



# NEWS FROM THE CHOIR SCHOOLS' ASSOCIATION SINGING OUT!

The benefits of a Choir School education

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PATRON: THE DUCHESS OF KENT

## LICHFIELD'S OUTREACH THRIVES

Lichfield was the first venue outside London to host a Prom Praise for Schools, a musical fusion of *The Last Night of the Proms* and *Songs of Praise*. The Cathedral's MusicShare Chorister Outreach Project teamed up with its choirs and the world famous All Souls Orchestra, Langham Place, under the baton of Noel Tredinnick, to enjoy a weekend of music-making last term. Three hundred primary school children and teachers converged on the Cathedral to give an afternoon concert. The Orchestra, accompanied by Lichfield Cathedral Choirs and Chorus, gave a second concert in the evening and led the worship on Sunday morning.



## CHAIRMAN TIM CANNELL WRITES...

Inside this edition you will find an excellent article by Elizabeth Cairncross on how 'Boarding with Love' can be a positive influence, both on the child and their education.

Throughout the country more than 40% of our choristers board for some or all of their time in the choir, and this figure has not changed over the last few years.

At Prebendal (Chichester Cathedral Choir School), although our choristers are regarded as full boarders they may go home overnight on a Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. We do, however, have a number that stay throughout the week.

From a chorister perspective the requirement to board, whether you live around the corner or from further afield, helps to bind the choir together as a team. It also allows many more children to have the opportunity to become choristers – some live too far away from a cathedral to make it a practical option on a daily basis. This to me is fundamental, because

this great choral heritage of ours should be available to all, regardless of the ability to pay or having to live near a cathedral.

Boarding also allows us, as a school, to vary the chorister schedule easily – it gives us flexibility for trips, extra services or special events.

Just because a child boards does not mean he or she won't see family and friends during term-time. There are many opportunities for parents to come in and see their children – after evensong for example, and we offer Sunday lunch for choristers and their families which is a great way to bring all the families together. They are often joined by the Organist and other members of the choral community. Boarding may not be for everyone, but don't discount it before considering the additional benefits it may bring.



**Tim Cannell, Head Master of The Prebendal School in Chichester, succeeded Roger Overend as Chairman of the Choir Schools' Association in September.**

Tim studied Comparative Religion/Theology at King Alfred's College, Winchester and also has an MA in Educational Management from the Open University. He began his teaching career in primary schools and was Care Officer at the Royal School for the Deaf. He was Head of an international school in Papua New Guinea before moving into the independent sector.

He is a team inspector with the Independent Schools Inspectorate. He and wife Jeanette, a garden designer, have two grown up children.

## In this issue:



**CSA Conference 2014; Hereford's Boy Bishop – p2; Boarding with Love – p3/4; Some chorister triumphs – p5; CSA People – p6**



# CSA Conference 2014

Roger Overend's last Annual Conference as CSA Chairman was held in Norwich. The very warm welcome from Norwich School Headmaster, Steffan Griffiths, his colleagues and the Cathedral team, combined with glorious weather and excellent contributions from our guest speakers, made it a very enjoyable and useful three days. Thank you Norwich!

Commenting on the digital world we now live in, Roger said "We live in an age where children have so much gadgetry that it is hard to believe that anyone could have survived in former years!

"A recent report stated that many young people have no clear line between their digital world and their real world. Of course the 'gadgets' are here to stay and there is so much on offer, but I believe children are missing out on so much too – culture, nature, conversation and the beauty of their surroundings.

"Yet our young charges seem to be able to embrace and enjoy both the trappings of the modern world as well as appreciate and be part of the historic world in which they participate day by day – that is good for them and good for our future."

□ □ □ □ □

Members enjoyed a rich variety of contributions from:

● **Major General Greg Smith**, Chief Executive of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association on the leadership skills he acquired as a chorister at Norwich Cathedral.

● **Ben Parry** spoke about the work of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain.

● **Marcus Culverwell**, Headmaster of St Mary's School, Reigate discussed Education for Social Responsibility.

● **The Very Reverend Dr Frances Ward**, Dean of St Edmundsbury spoke on The Pedagogy of the Chorister.

