These days I sing once a year in concerts organised by **Will Petter** and conducted by **Paul Plummer** in Oxford, and would be very happy to spend more time doing music if only my small flat in Chiswick could accommodate a piano! Still, it's good to see so many contemporaries putting their choral training to better use than me--if nothing else it is fun to be able to put names to faces when the Sixteen and other groups are singing on the television--and it is particularly good to see some of them at the CHASSOC events such as the recent pub visit in London, which was very enjoyable."

**Mark Milhofer** (LC 90-91) writes "I have been very busy which is good news... here are some of my personal highlights: Having not sung in England for 9 years I got 3 contracts close together, the best was singing Arnold in a concert performance of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* for the Chelsea Opera Group at the QEH (followed closely by *Don Giovanni* at Longborough and *Alcina* at Buxton Festivals). There has also been a "version" of Pergolesi's *L'Olimpiade* in Naples which we're taking to St Petersburg this autumn, Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* in Geneva and a wonderful production of *Die Entführung* in Rennes which was broadcast live on giant screens outside the theatre, on the radio, TV, the internet and even in 3D!"

**Colin Baldy** (Hon) says "I've had loads of fab reviews for my book; notably from the National Association of Teachers of singing in the States. Am currently working on another which is going to focus on boys' and changing voices. Have been developing ties with musical organisations in China and am going to be directing a production of *Pirates of Penzance*, of all things, with the Peking Chamber Orchestra! Bizarrely, I've also been booked to direct the same show for Utah State University next year so I'm going to be very piratical all round in 2012! Am also preparing to record *Dichterliebe* and the *Heine Liederkreis* with Christopher Weston. All very exciting."

**Adrian Finch** (AC 91-94) managed to meet **Dan Norman** in Oxford for a quick pint recently. He reports that "things fine here at Bedford. The boys are keeping us busy and there has not been time for a lot else. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to join in the evensong at the last reunion, very nostalgic!"



**Nick Smith** (LC 91-92) tells me he is "on cloud 9 having climbed the Old Man of Hoy in Orkney a week last Sunday (I'm the one on the left!). The captain of the ferry honked at us and invited us onto the bridge on our return. It was climbed live on the BBC in front of 15 million viewers so is quite well known to a certain generation."

**David Clegg** (AC 92-95) writes that "on the work front singing, fixing and teaching tends to keep me out of mischief. Alongside the usual schedule of concerts with groups such as The Sixteen and the Gabrieli Consort, shows this year have included staged projects at the Globe Theatre, Dijon Opera House, Spitalfields Festival and the Queen Elizabeth Hall, while my fixing portfolio has expanded to take in not only some of the country's foremost early music groups but I have also provided singers for the BBC Concert Orchestra and a Grammy Award winning computer game



soundtrack! I also sat on a casting panel for ENO which was fascinating. I conducted a charity performance of Brahms *Requiem* in the two piano version and was delighted to have NC support in the form of **Christopher Hughes** (now **Glynn**) as one of the pianists. It was a delight also to lure **Matthew Beale** out of retirement - the golden tones are still there. But all work and no play makes David a dull boy so this year has also seen holidays to Prague, Chamonix (my first skiing experience), Amsterdam and Scotland. It was great to attend the choir's record launch at St John's, Smith Square where I thought the Mozart *Requiem* was stunningly performed. I look forward to the disc very much."

**Gregory Finch** (AC 92-96) is busy in France with recent performances of Zelenka's *Lamentatio del venerdì santo* in Caen and Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with the Opéra de Chambre de Genève.

**Tom Raskin** (AC 92-95) reports that his daughter Eva is talking and running around a lot. "Marie-Sophie continues to run the Sixteen which is very busy at the moment. They've got more TV work lined up so you might see me there too. I'm singing lots with them as well as opera stuff. I've just started rehearsing as a cover for Garsington in Vivaldi's *La Verita in Cimento*. Rare stuff but good tunes and reams of recit."

**Clive Letchford** (LC 92-96) recently married Judith Affleck. He writes "She is another Classics teacher, and like me a refugee from living in London, but we only met up after we had both escaped to Warwickshire."

**James Dyer** (95-00) graduated from Trinity College Dublin in the summer of 2010, and in September began singing at Peterborough Cathedral where he often runs into the esteemed editor of this publication!

