



Spring 2015

A very belated Happy New Year!

In future we want to focus the newsletter to interact more with you rather than just report choir events. To kick this off, please take a look at *Not a lot of people know that* on the following page. We also need your feedback to find a winner for the caption competition on page 3. Enjoy!

Joy & Soo



The Armed Man and the Gallant Knight

Brockham Choral's *The Armed Man and The Gallant Knight* at Dorking Halls. Two major works were shoe-horned into one concert with the first, *The Gallant Knight*, being a world premiere of a specially commissioned piece.

Certainly it was an ambitious undertaking by the Society, but they are known for innovation and taking on big challenges. Booking the Dorking Halls on Saturday was a key part of that process.

The libretto of *The Gallant Knight*, which recounts the traditional story of St George slaying the dragon, was created by choir members Tony Earnshaw and Alison Jesson, both having successful professional track records.

The music was composed by Malcolm Archer, now well established as a composer.

The story features George as the true-born son of English gentry slaying the dragon that lurks in a dark forest, causing grief to the local community.

With choir on stage, the action took place around the orchestra – tenor Matt Spillet taking the key role as George, well supported by Ciaran Yeo as the King and a convincing dragon played by Alex Roose.

The inevitable finale is the betrothal of the hero to the King's daughter Sabia, performed by Alexandra Stevenson. Joy Ridley directed well, which was not an easy task in the space provided.

Young children from Powell Corderoy and St Joseph's

Primary Schools screamed convincingly at the menacing dragon and rejoiced loudly as George won his fair lady.

After the interval, choir and orchestra returned for Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* supported by the film created by Hefin Owen, which was shown on the screens. This work captures the menace and horror of war, emerging into the sunshine and dream of eternal peace. The music is original and thought-provoking.

Conductor Paul Provost, with orchestra and choir dressed in black, each with a red rose, produced a masterful version of this demanding work for which all can be proud. Brockham Choral at their best.

Simon Ames

Abridged from Surrey Advertiser

View from an elder

I joined the choir in 1982 when Chris Pratt was conductor. It was a small choir, say 25-30 people, but not lacking in ambition, even singing Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

We had several conductors over the years, more singers joined, and the standard of singing improved markedly. I particularly remember Paul Brough, David Swinson, who took us on tour to Bruges (such tours becoming a regular feature) and Chris Dawe. We sang demanding works including Monteverdi *Vespers* and Verdi *Requiem*, but it was not all plain sailing, and we had to ask one conductor to leave after only three months.

Early on, talent evenings were held in Maureen's sitting room when 25 people could squeeze in making it really intimate. I remember singing *She was Poor but She was Honest* with Jenny Bartholomew and Ann and *The Song of the Cheshire Cheese* with Ann. Of course Ron Hooper always made his inimitable contribution.

Yes, they were happy days. It was good to feel the standard of singing constantly improving as continues under Andy's leadership. **Bruce Pennell**

We're very sorry that Bruce has decided to step down from singing in the choir but delighted that he intends to keep in touch with us – he will be much missed. Editor

'If you cannot teach me to fly, teach me to sing' **Peter Pan**



Maureen and Gareth on Sue and Nick's boat, waiting for the sun to get over the yardarm.

Promises, Promises

It started with hope: it promised to be a relaxing social time, an enjoyable evening with a little fundraising.

It continued with optimism: inviting folk to offer skills, musical and sporting activities, works of art, boats and holiday homes. People were very generous: personal gifts, precious talents, private homes. The hall was decorated and delicious food donated. The choir gathered in beautiful Betchworth Village Hall and as the auctioneer lifted his gavel...*Going once! Going twice! Gone!* to another generous bidder bids were raised, hilarity increased, choir funds grew. As everyone paused for breath, the interval provided fabulous finger food and of course a little drink. The auction continued: works of art admired and sold, people's gifts given and received.

It ended with triumph: the amazing sum of **£4850** raised for the choir. But the highlight was Brockham Choral members giving so generously and bidding so enthusiastically while having a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

With special thanks to Ges Ray, the auctioneer borrowed from Dorking Choral, and Jane Stride, Joint Organiser.

Estelle Earnshaw

The other Joint Organiser

Over to you...



The talented twenty – a musical score...



Robin Luff encouraging donations

'I think that's a great idea...'

