



Wells Cathedral Choir Newsletter

Epiphany and Lent 2026

A message from Timothy Parsons

The Epiphany and Lent terms take us on a journey from the middle of winter to the beginning of Spring, and liturgically this period sees the most dramatic journey in the church's year. We start by celebrating the end of the Christmas season with Epiphany, marked with our annual Procession and then the much-loved Ceremony of Carols. In no time at all, we are into the solemnity of Lent, which concludes with what for many is the highlight of the year – the many special services of Holy Week, leading into the joy of Easter Day.

Among all that, as you will read below, there have (as ever!) been many additional events which have kept us busy. It was wonderful for the Choristers to return to St George's Chapel, Windsor, and learn about a place which is at the centre of so much of our nation's history, and we thank the Chorister Trust for their support of that event. The Boy Choristers and Vicars Choral sang Evensong at Cranmore, and the Girls were joined by the Choristers of Bath Abbey here at the Cathedral. It was wonderful for all of us to sing for the memorial for the life of Anthony Crossland, who served as Organist and Master of the Choristers for so many years.

The Youth Choir and Song Squad have been busy as well, and it was a particular delight that they contributed to the annual Legal Service, an important occasion in the life of the Diocese and County.

Of course, a large part of this term has been about preparing for the upcoming Choir tour to Tuscany straight after Easter. Look out for plenty of news about that in next term's edition of the Newsletter!

As ever, my enormous thanks go to everyone who enables the music at Wells to flourish through so much hard work, commitment and passion for what we do.

Wishing you all a wonderful Easter,
Mr Parsons

Epiphany Procession

The Surpliced Choristers and Vicars Choral sang beautifully at the Epiphany Procession Service on the afternoon of Sunday 1 February. The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the appearance of God's glory in the world through the birth of Jesus, Emmanuel (God with us), and the revelation of his birth to the Gentiles and to the whole of creation. It has been marked since the third century.

Last play of the organ for Epiphany

The Festal Eucharist for Epiphany on Tuesday 6 January was the last service for the Grand Organ before it was removed for refurbishment.

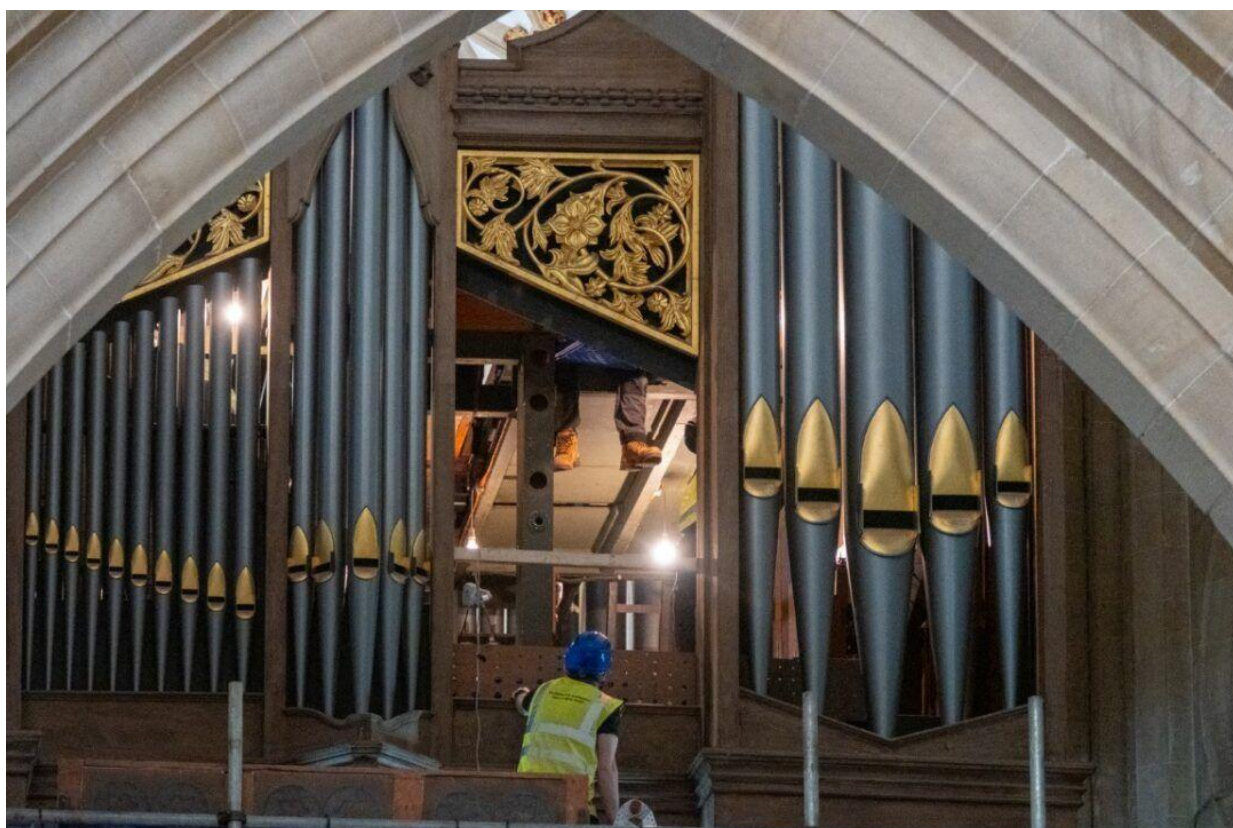
The service, sung by Schola Cantorum and the Vicars Choral, was followed by a drinks reception arranged by the Friends of Wells Cathedral to toast the Grand Organ and celebrate the beginning of its journey to refurbishment.

