



## **NEWSLETTER Spring 2023**

### **Welcome back.**

It is four years since the last newsletter, but the Trust remains active and continues to support many activities of the music department, here at St Wulfram's

The pandemic saw church closure and an extended period during which the choir was not able to meet or sing. At a time when many churches had to furlough their staff, the Trust was able to support Dr William's ongoing employment. Tim responded to the challenge of lockdown, pioneering 'virtual' rehearsals and developing techniques for digital recording to provide 'virtual' output, which proved innovative and engaging, which sustained the choir and supported worship throughout this difficult time. These methods have been adapted and applied to ongoing choir training and rehearsal requirements.

With the return to normal life, there has been no holding back on the music department's activity. To help Tim, three new members have joined the team including Rosemary Field, Anna Bolton and Tim Selman as Assistant Director of Music.

### **With thanks.**

It is with sadness we have lost long serving members and supporters of the choir, St Wulfram's and the Trust, over the past three years.

They include Peter Isaacs and Jo Green who were members of the choir for many years. David Brown who was one of the churchwardens and a valued supporter of music at St Wulfram's. More recently the Rev. Robert Reiss who donated regularly to the Trust.

We are grateful to them and for all that they have done for the choir and the church and especially grateful for the generous bequests and donations to the Trust.

### **Early Music Projects and Academic Activity.**

Since 2017 Dr Williams has worked in collaboration with Professor Magnus Williamson (Professor of Music at Newcastle University) on aspects of early music. This work has seen several enactment projects of early music performance practice. Professor Williamson has visited St Wulfram's Church on several occasions, including to deliver a lecture on the history of

sacred music in our church, and to deliver workshops with our youth choir on historical performance methods. The choir was able to engage with early music, reconstructing plainsong, faburden and polyphony from source material. Many of the results of these collaborations are on the choir's YouTube channel (see here: <https://youtu.be/iRKYS12-Us>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-58U01dwJb0>, <https://youtu.be/mDgZhPVG-Hw> and <https://youtu.be/k6RLYMvblOM>).

Using the 'virtual' techniques during lockdown, the project helped galvanise singers to continue their engagement with the choir. This collaboration resulted in an academic publication in *Early Music* (Oxford University Press) in 2022, 'Rethinking Early Music in a Time of Isolation' (<https://academic.oup.com/em/article/50/1/123/6595870>).

Dr Williams and Professor Williamson are currently working on further engagement projects, in particular developing strategies and resources relevant to teenage singers participating in sacred music.

### **Gesualdo Six.**

Since 2021, St Wulfram's Church Choir has worked in educational partnership with the award-winning international ensemble, the Gesualdo Six

<https://www.thegesualdosix.co.uk>. The collaboration began during the third UK lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic, when members of the Gesualdo Six led Zoom rehearsals for choristers, youth choir and adult singers. When in-person singing resumed in the summer of 2021, we welcomed the Gesualdo Six to St Wulfram's to lead workshops with the choir and to film two videos with the youth choir, singing music by John Sheppard and Thomas Tallis. The videos are online, here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLhMp2clGoQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLu5G6XETWU>. The collaboration continued with a concert and further workshops at St Wulfram's in the autumn of 2021, and further visits both from individual singers and the full ensemble in 2022, supported by the Postlethwaite Foundation. We hope to continue and develop this partnership in the years to come.

### **Youth Choir shenanigans.**

St Wulfram's Church runs a highly successful youth choir initiative for teenage singers. This ensemble is currently 20-strong, featuring sopranos, altos, tenors and basses aged between 13 and 18. The ensemble was formed to keep choristers singing beyond vocal change and graduating from the boys' and girls' choirs. In time it has become an elite ensemble for teenagers, meeting on Mondays after school to rehearse, and independently singing choral evensong on Fridays in termtime at 5.15pm. The members also sing with the full church choir in Sunday services. The choir has sung in many recitals and concerts and is a frequent guest choir at Harlaxton College. Highlights in recent memory have included a concert at Little St Mary's Church Cambridge during the choir's Ely 2022 residency, as well as the youth choir's collaborations with the award-winning choir, the *Gesualdo Six*. In February 2023, the youth choir made a mini tour, singing by invitation alongside Selwyn College Choir, Cambridge, and the next day singing Choral Evensong in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral.

### **Organ Scholars.**

We have continued to fund a programme for organ scholars, although more recently organ scholars have been able to access funding from different sources, including from the Dr Martin Clarke Young Organ Scholars' Trust and the Royal College of Organists. The students continue to make excellent use of the digital organs at two schools – the King's School and KGGS; many of the scholars who attend KGGS receiving their regular lessons at school. The organ scholars are working at different levels ranging between ABRSM Grade 3 and Grade 8.

Former organ scholars during Dr Williams's tenure include Joseph Beech (currently sub-Organist of Durham Cathedral) and Matilda Johnston, who is studying the organ at the Royal Academy of Music.

### **Choral Scholars.**

Members of the youth choir can apply for choral scholarships; the funding is intended to support them with their vocal training. There are seven choral scholars at the present time.

We are also supporting a second year for Anna Bolton, vocal teacher and coach, who has brought so much benefit to all young members of the choir, in terms of their confidence and their ability.

### **Commissioned pieces of music.**

In 2022, the Philip Lank Trust commissioned a new Christmas carol by Tamsin Jones, setting the Gregorian antiphon *Hodie Christus natus est* in memory of David Brown. This was given its world premiere during the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at St Wulfram's Church on 22 December 2022. The live video of the premiere is here: [https://youtu.be/BglrAbs\\_9GM](https://youtu.be/BglrAbs_9GM). We are keen to continue collaborating with Tamsin Jones, and with many other composers, in the creation of new music.

### **Forthcoming trip to St Davids.**

The choir is looking forward to its residential visit to St. Davids Cathedral in Wales this summer, the Trust hopes to help by subsidising the trip. These residential visits along with the day visits to cathedrals, to sing, are regular events and they allow the children to gain in confidence, develop their social and emotional well-being and enjoy being amongst friends to sing in some of the country's most beautiful buildings.

There will be activities to help raise funds towards this, please look out for publicity on the Trust and church websites.

### **Forthcoming events.**

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 – Schools concert at St. Wulfram's, supported by the Trust.

**Website.** [philiplanktrust.co.uk](http://philiplanktrust.co.uk)

The website is being updated and will be accessible via a QR code- watch this space!