



# THE VOICE

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



Issue No 37

November 2021

## St Mary's Girls' Choir at 30

*The Guild Reunion and Girls' Choir 30th Anniversary Celebrations, 2021*

**Will Butcher**

On Saturday 18th September this year, we finally had the chance to celebrate, face to face, the 30th Anniversary of the founding of the Girls' choir at St Mary's, albeit one year later than originally planned. As a combined former chorister annual



Familiar faces past and present with Simon Lole, founder of the St Mary's Girls' Choir

reunion and anniversary celebration we were lucky to be able to welcome back Simon Lole, the Director of Music at St Mary's in the late 1980's and early 1990's and founder of the Girls' Choir. Having sung for Simon in my own chorister days and been on one of the first Girls' choir tours as a member of the back row, I really enjoyed being able to catch up with Simon and many others that I hadn't seen in a long time!

The celebrations began in the afternoon with a lively recital by the new organ scholar Matthew Howell. Next it was the chance for former choristers to join the current choir to rehearse the evensong repertoire with Simon Lole as our guest conductor for the day. Remembering a little too late that we had been kindly provided the music

in advance of the weekend, and personally only having sung these pieces as a treble rather than a bass, ensured the rehearsal was quite intense!

It wasn't long before the Evensong was upon us and further familiar faces filled the church. After singing the Howells' Gloucester Service, a quick blast of Parry's I was Glad as well as a more refined rendition of Simon Lole's own 'Father's Love', there was a chance to mingle with a glass of fizz and catch up in the church.

The evening dinner was held in the Great Hall of the Lord Leicester Hospital, which didn't disappoint. Over 40 guests had the opportunity to catch-up and peruse various photo albums that former choristers had brought with them for previous tours in the early Girls' choir and Lole era. It was also a chance to meet others such as parents of former choristers, fundraisers, chaperones and guardians of the wardrobes to name but a few of the key roles that help the current and past choirs do what they do. The evening was nicely concluded with Simon Lole taking many of us down memory lane from his time at St Mary's with a great after-dinner speech.



Opportunity to remember past times with a glass of fizz

From a personal perspective, I reunited with a number of former girl and boy choristers from my era and had a chuckle or two with the help of the



Guests at the Anniversary Dinner held in the Great Hall, Lord Leycester Hospital

photo albums. It was good to meet new faces from more recent times as well, recognising the depth and breadth of talent that has graced our St Mary's choirs over the years.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of those who took part in the reunion and 30th anniversary celebrations and I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. Special thanks go to Matthew Howell who



provided us with the lively organ recital to get things started, Oliver Hancock as the current Director of Music, for helping make the whole event happen and last but not least to our special guest Simon Lole who made this a very special occasion for us all.

*If you have any photos of the Anniversary Reunion, do please share them on the St Mary's Choirs Past and Present Facebook page. - Ed*

## Director of Music's Report

**Oliver Hancock**

It's amazing. The children are keen and diligent, often leaping to be helpful before they're asked. There is rarely a cross word between the adults; everyone seems to get on all the time, and there's certainly no hint of any kind of teenage angst. Tasks are achieved in good time, with real focus and determination from all involved. Time is spent productively, and the educational value is beyond question. Above everything, it's all so very *wholesome*.



Yes, my current guilty pleasure is 'Our Yorkshire Farm', following the lives of Yorkshire farmers Clive and Amanda Owen and their nine children as



Life on a Yorkshire farm similar to life at St Mary's?

they juggle overseeing vast swathes of farmland, caring for countless animals, and attempting to maintain various bits of kit and buildings as well as their own herd. Aside from the obvious parallels with the choral life of St Mary's (ahem), I am particularly struck – especially as the series go on – by the reassurance that comes with the turn of the seasons. There are, of course, challenges through the Owens' year – a late frost, a very wet summer, a glut of twin lambs – but, broadly speaking, spring follows winter, animals are born, crops must be harvested, the nights draw in, and round it goes again.

Our liturgical life is the same, following a pattern of feasts and fasts. As I write, on the eve of Remembrance Sunday, Advent is just round the corner (one of the periods of prayer and penitence) and Chr\*stm\*s is very much on the horizon. The last 18 months have seen considerable disruption to our church existence,

and certainly to our choral activities, but despite the Church of England's questionable decision to close churches, lockdown(s) and so on, the liturgical round continues. Whether it's an Easter Day Eucharist from a kitchen, Pentecost from a garden, or recorded Christmas carol service from an otherwise empty church, the point is that it still happens.