After years of increasing faults, a once in a generation restoration is now underway at Harrison and Harrison Ltd in Durham. This major project will secure the future of the Cathedral's most important instrument, central to worship, music, and community life. It will be carefully restored before returning to Wells in late 2027.

This £3 million project has already received generous support, but there is still more to do. If you can donate to support the next stage of the restoration and help bring the Grand Organ back to life, please visit stewardship.org.uk/pages/wellsorganappeal



Pictured are Carolyn Craig (Assistant Director of Music), Edwards Marshall (Organ Scholar), The Very Revd Toby Wright (Dean of Wells), and Timothy Parsons (Director of Music)



Choristers Delight with annual *Ceremony of Carols*



On Saturday 7 February, the Choristers of Wells Cathedral, directed by Timothy Parsons, gave a beautiful performance of Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. The Choristers were joined by the exceptional Mared Pugh-Evans, Harpist to His Majesty The King. The performers received a standing ovation for their wonderful performance. The Nave was filled with over 400 guests, creating a truly special atmosphere. We were especially pleased to welcome the Mayor and Mayoress of Wells to share in the occasion.

The *Ceremony of Carols* concert raised funds for the Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust, which exists to ensure, as best we can, that no child for financial reasons loses out on the life transforming opportunity to take up a place to be a Chorister. The Chair gave a special thanks to all the regular supporters of the WCCT, known as The Friends of WCCT. It is due to these valuable supporters that the Trust is able to provide bursaries for Choristers. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported, it was an afternoon to remember.



Spring Sunshine and Song: Choristers' Special Day at Windsor

By Alex Jenkins



On a bright Spring morning, the Surpliced Choristers set off to Windsor to sing Evensong in St George's Chapel. After a cheery coach ride, complete with impromptu a cappella performances of Broadway hits by some of the Senior Choristers, we touched down in Windsor in time to enjoy lunch in the sunshine at Windsor's Alexandra Gardens, with a quick run-around before heading up the hill to the Castle itself.

Security checks complete, the Choristers were shown to their rehearsal space in "The Dungeon", before a fascinating and fact-packed tour of the Chapel. Cyrus (Year 6) reflected, "*It was fascinating to see all the memorials in the Chapel,*" while Jemima (Year 9) added, "*I loved the tour of the Chapel and seeing new things. The tour guides were lovely and answered all of our questions. One of the kings' heads was chopped off and sewn back on with catgut!*". There were also some memorable moments along the way, as Teddy (Year 4) enthusiastically put it, "*We stepped on Henry VIII!*"

The Choristers then re-grouped to warm up and rehearse for Evensong, with music by Sarah McDonald and Charles Villiers Stanford. Reflecting on the experience, Arya (Year 8) said, "*It was a beautiful experience seeing the beautiful architecture in the Chapel, and it was a lovely place to sing. Everyone did an amazing job.*" It was lovely to see many familiar faces from Wells in the congregation, with supporters of Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust coming to listen and support the Choristers.

After Evensong, we headed round the corner to St George's School, where the Chapel's Choristers are educated, who very kindly hosted us for dinner. Stomachs full and darkness descending on Berkshire, we began the (somewhat quieter!) journey back to Wells. A very successful trip, with the Choristers proving excellent ambassadors for the School, very kindly supported by Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust.

A Taste of Tuscany: Preview concert raises funds for Choir Tour

Ahead of their tour to Tuscany after Easter, the Cathedral Choir gave a special concert in the Quire on Saturday 28 February, offering those unable to travel a chance to hear a preview of their programme while helping to raise funds for the trip. The Choir performed a selection of sacred music from Britain and Europe, drawn from the repertoire they will take to Italy, in a beautifully received recital. The retiring collection raised just over £1,200, and we are very grateful to all who attended for their generous support.

