



# The Voice

The newsletter of The Guild of Ex-Choristers of the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick

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## Go west, young man!

After just over 4 years as Assistant Director of Music at St Mary's, we



learnt recently that Ruaraidh Sutherland is to leave us to take up the

post of Director of Music at Christ's Church, Rye, New York, USA.

Rye, Ruaraidh tells us, is a suburb of New York with a sizeable British community. The episcopal church boasts an adult and treble (boys and girls) choirs. The adult choir of around twenty-six benefits from six professional singers and, with the treble choir, provides the music at the single Sunday service as well as performing concerts, making recordings and touring - possible trip to the UK is planned next year.

Ruaraidh's contribution to the music at St Mary's has been considerable. Within 12 months of arriving, then DoM, Katherine Dienes left to take up the post of Master of the Choristers at Guildford Cathedral and Ruaraidh found himself in charge until the arrival of Tom Corns. Ruaraidh quickly made his mark and established his style on the sound and management of the choirs. Everyone

agreed that he achieved considerable results in such a short time giving an indication of his skills in choir training, which will be called fully into use in his new role.

In addition to his work with the main choirs, Ruaraidh has made great progress with the Scholars, the chamber choir that deputises when the main choirs are on holiday. In addition to the ten or so services each year, it has been growing a solid reputation for its concert work under Ruaraidh's direction.

From his very first day at St Marys, Ruaraidh has given his total commitment to and support of the ex-chorister's Guild and we are very grateful for all the he has contributed. We wish him well in his new job.

Go west, young man and grow up with the country!

## Michael Cheshire 1949-2011

It was with deep regret we learnt of Michael's untimely death at the age of 62 in March.

Michael joined the boy's choir in 1956 and, as with many boys since, in the tradition started by Geoffrey Holroyde, transferred to the back row when his voice broke in 1964, singing alto alongside Gerry Watts for a number of years.

When he joined the choir, like most of the choristers at that time, he lived close to the church, in Michael's case, on North Rock. He continued to live in Warwick until quite recently.

After leaving the choir his active involvement in singing ceased but he did occasionally sing in amateur productions and in the church at Barford. He retained a lifelong interest in choirs and music and often went to Truro Cathedral following his move to Cornwall.

On leaving school, Michael worked for Automotive Products and followed that with a spell at Benford before joining the railways in 1991 where he became well known to many as the station manager at Warwick. The move to the West Country found him working for Great Western Railways until ill-health caused him to retire.

It was at Truro Cathedral that Michael had his last encounter with St Mary's when the choir visited in 2009 and

where he had also met up with Luke Bond, previously Assistant DOM at Warwick.

The photograph is from Spring 1963 and Michael can be seen second from the right in the middle row standing between Anthony King and Nick Hodges.



Michael leaves a wife, Gillian and our thoughts and prayers have been with her over recent months and will continue to be in the future. For those who served with him in the choir, our memory of Michael will remain with us for many years.

## A message from the Director of Music, Tom Corns

As the last act of a busy academic year approaches the choirs can reflect upon an exciting and satisfying twelve months, full of wonderful music including much new and reintroduced repertoire. From 29<sup>th</sup> August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September the choir of boys and men will sing Evensong services in the beautiful setting of Wells Cathedral and both choirs can look forward to a concert of great Cathedral anthems at St Mary's on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. This will form part of the Warwick Summer Music Festival, details of which you can find on the leaflet with this newsletter. The Festival includes a variety of choral and chamber music concerts including lunchtime and late night recitals. As always, I am very grateful for your support of the choirs and music at St Mary's and hope that you may be able to join us at the Festival.

## Greater Parish Churches' Boys' Choirs' Festival

The brainchild of Croydon Parish Church's Organist and Master of the Choristers, Andrew Cantrill, the first Festival was held at Croydon in 2009 bringing together the choirs of Croydon Parish Church, St James's Parish Church, Grimsby, St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton and the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick.

This year it was Warwick's turn to host the event which took place over the weekend of 19 to 21 February.

After months of planning, the boys arrived in Warwick on Friday and were

guests of families of the boys' choir staying in groups of two or three. Saturday started with a morning rehearsal followed by lunch at St Nicholas Church. In the afternoon the boys visited Warwick Castle before returning to St Mary's to rehearse again for the evensong on Saturday and Sung Eucharist on Sunday morning.



*The choirs in rehearsal*

Both services were said to be "pure joy" and those who attended agreed that the singing was truly wonderful.

Next year's event is already being planned.

## FCOCA AGM

On the 7th May the Federation of Cathedral Old Chorister Associations held their Annual General Meeting in Warwick.

Their event began with a guided tour of St Mary's led by ex-chorister, Peter Stocker with the assistance of members of the regular guide team at the church.

After a formal welcome from Tom Corns on behalf of the Warwick staff, delegates were treated to a short organ recital by Tom.

Lunch was provided at the Masonic rooms where the AGM was also held.

Following the AGM the delegates, representing 22 cathedral and college ex-chorister associations returned to St Mary's for evensong sung by the boys, girls and gentlemen.

It was a significant honour to be asked to host the AGM, given the Guild has been affiliated to the Federation for only 5 years. There were some very complimentary comments as delegates left at the end of the event and in his letter of thanks, Federation Chairman, Ian Henderson (Rochester) referred to it as a memorable AGM.

Many thanks to all involved for making it such a success.

## AGM/Reunion 2011

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 8 October and will be followed by Choral Evensong and a Reunion Dinner at a venue to be confirmed.

This year marks a very special occasion, the 50th anniversary of Geoffrey Holroyde becoming Choirmaster and Organist at St Mary's. Geoffrey is credited with rebuilding the choir at Warwick and establishing many of the methods of running choirs and motivating choristers adopted by many choirs throughout the country as well as by the Royal School of Church Music.

Geoffrey is still actively engaged in church music as a much in demand organist and encouraging and supporting student organists.

The formal invitation will be sent towards the end of July but please make sure the date is in your diary, now.

## History of the Music at St Mary's

Copies of Geoffrey Holroyde's book are still available at £10 each and may be obtained from the Guild or at the church Gift Shop.

All proceeds go to the Guild to support the musical education of choristers.

The book contains a number of anecdotes from choristers past and present as well as detailing the history of music making over the past 900 years in St Mary's.

## Notice of annual subscription

Annual Subscriptions are due at the end of August and notices will be sent out in the next few weeks.

Please do renew your membership (we've suffered some fall out in recent years) as it is very important to us and helps us support the education programme with the choirs.

If you do not already do so, please consider using a direct debit to pay your subscription so that it is not forgotten in future years.



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