The Choir at St Mary's has returned in very fine form, ready to face the challenges of the coming church year. We have welcomed a new Organ Scholar and a new Vocal Coach – Matthew Howell and Laurence Panter respectively – and it is very good to see a new clutch of Junior Men keeping the Gentlemen in line. The week-long 'choir camp' at the end of August certainly blew the cobwebs away, and the term started on a real high (quite literally, in fact: our first Mass setting of term was Langlais' *Messe Solennelle*, with top Cs at the end of Benedictus...). Despite the inevitable beginning-of-term coughs and colds, the girls and men offered an excellent live broadcast on BBC Radio 3 towards the end of September, and the full Choir recorded a Christmas Evensong which will be broadcast on Radio 3 on Wednesday 29th December. We were thrilled to welcome back so many ex-choristers for the (delayed) 30th Anniversary of the Girls' Choir and the Guild Reunion, and it was a real joy to see Simon Lole in front of the St Mary's choir once again. We've enjoyed Harvest, the Regimental Service, a few members of the Choir representing St Mary's for the Cathedral Music Trust Diamond Fund concert at Coventry Cathedral (alongside peers from Coventry, Derby, and Leicester Cathedrals, St Peter's Wolverhampton, St Alphege Solihull, and Southwell Minster), All Saints' and All Souls' days (the latter offering an excellent and long-overdue outing of Fauré's *Requiem*), with much more still to come this term.

There's something to be said for the final sentiment of Flanders and Swann's *Song of the Weather* ('bloody January again!'), but we should take heart and be reassured by the permanence – even relentlessness – of the liturgical round, and look forward to the coming months:

*Through all the changing scenes of life,  
In trouble and in joy,  
The praises of my God shall still  
My heart and tongue employ.'*

*Tate and Brady (1696)*

## Mark Scores a Perfect 10

**Mark Swinton** has been Organist and Assistant Director of Music at St Mary's for 10 years. Here he provides some thoughts on his time in Warwick.



A decade can be an eternity yet also no time at all. 10 years after taking up the position of Assistant Director of Music at St Mary's, I have the sensation that time has flown by, certainly for the choirs that I have been privileged to work with.

Both the boys' and girls' choirs have had complete turn-over of personnel. Many of the choristers with whom I first worked are now on the far side of their university years and gainfully employed in a variety of occupations, not all of them musical. The men's choir and St Mary's Scholars have had more fixed and stable characters, yet also experienced their respective gains and losses – I think particularly of such stalwarts as Robin Verney in the former, or Edwin Griggs and Helen Black in the latter, gone but never to be forgotten.

I am now on my second Director of Music and my second Administrator, while the Rector and Reader remain the same. When I arrived, there were two Felicities in the main office (now there are none) and there was but one Verger, Ken, carrying out all the ceremonial and caretaking roles of that office. Within my first year, the Beauchamp Chapel Campaign was launched, aiming to raise £2.4 million for restoration work; now, the 2023 Campaign is under way and the tower stands clad in the first stage of the scaffolding behind which it is due to be restored in time for the church's 900th anniversary in that year. In 2011, the organ was capable of fine sounds, but prone to occasional misbehaviour, courtesy of its ageing innards. Now, it is capable of fine sounds and is prone to frequent misbehaviour... here's hoping it will soon have its own turn for fundraising and restoration?!

There have been other memorable events in the life of St Mary's over the preceding decade: the Warwick Summer Music Festivals with their orchestral Eucharists and Evensongs, annual school arts exhibitions, Warwick 1100 and the Great War commemorations in 2014, the Shakespeare and King James Bible Exhibition in

2016, further Great War commemorations in the amazing Warwick Poppies Exhibition in 2018 – not all have required musical input, but all have been a testament to the vital role, far exceeding the obvious role of spiritual oasis, that St Mary's plays in its community.