This tour, the Choir's first in over ten years, promises to be a memorable occasion. During their time in Tuscany, they will sing Mass at the Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta in Montecatini Terme and give three concerts: at the Chiesa di San Salvatore in Ognissanti in Florence, San Paolino Basilica in Lucca, and the Chiesa di Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano.

A Joyful Reunion: Bath Abbey Choir visits Wells for Evensong

The Girl Choristers and Lay Clerks of Bath Abbey visited Wells on Sunday 1 March for a joint Evensong service with the Girl Choristers and Vicars Choral.

The service was held in the Nave, with Philip Moore's Responses, Stanford's Evening Service in A, and Mathias' anthem *Let the people praise thee, O God*. The two choirs then enjoyed Tea together before the Bath Abbey Choir returned home.

It was wonderful to welcome the Bath Abbey Choir to Wells after our Boy Choristers and Vicars Choral sang at a special Evensong at Bath Abbey in October 2025, celebrating 150 years of their Boy Choristers and Lay Clerks.



Choir take Evensong to Cranmore in Diocesan Outreach Visit

The Surpliced Boy Choristers and Cantoris Vicars Choral enjoyed a trip to St Bartholomew's Church, Cranmore, on Sunday 8 March as part of the Cathedral's Diocesan Outreach work.

Conducted by Edward Marshall (Organ Scholar) they sang Evensong, including Weelkes' *Short Service* and Parry's *My Soul, there is a country*, and were then treated to scrummy tea and cake! The next Diocesan Evensong service will be at St George's Church, Easton in Gordano, on Sunday 26 April 2026, sung by the Surpliced Girl Choristers and Decani Vicars Choral.

Memorial Evensong for former Organist



On Saturday 14 March, there was a special Memorial Evensong service for Dr Anthony Crossland, attended by family, friends, and former Choristers and Vicars Choral. Tony (1931-2025) was Assistant Organist at Wells between 1961 and 1971 and then Organist and Master of the Choristers from 1971 until his retirement in 1996.

The service, sung by the Cathedral's Great Choir, was held in the Nave, with the collection going to the Grand Organ Appeal.

Easter services still to come....!

At the time of writing, we look forward with anticipation to the celebrations of Easter.

At 7.30pm on Maundy Thursday, the Senior Choristers will join the Vicars Choral for the annual Eucharist of the Last Supper. This solemn service includes the symbolic washing of feet and the stripping of the Nave Altar, and concludes with a period of quiet, prayerful reflection.

On Good Friday, as is tradition, all Choristers and the Vicars Choral will take part in the final portion of the Three-Hour Devotional Service. Beginning at 12.00 noon, the service is initially said before the

Choir joins at 1.30pm. Those unable to attend the full three hours are warmly welcome to join for part of the service.

The Easter liturgies continue on Easter Eve with the Easter Vigil, sung by the Senior Choristers alongside the Vicars Choral. This powerful and moving service begins in darkness, as the Easter candle is carried through the West Door. Gradually, light spreads throughout the Cathedral, culminating in a joyful celebration as the building is filled with light.

On Easter Day, all three services will be sung by the Great Choir (all Choristers and Vicars Choral). Sung Matins takes place at 9.30am, followed by the Cathedral Eucharist at 11.00am, and Evensong at 3.00pm. The day concludes with a much-loved Easter Egg Hunt for the Choristers in the Camery Garden.

New faces: Welcoming two new chaperones

We are delighted to extend a very warm welcome to Alex Lemanski and Barbara Saunders, who have recently joined us as Chorister Chaperones. Both have completed their shadowing sessions and will now be taking on their own duties.

Chaperones play an absolutely vital role in the life of the Choir, and we are incredibly grateful to those who give their time and care in this way. Their support helps ensure that our young singers feel safe, encouraged, and able to thrive - both musically and personally - within the unique environment of the Cathedral.

In addition to their work with the Choristers, some chaperones also help to look after children in Song Squad and Youth Choir. This wider involvement makes an enormous difference, strengthening the sense of community across all our choirs and ensuring that every child feels welcomed and supported on their musical journey.

Please do join us in thanking Alex and Barbara for stepping into this important role, and in making them feel very much part of the Wells Cathedral Choir family.

Hearing is Believing! *Sound of Wells* Festival 2026

This year's *Sound of Wells* theme, *Hearing is Believing*, celebrates music that surprises and uplifts. Here at Wells Cathedral, this is certainly in no short supply!

Our programme includes a veritable feast of performances from our many talented choirs and young musicians, alongside special events highlighting the Wells Cathedral Grand Organ Project, new commissions, and landmark works of the choral repertoire, all set within the Cathedral's daily rhythm of beautiful sung worship.

From Wednesday 6 – Sunday 10 May 2026, discover a world-class festival of classical music in the heart of England's smallest city, featuring all the best of Wells Cathedral's music - from choral concerts to recitals and a live, improvised film soundtrack!