● Our keynote speaker was **Bernard Trafford**, Headmaster of The Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, a former HMC Chairman and Oxford Organ Scholar. He ended his lively and challenging address with Michelangelo's testimonial to the Pope.

*"The bearer of these presents is Michelangelo, the Sculptor. His nature is such that he has to be drawn out by kindness and encouragement, but if he be treated well, and love be shown to him, he will accomplish things that will make the whole world wonder."*

Photos: KT Bruce



● Norwich School Headmaster, Steffan Griffiths, with The Very Reverend Dr Frances Ward, and CSA Chairman, Roger Overend.



● **Ashley Grote** (left), Master of Music at Norwich Cathedral led a discussion on the benefits of choristership and development of creativity in music between former Norwich choristers David Trendell, Director of Music at King's College, London and Ben Nicholas (right), Reed Rubin Organist and Director of Music at Merton College, Oxford. They were joined by Norwich School pupils Heather Dorling and Benji Wilcock, both of whom were in the Cathedral Choirs.

■ We were so sorry to hear that the exceptionally-talented David Trendell passed away in October, aged 50. There will be a memorial service for him in Norwich Cathedral on 16 May.



● Harry Brookes-Owen

● Hereford is one of the few dioceses to continue the medieval practice of the Boy Bishop Ceremony, devised to give the choristers some mid-winter fun. 13 year-old Harry Brookes-Owen, a former Cathedral chorister, was enthroned in early December and took the Bishop's throne, led the prayers and preached a sermon he wrote himself. The latter had a WW1 theme, following his visit with Hereford's Senior Chamber Choir to Belgium for the '1000 Voices for Peace' concert in November. Sadly we don't have room to reproduce it here but do go to our website, [www.choirschools.org.uk](http://www.choirschools.org.uk) where you can read Harry's excellent sermon.

Photo: Gordon W. Taylor MBE LRPS;  
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# BOARDING WITH LOVE

Elizabeth Cairncross, Headteacher of Wells Cathedral School, puts the case for boarding schools

**The received wisdom until a year or so ago was that boarding was gradually declining for younger pupils. And then recession hit. Parents started to have to work harder and harder and travel further, while child care got more and more expensive.**

Suddenly parents were realising that boarding is highly effective, very positive, relatively affordable childcare for those already paying school fees, and the numbers started to creep back, especially with increasing flexibility over the number of nights spent in school.

We all have to think creatively and carefully about a new kind of 'convenience' boarding, which comes from no sense of family tradition, but from a belief that the kind of environment and opportunities which our schools can offer are sometimes more appropriate for children's education than a loving, harried and hurried home.

● "WE NEED TO GIVE PARENTS  
● TEMPLATES FOR ALL THE  
● DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING  
● A FAMILY"

We have to remember that parents who make this decision, even for a few days a week, often do so with regret and with some guilt, and they look to us to understand and assuage that, and to help them to create new kinds of family routines. And we have to remember that sometimes those parents make the decision in the face of criticism from family and friends; 'Why have children and then send them away?' We need to be sensitive to this, and give them templates for all the different ways of being a family.

We need never to imply that we take the place of a family, but instead to be clear that we offer something else as well; a school / house / room community which offers all sorts of chances for children to learn to adjust around each other, to establish their own values and understand those of others, and to do so with courtesy and determination. We can offer communities fuelled by love, but of a different kind from familial love.

We must be rock solid in believing that 'love' is the right and acceptable word to use in the face of any populist association

I am indebted to Cressida Nash, who is married to the Dean of Wells, for sharing with me this quotation when her own children joined the school at Wells...

***"Even though you try to put people under control, it is impossible. You cannot do it. The best way to control people is to encourage them to be mischievous. Then they will be in control in a wider sense. To give your sheep or cow a large spacious meadow is the way to control him."***

***Zen Master Susuki***

of it with child abuse of any kind. Indeed, it is the antithesis of that. It means real charity, real grace, kindness without weakness, disciplined strength – proper 'meekness' with no mildness in sight. It means frameworks and fences, but bounding big fields for independent discovery and play, with fences which get lower as children get older.

