

Choir Notes for November

A Choirmaster, an Organist, two basses, three tenors, three altos and two sopranos: does that seem like the making of a good choir to you? No, on their own I don't think so either, but it is a start! I don't think that we keep choir practice attendance records, but on occasion we may have been there! My search back over past copies of 'The Messenger' does show that a reasonably diverse representative sample of our choir members have contributed to 'Choir Notes' since September just over one year ago. No collusions, no joint contributions but maybe just the occasional gentle editorial nudge, and of course some stalwarts have been multiple offenders. I will stop short of further mathematical analysis for it would show up my inadequacies following fellow Tenor Derek's erudite March piece and perhaps draw "tuts" from Soprano Deb. (Is a mathematical "tut" similar to the musical "tuts" that I recognise, I wonder?)

The passing of a year and approach of the autumnal equinox cannot but tempt me to cast my mind back to those sunlit uplands from where we looked forward with lightened hearts to The Great Escape which was to have been in March. I still have a large collection of toilet rolls stacked up in readiness for the shortage that our Leaving was to cause. Actually there was only just enough room to store them because of the hundreds of (in those days personally imported) pre-EU German wax candles that still remain from my previous attempts at preparing for the power cuts of the 1980s when our shops had none, and also some long forgotten bags of sugar - likewise to beat the anticipated 'shortages'. By the time you read this I might yet be able to smile smugly. As I write, looking forward to the end of October, my heart weighs a little heavier. Choir practice will offset this, though!

I am still able to recall my response to the sound of the 'flash mobs' that stood up in the Palace of Westminster a few days ago at 1.30 am after Mr Speaker's farewell. How much more I now appreciate the benefit of repeated choir practices and the forbearance of our inspired and long-suffering Choirmaster!

We have had a blessed year now since the interregnum and I had the good fortune to catch Norbert just before a mid-September choir practice. He told me that after a year he was still smiling (and he was!) but he issued what might be a veiled threat. He said that some time ago he had been advised by a wise clergyman not to change anything for one year on his being licensed into a new parish.... I like to think that the choir will respond to any challenge he may yet pose.

By now we have become used to the new improved acoustics afforded by the heated HARP floor but are not really expecting to see the nave roof revert to its earlier (200 years?) pitched height which would afford a further improvement. It would also afford more space for a helter-skelter if the PCC deemed it appropriate under the Mission Action Plan. That reminds me - next year, 2020, will be celebrated as the Year of Cathedrals. I wonder if another choir visit to Norwich Cathedral could be arranged then to coincide with the proposed visit of Dippy the Dinosaur on his UK tour.

Looking nearer ahead to the crib service (100% scale animals!) at Holly Green Farm makes me wonder whether we should have at least one choir practice in an unheated space. With our new heating system, I fear we may all be going soft. If we don't go and sing carols on Risborough station Platform 2 again then we probably will be.

The Vicar's piece in the Messenger reminded me that it is not easy to find a fresh anthem for Harvest Festival services. This year Cynthia suggested "All people that on earth do dwell" arranged by Thomas Tallis. By all accounts it went down well with my fellow choristers, and particularly with the representative of The Farming Community Network, Glyn Evans, who at this time of year tends to hear the same music at every service he attends.

We are now looking forward to our visit to St Albans cathedral on 26th and 27th October.

Oops..... I've run out of space to tell you why we enjoy singing and who benefits from choral activities.

Kip Manning, Tenor.