At the heart of the *Sound of Wells* festival is the Cathedral's daily rhythm of worship, featuring services of Choral Evensong and the Eucharist, sung by our Choristers, Vicars Choral, Song Squad, Cathedral Youth Choir, and Cathedral Chamber Choir.

Further details, including the full programme and ticket information, are available here - <https://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/whats-on/sound-of-wells-festival>

Plus Point prizes

A big “well done” to the Epiphany and Lent Plus Point winners.

Epiphany

Senior Girl: Jemima
Junior Girl: Gwendoline
Senior Boy: Kukhanya
Junior Boy: Teddy

Lent

Senior Girl: Celine
Junior Girl: Imogen
Senior Boy: George and Kukhanya
Junior Boy: Oliver

Exam news

Congratulations to the following Choristers on their exam success!

Gabi Grade 5 Singing with Merit (with a cold and during *School of Rock!*)
Grace B Grade 6 Oboe with Distinction
Francesca Grade 3 Singing with Distinction
Imogen Grade 4 Singing with Merit
Rowan Grade 5 Singing with Distinction, and Grade 1 Bassoon with Distinction
Teddy Grade 4 Singing with Merit and Grade 3 Classical Guitar with Merit

Other Achievements

Congratulations to Rowan, who was awarded first place in the Singing Sacred Solo category at the Bristol Festival of Music, Speech, and Drama!

Well done to Grace B, who was awarded a Wells Cathedral School Music Award certificate!

There's been great news for Austin – he has been awarded a Drama Scholarship from year 9! Congratulations, Austin!

Good luck to Kukhanya, who will be taking his Music GCSE exam soon (two years early!), and congratulations to Kukhanya too for being invited to play violin as part of the National Youth Folk Ensemble in May 2026!

Teddy has been very busy! He entered three classes at the Taunton Festival of Arts in February and was awarded first place in both the ‘Guitar Solo 8 and Under’ class and the ‘Guitar Solo Grade 3’ class, and second place in the ‘Grades 3 and 4 Guitar Solo Recital’ class. Teddy then went on to take part in the Bristol Festival of Music, Speech, and Drama on Sunday 15 March, and was delighted to come first in the ‘Classical Guitar Solo Grades 3-4 Open Age’ class and was awarded The Jubilee Cup! Great job, Teddy!



Dates for your diary

Looking ahead to the Whitsun and Trinity terms, here are some dates for your diary:

Tuesday 21 April	Whitsun Term begins
Sunday 26 April	Diocesan Evensong visit to St George's Church, Easton in Gordano (Surpliced Girls and Decani Vicars Choral)
Saturday 2 & Sunday 3 May	Chorister Exeat weekend
Sunday 3 May	Services to be sung by the Vicars Choral and Schola Cantorum

Wednesday 6 – Sunday 10 May Sound of Wells Festival

Wednesday 6 May	Lunchtime Concert: WCS pupils, with works by WCS composition students Evensong: Vicars Choral with Youth Choir Silent movie with organ improvisation – <i>The General</i>
Thursday 7 May	Lunchtime Concert: Wells Cathedral's Choral Scholars Evensong: Girl Choristers and Vicars Choral with Song Squad WCCC sing Monteverdi Vespers of 1610 in concert
Friday 8 May	Lunchtime Concert: Primary Schools Outreach Concert (including the Junior Choristers) Evensong: Boy Choristers and Vicars Choral (United States 250 th Anniversary) An Evening of Concertos (Cedars Hall)
Saturday 9 May	Lunchtime Concert: WCOS Evensong: WCCA Annual Chorister Reunion Evensong: All Choristers (including Probationers) and Vicars Choral, with WCS Chapel Choir and instrumentalists
Sunday 10 May	Cathedral Eucharist: All Choristers and Vicars Choral, with the Cathedral Commissions premiere of a new Missa Brevis by Cheryl Frances-Hoad Composition Masterclass: 1.05pm, Cedars Hall Evensong: Senior Choristers and Vicars Choral (Charles Wood Centenary)

Thursday 21 May
Friday 22 May
Monday 1 June
Tuesday 23 June
Friday 26 June
Sunday 28 June
Friday 3 July

Tuesday 7 July
Saturday 11 July

Vicars Choral Commemoration Concert
Whitsun Term ends
Trinity Term begins
Evensong: Senior Choristers and Vicars Choral with Song Squad
Primary Schools Outreach Concert (including the Junior Choristers)
Ordination of Deacons: Girl Choristers and Vicars Choral
End of Trinity Term and Choir year
5.15pm End of Choir Year Evensong and prize-giving
Evensong: Song Squad and Youth Choir
Song Squad and Youth Choir to sing in WOWFest! Carmina Burana
Come and Sing concert

