

CELEBRATING THE LAUNCH OF ALL SAINTS' MARLOW MUSIC TRUST

Many churches with strong musical traditions have set up music trusts and Clem Virgo, current Chairman of All Saints' Marlow Music Trust and Director of Music until he retired at the end of September 2010, first floated the idea a few years ago during discussions with the Gentlemen of the Choir in the Two Brewers (an excellent venue for the generation of valuable ideas!). With his own retirement and that of Rector Nick Molony, occurring that autumn, he felt the matter needed to be pursued with more urgency, and, although the Church Council of the day (usually referred to as the D.C.C., i.e. District Church Council) was of the view that it should wait until the appointment of a new Rector, thus causing some delay, that did give the group of five potential Trustees, all very committed to the project, more time to carry out really detailed research, and prepare a draft Trust Deed likely to be acceptable to HMRC and the Charity Commission. (It was a great advantage that one of the proposed Trustees was a chartered accountant, who also had useful access to a friendly solicitor.)

Shortly after the new Rector, the Rev'd Dave Bull, had taken up his appointment in January 2012, meetings were arranged between him, the new director of Music, Martin Seymour, Deputy Director, Andrew Horton (also a nominated Trustee) and Clem Virgo. It soon became clear that Dave Bull was enthusiastic about the project and, once a few minor adjustments had been made to the Deed, would be happy to recommend its adoption by the Church Council. This was excellent news and accordingly, having had a presentation and question and answer session on the proposed Trust in the summer of 2012, the D.C.C. unanimously passed a resolution supporting the setting up of the Music Trust. In August an agreed text of the Trust Deed was signed by the five Trustees, witnessed, and sent off to HMRC in order to obtain approval for the acceptance of gift-aided donations. A bank account was opened and HMRC approval was confirmed in late December. From then on it was practicable to accept donations, and the Trustees approached likely supporters known personally to them in order to get the financial ball rolling.

The five initial Trustees are:

Clem Virgo (Chairman), Andrew Horton (Treasurer), Duncan Allen (Secretary), John Bustin (D.C.C. representative – the Trust Deed making this provision to ensure liaison with the Church's policy-making body) and Tobias Gröttrupp. Sir Keith Stuart kindly agreed to be elected President and was later co-opted as a Trustee. (The Trust Deed provides for the co-option of one additional Trustee at any one time.) The resulting team is proving an enthusiastic, committed, and hardworking group, with a wide range of key skills which will be of enormous benefit to the effective operation of the Trust.

Dave Bull had suggested that there should be a 'big occasion' to celebrate the launching of the Trust, and planning for this began in earnest in the early autumn of 2012. The following account of those celebrations also appears in much the same form in the Spring 2013 edition of 'The Bridge'.

There was an air of excitement and eager anticipation as some 90 invited guests made their way in the pouring rain to All Saints' Church, Marlow, on the afternoon of Sunday, 10th February. This was the culmination of months of preparation and planning by a small group of people determined that the church's long-standing musical tradition, with all the benefits it brings both to church, community and the choristers themselves, would be safe for future generations. With the enthusiastic backing of the Rector, Dave Bull, and the D.C.C., a Trust has been set up to support and enhance the funding provided by the church. As Clem Virgo, former Director of Music and Chairman of the Trust, said in his introductory remarks:

'Support from the top, an able Director of Music with drive and charisma are essential prerequisites for success. We have those in place, but it is not enough. Adequate funding is vital too. The Church Council does its level best, but our needs are already running ahead of the contribution it is able to make, and that is exactly why we have set up the Trust.'



Welcoming everyone, and making particular mention of the Mayor of Marlow, Cllr. Mrs. Jocelyn Towns, the Archdeacon of Buckingham, the Ven. Karen Gorham, the Director of the Royal School of Church Music (R.S.C.M.), Andrew Reid, Business Leaders, ex-Choristers, and parents of ex-Choristers, the Rev'd Dave Bull said this was a momentous occasion, and that, just as the current generation is benefiting now from the vision of those who set up church schools in the past, so, in 100 years' time would people be grateful for the vision that had led to the setting up of the Music Trust in 2013.

