



Music @ Saint Bartholomew's

<http://www.stbartholomews.ie>

January 2011



- The “Spooky” Belfry
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Voice for Life Awards Service

A marvellous time was had by all on Saturday 2 October at the annual RSCM Ireland Voice for Life Awards Service.

Winners of the RSCM's Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards from churches across Dublin arrived at Saint Patrick's Cathedral for a rehearsal with Stuart Nicholson, the cathedral's Organist and Master of the Choristers. He took us through the repertoire for Evensong, before a rehearsal in the cathedral where adults from the choristers' (our) choirs sang the alto, tenor and bass parts.

On an occasion like this, it is always exciting to see how the singing progresses from relatively humble beginnings in the trebles-only rehearsal – to the mighty sound produced by forty singers in a cavernous cathedral! One chorister said

that her favourite moment of the day was “walking into the cathedral for the first time, because it was so big and it's amazing to think we were going to fill it with our singing!”

The organ was played by David Leigh, the cathedral's Assistant Organist, and we particularly enjoyed his vivid illustrations of the “trumpets and cymbals” when we sang Psalm 150! We sang a *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* by Dublin's famous son, Charles Villiers Stanford, and the radiant anthem by Irishman Charles Wood, *O Thou the Central Orb*.

All of this built towards the presentation ceremony itself, during which the Dean of Saint Patrick's, the Very Reverend Robert McCarthy, presented special certificates to the choristers, marking their achievements in the Voice for Life exams. We, as a choir and

congregation, were pleased to congratulate them, and we hope that many of them will be at another presentation service soon, being congratulated on receiving their next awards!

Afterwards, the singers and their families gathered at a reception (kindly hosted by the Grammar School), during which the Dean thanked Stuart Nicholson for his inspiring musical direction. The choristers were once again applauded for their achievements; and Peter Barley, Chair of the RSCM's Republic of Ireland Committee, wished them well for their future musical challenges, and encouraged them to start working towards the next level.

Peter commented that “we are delighted by the ever-increasing number and standard of entrants. The Voice



(continued)

for Life scheme is incredibly valuable to both choir trainers and choristers, and it helps to produce really well-rounded choristers who know not just how to sing, but what they are singing about, and why.”

Voice for Life exams are now being taken all over Ireland, and in their absence, we also celebrated the success of choristers from Cork and Limerick, who were unable to be with us on the day. They will receive their certificates in celebrations in their own churches.

Future exam sessions are scheduled to take place in January, May and November 2011, with exam centres around the country. A syllabus, an application form, and other useful information can be downloaded from the web site www.rscmireland.com.

Fraser Wilson and Helen Thomas

Edward S. Fry, 1905-2010

Former choirmaster, Edward S. Fry, passed away in Bristol on October 5. Bill Fry, as he was known more recently, was responsible for the music in Saint Bartholomew's from 1938-1946. He was the person who introduced the Walter Vale Psalter, which we use at choral services to this day.

The writer remembers his most sensitive accompaniment of these psalms. He also remembers that, in addition to being very caring, he was a strong disciplinarian, and he needed to be. In those days there were many occasions when we, the boys, were called upon to sing at mid-week weddings and funerals, and some of us were rather slow to travel back to school. Mr

Fry would chase us on his bicycle, with a basket on its handlebars, sometimes as far as the docks, before herding us back to Saint Andrew's College, which was on Clyde Road at that time.

Bill spent the last few years of his long life contentedly in Saint Monica's Home, just outside Bristol. This was a wonderful place, and its beautiful chapel was, to his joy, equipped with a Willis Organ. He accompanied most of the services there up until very recently.

We understand that his ashes will be buried in his parents' grave in Kilternan Parish, and we express our sincere regrets to his niece, Ms Patrica Dillon, who lives in Glenageary.

Bobby Barden



Concert by The Flautadors

The UK's leading recorder quartet, the Flautadors, were one of the star attractions at the East Cork Early Music Festival in September. As the group had a return flight from Dublin, they decided to give an additional concert at Saint Bartholomew's on Saturday September 18.

