



Wells Cathedral Choir Newsletter

Whitsun and Trinity 2026

A message from Timothy Parsons

It is so difficult to know how to begin in summing up this year, but suffice it to say that it has been a remarkable year for music at Wells.

Perhaps I can start with two major events – the broadcast of Choral Evensong on Radio 3 in October, and the tour to Tuscany in April – in both cases, our first in many years. Both these momentous experiences gave me, and I hope all of us, enormous pride and joy in what we are achieving together. We have undertaken four visits to churches in the Diocese; we have given world premières; we have given concerts, performed with singers and instrumentalists from the Cathedral School, and sung at St George's Chapel in Windsor. And that's not to mention the enormous amount of music that goes on at the Cathedral's major occasions – Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, and so many others across the year.

But we all know that a Cathedral Choir's purpose goes well beyond such highlights. For me, the true reason we are all here is to provide the best and most beautiful music we can on a day-to-day basis to enrich the Cathedral's worship. Some of my favourite occasions have been the humble Friday Evensong, when we have performed some of the simplest yet most beautiful music – perhaps a set of fauxbourdons, some psalmody, and a short but exquisite Tudor anthem. To be able to approach these moments with just the same level of care and pride, especially at the end of a long week when it's dark and rainy, is the mark of a Cathedral Choir working at its very best.

There have been so many achievements this year across the range of the Cathedral's musical life. The Chamber Choir, and Ms Craig, deserve special mention for a landmark performance of the Monteverdi Vespers of 1610 (read more in the article below). Mr Jenkins has brought so much to his role as Singing Development Leader, overseeing a growth of Song Squad and Song Squad Minis and four very successful Primary Outreach Concerts, and Miss Manning continues to lead and expand the Youth Choir: it is always a joy to include both choirs in our services, perhaps most notably at this year's Justice Service.

Above all, as the year draws to a close, there are enormous thanks due to a huge number of people. To the Precentor and the rest of the Music Department team for their indefatigable hard work: Ms Craig, Mr Marshall, Mr Jenkins, and Mrs Lawlor whose management of the tour was such a huge and fantastic undertaking. To the Vicars Choral for the skill and experience they bring and their commitment to making the Choir the very best it can be. To Mr Kidd for his daily work with the Choristers to enable them to sing to the best of their ability; to Mrs Atherton and Mrs Henderson for their care of the robes; to our fabulous colleagues at School for all their support. Our dedicated and wonderful team of chaperones ensure that the Choristers can enjoy their singing safely and happily and we are indebted to them. To parents and families, for the immense support and sacrifices you make to enable your children to have this experience, and to the Choristers themselves for their hard work, good humour, and glorious singing: thank you.

There are of course some sad farewells. Clemmie, Jemima, Aidan, Ryan, Alma, Kukhanya, and Annabel have come to the end of their time in the Choir, and we thank them sincerely for all their loyalty, service, and commitment over so many years (in Alma and Clemmie's cases, literally half their lifetime!). To our departing Scholars Mr Marshall, Mr Parmenter, Miss Wakefield, and Mr Zielinski for their musicianship, companionship, and good humour. And finally to Mr Tighe, who as Head Master of WCS has been such a constant and passionate advocate for the Cathedral and for the life of the Choristers within the School. You will all be missed hugely, and you go with our love and huge gratitude.

As ever, there are mixed emotions at the end of a year, but the life cycle of a Cathedral Choir goes on: I am looking forward immensely to returning refreshed, ready to welcome newcomers and embark on another exciting, fulfilling, and joyful year of music-making in this place we are so fortunate to call home.

Mr Parsons

Sunshine, song, and standing ovations!

After the incredible music at the Holy Week and Easter services, on Tuesday 7 April the Cathedral Choir set off on the first full Choir tour in ten years.

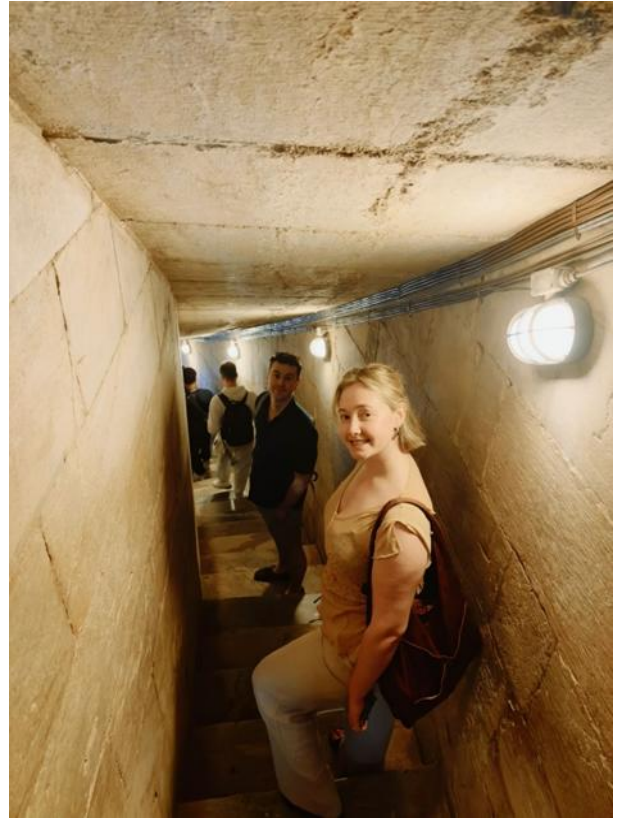
The Vicars Choral and 29 Choristers from years 6-10, along with the Cathedral organists and chaperones including the Precentor, headed off to Tuscany for a five-night tour.

