

Choir Notes: June 2021

Choir Member Sheena Prenter is leaving Bledlow and has kindly given us her thoughts on leaving the Choir



I grew up in Wexford in Ireland (left). My father was musical. He sang with Wexford Festival Singers in the 1970s, possibly from its foundation. The radio was always on at home and my father had a considerable collection of classical and contemporary music, which I did not much appreciate at the time. I would love to have access to his 33^{1/3} rpm vinyl records now!

I was a member of the Wexford Youth Choir in my teens. There were no boys in it. A high point was the choir singing Britten's "*Ceremony of Carols*" with the Wexford Festival Singers. I remember being thrilled at our sound as teenage girls. Singing was a distraction from an unhappy adolescence and was a highlight of my week. Ireland has a wonderful singing heritage and culture.

I learned to sing just by singing in choirs. Jeff's internet "Zoom" lessons in lockdown are all the professional personal voice training that I have ever had. I can't read music and have little innate musical ability, but I can hear and respond to dynamics, expression, cadences and emotion, so I can fit in with a choir and follow directions from the choirmaster. What I lack in formal training, I can make up for in amateur practical ways, and I rarely get lost! I have never felt awkward or unwelcome in Bledlow Choir, and I can only encourage people to have a go if they want a rewarding and welcoming activity.

I left home at seventeen for the UK to do nursing training. What with work, living abroad, lapsed faith, becoming a single parent and all life's other experiences, I only started with a church choir in about 2004, when I joined the choir of St Mary's at Princes Risborough.

I sang there until my husband and I moved to Chartridge, near Chesham, in 2012. Members of St Mary's Choir introduced me to Bledlow Choir and I became an occasional member, though not a member of Holy Trinity's congregation or a parish resident.

After moving to Chartridge, I sang with Amersham Choral Society for a few years, but my heart remains with sacred and church choral music, rather than big works of famous composers, which only lead to performances once or twice a year.

To me, church singing is not an academic or formally tutored exercise in excellence: it is part of my journey or continuum in faith, perhaps not wholly consistent over the years, but nonetheless, a journey of combining with other singers to do my best within my abilities to make a glorious sound to God.

I have loved doing cathedral visits with Bledlow Choir since 2011 (York, Southwell, St Albans, Salisbury, Southwark, St Paul's and Birmingham), and I had so very much hoped to visit St Paul's and Gloucester this year before moving away. I hope to sing with a new choir in Norfolk, and join Bledlow again perhaps if they make any trips to my new part of the world.

Sheena Prenter - Soprano

Sheena, thank you so much for all your contributions to the Choir and for sharing your thoughts on leaving - we wish you well in Norfolk

*The previous virtual services can be seen and heard via the parish website and at:
www.bledlowvirtualseervices.uk*