The performance began with a 14th-century medieval dance played in procession from the vestry. As the rich sounds of the treble and tenor recorders filled the church, it was immediately clear that it was the perfect acoustical setting for the instruments, and that we were in for a treat from these highly accomplished musicians. The music ranged from Purcell, Bach and Vivaldi, to more modern fare such as a lively arrangement of *The Pink Panther*, and an arrangement of some Scottish folk tunes by a

member of the quartet. The smallest instrument played was the tiny garklein (aka piccolo) recorder, which is less than a handspan in length, and plays notes from the C two octaves above middle C and upwards. At the other end of the scale was the sub-contrabass recorder, which is about eight feet tall and plays notes beginning at C two octaves below middle C.

For anyone, like myself, who played a screechy descant recorder at school – surrounded by twenty other children with equally screechy recorders (each one at its own subtly different pitch) – it was hard to believe that we were listening to members of the same instrument family! All too soon The Flautadors had to leave to catch their flights, but hopefully we'll have a chance to head them again in the future.

Andrew Mullins

Noel Houlden

Former chorister, Noel W. Houlden, died early on Wednesday January 5th at the age of eighty-one.

Noel who originally came from the centre of Ballsbridge, joined Saint Bartholomew's Choir in January 1939 and sang with us until the end of the second world war. He maintained an interest in Saint Bartholomew's throughout his life, and had been attending with his wife Valerie until quite recently.

Those of us who knew him will particularly remember his wonderful roguish sense of humour.

We extend our sympathies to Valerie and the rest of his family.

Bobby Barden



A view from the loft...

This is coming to you direct from the Saint Bartholomew's organ bench, where I retreated last summer after Peter took over as Director of Music. The seat is comfortable and the view pleasant; and it is good to see things from a different perspective.

I greatly enjoyed most of my time as Director of Music, but the change seems to have worked well for everyone. The switch has allowed me to concentrate on organ-playing, composition, and other things that I had missed when I was working so hard on leading the church's music.

The church's organ is marvellous; and it has been a real pleasure getting to know it well over the last few months. One of the interesting things about our organ is how different it sounds at the console – as opposed to what you hear out

in the nave. In particular I enjoyed playing for the services over Advent and Christmas – it was interesting to see this important part of the church's year from a different perspective, and to contribute to it in a different way from the previous few years.

Now that I no longer choose the choirs' music, chat with parents, or organise schedules, I can take time to plan suitable voluntaries and to prepare colourful accompaniments for the choral music. Mastering all of this has been an excellent challenge!

You might remember one or two of the pieces of mine that the choir used to sing: the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, for example, and *The Angel Gabriel*. Well, I have certainly kept up the composing since the job swap, and in fact have written more music in the

last six months than for a number of years.

Most excitingly, I have written a number of pieces that were specially commissioned by the groups that were first to perform them – perhaps most thrillingly, a piece in Irish for the choir of Saint Ann's, Dawson Street. This was a wonderful project that was suggested by Charles Marshall, the Director of Music there. He was most helpful in teaching me the intricacies of such a beautiful language, and in discussing every aspect of the music as it was being written. The piece was first performed in their service of Nine Lessons and Carols the week before Christmas, and I was fortunate enough to be there myself to hear it.

This year I have carried on that good work, and am currently working on a num-



A view from the loft... (continued)

ber of pieces which are to be performed by various groups over the next few months. It goes without saying that I am always happy to be asked to write something new.

Another exciting recent project has been singing in Chester and Truro cathedrals with the Rivelin Singers, the chamber choir I founded. It is always a privilege to be invited to take part in the daily worship of a cathedral, as our choirs know from their own such visits. I enjoyed the conducting all the more, having done a little less than usual over the past few months! The Rivelin Singers will be visiting Gloucester, one of my favourite cathedrals, this coming summer.