Arriving in the dark, and after waiting over an hour to get through Passport Control (the new EU entry rules made this a very slow process!), the Choir woke on Wednesday morning to find themselves in the beautiful Tuscan spa town of Montecatini Terme with the hills of the Tuscan countryside visible in the distance.



The first morning was spent in Pisa, exploring the beautiful Square of Miracles including the stunning marble Cathedral, Baptistry, and famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. The Pisa Cathedral (Duomo di Pisa), officially known as the Cattedrale Metropolitana Primaziale di Santa Maria Assunta, is a medieval masterpiece and the centrepiece of the Piazza dei Miracoli (Square of Miracles). Construction began in 1064 and it was consecrated in 1118. For nearly a century it was the largest Cathedral in Europe, and it did not disappoint! Almost all of the group climbed the 251 steps to the top of the Leaning Tower and were greeted by an incredible view over the rooftops of Pisa and the countryside beyond, although some felt a little seasick as the Tower and its steps lean very much inside as well as out!





The group then hopped back on to the gold-coloured land train which had taken us into central Pisa and returned to our coach and then our base of Montecatini Terme.



Back in Montecatini Terme, the Choir rehearsed for and sang Mass at the Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta. Built in the twentieth century and located in the heart of the town, the Basilica is considered to be one of the most important and recognisable landmarks in Montecatini Terme. The Choir received a warm welcome from the clergy and congregation, and it was a special experience being part of a Catholic Mass service in Italian. The Choir sang unaccompanied music by Bruckner, Wood, Bairstow, and Holst.



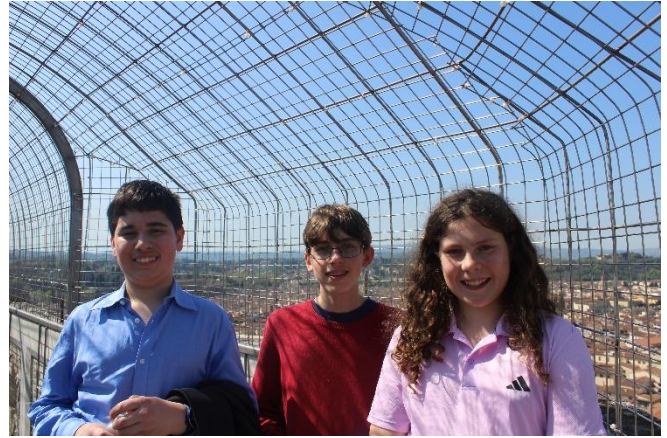


The next day, on the way to Florence, the coach stopped briefly at a viewing point called Piazzale Michaelangelo, where the group was able to look out over the river and city. It was a beautiful sunny day (we had unseasonably warm, gorgeous sunny weather throughout the tour – up to 26c!), and the view was incredible.



Once in Florence itself, many decided to climb another tower (there are lots of towers in Tuscany!), and headed to Giotto's Bell Tower, which is next to the famous Duomo. This time there were 414 steps to climb, with the vista over the rooftops including a great view of the Duomo's famous dome. The queues for the Tower and Cathedral were long, so some made it into the Duomo whilst others chose to find a quiet spot for lunch or enjoy the stunning architecture of the city. Quite a lot of gelato was consumed!

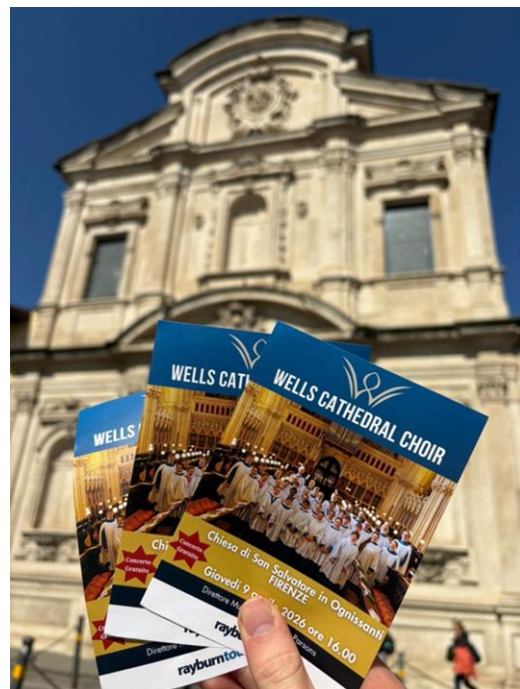




Florence's concert venue was the Chiesa di San Salvatore in Ognissanti. Founded in the mid-thirteenth century, the church takes its name from "Ognissanti," meaning All Saints. Regarded as one of Florence's most quietly significant churches, it's renowned for its artistic treasures, including Domenico Ghirlandaio's painting entitled Last Supper, the very one Leonardo da Vinci admired before painting his famous piece.

Sandro Botticelli (whose works including The Birth of Venus) and his muse Simonetta Vespucci (who features in The Birth of Venus) are here.

As the Choir entered the simple-looking building the gasps at the sight of the beautiful artwork, sculptures, and painted dome ceiling could be heard reverberating around the church! The concert itself was stunning, with the acoustics of the building only magnifying the stunning sound of the Choir. Our concert programme was the same throughout the tour - Allegri's Miserere mei, Deus (famous for its top C solos, sung beautifully throughout the tour by three different Choristers) and Frank Martin's wonderful Mass setting for double choir. We partnered these pieces with unaccompanied motets by Anton Bruckner and English music by Charles Wood, Edward Bairstow, and Gustav Holst.