Andrew Reid emphasised the huge benefits of being a Chorister: they were wide-ranging and long-lasting, as he himself could testify, having started out as a humble boy in his local church and gone on to be Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral, before being appointed to his current post at the R.S.C.M. a few months ago. There was no doubt, he said, that, whereas support and standards in cathedrals had grown, in Parish Churches the involvement of young boys and girls had declined markedly over the past years. All Saints' Church, Marlow, was a shining exception, with its Choir of Men and Boys, a separate, very successful Girls' Choir, and an Adult Choir. It was vital, he declared, that this wonderful tradition should where possible be maintained in Parish Churches as well as in cathedrals, and applauded the initiative being shown in the setting up of the Trust.



Director of Music, Martin Seymour, then introduced a splendid demonstration of the wide repertoire currently sung by the Choirs, ranging from sections of a Haydn Mass,

through a lyrical setting by Herbert Howells of Robert Bridges' poem 'My eyes for beauty pine', to a triumphant and more excitingly discordant 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates' from Psalm 27 by William Mathias, where skilled accompanist Andrew Horton was able to use the full



power of the magnificent 'Father' Willis organ to great dramatic effect. Between the musical



items, which were listened to with rapt attention, Head Girl Choristers Issy and Phoebe Mansell, members for 8½ years, and both Bishop's Choristers (a level achieved after a very searching examination run by the R.S.C.M.), paid tribute to

the fun and enjoyment they had had as Choristers and to the tremendously beneficial knowledge and skills which they had acquired along the way. From their very first rehearsal at the age of 7 they had been totally captivated by the wonderful sound the Choir made, and wanted to go on being part of it. Olwen Elliott, mother of Bishop's Chorister Ciaran, who has already given five years' service, enthused about the benefits



of the discipline and commitment involved (two rehearsals a week for the Boys, plus rehearsals before Sunday services), gentle persuasion being needed occasionally, but always proving worthwhile, the benefits of membership being so great. The family were not musical, she said, so the excellent R.S.C.M.

'Voice for Life' Workbooks at various levels which Choristers have to complete were a great boon. The musical skills acquired as a Chorister had helped Ciaran immeasurably with his oboe playing too.

After enthusiastic applause for all the performers, everyone was reminded to give careful consideration to making a donation to the Trust, and it was time to repair to the Compleat Angler for a lavish and sumptuous tea generously provided by the Hotel under the watchful eye of General Manager Gaius Wyncoll. Former Choristers, a few beginning to look quite mature, parents and some of the current Choristers mingled with the other guests. It was a lovely relaxed, happy atmosphere, and there was ample time for



everyone to chat, catch up with old friends and meet new ones. On behalf of all the guests Clem Virgo thanked Gaius Wyncoll for his excellent hospitality – he and his staff had looked after us so well and being able to enjoy tea at the Compleat Angler had been a brilliant way in which to round off the celebrations.

So, the Trust has now gone public and the Trustees are confident that, with all the enthusiasm and goodwill being generated, they will achieve their aim of placing funding for music at All Saints' Church Marlow on really firm foundations, enabling current needs to be met and creating a permanent endowment fund for the future. More details can be found at asmmusictrust.org.uk, where a Donation Form can be downloaded. If you have any questions, comments, or recommendations, then please e-mail chairman@asmmusictrust.org.uk.

The Objects of the Trust as stated in the Trust Deed are:

- To further the religious work of All Saints' Church, Marlow, by enhancing, safeguarding and sustaining its choral tradition for the benefit of its choristers and musicians, its parishioners and the community at large.
- To advance the education of the general public by encouraging, developing and maintaining their interest in the work of the Choirs and Organists of All Saints' Church through performances of church music (both choral and instrumental) and by such other means as shall be deemed appropriate.

BUT please note: the Trustees do NOT wish the D.C.C.'s finances to be compromised in any way, and would be mortified if anyone thought it appropriate to switch allegiance, as it were. This is a partnership, not a competition. Resources are needed for so many important aspects of the church's work here. Music is just one. Many members of the congregation appreciate the music which is offered week by week and month by month, and any support they choose to give to the Trust will, of course, be warmly welcomed. However, there are many individuals, not regular worshippers (ex-Choristers, parents of ex-Choristers, for example), charities, businesses, companies, who do not contribute to the D.C.C.'s funds, but who will be sympathetic to the objects of the Trust, and it is their support in particular that the



Trustees are seeking. This was the guiding principle underlying the drawing up of the guest-list for the launch celebrations, and it will be the guiding principle in the future.

Footnote: Those with good memories may remember the article which appeared on page 7 of the Autumn 2012 edition of 'The Bridge' announcing the setting up of the Trust and giving details of its rationale. The 'official' launch was then expected to be in late September, but, due to various technical and other delays, had to be postponed until February this year.