

## Abbey Girls Choir Tour to Sweden

The Abbey Girls Choir visited the Cathedral's link diocese of Linköping, Sweden at February half term. The visit was supported in part by a generous donation from the Music Trust.

The Choir flew to Sweden on Ash Wednesday, and was greeted by host families from Linköping Cathedral's choirs. The first full day was divided between rehearsing and time spent at the Busfabriken activity centre. The evening was spent with the host families who looked after the girls extremely well – many of them were treated to sledding or ice skating. A fresh covering of snow heralded Friday morning, when the choir travelled to the historic Vadstena Abbey church, the motherhouse of the Brigittine Order, which is situated on the picturesque shore of Lake Vättern. Here the girls gave a concert of music spanning the 13th to 21st centuries to a large and appreciative audience. Prior to the concert they also took part in a youth mass. The church's youth workers have drawn inspiration from the Cathedral's Education work during visits to St Albans.



Saturday morning was spent in rehearsal with the Linköping choristers, helping to perfect the Swedish texts for Sunday morning's Eucharist, before having a delicious traditional lunch together of Swedish meatballs. In the afternoon, the Choir travelled to the ancient



The church of Vreta Kloster (left) and (above) the girls sing in Vadstena Abbey

photos: Alex Yakovlev

church of Vreta Kloster to sing Evensong. The church is the burial place of a number of early Swedish monarchs, and boasts a wonderful acoustic which particularly suited the plainsong and music for upper voices which the girls sang.

The girls joined forces with the Linköping Cathedral choristers for the Sunday morning Eucharist, singing works by Mendelssohn, Vierne and – a new favourite – *Gud är mysterium*. Fr Berkeley read the gospel, and Canon Walton thanked (in Swedish) the cathedral community for their very kind welcome. After saying goodbyes, it was time to jump straight on the coach to the airport so that the girls could be back at school on Monday morning!

It was very good to be able to further our links with Linköping Cathedral: the girls sang magnificently throughout the tour and were a credit to our own cathedral. I am particularly grateful to Fr Berkeley, Canon Walton, Marnus Greyling, Monica Alabi and Charlotte Maxwell who accompanied us on the trip, and to the Music Trust, the choir parents and all those who contributed towards the fundraising for the visit.

## Notes from the Song School

### *A summary of the Cathedral Choirs' busy winter schedule*

After the busy round of the usual regular Christmas services, the spring term has been relatively quiet, with one concert in Berkhamsted in February (see review on page 3). On Easter Day, the live Evensong broadcast at 3pm on Radio 3 was the first broadcast for both boys' and girls' choirs with the lay clerks. Earlier that morning the Abbey Singers and lay clerks sang the Easter Sunday Worship service broadcast live on Radio 4 – a suitably joyful celebration of Easter by the whole music department.

In the summer term we will be all working towards our joint performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* on 14 July with both choirs and St Albans Bach Choir.

**Andrew Lucas** *Master of the Music*

The Christmas highlight for the Abbey Girls Choir was singing Britten's famous *A Ceremony of Carols* as part of the well-loved and tranquil Christmas Eve Evensong. A short tour to Sweden in February half-term is described above.

The girls shared singing Holy Week and Easter services, with the added excitement of broadcast Evensong on Easter Day.

I have now started study leave until the end of May half term and return in good time for the Music Trust/St Albans Bach Choir *Elijah* concert in July.

**Tom Winpenny** *Assistant Master of the Music  
and Director of the Abbey Girls Choir*

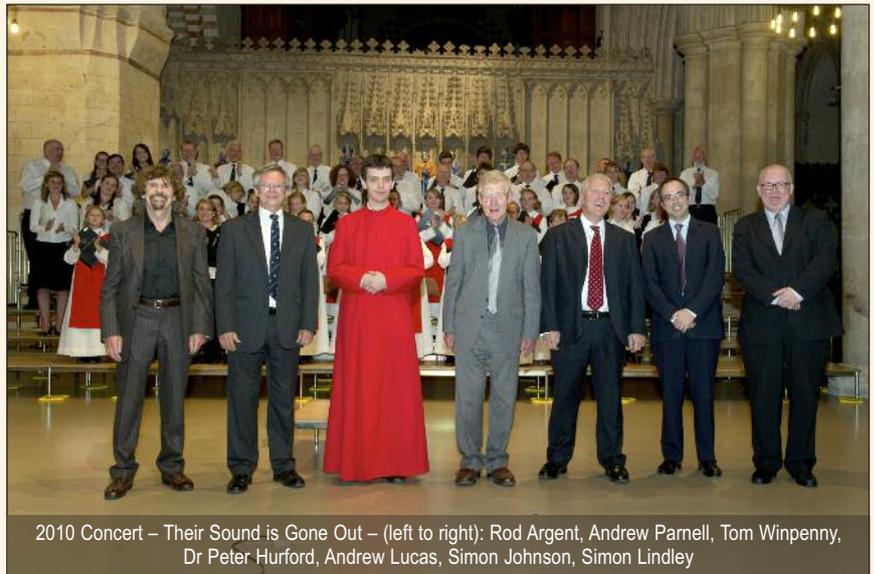
# St Albans Cathedral Ex-Choristers' Association

Malcolm Bury, the retiring Chairman, reports on the work of the Association:

The Ex-Choristers' Association (ECA) was re-formed in 2007 and is now in its 11th year. As well as being the alumni organisation for former choristers and lay clerks, it makes a significant contribution to the ongoing musical life at St Albans Cathedral, both vocally and financially.

