

On 17th of June to Exeter College, Oxford, to hear our Keri sing with Thame Chamber Choir. This was lovely, with Keri and others singing solos in golden summer evening light.

On 1 July, to Uxbridge Choral Society, who were giving their last concert with Jeff as their choirmaster. I went for a good night out; to lend Jeff a hobby horse (see below); and to see if he had this Choir watching him more than we do.

Some of the choir watched Jeff some of the time, but many had glued their eyes to the music with the same eye-glue, made by a factory at Walsall in the West Midlands, as is used by the Bledlow Choir and probably 90% of amateur choirs worldwide. The factory is next to the Walsall Canal, by which it transports eye-glue around the globe.

The two soprano soloists (pupils at Pipers Corner School) rode across the stage on hobby-horses in the Ascot Gavotte from My Fair Lady, and generally all had a great time. It was great: an evening of songs from the shows.

Then to Bury St Edmunds Cathedral on 8th July. I went by train, which runs by the gallops at Newmarket. The train went east, and the horses galloped west, so I couldn't compare speeds, but my money is on the horses.

We sang canticles by Knott, Stanford's *Justorum Animae*, and psalm 22 which contains "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying..." Jeff said we should imagine being teased and bullied at school. The congregation probably quaked in their boots.

Then to the family service at Bledlow on 16 July. Jeff wanted something for children, so we sang *The Lord Bless You and Keep You* by Rutter, which he said is easy.

We sang well at practice, but on the day it went wrong. It was bad and hard to say why. Some went flat, and the rest followed (I may have led the rout: I don't know).

Jeff at the next rehearsal didn't shoot out his lips or shake his head, and his laughter was gentle, not scornful, but he said it was the worst he had ever heard us sing. This was helpful, as we need to know when we flop, so as to learn from our mistakes and do better next time.

Then to Bledlow on 5th August for the wedding of Jamie Wiseman-Clarke and Claire Saunders. For the signing of the register, they had Rutter's "*Gaelic Blessing*" and "*The Lord Bless You and Keep You*". Oh dear! Will we do it right (and with Stewart conducting, as Jeff and several of the choir, including some of its best singers, are away!) But de choir dun good this time. Phew!

6th August to Eucharist at Saunderton. Jeff is still away, so we sing Gaelic Blessing again. I don't know what it sounded like, but we had no conductor, so maybe enthusiastic but ragged: some of the starts took me completely by surprise. We recovered well, and it must I hope be better even with a ragged choir than with no choir. Interesting comments from Cynthia when her organ suffered a cipher at the end.

I look forward to the autumn when we are all back, and conducted by Jeff again.