

St. Bartholomew's Choir

May 17, 1996

Dear Choir Friend,

We travelled Tuesday April 9 Dublin-Rosslare in a convoy of ten cars crossing to Pembroke on 'Irish Ferries' - "Isle of Innismore". Robin Heather provided each driver with an excellent route plan, Pembroke to Exeter with agreed refreshment stops along the way (Pembroke to Exeter - 215.6 Miles).

Arriving in daylight we got our first impressions of beautiful Exeter Cathedral with its twin towers and total length of 383 feet. Then we located the Choir School right beside the cathedral. We were warmly received once we breached the security devices. We quickly had to commit to memory the door lock codes to enter and exit and to move from one section to the next.

The accommodation, dormitories etc., were good and the facilities most suitable - TV/Video/Gymnasium/Football and Basket Ball/Music Room/Table Tennis/Snooker. Food was to a high standard, cooked by school caterers. We found we were also at the heart of the city - shops, restaurants, pubs, etc. Everyone settled in well while a number of the more senior in the party made off for their hotel some half-a-mile away. Named, the Clock Tower, we quickly renamed it 'the Cockroach' !

Next morning Wednesday, practice for the boys was at 9.30 with the men starting at 10.00am. First morning was in the Music Room but every other morning we sang in the Chapter House which was a lovely large and lofty building to the south of the cathedral.

Each afternoon we practiced in the choir stalls in the cathedral from 4.00 to 5.00pm with Evensong at 5.30pm (except Saturday 3.00pm). Sunday was completely different with practice at 9.00am for us all and then straight into Sung Eucharist at 9.45am and Matins 11.15am. We were not required to sing the Sunday Evensong.

This is the demanding repertoire we performed :-

| | <u>Setting</u> | <u>Anthem</u> |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Wednesday | Nicholson in D | Listen Sweet Dove - Ives |
| Thursday | Noble in B Minor | Greater Love - Ireland |
| Friday | Stanford in A | Dum Transisset - Tavener |
| Saturday | Sumsion in G | Blessed City - Bairstow |
| Sunday S.Euch. | Stanford in C&F | Sicut Cervus - Palestrina |
| Sunday Matins | Stanford in B | Blessed be the God - Wesley |

Supplemental Musicians

additional friends in our party :-

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Andrew MacKriell | - Accompanying Organist |
| - Ken Shellard | - Bass |
| - Rev. Gavin Williamson | - Alto |
| and on Saturday only | |
| - Stephen Shellard | - Alto |

Once again we were fortunate to have some addi-

While all the services were sung in the Chancel/Quire we moved outside the screen to a nave altar for the Sung Eucharist which was attended by 3/400.

Precentor's Reception

Canon Kenneth Parry gave a wine reception for our whole party in the Deanery at which he praised the singing and the demeanour of the choir. He particularly admired the discipline of the boys attributing this to Malcolm. The Canon made us very welcome throughout the week and took a party up into the roof of the nave, then on into the south tower, the belfry and on to the roof for a viewing of the city.

Civic Reception

Exeter has the oldest Guildhall in England dating from c.1160. We were very warmly welcomed by the Mayor, Margaret Midgely who told us of an ambition she had to visit Dublin and follow the James Joyce trail. Councillor Midgely coped marvellously with all of the choir boy's questions and following some refreshments we were taken around the Guildhall to view the silver wear, the dungeons, the mayor's parlour and a jury room. We were told that the "hanging judge", Judge Jeffreys had handed down death-sentences in the hall, for the most trivial of crimes. On display was the "Nelson Sword" presented to Lord Nelson when he was enrolled as a Freeman of the City in 1801.

We sang "Sicut Cervus" by Palestrina for the Mayor and party, following which we were presented with a glass token which has since been presented to the Lord Mayor of Dublin.

Also welcoming us in the Guildhall was Mr. Alan Wright, Mace Bearer to the City of Exeter. We discovered that Alan was a frequent visitor to Irish horse racing meetings at Leopardstown. We have since learned that he wrote to our Lord Mayor commending our Choir as fine musical ambassadors for Dublin.

Presentation

Boys and men contributed to a gift token to buy CD's and this was presented to Malcolm Wisener in appreciation of all his hard work, on the final Sunday morning in the Chapter House. Plus an Exeter Knight 1.5" tall, an Exeter teddy 2" tall an Exeter stick of rock and a beautifully hand-woven book marker !

Bombs and Rugby Near the end of the last war the cathedral was bombed - fortunately the damage was mostly confined to a small chapel dedicated to St. James, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Thomas. If the hit had been 10' further north the whole choir/chancel area would have been destroyed.

Part of the funds to rebuild the chapel came from a rugby match arranged between Exeter RFC and Exeter University RFC and the captain of Exeter RFC's face with a rugby ball is carved in stone at one side of the windows. The player who is now 65 years old regularly visits the cathedral. Directly opposite is carved the face of the stone mason responsible for the re-build, plus his cap, which we were told he never removed, even for royalty visits.

Wells Venture Relieved of all further musical responsibilities on Sunday afternoon a number of us travelled to Wells which is situated in lovely countryside far away from any large town or city.

Wells is of course famous for its scissor arches which were the spectacular solution, in 1338 of master mason William Joy to prevent the massive central tower subsiding. It worked and the cathedral is indeed a jewel of architecture. Wells also has the oldest clock face in Britain (dated 1392) and the clock still works. Then, next door, what must be the grandest bishops palace, which is moated. We met the Canon Treasurer, Geoffrey Walker who suggested we consider a choir visit to Wells sometime in the future !

Funding Exeter In the March Choir-news a cost of £1000 was mentioned for the rental of the choir school for accommodation. This should have read £2900 !!!

Mid-Summer Choir Concert To get our choir funds back in better condition we plan to have a concert on Sunday Evening 7.00pm June 2. Please enter the date in your diaries and do your best to support the effort.

Gorey Our March 23 concert in Christ Church, Gorey was hit by the worst weather possible so numbers were less than expected. But , the parishioners more than made up for the weather by providing a lovely cooked support for our whole party. We are much indebted to the Reverend Charles Mullen and his parishioners for their hospitality and for a very worthwhile contribution to our Exeter Trip funds.

New Choirboy We welcomed Luke Ginnell into the choir only a short time before we set off for Exeter. He travelled with us and cheerfully learned lots of basics very quickly.

Niall Morris Niall was tenor soloist in the Bach B Minor Mass performed in the National Concert Hall, Saturday April 20. The Guinness Choir and Orchestra were under the direction of our former choirmaster, David Milne.

It was an exhilarating performance and we congratulate our two former St. Barth's musicians.