A few people choose boarding because of family tradition, although far more often, they choose it in order to go on being a family in a considered and thoughtful way. But there is another driver for this choice – when there are special needs of some kind which are best met in a specialist environment which may not be on the doorstep and which allows a school to take an all round view of a human being (I am trying hard to avoid the word 'holistic'!) whilst also developing the right response or training for the individual's own talents, gifts and brain-wiring.



● Elizabeth Cairncross

Those of us who are involved in the UK's specialist music or dance schools have to work within this environment every day, and at Wells we're doing it within the community of a bigger school with children who don't have the same 'special needs'. And it's hard. But we believe, and have some evidence, that it makes us more thoughtful about everyone's education, not just our specialist musicians.

One of the principles which we have adopted recently is to state often and overtly that musicians should be *useful*. A community like a boarding school gives so many chances to show and prove that, both within the immediate school family and beyond it. So many of us have seen this in remembrance, for example. And hearing even 'happy birthday' sung tunefully, musically, creatively, albeit with immense gusto in the dining hall leaves us in no doubt about the usefulness of an education which values music for all.

Choristers are pre-eminent examples of the usefulness of music. Without them a 1000+ year old history, and its future,



● Boy choristers on their way to choir practice

dies. Without them the Christian worship of hundreds of thousands all over the world is weakened. Without them the celebration and living performance of hundreds of years of music dies. Even more importantly, without them the possibility of new music for the next thousand years wouldn't even exist.

- “WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND
- THEIR PERSONALITIES, GIVE
- THEM TIME AND INDIVIDUAL
- ATTENTION, TO FIND OUT
- WHO THEY REALLY ARE.”

Choristers are useful. But they're not just being trained and developed for the future. They are doing a job *now*. From their first probationer evensong to their last at the end of their final choir year they do that job with increasing confidence and skill, and then they are let loose to carry on doing it in other ways with the gifts which their choir years have given them.

We who have the privilege of being responsible, with their parents, for their whole education have to remember that choristers are professionals, covenanted to do a job. They have 'taken the choir's shilling' as it were, and it is our duty and job to enable them to do theirs as well as they possibly can. This is, often, boarding; for children who are doing things which most of us don't do until we are adults – turning up, practising, performing, dealing with each other and our own leaders, subsuming ourselves to the demands of the job and not the other way round whilst influencing the job so that it can evolve and not fossilise.

Is it any different from boarding at its best for anyone? No – but it requires a very refined level of sensitivity and sense from those of us responsible for it. We have to understand their personalities, give them time and individual attention, find out who they really are. We have to do that within the context of clear respect for the job they do, and an understanding that we (schools and music departments and foundations) are the ones who must enable them to do it, even when it's cold and wet and dark.

We need to understand that their 8 year-old needs are different from their 12, 13 or 18 year-old ones – the development of different kinds of choirs, especially older girls' choirs, has extended the challenge for us – and yet they are all doing the same job. It takes wisdom, time, energy and experience – and we don't all have all that.

So we must create teams which span those qualities, from wise houseparents, matrons and chorister tutors to cheerful,



● Wells Cathedral girl choristers rehearse

kind, Duracell bunny powered young gap students, to immensely talented and experienced musicians, to wizened heads of schools. Even more importantly, we need expert academic subject teachers, creative arts teachers and sports coaches.

We are all professionals. So are our charges. We need to recognise the chances they have for proper responsibility, not necessarily conferred by a badge, a medal or by rules, but by necessity and expectation – and the right

kind of support and age-appropriate training from us. And almost all of us, working in schools which are not only choir schools, have to ensure that their peers respect and understand them and their job as well.

We need to do all this whether our choristers are day pupils or boarders but the opportunities to do it well – and, sadly, to do it badly – are greater in boarding.

Creating routine, attention, time to listen, time for fun, time for learning, understanding how to keep the family base pre-eminent and strong, building negotiation and, sometimes, relationships at a distance; knitting long elastic ties between people and work which will lead to creative and fulfilled independence and citizenship – all that is, simply, what we have to do. I call it love. And we all have to look as though we love doing it!

- “CREATING ROUTINE...
- UNDERSTANDING HOW
- TO KEEP THE FAMILY BASE
- PRE-EMINENT AND STRONG...”