At the end of the concert, the Choir were very pleased to see former Chorister Sophie Gallagher, who left the Cathedral Choir in 2009 and is now a professional singer living in Florence. Many long-standing members of the Vicars Choral knew Sophie, and it was inspiring for the Choristers to meet her!

Friday was spent in the charming Tuscan city of Lucca. A more laid-back day, the Vicars Choral had free time to wander the historic streets whilst the Choristers also enjoyed the chance to let loose on the tree-lined sixteenth century Renaissance city walls which are like a park. There was lunch at a Pizzeria for the Choristers (margheritas all-round and a break from the hotel's packed lunches!), souvenir shopping, and gelato.



Some visited Lucca's Cathedral, and a few chose to go with a chaperone to visit the Puccini Museum. Many found a third tower to climb – the Guinigi Tower – one of the city's most iconic structures which has 230 steps and oak trees growing on its roof! The rooftop garden symbolises renewal and rebirth and has panoramic views over the city and across Tuscany.



Lucca's concert venue was the San Paolino Basilica. Set in the historic heart of the city, this is considered one of Lucca's most important churches, deeply connected to the city's religious identity and civic history. Once again, the vaulted ceilings, frescoes, and devotional artworks were simply stunning. On arrival, Boy Choristers Michael, Zino, and Henry enjoyed the opportunity to play the church's organ with Ms Craig and Mr Marshall, which very much impressed the staff at the church.

When it came to concert time, the Choir gave an absolutely incredible performance which finished with a very long-standing ovation led by local people. Afterwards, the church's director, himself a professional musician, said it was one of the greatest concerts he had heard!



The last day of the tour was spent in the stunning mediaeval hilltop town of San Gimignano, famous for its remarkably preserved skyline of 14 ancient stone towers, earning it both the nickname "Medieval Manhattan" and UNESCO World Heritage status.

To make the most of our time amongst the Romanesque and Gothic architecture, and charming cobbled lanes, we enjoyed a walking tour which showed the highlights and taught some history. It also took the groups to the parts of the town with the most incredible views over the Tuscan countryside. There was no tower climbing today, although there were plenty of towers! There was, however, time for more sight-seeing, souvenir shopping, and gelato! Most of the group visited Gelateria Dondoli - "The World's Most Famous and Best Gelato Shop"!

The Choristers enjoyed eating their packed lunch in the sunshine, sat on the steps of the stunning Collegiata di Santa Maria Assunta. A Collegiata is an Italian Cathedral which is not the official seat of a Bishop.



Our final concert was in the Chiesa di Sant'Agostino, which is considered one of the most important religious and artistic landmarks in San Gimignano. Built in the late thirteenth century and dedicated to Saint Augustine, the church stands just outside the historic centre and is renowned for its extraordinary fifteenth century fresco cycle by Benozzo Gozzoli which runs along the nave walls, depicting scenes from the life of Saint Augustine. There was also an incredible artwork from 1380 which was partially covered up in the 1600s as it was deemed out of date! Thankfully some of it is now visible.



Once again, the Choir gave a world-class performance of unaccompanied music, with many feeling as though they had reached the peak and this was the best performance of the tour. The high vaulted ceilings gave an incredible acoustic, and again there was a standing ovation from the audience at the end – and tears from some at the beauty of the music.



After dinner on the final evening the Choristers enjoyed a surprise awards ceremony, with all receiving at least one nomination. The categories included The Bear Grylls Award (for endeavour), The Nomad/Wanderer/Loose Cannon Award (for those who often deviated from the general direction of the rest of the group), The Late Comer Award, Calamity Jane and Calamity James (for the accident/incident prone!), The Weirdest Purchase Award (won by a Chorister who bought shark flip flops!), and The Top Tourist Award (for the Chorister who was always in the right place at the right time, with everything they needed – harder than it sounds, it seems!). Prizes included keyrings, fridge magnets, socks, and a t-shirt for the Top Tourist. It was a lovely and highly entertaining part of the tour, with Mr Wells and Mr Parsons leading with funny stories and the group recounting the happy memories just made!

All returned home safely, although huge queues at Passport Control in Pisa Airport on exit made things rather stressful! Over 90 people booked on our flight were still held up in the queue when the gate closed, so given the number of children involved easyjet held the flight and we took off with a 40-minute delay. The Choristers then so impressed the cabin crew on the flight that they and the pilots passed us a card, saying it was a pleasure to have the Choristers onboard! The Choristers then sang a short piece for the cabin crew to thank them! We then disembarked into the 7c cold and rain, with the warmth of the Tuscan sunshine, and happiness from a very successful tour, warming our hearts.

All will look back on this tour with fond memories of the beautiful places we visited, the kind people we met, the world-class performances in stunning churches, and the bonds that were strengthened between the Choir members. We spoke with a lot of people about the city of Wells and its Cathedral and School, spreading the word via words as well as music. The Choir really were fabulous representatives for the Cathedral, School, and city.

Tours are an important part of the life of a Cathedral Choir for many reasons, including sharing our music with a wider audience, spreading the word about Wells Cathedral and Wells Cathedral Choir, developing positive relationships which enhance day-to-day work once back in the choir stalls, enabling the Choir to bond and develop musically, and tours are part of the experience of being a member of Wells Cathedral Choir (or any Cathedral Choir), whether as an adult or a child.