**Ben Rayfield** (LC 95-97) says he is "just about keeping his artists on the straight and narrow! Just finishing our house renovation as well (4 weeks to go...) so looking forward to signing that off and going on our first proper holiday since honeymoon"

**Ben Hulett** (AC 96-99) writes that "Alice, Freddie, George and I moved to Thame two years ago and are enjoying being in the UK after four years in Germany. NC seems to be well represented around the world; in Hamburg I sailed on **Tim Robinson**'s HMS Indomitable when he played Vere in *Billy Budd*, bumped into **Toby Spence** as he was Gluck's *Pylade*, sang Mendelssohn's version of *Israel in Egypt* with **Alex Potter** in Dusseldorf, have Passioned with **James Gilchrist** in London and done *War Requiem* with **Simon Halsey** in Dortmund, Rotterdam and Eindhoven. As I write, I am waiting for the premiere of *Salome* in Baden-Baden where I am once more reunited with **Tim Robinson**. Singing continues apace with Operas, concerts and recordings. I am beginning to do more recitals and my first recital disc DEPARTURES featuring a brand new song cycle from Giles Swayne was warmly received and critically acclaimed (Latin for 'no one bought it'). I enjoy the occasional project in the UK - *Turn of the Screw* for Opera North was a highlight and enjoying my roses (Benjamin Britten, Winchester Cathedral, Munstead Wood, Miss Alice).

**Corin Cole** (98-02) is living in Cambridgeshire and enjoying a job (with a small/young digital publishing company) that lets him travel abroad even more often than he did with the choir.

**Ben Linton** (AC 99-03) is now a Sergeant working at New Scotland Yard in the Olympic planning team. He says “it’s a bit of a change from actively fighting crime but very interesting.”

**Tom Rogers** (AC 02-05) reports that “after 18 long months of searching, I’ve finally bought a place in South London, which I’m currently doing up. Still trying my best to keep Radio 4 on air and sounding nice. Otherwise still muso-ing, not so quite much of the singing, but orchestral and jazz trumpeting, and taken to waving in front of a new Big Band... details of gigs to follow no doubt!”

**Matthew Clarke** (04-08) is enjoying life at Radley, now just finished his GCSEs and looking forward to a bit of work experience for Garsington Opera in their new venue at Wormsley. Still learning singing from **Stephen Taylor**, but now changed from countertenor to baritone, and very much enjoying this.

## **Future Dates for the Diary**

### **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September at 9pm**

Concert at Abbazia di San Nicolo, Terni, IT

Programme:

Part I: Masters across the English Channel: music of the late C17th  
Purcell, Locke and Couperin

Part II: Masters across the ocean: English and American music of the C20th  
Britten, Dove, Lauridsen, Stravinsky, Ives, Bernstein and Tippett

### **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September at 9pm**

Concert at Basilica di San Pietro, Perugia, IT

The Choir of New College, Oxford with Camerata Strumentale Citta di Prato.

Programme to include Bernstein, Chichester Psalms and Fauré, Requiem.

### **Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September at 3.30pm (Oxford Alumni Weekend)**

Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford

Haydn Creation

The Choir of New College, Oxford with Oxford Philomusica

### **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October at 7.30pm**

Swalcliffe Parish Church (College living) in aid of Tower Restoration Fund.

### **Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 8.30pm**

Rialto Theatre, Limassol, Cyprus - Haydn Creation

### **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October at 8.30pm**

Strovolos Theatre, Nicosia, Cyprus - Haydn Creation

### **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December**

Sheldonian Theatre – Handel Messiah with Oxford Philomusica.

*October 2012 – Next CHASSOC Reunion - date to be confirmed.*

## Births

To **Julian** and Catherine **Humphreys** - Zoe Hana, on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

To **Edward** and Lorna **Sykes** – Toby Francis, on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010

## Marriages

**Gary Cooper** (OS 88-91) and Sabine Dziewior in December 2010

**Clive Letchford** (LC 92-96) and Judith Affleck on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2010

**Stefan Schrijnen** (AC 02-05) and Chiara Alfano on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2011

**Daniel Benoliel** (93-95) to Abby on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2011

## Missing List

We do not have contact details for the following - please could you email Henry on [chassoc@softtop.co.uk](mailto:chassoc@softtop.co.uk), or write, if you know of the addresses and phone numbers for the following, or any other information about them - whether you are that person or not! Also please do remember to tell us if you move!