Picture this - a beautiful church on a hill amongst trees, a balmy summer's evening (oh alright-a bit chilly-but dry) and 20 talented people presenting an *Evening of Words & Music* for Summer at St Barnabas Ranmore on 23 August - a programme of readings and music, devised by **Mark Sayer** and **Carolyn Bourton**. A near capacity audience enjoyed great performances from **Jenni Lee-Potter** on flute and vocals, local pianist **David Hughes**, readings from **Ali Jesson**, **Robin Luff** and **Tortie Harding-Rolls** and others and lovely singing from the St Barnabas choir and talented Guildford contralto **Fiona Harris**. Mark produced the music, played the church organ and keyboards, accompanied Jenni, conducted the choir and sang the baritone solo in the final piece *Wonderful World!* That'll teach him to say 'I think that's a great idea, let's see what we can do!' All in all, it was a very enjoyable and successful evening, raising around £700 for church maintenance, and thanks are due to all who contributed. **Mark Sayer**

Meanwhile, down at Dingley Dell...

As a member of the congregation of St Giles' Ashted, Romey was aware of the church's plans to demolish the old, dilapidated church hall, and replace it with a new one, in the 'The Dell' next to the church. The new building will provide excellent facilities, for the church and the community. The hall and kitchen will be able to cater for celebrations, and a range of rooms can be hired.

Two million pounds had already been raised. Ed and Romey each organised a fundraising concert. The first in May was a concert by Ed's folk band **Childe Rolande** at St George's Ashted, sister church to St Giles, and was



Swell in The Dell, Carol Belk

well-supported raising over £1,100.

Romey organised a *Midsummer Music and Merriment* concert in June. Before the concert, wine was served outside on a perfect midsummer's evening. The

programme featured the **Meadvale Singers** singing swing, folk, pop and classical pieces. Variety and contrast were provided by **Terry Spooner**, an excellent local singer and guitarist, and two very talented young musicians, cellist **Emma Knight** and pianist **Elliot Scott**. **Romey** and **Carol Belk** performed *We're a Couple of Swells*. MC was Brockham's own Soo Abram, who brought the whole thing together with glamour, panache and humour.

A number of loyal choir members supported both concerts, which together raised nearly £2,500.

The Criswicks

REVIEW

April 2014 concert

Brockham Choral returned to traditional form with a rousing performance of J S Bach's *Magnificat in D (BWV 243)* and Mozart's *Solemn Vespers (K 339)* on Saturday, 5 April at St Martin's Church in Dorking. As an amuse bouche between the more spiritual halves of the liturgical sandwich, the talented **Chameleon Arts Orchestra** also gave a spirited con brio rendering, under the firm directing hand of Andrew Phillips, the choir's Musical Director, of Mozart's evergreen *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (K 525)*.

The Bach *Magnificat*, a precursor to his greater masterpieces of the future, burst into life with its brilliant trumpet-led orchestral introduction. This was quickly gathered up by the choir in the opening chorus of the *Magnificat anima mea dominum*, with the tenors and basses in full throttle on the front rows. Thereafter



the choir and the quartet of accomplished soloists juxtaposed in moving passages, culminating in the magnificent combined *Gloria* at the close. If the soprano, Ruth Provost, perhaps lacked a little power and projection in her opening *Et exultavit*, she combined beautifully with Eleanor Minney and Romey Criswick (from the choir) in the later hauntingly beautiful trio, *Suscepit Israel*. Both Jamie Hall (bass) and James Atherton (tenor) sang their parts with great resonance and authority and left us regretting that their roles were not more extended.

The *Solemn Vespers*,

Mozart's final composition before leaving Salzburg to pursue his career in Vienna, gave the now increasingly confident choir a more dominant role. Combining from time to time with the four soloists – above all in the *Beatus Vir (Psalm 112)* – in a work which in some respects presages the genius of Mozart's later operatic glories, they excelled themselves in the robust and energetic grandeur of the final *Magnificat*. The soloists all contributed commandingly throughout, with Ruth Provost now coming into her own in the lingering and luxurious passages of the simple but beautifully constructed *Laudate Dominum*.

We often look to **Brockham Choral** for innovation and expanding our musical experience. On this occasion the choir was back on top form with a clear home win in more familiar traditional territory, which the full attendance clearly much appreciated.

Brian Unwin



Have you got a straw?

Here are the entries we've received for the last caption competition. Please tell us your favourite by 31 May. As well as a prize for the winner there will be a prize for the nominator!

- 1 'And if one Merlot bottle should accident'ly fall. There's only one Merlot bottle, to share among us all.'
- 2 'This is what I gave up each day in February for Guildford Cathedral!'
- 3 'No Andy, you're only allowed one bottle a day!'
- 4 'Temptress! You know that I'm on the wagon at the moment!'
- 5 'I don't bother with a glass these days!'
- 6 'I'll match your glass and raise you one bottle'
- 7 'I like anything full-bodied'
- 8 'Glaash, bottle - bottle, glaash!'