The tour could not have happened without the following people, to whom we owe huge thanks:

- The chaperones (Jody Wells, Karl Gibson, Clair Willis, and Alex Jenkins), organists (Timothy Parsons, Carolyn Craig, and Edward Marshall), and the Precentor, who gave up their time for free to travel with the group and care for the children so well throughout, including through bouts of illness, injuries, and who on numerous occasions dealt with keys locked in hotel rooms!
- Karl, Carolyn, and Edward who, as part of our marketing strategy, handed out the leaflets we took with us immediately ahead of the concerts to lure in passing tourists!
- Alex Jenkins, who was tour photographer as well as a chaperone
- Clair Willis, who posted to social media so people could see what the Choir were up to
- Our lovely coach driver, Claudio, who looked after everyone so well and said “they are the best behaved children I’ve ever had on the coach”!
- Ros Atherton, who worked so hard to have robes ready for everyone and fixed a lot of damage suit bags so they could be used on the tour
- The Cathedral Accounts Team for their help and support
- The Chorister Parent Social Committee, and especially Anna, for arranging and paying for the Choristers’ tour hoodies
- The Chorister parents, for supporting their children in fund-raising for the tour, and a few of whom were able to travel out to support the Choir at the service and concerts
- The Cathedral Chapter, for giving their support to the tour
- Timothy Parsons, for putting together an incredible programme of unaccompanied music which showed the Choir to be world-class
- Timothy Parsons and Carolyn Craig for conducting so wonderfully
- The Vicars Choral for singing so beautifully and being supportive of the Choristers
- And finally to the Choristers, who spent several months before the tour enthusiastically fund-raising, and who whilst on tour were very well-behaved and fantastic ambassadors which made the experience enjoyable for the chaperones, too! Their politeness and kindness to each other and those we met, as well as their determination and resilience on a tiring schedule, and their incredible professionalism when singing, truly showed what an incredible Choir we have in Wells!
- Timothy Parsons writes: As a final thank you, the person who organised and thought about and put in place every single detail for this tour is, of course, the amazing Melanie Lawlor. The amount of work required to safely and successfully take a large group of children (and adults!) abroad has to be seen to be believed, and we are so fortunate to have someone like Melanie who is so brilliant at this, and without whom such tours would simply not happen. Thank you so much!!

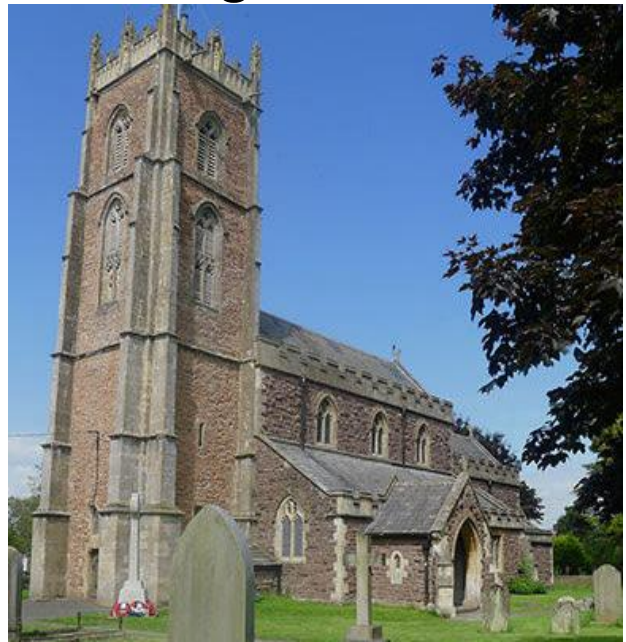


Sharing the gift of Choral Evensong

The Surpliced Girl Choristers and Decani Vicars Choral enjoyed a visit to St George's Church, Easton in Gordano, on Sunday 26 April as part of the Cathedral's Diocesan Outreach programme.

Directed by Timothy Parsons and accompanied by Carolyn Craig, they sang Evensong featuring music by Michael Wise, Matthew Martin, and Stanford's *Beati quorum via*. Following the service, the choir were warmly welcomed with a delicious afternoon tea of homemade cakes and refreshments.

The next Diocesan Outreach Evensong will take place at St Mary's Church, Kilve, on Sunday 11 October 2026, and will be sung by the Senior Boy Choristers and Cantoris Vicars Choral.



Vicars' Close recording project

On several evenings in May and June, the Senior Choristers and Vicars Choral made recordings of music originating from Vicars' Close across the centuries which will form part of the exhibition spaces being opened to visitors as part of the Vicars' Close Project. The most significant work recorded was the final part of a large-scale motet by Richard Hygons, a fifteenth-century singer and organist who spent most of his life living and working on the Close. His work *Salve Regina* formed part of the famous Eton Choir Book, a compendium of the most notable sacred music of its age, and it was an extract of this piece which was recorded. Additionally to this, the Choir made recordings of psalms as they might have been sung in the Cathedral in the Victorian era, some plainsong unique to Wells, and even a timeline of compositions ranging from the earliest to the most recent music composed on the Close. We look forward to hearing the finished result sometime in 2027!

Sound of Wells Festival 2026

By Timothy Parsons

People often talk about USP's (unique selling points). The USP of the annual *Sound of Wells* Festival, for me, is that it features almost exclusively home-grown talent from within the School and the Cathedral, whereas normally music festivals import talent from around the country and the world. While the second approach can be very exciting, our format allows us to celebrate in a very intentional way what makes us remarkable here: namely, the sheer volume and breadth of musical activity that exists and goes on across both institutions. This year's festival was a wonderful showcase of this, condensed into a few celebratory days in May.

We opened on Wednesday 6th with a superb concert of new compositions by Wells Cathedral School students. I was not sure which was more impressive, the quality of the compositions themselves or the quality of the performances, but both were of the very highest order. We then had an Evensong featuring the Youth Choir alongside the Vicars Choral including music by myself and Mr Drakett. That evening, David Bednall improvised a soundtrack to the Buster Keaton movie *The General* in a rollicking performance hugely enjoyed by the audience.