During the process of changing over, the Vicar and Vestry and others could not have been more supportive. I

am delighted that it worked out so well for Peter and me – and particularly for the church's music. You can see for yourselves what super work Peter is doing; it's a joy to be part of it every Sunday.

We are all working very hard as usual to provide the best music we possibly can, and – because being out of sight can sometimes mean that an organist is also out of mind – I'm always delighted when people are so generous with their praise after concerts or services. I think, though, that I have to share the credit with our fabulous organ!

In closing, I'd like to thank everyone who has been so supportive both before and after the change, and to say how much I am looking forward to the rest of this term, Holy Week, Easter, and beyond.

Fraser Wilson

Former Chorister Wins Award

We send congratulations to former chorister, Tom Roseingrave, who, having achieved maximum points in his Leaving Certificate, was recently awarded one of the Easter Week Scholarships by the government. Just seven of these are awarded each year, and they are based on the best scoring candidate nationally in groups of three subjects – in Tom's case: Irish, English and History.

Tom is now studying English and Spanish at Trinity College, Dublin. The scholarship fully funds his third level education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Robert Hilliard





Saint Bartholomew's Choir, c. 1945

Back row: Michael Treacy, Henry McDowell, Bobby Barden, Cecil Price, Aubrey Fogarty,
Robin Luke, Robin Armstrong, Fred Leach, Tony Dillon, Robert Chandler, Noel Quinn, ???

Middle row: Brian Draper, Noel Houlden, George Reeves, Curate Rev Sydney Craig, Choirmaster Edward S Fry,
Canon Walter Simpson, Des Treacy, Robert McBride, Trevor Lewis, Ian Lewis

Front row (sitting): ???, Sydney Gorman



Saint Bartholomew's Choir, 1993

Back row: Malcolm Proud, (Dean) Norman Lynas, David Falconer, Liam Lyons, Bobby Barden, Alan Latimer, Nicholas McMurry, Alan Fletcher, Ian Ellis, Mervyn Percival, Malcolm Wisener

Front Row: Shane Martens, Brian Gageby, Stuart McCoy, Benoit Ferre-Cullen, Tim Greenland, Christian Phelan, Robert Hilliard, Edward Boles, Kevin O'Connor, Richard Bannister, Patrick Greenland, Steven Kerr, Graham Kerr



Saint Bartholomew's Choir, 1995

Back row: Mervyn Percival, David Falconer, Alan Fletcher, Liam Lyons, Nicholas McMurry, Richard Bannister, Bobby Barden, Ian Ellis, Tim Thurston; **Middle row:** Dominic Thurston, Stephen Kerr, Benoit Ferre-Cullen, Kevin O'Connor, Edward Boles, Robert Hilliard, Tim Groenland, Gillen Motherway, Stuart McCoy; **Front row:** Patrick Groenland, Timothy Telford, Roger Fagan, Steven Fagan, Graham Kerr, Brian Gageby, Patrick Arnold, James O'Neill.



Saint Bartholomew's Choir, 2003

Back row: Alan Latimer, Alan Fletcher, Clive Hope-Ross, Doug Poynton, Tim Thurston, Robin Heather, Richard Ban-
nister, Graham Kerr, Sam Cogan, Robert Hilliard, Bobby Barden, Ian Ellis, Mervyn Percival; Middle row: Andrew
Dempsey, Peter Cox, Mark Rogan, Tom Roseingrave, Jonathan Van der Belt, Cian Kinsella, Killian Rogan, Conor Mc-
Dermott, Killian Horan, Malcolm Wisener; Front row: Ray McDermott, Declan Doyle, Calvin O'Broin, Emmet Kiberd,
Carl Adams, Ethan Conroy, Brian Horan, Dominic Guilding, Sebastian Adams

Singing in the Snow

The Christmas season is always a busy time for the choirs, and 2010 was supposed to be no exception. Unfortunately, the weather had other plans, with heavy snow forcing the cancellation of practices on Wednesday December 22.