Of course, there have been so many musical highlights. Several of those have involved the BBC: recording for Sunday Half Hour in 2012 and for Songs of Praise in 2013, broadcasting Sunday

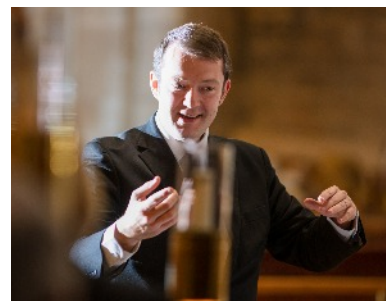


Worship in 2014 and 2017, broadcasting Choral Evensong in 2017 and 2021, broadcasting the carol service in 2017 for BBC Coventry and Warwickshire, and broadcasting the

Easter Day Eucharist live on television in 2019. There have been the recordings of "Christmas at Warwick" in 2013 and "Gaudeamus omnes" in 2014. (On a personal note, I've been fortunate in St Mary's to have a venue in which to increase my own solo discography – "A Bach Family Album," "The Lark in the Chapel" and "FJ 100" are all still on sale!) The choirs have premiered remarkable new works by Najji Hakim, David Briggs and Malcolm Archer. I have accompanied them on tours to Ely, Durham, Salisbury, Germany, Lincoln and Bristol, as well as on day trips to London, Tewkesbury and Worcester, and most recently for the residential week that – although not a tour – did include trips to sing at the other St Mary's and at Coventry Cathedral. We have celebrated such things as the anniversary of Michael Freeman's ordination to the priesthood; the giving of the Freedom of Warwick to DM Kineton; the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and her overtaking of Queen Victoria to become our longest reigning monarch. With St Mary's Scholars, I have had the chance to keep my hand in choral direction, exploring new and neglected repertoire with a willing cohort of enthusiastic adult singers whilst filling in for the robed choirs. I have also borne the responsibility of keeping the robed choirs on track too, for seven months between the reigns of Messrs. Corns and Hancock. There have been countless weddings and funerals, baptisms and welcomes; there have been choir concerts, carol services, crib services, Christmas Eves spent in one hotel or another followed by hospital followed by curry with the gentlemen followed by Midnight Eucharists, ending sometimes at 12.45 in the

morning with a rehearsal for the Christmas Day Eucharist just eight hours later. There have been Lent Addresses (the musical series in 2014 standing out with particular vividness), Holy Week services, Requiems (Faure, Duruflé, Mozart and Howells) for All Souls, Ascension Day mornings spent atop the tower, or at the Lord Leicester Hospital (hopefully I won't jinx things for the future by saying that it hasn't yet rained on any of those!), numerous chorister admissions, award ceremonies, valedictions, choir picnics and sports matches, organ recitals that initially took place on Summer weekends but have now expanded successfully into a year-round series embracing chamber music and song ..... there was even an occasion, which Vaughan will probably remember better than any, when as part of one Fairtrade Week I accompanied a hymn at the Family Service having swapped my cassock for a banana costume. (We won't dwell too much on that one!)

When the pandemic struck in 2020, the hiatus that it enforced in our usual activities afforded me an unscheduled sabbatical, which I used to expand my solo repertoire amongst other things. I suppose, having been in post for more than seven years, it was about time that I had one! However, it made me realise – in common, I'm sure, with many other people – that for all the individual occasions and excitements, for all the drudgeries and demands of our work



at St Mary's, the constant thread of regular worship is woven through everything. And, even as the players change, the "game" remains the same. Already, some of those who were children in the choirs when I started are now approaching the age I was at that time, whilst there are those now joining the choirs who were then not yet born! For all that the musical highlights have been many, still the most wonderful aspect of the job is the accompaniment of services, especially Evensong on weekdays as well as on high days and holy days, when one choir or another will sing in the gathering gloom or summer's dusk with little more than a handful of people present, contributing to a tradition of worship that originated centuries ago. When all's said and done, that's what we're here for and it's a special pleasure to take part in it.

# Choir Summer Camp

To ease the current crop of young choristers back into the rigours of choir, the music department organised a week of activities - not all musical - between the 23rd and 29th August 2021

Chorister, Hannah Maxwell writes this review.



What a week! After many weeks of summer holidays, it was so nice to see each other again. It was also a real novelty to be able to sing standing next to each other, instead of being socially distanced

around the church. The last 18 months had been a real struggle for the choir, and in the lockdown after Christmas in 2020 we started doing weekly Zoom calls. I liked doing these as, although it wasn't ideal, it did at least give us the chance to get back into the choral lifestyle. However, the connection issues were frustrating sometimes! In April we were finally allowed to be back in person, but yet again had to be distanced and in limited numbers.