Thursday 7th brought a morning concert featuring our own Choral Scholars, Mr Parmenter, Miss Wakefield, and Mr Zielinski and accompanied by Mr Drakett. At Evensong, the Cathedral Choir was joined by the Song Squad and we gave the first performance of a new work, *An Easter Carol*, by WCS pupil Ernest Chui. That evening came the key concert of the week: a performance of Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610. Please read all about this spectacular concert in the separate article by Ms Craig!

On Friday 8th, it was a delight to welcome a huge group of schoolchildren for the Primary Outreach Concert, led by Mr Jenkins and joined as ever by the Junior Choristers, and then on Saturday 9th we held a special orchestral Evensong with string players from WCS, featuring music by Stanford and Bairstow. It was fabulous to bring together the Cathedral Choir with the WCS Chapel Choir and old Choristers too, at the Cathedral for their annual gathering, for this service.

Sunday 10th saw us give the world première of our most significant commission of this year: a *Missa Brevis* by Cheryl Frances-Hoad. New music has been an incredibly important feature of our musical life at Wells for many years, and it was enormously exciting to breathe life into a brand-new interpretation of ancient words that have been set so many countless times before. It was wonderful to welcome Cheryl to the Cathedral, and she also led a masterclass at WCS for the composers featured in the lunchtime concert earlier in the week. The Festival concluded with Evensong in the Nave marking the farewell to Archdeacon Anne Gell, a huge supporter of the Choir and especially during her tenure as Acting Dean. We left the Cathedral to the joyful sound of bells from the South West Tower. Huge thanks to everybody who contributed so much to making this year's festival as rich and successful as it was!

An unforgettable evening of Monteverdi

By Carolyn Craig

On Thursday 7 May, headlining the *Sound of Wells Festival 2026*, the Wells Cathedral Chamber Choir, Monteverdi String Band, English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble, pupil instrumentalists and singers from Wells Cathedral School, and soloists Beth Yates, Maddie Perring, Kieran White, Richard Rowntree, and William Drakett performed the Monteverdi Vespers under the direction of Carolyn Craig. It was a truly collaborative effort, celebrating what is so special about this incredible musical city. The audience of over 400 people gave a generous standing ovation and raised £5,500 for the Grand Organ Project.



It was a great joy to learn and perform this music in such a wonderful space with truly top musicians. The Chamber Choir is grateful to bass Chris Vigar for having the inspiration for this vision, to all who donated to make this possible, and to the instrumentalists - especially Old Wellensian Olly Webber, leader of the Monteverdi String Band - for their impeccable performance and for helping decide who would play when (Monteverdi didn't specify!). It was a joy to have Wells Cathedral School teachers Simon Lloyd, Emily White, Tom Lees, Annabel Knight, and William Drakett perform on the night alongside their pupils whom they had worked so hard to prepare. The evening was dedicated to Chamber Choir member Martin Warren, who passed away suddenly in April. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.



WCCA Reunion celebrates our Choral Tradition



On Saturday 9 May, we were delighted to welcome former Choristers and members of the Wells Cathedral Choir Association (WCCA) back to the Cathedral for their annual reunion. It was a joy to see so many familiar faces representing generations of the Cathedral's rich choral tradition.

As part of the *Sound of Wells Festival*, returning Choristers joined the current Cathedral Choir alongside Wells Cathedral School's Chapel Choir and String Orchestra for Evensong. Together, they created a magnificent sound, making for a memorable and uplifting service. The celebrations continued afterwards for WCCA members as they enjoyed a delicious dinner and the opportunity to catch up and share stories.

This year's reunion also marked a significant milestone for the WCCA, as Chris Seaton stepped down as Chair after 16 years of dedicated service, handing over the role to former Head Girl Chorister Frances Fowler. Reflecting on his time as Chair, Chris said: "I will of course continue to be an energetic ambassador for the Wells Cathedral Choir Association and Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust, and look forward to seeing everyone at future events."

The Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust (WCCT) is now the main point of contact for all former Choristers. If you are a former Chorister and would like to keep in touch and hear about future events, we'd be delighted to hear from you. To join the WCCT mailing list, please sign up here: <https://wcct.beaconforms.com/form/5e561183>.

Trials, Tribulations, and Timeless Music

By Carolyn Craig

On Thursday 21 May, the Vicars Choral presented their Commemoration Concert, celebrating the founding of Vicars' Close by Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury. The concert, called *The Trials and Tribulations of the Vicars Choral*, featured readings from the archives illustrating the lives of Vicars Choral of centuries gone by, including their various misbehavings and the contractual results thereof, pertaining to food, drink, relations with the fairer sex, violence towards one another, etc!

Musically, the Vicars Choral presented gems of lower voice liturgical repertoire in the first half, and close harmony in the second half, including our very own Timothy Parsons's arrangement of *God Only Knows* by the Beach Boys. The next Commemoration Concert, *From Chant to the Charts*, will be on Thursday 19 November 2026 at 7.30pm. Tickets will be available via Eventbrite. We'd love to see you there!



Junior Choristers delight audience in Seussical Jr

The Junior Choristers delighted audiences in the Wells Cathedral Prep School production of *Seussical Jr* with three outstanding performances in June, bringing the wonderfully whimsical world of Dr Seuss vividly to life!