The knock-on effect was that the Midnight Mass was sung by the Gentlemen of the choir alone for the first time since 2003, albeit with a couple of particularly determined girl choristers 'back seat driving' in the organ loft. There was no Mozart, as promised by the music list; instead, the gentlemen sang the *Mass for Three Voices* by William Byrd, together with J.S. Bach's arrangement of the chorale *O little one sweet*. Although the Mozart was missed, the replacement proved to be a beautifully understated start to Christmas Day, very quiet and gentle. After the service a

number of the gentlemen had to assist with pushing cars out of the snow-covered car park!

On Christmas morning, the temperature in Dublin was -11°C , some ten degrees colder than the temperature reported for the day in Moscow! The service was sung by all choristers who were able to get there, albeit with some surreptitiously wearing gloves in a largely futile attempt to keep warm, the heating having failed to come on in time. Mr Wilson did valiant battle with the organ, it too having succumbed to the overnight temperature change, with the result that an entire division was unusable. *A division refers to a group of stops playable on a specific manual (keyboard) of the organ. The organ at Saint Bartholomew's has four divisions; Pedal, Choir (the bottom manual), Great (the middle manual) and Swell (the top manual).*

The mix of personnel presented an interesting challenge as the boys and girls have different repertoire. Nevertheless, the gentlemen repeated the Byrd from the night before, and the full choir gave a spirited performance of Philip Stopford's setting of *We three kings* - well remembered from the concert on December 12.

Our thanks to all who went to such lengths to make sure that we could provide music for the Christmas services. It was hugely appreciated by the congregations at both services. One senior member of the choir, who had not been able to get to church, told us a few days later that it was the first Christmas he had missed in well over sixty years. Such is the level of commitment shown by our choristers!

Peter Parshall and
Richard Bannister



Salvete and Valete

Following a highly successful recruitment drive in the autumn, we admitted twenty new members to the choirs in October 2010: Mark Connor, Roman Considine, Matthew Corcoran, Peter Corcoran, James Corr, JohnLuka Doherty, Joseph Donnelly, James Hastings-

Rafferty, Jacq Herbots, David Kennedy, William Kinsella, Lily Magahy Buckley, William Montgomery, Max Moore, Caroline Rentschler, Hugo Stapleton, Lucas Walshe, Cian Whittaker, Aisling Wright, and Roisin Wright.

In January 2010 we welcomed Isobel Howard-

Cordone back to the girls' choir, and bid a sad farewell to Matthew Pearson and Saorla Wright, both of whom have given sterling service to the boys' and girls' choirs respectively. We wish them well for all their endeavours in the future.

Peter Parshall

Funderland Trip

The annual choir trip to Funderland in early January made an awesome end to the school holidays.

On entering the Simonscourt Pavillion the atmosphere was electric. The noise of the rides, music, screaming, and the bright lights got the adrenaline pumping straight away. We all felt the need to go on as many rides as possible as

quickly as possible.

Some were even daring enough to test their sanity to the limit on *Extreme*, the most stomach churning of all the rides. We spent a lot of time on the bumper cars but the best was definitely saved for last: the *Mega Drop*. Just before we left for home we enjoyed a terrifying journey 40 metres in the air; we were left dan-

gling to admire the view, then suddenly dropped down to the ground leaving our innards behind!

After we recovered from that hair raising experience, most of us were eager to have another go. Then we returned home to dream of next January and another amazing Funderland experience!

Séan Healy



Funderland – Another Perspective

On January 5th, after our usual Wednesday rehearsal, the girls' choir set off to Funderland. To the dismay of some choristers we had to walk that horribly long ten minute journey to the RDS, the various cars being left behind at the church.

We gathered under the *Giant Wheel* while Mr Bannister went to collect unlimited ride wristbands. As we waited, we looked up with a mix of emotions at the *Mega Drop*, a spectacularly high tower, which suspends its nervous riders at its highest point before suddenly speeding to the ground.

