

We have not sung in public since Jennifer's retirement. We have a Eucharist service at Bledlow on 25 June, but have not started to practice for that, and do not know yet what we will sing.

We had a week off after Jennifer's last service. The following week I was unavoidably late for rehearsal, and missed recording the pieces we sang for Jennifer as her farewell souvenir.

I like to listen to our recordings, as you do not know otherwise how you sound to an audience: we sound loud, though that could be because of the volume knob. It is not perfect, but we are not the choir of King's College Cambridge or Westminster Abbey.

The recordings are of The Lord Bless You and Keep You, Hosanna to the Son of David by Arthur Hutchings, and Stephen Bartlett-Jones' arrangement of The Summons. Sherlock Holmes would deduce correctly that the composer of The Summons is a tenor and an organist, as his name is male, his use of the very low bass notes shows he is not a bass, and he writes many twiddly bits for the organ. There are very fine passages including the organ solo, Cathy Stone and Kerri Byrne singing a duet, and Jeff singing tenor solo backed by the choir. Jeff wants us to put meaning in the words, and you can see what he means when he does a solo.

When I arrive after the recording, the choir is starting to rehearse for our trip to Bury St Edmunds on 8 July. Jeff has sent us a Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Christopher Knott, a contemporary composer, and Justorem Animae by Stanford.

He says of the Knott that we shouldn't find it a struggle. This could mean that he thinks we are a good choir who can manage difficult pieces, or he may think the piece is easy, which means we must be a poor choir, as we find it a bit of a struggle. The point is that it is different from much else that we sing. The emphasis seems to be on mystery rather than glory: glory is easier than mystery.

By the time we have practised it for three weeks, we can see where we're going, but not without struggle.

The Stanford piece is more straightforward, and similar to other Stanford pieces. It still needs work to reach performance standard, but it is not worrying. The Responses are by Reading, a Restoration composer, who, Cynthia tells us, was influenced by contemporary French styles, and wrote these jolly responses as a result. She explains to us *silence d'articulation*, a brief rhythmic pause creating a bounce in the music

I hope some of you can join us in Bury St Edmunds on 8 July. I am looking forward to it even though we will not have a large bass section, having lost Matthew, and some basses being unavailable, so the bass section may be a bit exposed.