DIARY DATES

Saturday 6 June 2015
St Paul's Church
Picnic Concert
A celebration of the words and music of Noël Coward

Saturday 21 November 2015
St Martin's Church
Will Todd Mass in Blue
Ramirez Misa Criolla

Saturday 12 December 2015
St Martin's Church
Family and Children's
Christmas Concert 2015



Teas on the green

As I don't generally do cake – but drink prodigious amounts of tea – **Teas-on-the-Green** has for me been a mysterious annual ritual organised and run by other BCS members. Admittedly I had occasionally done my bit dropping into the undercroft of Brockham church to extricate chairs, tables and signs before arranging them around the churchyard. So when Anne Hogarth announced she would be away for TotG last year I discovered in full detail what an excellent job she and others do year-on-year. A trip to Sainsburys for tea and coffee and email and telephone cris de coeur resulted in a steady stream of cakes, many valued volunteers and another successful and busy TotG for the choir. My sincere thanks to all those who helped.

Nick Tanton



A dragon getting a trim with a Tudor Black & Decker

And here is the new competition. Please email joyridley21@gmail.com by 31 May with your nomination.



The wet, wet, wet seven...

NOT singing in the rain

The Evening Stroll is an annual feature of Brockham's Social Programme, ably planned and coordinated by **Estelle Earnshaw** and **Jules Welsh**. It took place at Denbies Vineyard on 8 July, which proved to be one of the rare wet days amidst the beautiful summer.

Some Brockham stalwarts sensibly decided on a detour to the Running Horses in Mickleham.

So a band of seven waterproof-clad figures set out amongst the vines. It was quite agreeable walking under the canopy of the woods on the hillside and we climbed up and along to the point where all Dorking can be viewed in

the valley below.

We retraced our soggy footsteps, water rolling off our waterproofs and headed downhill to join the dry and prescient crowd at Café Rialto.

The Running Horses' patrons, who had not gone for the wet walk, had enjoyed their pre-dinner drinks and conversation and looked on somewhat pityingly and smugly as we arrived, distinctly bedraggled.

What pleasure could have been gained from venturing out on such an evening? A bit of rain never did anyone any harm - but it would be preferable to try and pick a sunny evening for next year!

Jane Dawson

Not a lot of people know that...

We want this newsletter to be more interactive with more stories about you. To kick this off we're asking you to tell us something about yourself that no one else in the choir knows. It can be anything at all, bizarre, funny or mundane, and anonymous if you prefer. Reuben has kindly taken the lead with: *'I spent the first ten years of my life in a 14th century farmhouse, with no electricity or plumbing, a Victorian range for cooking, log fire for heating and oil lamps and candles for lighting.'* Now it's over to you. Please submit your revelations to Joy at joyridley21@gmail.com by 22 May.



Revamped website

Last year the choir received a grant from Surrey County Council to enable us to replace our existing website, which was gradually failing, although the look of the website was much admired.

We now have a new, even better website, with a new header designed by our very own Soo Abram - this eye-catching design gives a glimpse of the wide range of things we do in addition to singing. The website was put together by Jenny Monro of Business Arch (who happens to be the daughter of Estelle and Tony Earnshaw). The new website is now ready. You can visit it at www.brockhamchoral.org.

If you have the old website bookmarked or saved as a favourite, you will need to replace it with the new one as the address is slightly different - the old website address included .asp at the end.

It has all the features of the old website, plus extra menu buttons across the top of the page - under the header for access to popular pages, and there is potential for adding new features.

We hope you like it and would love to know what you think. Please send your comments and suggestions to Ed at edcriswick@gmail.com.

Friends of Brockham Choral

We are keen to welcome additional members to our Friends' section.

With this in mind, the Friends have recently had a re-launch, featuring some new benefits.

These include special Friends' events, pre-concert talks and receptions on concert days and a pass for free interval drinks.

Before the Mozart concert in November, there was a drinks reception for Friends to meet one another and some choir committee members.

Before the next concert in March, Stuart Chevalier, senior English teacher at Reigate Grammar School, has kindly agreed to give a talk on some war poems to contrast with those featured in the concert and set everything in context. Drinks will be served to accompany his short talk. If you know anyone who would be interested in becoming a Friend and lending their support to the choir in this way, please let Jane Dawson know. Email janie_d@btinternet.com or telephone 01737 644111.