Mike Spratt, Rachel's dad, who had volunteered along with Mary Neenan and Paula Somers to help supervise that night, joined his daughter and the choristers on the *Mega Drop*, while the other parents tried not to look at the sickening height that their children

were reaching.

After that first hit of adrenaline, we split up into four groups, searching for more thrilling rides that took our fancy. We went inside, bumping into each other occasionally, and excitedly describing and recommending the various rides we had taken.

A few minutes on the *Bumper Cars* was all it took to demonstrate just why the legal driving age remains at seventeen. Some of the girls seemed to quite enjoy this particular outlet for their anger – and the constant whiplash feeling that it produced – and went on the ride more than ten times!

Collectively, I think the girls went on every ride possible, however, there was an unfortunate incident when some of us were told that we were too old to go on the *Merry-Go-Round*. This particular ride had

a sign stating that parents could accompany their children and so needless to say, it confused us no end.

As the evening began to wind down and stomachs began to act up, we decided to leave. It was about ten o'clock when we remembered that we had agreed to go on the *Jungle River* last. And so, despite the cutting wind and general lack of any waterproof clothing, most of us foolishly sat aboard the already soaking boats... five times! (*The "responsible" adults expressly disclaim all responsibility for hypothermia cases! – RB*)

Overall it was a fantastic evening. And so, we all went home totally content. By then our nausea was somehow healed by the delicious overpriced hot dogs, which kept us warm as we walked back to Saint Bartholomew's.

Kate Somers



The “Spooky” Belfry

Walk round to the Elgin Road side of the church and you will find a spiral stairway. Enter and climb those fifty-eight stone steps to emerge in the lower chamber of the belfry. Immediately to the right, you will find the wonderful clock – and the bells mechanism – by which it rings the quarters and the hours. This mechanism, pictured below right, has been operating for over one hundred and thirty years.

Until fifty years ago the clock was wound manually every day by the verger. This winding involved lifting the very heavy weights up to the height where the bells are. They are still lifted to this day, though the job is now performed by timed electric motors.

Opposite the clock is the Carillon, which many years ago could automatically peal the bells and play tunes. It op-

erated like a music box with heavy wooden drums rotating, and metal pins that released the appropriate bells as required.

During the early days of the church, towards the end of the Victorian era, one of these wooden drums enabled the Carillon to chime out “God save the King/Queen”. As various British monarchs passed through Ballsbridge on their state visits, they no doubt inserted their ear-trumpets to hear this salute. This writer has a fond memory of that particular wooden drum being summarily ejected from the belfry!

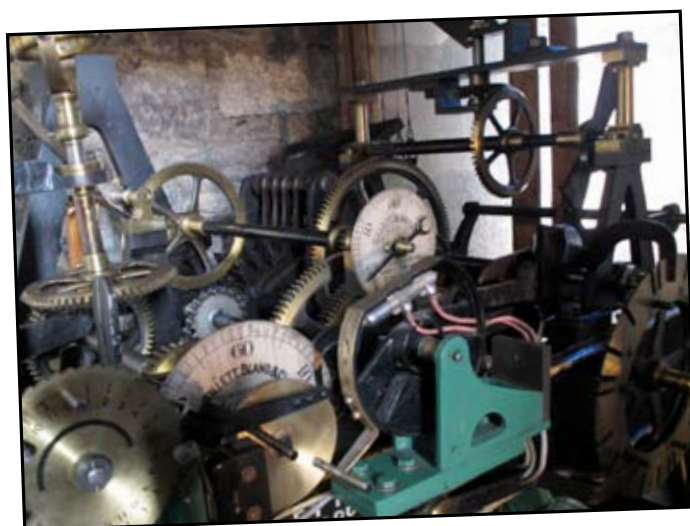
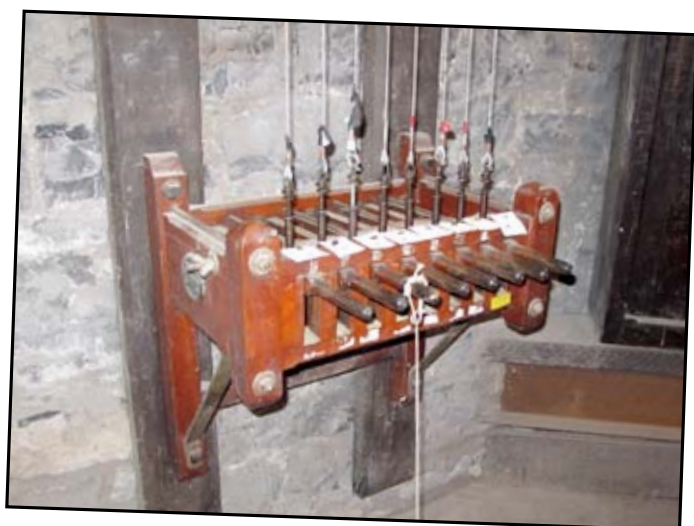
A valiant effort to repair the system was made during the time of the late Dean John Paterson, allowing it to operate for a few years. However, it has been out of order ever since, and we suspect that it may have reached the end of its working life.