The choir camp week was amazing! Overall, we did roughly 36 hours of singing: the choir sang 8 services, and we were lucky enough to do two of these in different venues, Saint Mary Immaculate Catholic Church in Warwick and Coventry Cathedral. We



sang a wide range of music, my personal favourites being 'Hear My Prayer' by Mendelssohn and the Nunc Dimittis by Holst (which you can hear on BBC

Radio 3 Choral Evensong on Wednesday 29th December!). From Monday to Thursday the boy



and girl choristers sang Evensong and were then joined by the men for the rest of the week. It wasn't just singing, though! We did lots of different kinds of activities across the week, ranging from games plus archery, swordsmanship on the playing fields next to Warwick Prep, to bowling and Go Ape. On Wednesday we finished

the day a bit later after having a Quiz night with pizza – a competitive night for all – and finished off the week with choir awards and a barbeque.

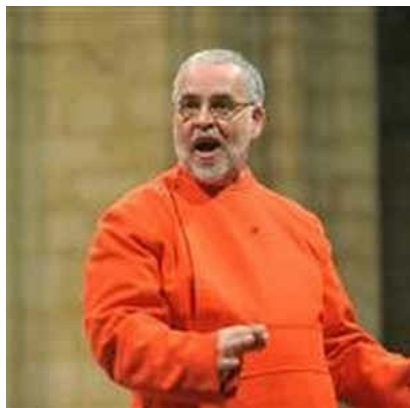
When I look back, my favourite thing about the week (as well as the singing!) is the amazing bonds I've made with the other choristers. The whole experience has created wonderful memories for all of us. A massive thank you to Mr Hancock, Mr Swinton, and all the chaperones and staff that organised this, gave up their time and had to put up with us for the week! It's greatly appreciated!



## Voices from the Past

### Trepte years at Warwick: a time of learning

Paul Trepte



After 35 years living in the flatness of the East Anglian fens, Sally and I have been thrilled to return to Worcester and, of course, to the nearby Malvern Hills; the area where we met, got engaged, and married. It was from

Worcester that we moved to Warwick in 1981, remaining there until our move to Bury St Edmunds in 1985. During a holiday period in Warwick, my mother was staying with us, and she and I decided to go off for a few days of adventure. We did not really know where we would go; we just packed our bags, pointed the car and set off. How curious that this trip took us first to Bury St Edmunds and then to Ely – our future cathedral work places; I always recall that trip with astonishment!

Now that we have completed much of the "nesting" required in any house move (especially so when seriously downsizing, as has been the case for us), Sally and I are considering writing some memoirs. We have talked about this possibility a good deal and it has provoked much laughter between ourselves. The question will be how spicy we might dare to make any such writings, because some of our church music related experiences have been utterly bizarre. We are pretty clear that if we do decide to write any memoirs, it will be a joint effort, because Sally and I have always functioned as a team.

Easily the most significant thing for us the early 80s was birth of our daughter, Sara. We were blissfully unaware that Sally was in an expectant condition at a time which turned out to coincide with preparations for one of the biggest fund-raising event we have ever initiated and organised: a "Nearly New Sale" which required Sally (not me!) to sort out vast piles of clothing and other saleable items. The stock took over about half the area of St Nicholas Church and, following an untypically irate reaction to this from the said church authorities, Sally suddenly found herself having to reorganise the whole lot within the building at a very late stage in the day. Two positives eventually emerged from this. First and foremost, all the physical bending and lifting

required to shift things around on a Friday evening (whilst her husband was obviously consumed with the crucial business of the weekly full choir rehearsal in St Mary's) did not prove to have any negative impact on Sally's condition. Secondly, the sale raised a huge amount of money for the tour fund.

Speaking of matters financial, it's now long enough ago for me to reveal that my starting salary at St Mary's back in 1981 was the princely sum of £1300 (*sic!*). Initially, I had no other work until I applied for it, but a teaching post at Binswood School was soon on offer, and it was good too to find myself with a number of piano and organ pupils. Meanwhile, Sally became a school secretary at Kineton School. So, our move from Worcester to Warwick added up to a risky predicament, but I have always been a risk-taker, and things turned out to be just fine – and precisely what I needed at that point in my career.