Roger Barnes (54-55)  
Toby Bourgein (57-58)  
William Brown (63-65)  
Ian Butcher (68-70)  
Adam Cooper (63-64)  
Simon Talbot Evans (64-67)  
Roger Fleming (58-60)  
Philip Goldsworthy (81-85)  
Robin Halliday (49-54)  
Martin Hedges (61-66)  
Michael Hinton (56-61)  
Alistair Hopkinson (62-67)  
Charles Jolly (84-89)  
Christopher Moore (LC, 83-85)  
Jeremy Munro (LC, 77-79)  
Gerald Orme (61-66)  
Robert Pearce (51-54)  
David Ransom (57-60)  
Alex Sawyer (AC, 85-88)  
Stephen Sleigh (Hon, Staff)  
Clive Stapley (75-79)  
Ian Stewart (60-62)  
Stuart Walker (37-40)  
Nicholas Whitehead (74-79)  
Martin Wright (51-55)

Leo Batchelor (89-90)  
Christopher Brent (49-52)  
Paul Burbridge (AC, 54-56)  
Jonathan Carras (85-88)  
Paul Derrett (61-63)  
John Trueman Farrar (52-54)  
Guy Gibson (71-75)  
Theo Green (81-83)  
Martin Hallows (86-89)  
Richard Hickman (56-60)  
Peter Hopkins (69-73)  
Tim Jolly (82-86)  
Rupert Kirkham (64-66)  
Sgt Hugh Morgan (69-72)  
Harvey Nightingale (AC, 78-81)  
Nigel Howard Major Patten (51-53)  
Michael Price (59-62)  
Allan Rostron (Hon)  
David Skelton (66-68)  
Matthew Smith (96-99)  
Nathaniel Steele (94-96)  
Jonathan Stoughton (AC, 98)  
Justin Waters (70-75)  
Laurence Wiliford (AC)

## Recordings



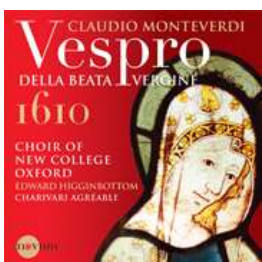
### **Mozart Requiem**

What makes this recording special? The use of soloists drawn from the chorus, as in Mozart's day, combined with the use of a period band. The contemporary virtues of this approach are consistency in the sound-world between chorus and solo ensemble, and homogeneity of style between orchestra and chorus.



### **Evensong at New College Oxford**

The Choir of New College Oxford  
Nicholas Wearne organ  
Robert Patterson organ  
Directed by Edward Higginbottom

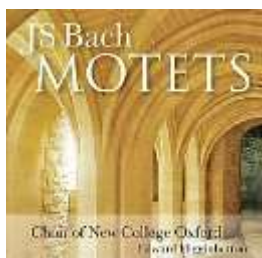


### **Monteverdi, Vespers of 1610**

The Choir of New College, Oxford  
Charivari Agréable  
Directed by Edward Higginbottom

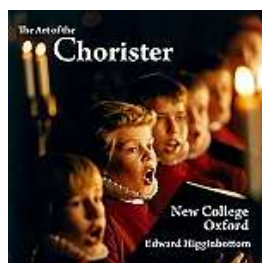
*"Edward Higginbottom draws wonderfully elegant and naturally expressive singing from his choir at New College, Oxford. This is the New College sound, and it serves the music very well indeed."*

Simon Heighes, BBC Building a Library, Dec 2010



### **JS Bach Motets**

The six great motets: *Jesu, meine Freude*; *Lobet den Herrn*; *Komm, Jesu, komm*; *Fürchte dich nicht*; *Der Geist hilft*; *Singet dem Herrn*. Recorded in New College Chapel in July 2009.



### **The Art of the Chorister**

Released in May 2009 on the NCR label it features music for treble voices by Mozart, Bach, Mendelssohn and others. It is the ultimate answer to any other trebles disc – the unique, exciting New College sound.

These and many other Choir recordings are available for purchase online from <http://www.newcollegechoir.com> or by phone from 01865 279519. Sales of CDs contribute importantly to the Choir's recording budget, and buying through the website is not only helpful to the choir but also very convenient for you!

*For October release: EXULTENT SUPERI Motets Choisis by François Couperin.*