On another side of the belfry is the manual keyboard; eight wooden rods which can be played with clenched fists. Scales, arpeggios and tunes can be played to herald the commencement of services, usually for ten minutes before.

Nearby, albeit forbidden to all except the bells technician, are the thirty rungs of a ladder which leads up to the actual bell chamber, where ear plugs are needed in the event the bells should sound. Here you would see how the clock strikes the bells with a hammer, while someone using the keyboard pulls the appropriate tongue inside the bell. Some further rungs up a ladder takes you through a trap-door out on to the roof.

All in all, we have what we think is probably the finest peal of church bells in Ireland!

Bobby Barden



Concert of Carols and Festive Readings

The twenty-first annual concert with Alan Stanford took place on December 12. This year a number of new carols were introduced to the programme. The first was Jacob Handl's lively *Resonet in Laudibus*, sung with enthusiasm by the boys and men. Next, the girls took on *And the Glory of the Lord* from Handel's *Messiah*. It is hard to believe that you can have heard this sung better anywhere. The boys followed with a treble-only arrangement of John Ireland's *The Holy Boy*, a carol last sung by the full choir back in 2006. The definite musical highlight, however, was Stephen Cleobury's *Joys Seven*, performed by the girls and men. The final verse features a fantastic treble descant, which the girls sung with panache. Moving well away from the usual Christmas repertoire, the girls and men introduced the beautiful *Suantraí ár Slánaitheora*, sung in Irish (and understood by almost nobody!). As always the programme included two audience carols and three obligatory favourites: the *Wexford Carol* arranged by Peter Parshall; the timeless *O holy night*; and, as an encore, Philip Stopford's slightly demented arrangement of *We three kings*.

Soloists during the concert were Liam Newman, Gavin Jones, Cliona Rogan, Daisy Magahy Buckley and Isabelle McGeough.

Of course this event would not be possible without our good friend, Alan Stanford, and his marvellous (and clearly emotional) festive readings. Many people rightly consider this to be the highlight of the festive season, to the point that some get quite cross if he dares to omit any of their particular favourites.

At the end of the concert it was time to thank Alan for twenty-one years of service. Alan Fletcher, himself a former member of the choir, presented six beautiful silver goblets he had bought at an auction specially for this occasion. Alan Stanford was clearly overcome, and assured us that he would continue to take part for "years without end". Robert Hilliard then handed over a bottle of something special to go into the goblets!

We all pay tribute to our Director of Music, Peter Parshall, and our Assistant Director of Music, Fraser Wilson, for their dedication to the music at Saint Bartholomew's.

Bobby Barden

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Future events

A full schedule of services and events is available on the diary page of the parish web site, located at <http://www.stbartholomews.ie/>.

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