Sally and I began our years at Warwick living in a converted outhouse of the *Baraset* estate which was owned by the well-known "anonymous benefactor" who founded the choral scholarships for a set number of boy choristers attending Warwick School. When we arrived at our new abode we discovered that the choirmen had organised a "house painting party". A sizeable group of singers from the back rows of the choir kindly turned up on a Saturday afternoon to transform the place into a well decorated condition, and it was our first experience of the team spirit which we found to be one of Warwick's greatest assets. The *Baraset* house was nearer Stratford than Warwick though, and we soon found that cost of living there was beyond our modest means. It was also very cold, to say the least; there was no roof insulation and it felt like sleeping out in the open air. Sally decided to purchase a Honda motor scooter to travel the distance into work whilst I retained the use of the car. That was fine until Sally decided to purchase a bag of cement one morning which she placed between herself and the handle bars of the scooter. Inevitably, Sally fell off. We quickly decided to change the scooter for a second car (which we could ill afford) and set about looking for a house to purchase in the centre of Warwick with the help of a small but helpful legacy I had acquired. It was one of the best things we ever did, because it got us onto the housing market for the first time, and we continued to reap the benefits of that decision whenever we moved on. I still worry a great deal about organists / directors of music who find themselves in tied accommodation; whilst it's convenient in the

short term it really can cause massive problems in later life.

Amongst early experiences gained at Warwick were my first trip over to hear the choir sing an evening Choral Eucharist - for the feast of Corpus Christi, sung in the chancel. Byrd Mass a 4. Although it was apparent that this was a challenging choice of repertoire for the choir at that particular stage of its history, it encouraged me to programme some risky music choices from the word go. My own first service officially in post as DoM featured the *Missa Brevis* by Lennox Berkeley. Not for the faint hearted in terms of the choral demands, and this approach set the tone for lots more ambitious repertoire which I programmed at a deliberately quick rate. This method of working was only possible because of the ability and cooperation of the back row, and the intelligence of the boys. In particular, I soon



realised that able boys can do anything asked of them and that they would respond positively and enthusiastically to almost any amount of challenge. I have said it before and I'll say it again: the Warwick boys were probably the most proficient bunch I ever encountered, clearly reflecting their socio-economic and parental background which was wide ranging but dominated by an especially capable group who came together from various schools, creating a particularly creative and inspiring working atmosphere.

Two other early memories are at the front of my mind as I write this short piece. One was the choir camp I was encouraged to attend before I took up my post. It was my first and only experience of spending a night under canvass. Except that it was not under canvass, because whilst I slept the tent was removed and I woke to find myself under

the stars themselves. This introduced me to the boys' sense of mischief which inevitably went hand in hand with other attributes I have mentioned. I think too that other adults present on camp had a good deal to do with this prank. I was, of course, highly amused, if only in retrospect(!) but I have managed to stay away from camp sites ever since. It's good to be teased by choristers and choirmen; I've always thought of it as a sign of friendship on an even playing field.

Then there were the visits to Chichester Cathedral. Fodder there for an entire novel. What a fabulous mixture of hard work alternating with fun and games! Which story to choose here? How about the time Sally and her cohort of helpers (including a team of cooks who produced our meals in the Prebendal School where we all boarded) decided on a particularly wholesome and filling meal of beef cobbler followed by a crumble pudding with custard. How we all enjoyed that meal, including those of us who had been invited out for drinks later in the evening with a particularly sociable and well - meaning family who lived in an impressive property close to the cathedral. At least, we thought we had been invited out just for drinks, but as the evening unfolded some partition doors were drawn back by our hosts to reveal a dining table set out with an extensive selection of silver service cutlery opposite each chair. With the recently consumed choir supper weighing heavily in our stomachs, we found ourselves sitting down to a second meal of game soup followed by doorstep size sandwiches (also game)

followed by a rich array of desserts. Glances were exchanged as we sat down to this feast, and sighs were heaved when our hosts were away from the table between the courses, but we felt obliged to do our duty and consume as much as we possibly could in appreciation. Eventually we said our thanks and took our leave. That was the only time in my life I ever suggested to Sally that it might do us good to take some exercise, and a short time before midnight she and I could be spotted running through the streets of Chichester on a somewhat roundabout route back to the school.

The overriding significance of our time in Warwick was that it was a *place of learning* – not just about musical matters and associated tools of that trade for me, but, equally significant, about life in general. I made a good many mistakes there, but there were successes - and even triumphs too.

Warwick was also the location of my first encounter with Arthur Wills. We chatted over a drink in the Zetland after a Sunday service he had attended. Arthur was kind enough to say many encouraging things to me on that occasion, but little could I have known that he felt that in me he might have spotted his preferred successor at Ely Cathedral. It was only after I had been appointed to that post that he made me aware of that.