Narrated by the mischievous Cat in the Hat, the colourful production featured many of Dr Seuss's best-loved characters, following Horton the Elephant on his extraordinary journey to protect the tiny world of Whoville. Packed with memorable songs, vibrant costumes and infectious energy, the show captivated audiences from beginning to end.

The talented cast delivered performances full of confidence, humour, and heart, beautifully conveying the show's themes of friendship, loyalty, family, and community. Their enthusiasm and commitment shone through in every scene, reminding us all that even the smallest voice can make a big difference.

Congratulations to everyone involved - pupils, staff, and volunteers - for creating such a joyful and memorable production. It was a wonderful celebration of creativity, teamwork, and the performing arts.



Pizza, karaoke, and heartfelt thanks

After the Ordination of Deacons service on Sunday 28 June, the Chorister Parent Social Committee (CPSC) treated the Choristers to an end-of-year pizza and karaoke afternoon at *Soul Dough* in Wells. It was the perfect time for the Choristers and their families to say a huge “thank you” to Anna, who is stepping down as Chair of the CPSC, for all the hard work, time, and enthusiasm she has given to the CPSC, the Choristers, and their families. Pictured below are Anna and Louise, CPSC Secretary.



This academic year, the CPSC has organised and funded Carols Around the Piano, Christmas ice skating, the *Guess Who* Chorister Edition Christmas present, the Chorister hoodies for the Tuscany Tour, the Easter Day lunch and egg hunt, social events, raffles galore, the end-of-year pizza and karaoke afternoon, and much more!

It's been a super busy year, and the CPSC and parents are incredibly grateful to the whole CPSC team and everyone who has helped. The CPSC is always looking for new parents to join and help organise even more fun activities for our Choristers. They're a friendly bunch (we promise!), so if you'd like to get involved, please have a chat with Amy, Louise, Anna, or Alan – they would love to welcome you!

Sharing music through Outreach: Springs, Fountains, and Mythical Creatures!

By Alex Jenkins

By the end of the term, we will have welcome over 200 children to the Cathedral as part of this term's two Outreach Concerts. The watery-themed *Springs and Fountains* concert, part of the Cathedral's Sound of Wells festival, saw children from Stoberry Park and Midsomer Norton Primary Schools sharing what they have learnt during their in-school sessions, and joining forces with the Junior & Year 7 Choristers of the Cathedral Choir. Clutton Primary School joined us for our final concert of the year, *Mythical Creatures*, exploring some of the stories behind the various beings that will be lurking around the Cathedral for this years' summer holiday activities!

A busy term for Song Squad

By Alex Jenkins

It has been another busy term for Song Squad, with more to come in the weeks ahead! The Seniors have sung two Evensongs alongside the Choristers and Vicars Choral of the Cathedral Choir, and will be joining forces with the Cathedral Youth Choir for their own Evensong on Tuesday 7 July. Some members of Song Squad will sing at the WOWFest 2026 *Carmina Burana* concert in the Cathedral on Saturday 11 July, and the term will finish with an open rehearsal and performance for the choir members' families!

Song Squad meet every Tuesday afternoon in state school term time. If you know any children aged 4-11 who love to sing, there's more information here: <https://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/worship-and-music/musical-outreach>.

Youth Choir up-date

It has been another exciting term for the Cathedral Youth Choir, led by Natalie Manning, with plenty more still to come before the summer break. As part of the *Sound of Wells Festival*, the Youth Choir sang Evensong alongside the Vicars Choral, delighting the congregation with a confident and accomplished performance. Looking ahead, members are very much looking forward to joining forces with Song Squad for a special Evensong on Tuesday 7 July. Several singers will also be taking part in the WOWFest 2026 performance of *Carmina Burana* in the Cathedral on Saturday 11 July.

The Cathedral Youth Choir is open to young people aged 11-18 and meets each Tuesday during Wells Cathedral School term time from 6.15pm. If you know someone who enjoys singing and would like to be part of this friendly and flourishing choir, we'd love to welcome them. To find out more and register, visit the Cathedral website: <https://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/worship-and-music/musical-outreach>.

Cathedral Commissions Advent Carol Competition



Calling all composers! Wells Cathedral is excited to launch a new choral competition, which is free to enter and for all ages. We are inviting composers to submit a new choral composition for an unaccompanied SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) choir, setting a text appropriate for an Advent Sunday service. The winning composer will receive a prize of £1,500, and the premiere performance of the music will be given by the world-class Wells Cathedral Choir, as part of the Cathedral's traditional Advent Procession on Sunday 29 November 2026. The deadline for submissions is Sunday 20 September 2026. Find out more here: <https://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/worship-and-music/advent-carol-competition-2026>

A fond farewell to our Choristers and Scholars

As another academic year draws to a close, we say farewell to some much-valued members of our Choir family as they embark on exciting new adventures. Each of them has made an outstanding contribution to the life of the Choir and Cathedral through their dedication, hard work, and wonderful music-making. We are immensely grateful for everything they have given, and they will all be greatly missed.

We send our heartfelt thanks, congratulations, and best wishes to Choristers Aidan, Ryan, Kukhanya, Clemmie, Jemima, Alma, and Annabel. Their commitment, enthusiasm, and talent have enriched the Choir in so many ways, and we are also grateful to their families for the time, encouragement, and support they have given throughout their Chorister journey. We wish them every success and happiness.

We also bid farewell to Organ Scholar Edward and Choral Scholars Phoebe, Luke, and Herbert, thanking them for the enormous contribution they have made to the musical life of Wells Cathedral.



