

St. Bartholomew's Choir

May 1999

Diary of the Trip

One of the younger gentlemen has given us his perspective of the trip.

Connected with a choir of St. Bartholomew's calibre, where one is perennially kept busy with the challenges inherent in some of the finest music ever written, it is understandable that getting to know everyone just isn't always possible. By definition, members of a choir ought to be more concerned about musical commitment than to cultivating personal friendships. And it is for this reason that the recent choir trip to Worcester and St. David's was such a blissfully refreshing and enlivening opportunity, embodying as it so clearly did a relaxed and informal springboard to closer friendships and new acquaintances. Packed with variety and bustling with activity, the week following Easter Sunday was an ideal chance for everyone involved to become more familiar with those we never really knew. Choosing from such a myriad of events,

occasions and occurrences, it would be impossible to present even a fraction of the week's proceedings, but the following accounts provide a glimpse of the tour's highlights:-

Tuesday 6th April

Arriving in Worcester in time for dinner, everyone was stunned by the luxurious and comfortable accommodation. To the delight of the boys - and many gentlemen - not to mention accompanying adults - there was a trampoline on site, to which many hilarious photographs pay tribute. In a case such as this, a picture really does paint a thousand words!

Wednesday 7th April

Our first morning in Worcester saw us warmly welcomed by the Mayor, Mr. Derek Prodder, in his sumptuous chambers. Married to an Irish woman and being an avid fan of racing, the Mayor claimed a particularly strong affinity with Ireland and made every

effort to welcome us. Refreshments in the courtroom preceded our first performance of the trip - "Ag Críost an Síol" by Ó Riada. Later in the day, Noble in B Minor and Fauré's "Cantique de Jean Racine" marked the first of our appearances at Evensong in the spectacular cathedral.

Thursday 8th April

The boys paid a visit to Warwick castle during the day. This castle was home to the mighty Earls of Warwick



for centuries. In addition, Richard III once owned the Castle and started new fortifications there before meeting his death at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. Later, the Castle was a Parliamentary stronghold during the English Civil War.

Continued Overleaf...

Diary of the Trip (continued)

Friday 9th April

During the morning, all the boys and a few of the gentlemen paid a visit to The Commandery, a civil war museum. The building itself was used as the Royalist headquarters during the



Battle of Worcester in 1651. Just before the regular afternoon rehearsal, a small and privileged group of choir members were given the opportunity to visit the Cathedral Library. Under the erudite guidance of Dr. Alan Fletcher, they viewed ancient manuscripts and were able to examine the second-oldest binding in existence. It was a wonderful opportunity to delve into history in such a direct and unusual manner.

Saturday 10th April

With a three-hour car journey to St. David's militating against a weekend lie-in, we were on the road to Wales before 9 am. Arriving in

blazing sunshine a few hours later, the breathtaking sight of the Cathedral was given every added advantage of nature. Following a tour of the Cathedral, the choir went its separate ways to different accommodation. As the "adults" stayed in a vegetarian hostel, the boys and young(er) gentlemen resided on a remote farm, far more comfortable than its description first suggested. Our first Evensong at St. David's included a performance of Bainton's "And I saw a new heaven".

Sunday 11th April

The penultimate day of our trip was punctuated with no less than two services, the highlights of which were Wesley's "Blessed be the God and Father" and "Ave Maria" by Bruckner. Shortly after Evensong, a select group had to hurry away to the midnight ferry, while most people remained until the following morning. After a mammoth sea journey in atrocious weather, we returned to Dublin safe and sound - back with ourselves, our baggage, and a catalogue of unforgettable memories!

Participants in the trip this year:

Boys

Patrick Arnold
Joshua Cashman Edge
Hugh Clancy
Sam Cogan
Thomas Collins
Mark Cummins
Andrew Dempsey
Robert Dempsey
Roger Fagan
Kevin Fitzpatrick
Sean Fitzpatrick
Patrick Groenland
Graham Kerr
Sean O'Connor
Killian Rogan
Ross Traynor
Jonathan Van de Belt
Sebastian Woods

Men

Richard Bannister
Bobby Barden
Ian Ellis
Stephen Fagan
Alan Fletcher
Brian Gageby
Clive Hope-Ross
Robin Heather
Robert Hilliard
Stephen Kerr
Alan Latimer
Nicholas McMurry
Gillen Motherway
Kevin O'Connor
Mervyn Percival
Doug Poynton
Des Ryan
Ken Shellard
Dominic Thurston
Tim Thurston

Support

Tom Arnold
Mildred Beresford
Neville Beresford
Maureen Cooke
Fran Dempsey
Maria Gageby
George Alfred Heather
Julie Heather
Rhona McKay
Margaret O'Connor
Margaret Percival
Niamh Rogan

Organist & Choirmaster

Malcolm Wisener

Accompanying Organist

Andrew Mackriell

Organ Scholar

David Falconer

Pen Rhiw, St. Davids

While the boys were staying on a secluded farm, the majority of the adult party stayed in Pen Rhiw, built originally as a vicarage in Victorian times. Later on it was used as a priory.

Today it is a residential centre taking parties



such as ours. It is also frequently used as a venue for a retreat. St. David's is well suited to that task, as it is so far away from the noise and the exuberant business of cities.

By a very pleasant coincidence, Pen Rhiw was home to the Community of St John the Evangelist, the good sisters from St. Mary's Home, Pembroke Park, from 1952 to 1985. We were able to bring back photos and some personal messages to them from our hosts.

Concert Coming Up

St. Bartholomew's has been invited to give a concert on in the Dublin International Organ & Choral Festival, which takes place this year



from the 19th to the 27th of June. This takes place on the 24th, in St. Audeon's Roman Catholic Church, High Street. This is quite a honour and we are looking forward to it.

St. Matthew Passion

Our boys provided the Ripieno Chorus when Bach's St Matthew Passion was performed in the Church of Our Lady, Mother of Divine Grace, Raheny on Saturday, March 20th.

The choral societies involved were the Seafield Singers (Directed by William Young) and the East Cork Choral Society (Directed by Colin Nicholls of St. Finbarre's Cathedral). Malcolm Wisener provided the Harpsichord continuo.

St David's Organ

The organ at St. David's Cathedral was originally built by Henry Willis in 1883, and had three manuals and thirty-one stops. It was rebuilt by Hill, Norman and Beard in 1953, when no significant tonal alterations were made, but the instrument was housed in a new smaller case designed by the architect Alban Caroe.

The organ was dismantled in September 1998 and is at present undergoing a major restoration and rebuild by Harrison & Harrison of Durham, based on a budget of £670,000. Work is hopefully going to be completed some time in the year 2000. A new case will house almost the entire pedal organ on the screen, the Willis Choir removed in 1980 will be re-instated, and with a few other additions in the style of Father Willis, the new organ will have four manuals and fifty-two stops.

St. David's was very fortunate to receive a grant from the UK National Lottery of just under £400,000. Lets hope St. Bartholomew's can find an equally generous donor!

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Treasurer: Neville Beresford, 1 Linden Vale, Proby Square, Blackrock, Co. Dublin. Tel 01-2885693

Secretary: Bobby Barden, Forgefield, Stocking Lane, Dublin 16. Tel 01-4945671.

Newsletter: Richard Bannister, 76 Stillorgan Wood, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin. Tel 01-2780940.