● Headmaster, Dr Kenneth Taylor, sets the pace for St Mary's Music School's running club. They meet after school every Wednesday for a run round Edinburgh. The group is feeling the benefits both physically and for the added camaraderie it brings. They regularly take part in Edinburgh Schools' Cross Country Races held in various schools and parks round the city during the year.



# SOME CHORISTER TRIUMPHS!

**Rosie McLachlan**, a pupil at Chetham's School of Music, is the 2014-2015 Willcocks/CSA Organ Scholar. She has been singing in the Manchester Cathedral Choir for three years and has already passed Grade 8 piano with Distinction and recently performed the First Movement of Beethoven's *2nd Piano Concerto* at a lunchtime concert at Chetham's. She has also given solo piano performances in Lanzarote in a recital series organised by Sir Ernest Hall.

Rosie has really taken to the organ says Christopher Stokes, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Manchester Cathedral. She is clearly a talented all-round musician who is making good progress on the organ having already played voluntaries after services.



## CSA Competition inspires Joel

**Joel Branston**, a 12 year-old chorister at St John's College, Cambridge has become the youngest musician at St John's College School to compose pieces to be performed in the College Chapel.

His talent for composing was discovered last year when the school's Director of Music, Simon Kirk, told choristers about the CSA Composition Competition. Joel really enjoyed the experience and was delighted to be a runner-up. Simon says "He is showing exceptional promise as a young composer. He has an instinctive understanding of the handling of melody, harmony and phrase, and has a bright musical future ahead of him."

Wells Cathedral School has also seen the potential in Joel's compositions and he will be the youngest pupil to go to Wells as a composer. The School was keen to help him develop his skills and arranged a lesson for him at the Guildhall School of Music. They also recommended him to Tim Watts, composer-in-residence at the University of Cambridge, who was impressed with his work.

Joel performed a composition based on *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland*, a Chorale Prelude by Bach, as part of the St John's Music Festival in a concert called 'Borrowing Bach' in February in St John's College Chapel.



Readers of issue 18 will know the first recipient of the Sir David Willcocks/CSA Organ Scholarship was Felix Kirkby, a chorister at York Minster and a pupil at The Minster School. Felix was also the 2014 winner of the Association's Composition Competition, judged by Jonathan Willcocks. CSA was delighted to welcome Felix and his family to the Norwich Conference when his introit was premiered by the Cathedral Choir during Evensong.

As *Singing Out* goes to press his anthem *Ubi Caritas* will be performed at Evensong on 26 February by the Chapel Choir. He is currently working on a string quartet *Nuovo Vita* – the story of his own rescue pony giving birth to her foal.

In the pipeline is the score for an animated film. Director of Music at St John's College, Andrew Nethsingha, says: "I am delighted to have such a

talented young composer amongst our College choristers. We look forward to performing his new choral work and I will be fascinated to see how his compositional voice develops over the coming years."

Joel adds that Edward Elgar is his favourite dead composer "because he is quintessentially English". He is also a great admirer of Nico Muhly, who writes music for the Chapel Choir and is his mentor.

## All in a term's work

**Francis Bamford**, a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral and pupil at St Edmund's School, has had a challenging few months.

"I love being a chorister but I also enjoy getting away. Last summer I sang on the soundtrack to the film *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, which I recorded at Abbey Road Studios in London. In December I went to the world premiere in Leicester Square, and the party with the stars afterwards, which was brilliant.

"At the end of October I went to Toulouse to sing the role of Miles in Benjamin Britten's opera *Turn of the Screw*. I learned a lot about acting and how an opera is put together and performed with some fantastic singers. I missed my bassoon, but the theatre let me play their Steinway so I enjoyed that and did some composing.

"I had to do school work while I was away and it was a relief when I got back to find I was ahead with several subjects! My family came to see me perform and we enjoyed beautiful Toulouse with its great restaurants, the European Space Agency and the Airbus Factory.

"I got back just in time for Advent Carols in the Cathedral, and then was a soloist with my Dad for a concert of Fauré and Honegger in Norfolk.

"Last year the BBC made three programmes about the Cathedral which I enjoyed watching as part of the build-up to Christmas.

"Now it's time to concentrate on auditions for my next school, while looking forward to a tour to America with the Cathedral Choir at Easter. I am also looking forward to being with my family for the summer and knowing where I will be going to school."