Edward is moving to Lincoln Cathedral, where he will take up the post of Organ Scholar for the coming academic year. He is looking forward to once again playing a traditional pipe organ – specifically the last Cathedral Father Willis organ built in the UK. Although excited for the opportunities ahead, he says he will greatly miss Wells and the wonderful colleagues and friends he has made during his two years here.

Phoebe is returning to St Albans Cathedral, where she was once a chorister herself, to take up the role of Lay Clerk. Alongside her Cathedral duties, she is looking forward to exploring London's vibrant freelance music scene.

Herbert is returning to Wellington, New Zealand, to complete his BSc in Biotechnology before moving to Auckland in 2027 to begin a Master's degree in the same field. He hopes to continue making music wherever possible through church and community ensembles and ultimately combine a career in science with singing as a lay clerk at a Cathedral in New Zealand, Australia, or the UK.

Luke will remain in Wells over the summer in his role with the Cathedral Events Team. Looking ahead, he plans to pursue a career in the automotive industry while continuing to enjoy singing alongside his professional work.

To all those leaving us this summer, thank you for everything you have brought to the Choir and Cathedral community. We wish you every blessing and success in the next chapter of your journeys, and we hope Wells will always remain a special place in your hearts to which you will love to return.

Welcome to the Choir family!

A number of new Choristers will join the Choir in September – Guy, Rory, Felix, Elsie, Rachel, Alice, Eleanor, and Jasmine. We very much look forward to welcoming them all into the Choir!

We will also welcome three new Choral Scholars and a new Organ Scholar:



Alastair will be joining us as Organ Scholar.

He is currently the Assistant Organist at Ripon Cathedral and is a freelance accompanist and recitalist around North Yorkshire. Alastair moved to Ripon after graduating from Oxford University, having read Music at Pembroke College, and was organ scholar concurrently at both Pembroke and Harris Manchester College. Prior to that Alastair was a chorister and scholar at Coventry Cathedral and studied at the Royal Birmingham Junior Conservatoire.

Alastair achieved his FRCO in 2024, and on the way down to Wells, he will be making his debut at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester.

Alastair says “I’m really excited to become part of the musical life at Wells Cathedral and look forward to the opportunities to work in that magnificent building!”.

Beth’s musical journey began at Wells Cathedral in 2012 when her grandparents signed her up for a *Beth a Chorister for a Day* event. What was intended as a single visit somehow turned into seven years as a Chorister! During Beth’s time at Wells, she took part in a number of memorable projects, including performing Bach’s *St Matthew Passion* at the BBC Proms, recording works by Bob Chilcott and John Tavener, and touring to the Netherlands.

Beth recently graduated from Durham University with a First-Class degree in English Literature. Alongside her studies, Beth sang with several university ensembles, including St John’s College Chapel Choir, Durham Cathedral Consort of Singers, Castle Chapel Choir, and Durham University Chamber Choir.

Beth is delighted to be returning to Wells Cathedral as a Choral Scholar. She says returning to the place where her musical journey began feels like a real full-circle moment, and she looks forward to contributing to the Cathedral community alongside her MSc studies in Environmental Policy and Management at the University of Bristol.





Archie lives in Scotland and has recently finished studying at Ampleforth College in Yorkshire, where he sang in the Abbey's Schola Cantorum, in concerts, with the college chamber choir, and with their barber shop group - The Whitmore Wailers. Archie enjoys playing the bass guitar and banjo in his band Super Quiche. Archie has always loved singing in choirs at school and is most looking forward to the exceptional level that the choir at Wells Cathedral offers and learning about new composers and pieces with such an outstanding choir in an historic city.

Toby is a baritone based in Exeter, where he has just completed his undergraduate degree in Politics and International Relations.

After singing at school, Toby joined the University of Exeter Chapel Choir in 2023, before taking a Bass Choral Scholarship at Exeter Cathedral in September 2025 under the direction of Timothy Noon. During this time, he developed a strong passion for choral music and enjoyed ensemble singing as well as a variety of opportunities including solo work for choirs and choral societies around Devon.

Beyond singing, Toby is a keen tennis player, and despite giving up playing rugby when leaving school, he remains a fan, supporting Northampton Saints. Toby looks forward to moving to Wells in September and joining the Cathedral Choir as the Bass Choral Scholar. He is excited to work with Timothy Parsons and Carolyn Craig and spend time getting to know the city and surrounding area.



Head and Deputy Head Choristers announced

Congratulations to the following Choristers who will officially take up these posts when the Choir returns in September!

Head Girl Chorister	Celine
Deputy Head Girl Choristers	Arya and Grace
Tudway-Quilter Chorister	Gabi
Head Boy Chorister	George
Deputy Head Boy Chorister	Henry
Iain Ball Chorister	Austin

Plus Point prizes

A big “well done” to the Whitsun and Trinity Plus Point winners.

Whitsun

Senior Girl: Celine
Junior Girl: Imogen
Senior Boy: George
Junior Boy: James

Trinity

Senior Girl: Celine
Junior Girl: Imogen
Senior Boy: Walter
Junior Boy: Oliver

Congratulations to our prize-winners!

Congratulations to all of the Choristers who were awarded prizes at the end of the year!

Prizes awarded at School:

Dean & Chapter Prize	Ryan and Alma
Organist's Prize	Kukhanya
Music Foundation Prize	Clemmie and Jemima
Wells Cathedral Choir Champion Cup Prize	Oliver
Foundation for Sports & the Arts Cup Prize	Imogen

Prizes awarded at the Cathedral:

Morton Fuller Cup	George, Henry, Grace, and Arya
Fred James Cup	Austin
Wells Cathedral Choir Association Cup	Henry and Clemmie
Choral Foundation Prize	Aidan and Gabi
The Mr John Award	Celine
Wills Family Cup for improvement Music Theory	Emmeline

Exam news

Congratulations to the following Choristers on their exam success!

