

SOTTO VOCE

The Ross-on-Wye Choral Society Newsletter

August 2017

Editorial

Membership, as measured by subscriptions received, showed a reduction of 5% from 2015/16. 43 members sang in our Spring Concert. We must never forget that we are only able to afford to employ professional soloists and orchestras because of the generosity of **The Gibson Trust** and our **President Jane Gibson**, who we were delighted to be able to welcome to our performance of **Haydn's The Seasons**, which celebrated our fiftieth season. This concert was **Russell Burton's** last major work as our conductor after five seasons with us. We believe that he is still living in Cheltenham where he teaches and holds the post of organist and choirmaster at Leckhampton parish church. Russell's first performance with us was **Handel's Messiah** in November 2012. We wish Russell well in his future career, and will hope to keep in touch with him.

We meet again at 7.30pm at **Brampton Abbots Primary School** for our **Annual General Meeting on Thursday 7th September**. There, the meeting takes the first half of the evening and we shall receive reports

from the officers, including from our **Treasurer** telling us the state of our finances, our retiring **Chairman** and his successor **Rosemary Mann** and our new **Musical Director Adrian Taylor**, telling us of his vision for the society. Adrian is of course an old friend, having taken a number of rehearsals as stand-in for **Russell** last season. He is now organist at **St Mary's**, so is very much part of the Ross-on-Wye scene. His day job is in IT and although most of his musical career has been as a church musician, he has conducted various choral societies, including the **Innsworth Military Wives** and **The Renaissance Singers** of Southampton. Adrian's wife **Rosie** is head of music at **Wycliffe Preparatory School, Stonehouse**. She studied Music at Southampton University, specialising in voice, French horn and recorder, and has pursued a career as both teacher and performer. Adrian and Rosie have two children, Alex 11 a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral and Sophie 5.

Rosie sings with **Celestial Sirens** and **Musica Secreta**, a group that specialises in discovering,

researching and performing Renaissance music written by and for convent women. We wish them all a warm welcome and look forward to a long and rewarding association.

Next Season

The dates for next season are:-

Thursday 7th September AGM and first rehearsal at Brampton Abbots Primary School.

Thurs 14th Sept - Open rehearsal

Thur 26th October - no rehearsal

Sat 25th Nov - Concert in St Mary's

Sat 9th Dec Carols & tea, Baptist ch

Thur 4th Jan - First reh Messiah

Thur 9th Feb - no rehearsal

Sat 24th Mar - Messiah in St Mary's.

Thur 30th Mar - no rehearsal

Summer term - to be arranged.

Our first concert will be in **St Mary's** at **7.30pm on Saturday 25th November**. In the first half we shall be performing **Lux Aeterna** and **O Magnum Mysterium**, two sacred works by the American composer **Morten Lauridsen** (born 1943). Both these highly spiritual works are in the European tradition. After the interval, we have **Mozart's Vesperae Solennes de Confessore (K339)** which we last performed in 2005, followed by Vivaldi's **Magnificat (R611)** which we last did in 2013. Solo parts in the second half will be taken by **Rosie Taylor** soprano, a **tenor lay clerk** friend of Adrian's, and other parts we hope will be taken by members of the society. Accompanying us on the organ for the whole concert will be our trusty friend **Christopher Boodle**.

We shall again be singing carols and serving tea at 3pm in **Ross Baptist Church** on Saturday **9th December**. That is followed by the Christmas break.

It being five seasons since we last did **Handel's Messiah**, we have chosen to do it in the **Easter term**, on **Saturday 24th March**. The timing is to avoid clashing with the usual Christmastide performances where it seems to have mostly settled. In fact, the original performance in Dublin in 1742 was on 13th April, so historically we are spot-on. Where we have less in common with Handel's time is that we have a choir of 45/50, his was only 16 voices, and whereas his orchestra was 40 strong, ours will be 14, provided as usual by the **Musical and Amicable Society** playing period instruments. This set-up is 2-2-1-1-1 strings, 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 trumpets, timps and harpsichord. People are used to hearing it performed by huge choirs and orchestras in cathedrals and large concert halls, but in St Mary's, these resources are all that is needed to do the work full justice, particularly with the four soloists who will be coming. Soprano is **Hannah Davey**, who so enchanted the audience (and us) with her unforgettable performance of **Mass in Blue** in December 2016. She also gave a fine performance in Mendelssohn's **Lobgesang** in the first half of the same concert, so we need have no doubts about her being equally at home in oratorio. The contralto soloist is mezzo **Catherine King**, who sang it with us in 1998, when our **Patron Dame Felicity Lott** was also singing. **Catherine**, who also

sang it with us last time we did it in November 2012, has a busy schedule singing solo and with her group **Gothic Voices** here and abroad. She lives at Llangrove. Our tenor soloist **Paul Badley** also lives locally, and sang it with us in 2006. Bass soloist **Jimmy Holliday** who is the only one who comes from afar, will be driving down from London. He sang it with us in 2012 and will be remembered for the deep richness of his voice.

We have not made any plans for the last term of the season, although we shall be returning to practise on Thursday 5th April. In the past two years we have had a concert party with choruses and some solo numbers by members, followed by wine and finger food. In other years we have had opera choruses at the Larruperz Centre and Shakespeare songs in St Mary's. We felt the best approach was to let Adrian get to know our capabilities and for us to get to know him, before deciding what we all want to do. Last year we spent most of this time auditioning five candidates for Russell's successor, and the party was on Thursday 18th May, but this time we shall have 7 weeks to rehearse whatever we decide to do.

Open Rehearsal

This year it will be at on Thursday 14th September, the week after we start back and the AGM. There is no doubt that the society would benefit from having more members, preferably, but not essentially, with some experience of singing with choirs, the ability to read music. The one essential attribute is to be

able to sing in tune. The rehearsal will be publicised in the local press, but try and persuade anyone you know who might be interested to come to that rehearsal at our usual venue.

Fundraising

Members do not seem to have cottoned on to easyfundraising.com which is such a painless way of raising money for the society. Last month the total raised was 77p which is 2% of £15.40, with the total since the society was registered as a beneficiary two years ago of only £124.34. Sign up with easyfundraising and nominate Ross-on-Wye Choral Society as the beneficiary whenever you make a purchase from the very large number of suppliers who are within the scheme. 2% of all purchases is the rate of return without adding to the price you pay for the goods.

The splendid cornucopia shown below was won by Jenny Cook when she visited Ross-on-Wye's twin town in France Condé-sur-Noireau this summer. Jenny has most generously given it to the society to be raffled at rehearsals at £1 a ticket. There is a mouth-watering selection of French gourmet produce which will still be within its sell-by date for Christmas. His is a most generous gift for which we give Jenny our warmest thanks.



he is there 'for another ten days and has had enough!' When he returns he intends 'to build up the music profile of Leckhampton Church in Cheltenham through singing days and recruitment and returning to tutor the Gloucester Choral Society Young Singers project. He intends to do more work touring and examining for the Associated Board 'China next stop!' He hopes to attend our concerts when the pressures of life allow.

News from Russell

Russell has again travelled to Malaysia to conduct examinations for the Associated Board and says

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Fifty-first Annual General Meeting of Ross-on-Wye Choral Society
will take place on Thursday 7th September 2017 at 7.30pm

at

Brampton Abbots Church of England Primary School

For the purpose of

1. Receiving the reports of the officers
2. Receiving and if appropriate approving the Financial Statements for the year ended 11th July 2017
3. Appointing members of the committee
4. Approving members' subscriptions for 2017/2018 season
5. Conducting any other business