# CSA People

● **Darren Ayling** has succeeded Gary Longman as Head of King's (The Cathedral School), Peterborough from Ipswich School, in Suffolk, where he was Deputy Head (Academic) for thirteen years. His two sons, Tom and George, and his wife Jane, are still in Suffolk but will be joining Darren in Peterborough in the summer. As well as being an enthusiast for evensong, Darren also teaches English, and is a keen gardener and cyclist.

Gary was Head of King's for 20 years during which time the school was completely rebuilt to better serve its pupils. Another highlight over this time was to realise his dream of opening the King's School's junior department to give space for Peterborough Cathedral to educate its choristers. We wish you a happy retirement, Gary, with lots of travel and gardening in the years to come!

● A familiar face is back in the country as Acting Head at Dean Close Preparatory School in Cheltenham. **Roger and Sue Jones** retired to France when they left St George's School, Windsor but Roger was persuaded back to hold the fort until Dean Close's new head arrives in September following the departure of The Reverend Leonard Browne last summer. Since leaving St George's he has been involved in consultancy work for a range of schools which included curriculum development, marketing and head teacher appraisals. His main curriculum interests are English, History and Physical Education. He has led over 20 prep school ski-trips and, together with Sue, has been a director of a holiday activity company.

● Canon Philip Blinston retired as Head of The Minster School, Southwell last Easter after 20 years of 'exemplary leadership of the school' and we wish him a happy retirement although he remains a Canon at the Minster. His successor as Headteacher is **Matthew Parris** who moved from Rushey Mead School in Leicester in September. Rushey Mead is a National Teaching School, one of the 'first one hundred' and Matthew was very involved in leading the development of programmes to support professional development of teachers, not only in the school itself but also across the region. He is married with two sons, the elder of whom was Head Chorister at Southwell Minster.

● **Tom Burden**, former Head of Hereward House in North London, is the new Headmaster of The Pilgrims' School, Winchester. He comments: "I know that I inherit a school with a remarkable staff and distinctive ethos. There are no big changes in the pipeline as it is already a fantastic place. However, improvements are always possible and we mustn't stand still."



**Above:**  
**Darren Ayling**



**Above right:**  
**Tom Burden**



**Right:**  
**John Price**



**Roger and Sue Jones with Holly**

**Right:**  
**David Lambon**

**Below:**  
**Matthew Parris**

**Below right:**  
**Matthew Armstrong**



● **Dr John Price** is the new Headteacher of St James' School, Grimsby following Sue Isaac's retirement after 28 years at the school, including 13 as Head. John has a PhD in Biological Sciences and continued his studies in Canada before joining the Sciences and Plants in Schools initiative based at the University of Cambridge. He then taught at Millfield School for 15 years. Our best wishes to Sue for a happy retirement and to Dr Price, already enjoying "the family feel of the place and the warm, welcoming atmosphere. During my own education I felt I was just a number but St James' is the opposite to that."

● We were sorry to say farewell to Fr Gabriel Everitt as Headmaster of Ampleforth College and wish him well in his retirement. However, we are pleased to welcome **David Lambon** in his place. David's initial degree is in Engineering and he went on to qualify as a teacher at Queen's University, Belfast. He also has a degree in Mathematics and an MBA in Educational Leadership and Management. He has been Head of a number of schools in Northern Ireland. He is married with two sons at university and is a keen sportsman.

● **Matthew Armstrong** has succeeded Tim Keyes as Headmaster at The King's School, Worcester. He has taught at Winchester College and for the last 10 years was Assistant Head at Charterhouse. Commenting on his appointment, Matthew said: "The warmth of the school, its close connection with Worcester Cathedral, its academic standing and its focus on all-round education combine to make it a very special place."

"I am fortunate to be taking over from Tim, who has led King's with such distinction over the last 15 years and I look forward to building on his good work."

● **Mrs Sarah Fletcher** has taken over from David Levin as Head of City of London School moving from the headship of Kingston Grammar School. She has also taught at Wycombe Abbey and in Switzerland. Meanwhile, David is now MD of United Learning's independent schools.

**Above:**  
**Sarah Fletcher**



## SINGING OUT!

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