*Paul & Sally Trepte, now back in their glorious Worcestershire*

Ely and Warwick also define a link between myself and Oliver Hancock. It was my privilege to watch Ollie develop and shine when he worked in Ely as Assistant Organist to the Girls' Choir there. I'm full of admiration for what he is achieving, especially given the horrid intervention of the pandemic. I don't think I would have had the patience required to shift my work online whilst waiting for the go-ahead to return to some sort of live singing. I hope he will enjoy the same positivity and joy as I did at Warwick, and now that we live relatively close by, Sally and I look forward to driving over from time to time to enjoy the music making in St Mary's, which is clearly in a safe pair of hands.

## New Appointments to the Music Team

**Vocal Coach Laurence Panter** is a British tenor and accompanist working in Warwickshire and London. He read music at Cambridge, where he sang with Gonville & Caius chapel choir, and went on to gain an MMus in singing from Trinity Laban Conservatoire. Engagements in 2021



include opera contracts with Longborough Festival Opera (as Mosquito in Janacek's 'The Cunning Little Vixen') and Barefoot Opera (as Mervyn in the premiere of Orlando Gough's 'Bloom Britannia'), and performances with Armonico Consort and Electric Voice Theatre. Having set up a successful private piano/singing teaching practice, and acted as music director for a number of projects, 2021 marks the start of Laurence's role as vocal coach to the boys' and girls' choirs of St Mary's Warwick and as director of the Random Opera youth chorus in Rugby. Laurence is a tenor lay clerk at Coventry Cathedral, having previously held a similar post at St George's Catholic Cathedral, Southwark. Funding for this role is provided by the Ouseley Church Music Trust and Warwick Choral Trust, enhancing the musical education of our choristers.

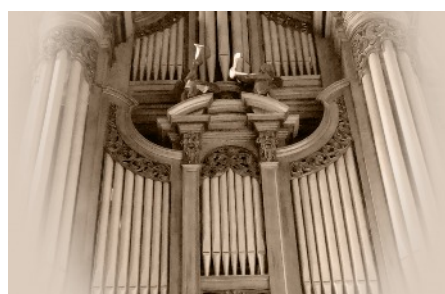
**Our new Organ Scholar, Matthew Howell**, began



learning to play the organ in Bristol with Alison Howell. During his gap year, he was organ scholar at St Alban's, Westbury Park, Bristol. He continued his studies at the University of Chichester Conservatoire, where his organ teacher was Timothy Ravalde. During this time Matthew

passed grade 8 organ with distinction and gained the CRCO diploma.

As an accompanist, Matthew has performed with the Chamber Choir of the University of Chichester Conservatoire in concerts and cathedral evensong services. At the conservatoire, he has also accompanied various ensembles and soloists. Other work has included accompanying the Avon and Somerset Constabulary Male Voice Choir and Bristol Male Voice Choir in joint concert. Matthew enjoys playing as an organ soloist and has taken part in numerous concerts in Chichester and Bristol. He also sings bass and has been a choral scholar at Arundel Cathedral. The Guild of Ex-Choristers provides financial support for the Organ Scholarship.





## Editorial



**Nick Hodges**

I was very disappointed to have missed the 30th anniversary celebrations of the Girls' Choir but I am so pleased that it was such a success and I do hope that we will see some of those who were attending a Guild reunion for the first time at future events.

Reunions aren't just about remembering the past.

They are also about making new connections and looking to the future. I was delighted to hear that former member of the Girls' Choir, Ksynia Loeffler (née Reynolds) has kindly offered to help with preparations for the 900th Anniversary celebrations and with broadening the reach of the Guild. Ksynia's son, Finn (8) joined the choir as a probationer in September, which must be the first offspring of one of our Girl Choristers to do so. Ksynia, who lives in Warwick, is a professional singer, working with the BBC Singers, Ex Cathedra, London Voices and Hanover Band amongst others and we look forward to hearing more from her in future issues of The Voice.

In my role with the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations, I have had many conversations this year about survival. The pandemic has not been kind to non-profit organisations, especially those that rely on people coming together in the same physical space at regular intervals. It is on these occasions that attendees are canvassed for their support. It is usually at these events that individuals are encouraged to take a more active role in the organisation. It is only by refreshing the team that runs an organisation that it grows and remains in existence. Too many of the former chorister associations I have spoken with tell the same story of an aging and contracting "management" team and, as a result, the real risk of not surviving.