George	Grade 1 Guitar with Merit and Grade 5 Voice with Distinction
Gwendoline	Grade 1 Violin with Merit
Jemima	Grade 5 Singing with Distinction
Oliver	Grade 4 Singing with Distinction
Rowan	Grade 5 Music Theory with Merit
Imogen	Grade 1 Double Bass with Distinction and Grade 3 Violin
Oliver	Grade 3 Cello with Distinction
Teddy	Grade 1 LAMDA Speaking Verse and Prose with Distinction

Zino wins national composition competition

Congratulations to former Chorister Zino, who has been named the winner of the 2026 Choir Schools Association (CSA) Chorister Composition Competition, a prestigious bi-annual competition celebrating the compositional talents of young choristers from across the UK.

Zino's winning composition was selected by adjudicator Jonathan Wilcocks from a strong field of entries submitted by young composers nationwide. Entrants were invited to compose a short introit on the theme of Songs of Praise, setting a text by the 19th-century poet James Montgomery.



This latest achievement follows Zino's success in the junior section of the same competition in 2024!

The competition has a distinguished history, with notable past winners including Old Wellensian David Buckley, who received the award from HRH The Duchess of Kent in 1991.

Congratulations to Zino on this outstanding national achievement. We look forward to seeing where his musical talents take him next!

Book now for BACFAD!



This year's annual Be a Chorister for a Day event will take place on Sunday 4 October. The event is open to children aged between 6 and 9, there are fun singing workshops, and the afternoon ends with them taking part in the Evensong service alongside the Choristers of the Cathedral Choir.

For parents, there is the chance to speak with Wells Cathedral School staff and parents of current Choristers whilst enjoying tea and cake in the Cathedral Café ahead of the Evensong rehearsal and service.

If you know a child aged 6-9 who loves to sing, ask their parent or guardian to be in touch with Melanie Lawlor (musicoffice@wellscathedral.org.uk) ASAP, as places fill up quickly!

Summer services

Whilst the Cathedral Choir are on leave over the summer, we are very fortunate to be welcoming visiting choirs to Wells. Please do come along to the summer services if you can:

Saturday 4 & Sunday 5 July	St Mary the Virgin, Ewell
Monday 6 July	Said Evening Prayer
Tuesday 7 July	Song Squad and Youth Choir
Wednesday 8 July	Said Evening Prayer
Thursday 9 July	Wells Cathedral Chamber Choir
Friday 10 July	The Choir of St Giles & St Nicholas Parish Church, Sidmouth
Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 July	Winchester Consort
Monday 13 – Sunday 19 July	The Choir of St. James by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, La Jolla, California
Thursday 16 July	Exeter Chamber Choir
Monday 20 – Sunday 26 July	Choir of Grace-St Luke's Episcopal Church, Memphis
Thursday 23 July	Choir of St Laurence's, East Harptree
Monday 27 July – Sunday 2 August	The St Mary's Choir, St Mary's on the Highlands Episcopal Church, Birmingham, Alabama
Thursday 30 July	Choir of the Holy Trinity Church, Utrecht
Monday 3 – Sunday 9 August	St Alphege Church Choir
Thursday 6 August	St Nicolas Consort
Monday 10 – Sunday 16 August	Wantage Parish Church Choir
Thursday 13 August	Said Evening Prayer
Monday 17 - Sunday 23 August	The Colne Singers
Thursday 20 August	Said Evening Prayer
Monday 24 – Sunday 30 August	Sine Nomine
Thursday 27 August	Said Evening Prayer
Monday 31 August	Said Evening Prayer

Dates for your diary

Looking ahead to the Michaelmas and Advent terms, here are some dates for your diary:

Wednesday 2 September	Choristers return for pre-term rehearsals, and the annual Chorister Treat!
Thursday 3 September	TBC: CPSC Chorister family event
Friday 4 September	Well Cathedral School term begins
Saturday 5 September	First service of the academic year and reception for the Choir family
Friday 11 September	Chorister Parent Meeting (at WCS)
Saturday 3 October	Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust Evensong
Sunday 4 October	Be a Chorister for a Day
Wednesday 7 October	Dedication Festival Eucharist
Sunday 11 October	Diocesan Evensong: St Mary's Church, Kilve (Senior Boys & Cantoris VCs)
Sunday 8 November	Remembrance Sunday: Gabriel Fauré <i>Requiem</i>
Thursday 19 November	Vicars Choral Commemoration Concert
Sunday 29 November	Advent Carol Service
Monday 30 November	St Andrew's Day Festal Eucharist
Saturday 5 December	Messiah Concert
Thursday 10 December	CPSC Carols Around the Piano
Saturday 19 December	Song Squad and Youth Choir Christmas Sing-Along
Saturday 19 December	Candlelight Concert
Sunday 20 December	Candlelight Concert
Monday 21 December	Candlelight Concert

Tuesday 22 December No duties for Cathedral Choir
Wednesday 23 December Cathedral Carol Service
Thursday 24 December Cathedral Carol Service, and Eucharist of Christmas Night
Friday 25 December Christmas Day Eucharist

BE A CHORISTER FOR A DAY

at Wells Cathedral



SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 2026

Wells Cathedral invites boys and girls between the ages of six and nine to come and meet the Choristers, find out about Chorister life, and sing at Cathedral Evensong

For more details, and to book your place, please contact: musicooffice@wellscathedral.org.uk



<https://wells.cathedral.school>



www.wellscathedral.org.uk