We have been very lucky at St Mary's over the past nearly 20 years, with new blood joining the Guild committee with fresh ideas, as well as the "old hands" who have given generously of their time and, of course, all those who help and provide support when required to ensure that the Association continues. I hope the Guild will continue for many years to come, supporting the current choristers and celebrating their own choristership when the opportunity arises.

## Chair's column

### Will Butcher



What a month September was this year, for the choir and former choristers alike. Following our second ever, virtual AGM earlier in the month, it was wonderful to finally celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the founding of the Girls'

Choir at the reunion weekend and great to meet many of those who were involved at the beginning. It certainly felt good to be back with live music and meeting face to face again. A few days later, the current Girls' Choir celebrated the 30th Anniversary in style with a live BBC Evensong broadcast which turned out to be one of two BBC broadcasting sessions for the choir that week!

As many of you may know, our St Mary's former chorister association (The Guild of Ex Choristers) is affiliated with the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations (FCOCA) which is currently looking to reinvigorate and transform such associations into more open and inclusive organisations for the better. With our own Nick Hodges as the current Chair of FCOCA, we will be looking to assist where we can. St Mary's will be hosting the FCOCA festival weekend 15-17th September 2023, to coincide with the 900th Anniversary of the founding of St Mary's and its choir, which is a something we are already starting to plan.

Another of the core aims of the Guild is to support the current choir with music making at St Mary's. The organ scholarship is one of the areas in which the Guild and its members have been proactive over the last few years, along with sponsoring the chorister medals, although, for both to continue, further funding will be required. If you would like to contribute to either of these schemes and help the current choir continue the great St Mary's musical tradition that we have all been part of, please feel free to get in touch.

This just leaves me to wish you all a merry Christmas and hopefully you will finally get the opportunity to sing some of your favourite carols and songs with friends and family where ever you may be!

## Announcements

**St Mary's Scholars** is looking to expand its pool of singers. If you are a good sight-reader, confident enough to hold a part by yourself and able to commit to dates and to do some preparation between times, they would love to hear from you, particularly if you're a St Mary's ex-chorister - several former choristers have sung with them in recent years!

On 17th July 2022, the Scholars will give the first performance of a newly-commissioned work by Tamsin Jones, and they have various Sundays to sing for in the meantime.

Email Mark Swinton for more details: [adofm@stmaryswarwick.org.uk](mailto:adofm@stmaryswarwick.org.uk)

Don't forget the **Advent Carol Service** on **Sunday 28th November**, a real favourite of both current and former choristers and regarded by many of the beginning of the Christmas season.

You can check on times of services on the St Mary's website. Many of the choral services are available to be streamed live or watched on demand.

<http://www.stmaryswarwick.org.uk/>

If you've not already been there, you can share memories and see what's happening now on the St Mary's Choirs Warwick Past and Present Facebook page.

### Christmas Tree Festival

25th November - 5th December 2021

Opens 5.00pm 25 November

then daily 10.00am – 4.00pm

(12.00pm – 4.00pm Sundays)

50 decorated Christmas trees sponsored by Warwick businesses, charities, community groups and schools.

Variety of special events | Pop-up Café

Visit [www.stmaryschristmas.org.uk](http://www.stmaryschristmas.org.uk) for full details.

Prices £2 per adult, children free



### Lunchtime Recital Series (2022)

7th Jan - Mark Swinton, organ

21st Jan - Nela Mahoney, flute

4th Feb - Dae-Hee Kim, piano

18th Feb - Matthew Howell, organ

4th Mar - Young Musicians from Warwick School

18th Mar - Michael Overbury, organ

8th Apr - Mark Swinton

Wishing all of our  
readers a very  
happy and  
peaceful  
Christmas and  
and healthy  
New Year

### Diary

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Sunday 28th November<br>5.30pm    | Advent Carol Service                                      |
| Saturday 18th December<br>7.30pm  | Carols at the Castle                                      |
| Sunday 19th December<br>6.30pm    | Christmas Carol Service                                   |
| Wednesday 29th December<br>4.00pm | Christmas Choral Evensong<br>BBC Radio 3                  |
| Sunday 13th January<br>5.00pm     | Choral Evensong at Tewkesbury<br>Abbey (Boys & Gentlemen) |
| Saturday 16th April<br>8.00pm     | Service of Light and First<br>Eucharist of Easter         |



The Guild of Ex-Choristers

The Parish Office, Collegiate Church of St Mary, Old Square, Warwick, CV34 4AB

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*foca*  
Affiliated