Over the last 10 years there have been two major concerts in the Abbey; in 2010 to celebrate the 80th birthdays of Peter and Pat Hurford and in 2012 to raise funds. Both concerts featured the Abbey Girls Choir and the 2010 concert programme, conducted by Andrew Parnell with Tom Winpenny playing the organ, included Handel's *Coronation Anthems* and performances by Rod Argent (Zombies), Andrew Lucas, Simon Johnson and Simon Lindley – a unique and 'once-in-a-lifetime' line-up of musicians.

In 2013 the ECA hosted the annual festival for the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations where over a hundred participants from many UK cathedrals took part in the weekend. From these events, and also from the sale of the book written by ECA Chairman, Malcolm Bury, entitled 'The Choirs & Musicians of St Albans Cathedral' nearly £4,500 Gift Aided contributions have been made to the Cathedral Choirs. Former choristers and lay clerks,



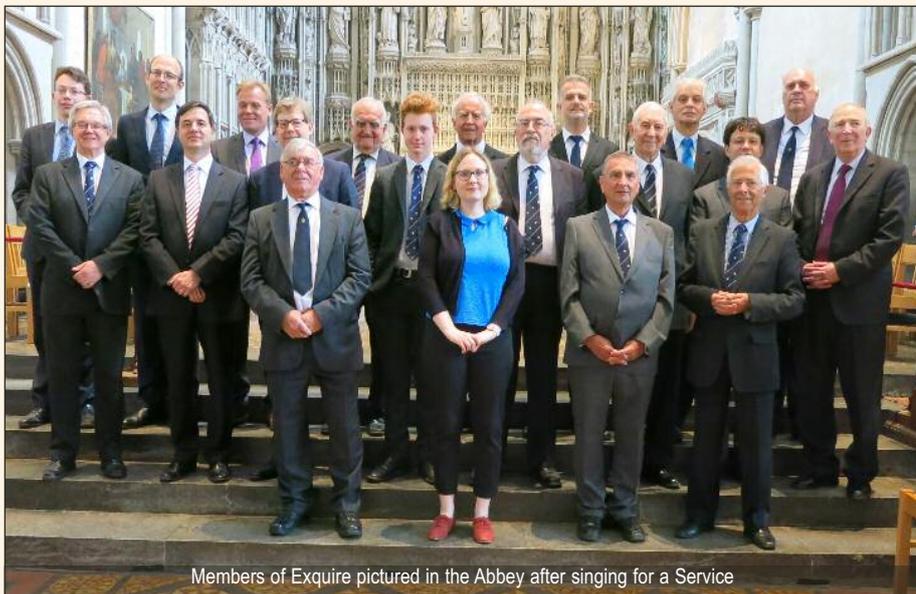
2010 Concert – Their Sound is Gone Out – (left to right): Rod Argent, Andrew Parnell, Tom Winpenny, Dr Peter Hurford, Andrew Lucas, Simon Johnson, Simon Lindley

photo: Colin Whyman

service as singers, but also for their ongoing support. [Please see page 6 for details of the various ways to help the trust to support and develop the tradition of choral worship and promote music of the highest quality in the Cathedral.]

The ECA has now published 43 editions of their quarterly newsletter, *Alban Notes*, and maintains an active website [www.stalbanseca.org](http://www.stalbanseca.org) together with Twitter and Facebook accounts. Membership is free and if you would like to know more, just visit the website. Many friendships have been re-kindled and the committee is always interested to hear from members about ways to maintain links through social and singing activities.

The ECA has its own choir, **Exquire**, which includes our younger members who sing with Abbey Singers and in the last two years has sung the Sunday morning Services of Choral Eucharist. The ECA aims to hold its biennial reunions and AGM on a Saturday afternoon during the summer months, although this has not always been possible, and also enjoys other events including two visits to Luccombe, a Veteran's Gaudy, Exquire singing at Music in Bloom Flower Festival.



Members of Exquire pictured in the Abbey after singing for a Service

and their families, have contributed over £300,000 to the Music Trust's endowment funds, which are used to provide a secure financial foundation for the cathedral's music.

The Hurford and Parnell Choristerships were largely funded by donations from former and current chorister families. Two layclerkships and several days have also been endowed by choir families. The Trust is immensely grateful to them, not only for their

This year sees a significant turnaround in the ECA management team with the retirement of the Chairman, after 11 years in the role, and a very welcome strengthening of the management committee with younger members.

Exquire is next singing in the Cathedral at the Mass for Corpus Christi on Thursday 31 May 2018 at 8pm. All are welcome. If you are a former chorister or layclerk and would like to sing, please email: [info@stalbanseca.org](mailto:info@stalbanseca.org) or visit: [www.stalbanseca.org](http://www.stalbanseca.org)

# Cathedral Choir Concert in Berkhamsted

'Advent to Candlemas' was the title of the Cathedral Choir's Concert in St Peter's Church, Great Berkhamsted on Saturday 10 February.

Conductor, **Andrew Lucas** compiled a lovely programme drawing on the music the choir had sung during services in December and January. Beginning with Boris Ord's well-known carol *Adam lay y'bounden*, we were treated to works by Wise and Mendelssohn, Robert Parsons' wonderful *Ave Maria*, two motets by Poulenc and Philip Moore's haunting *Benedictus* which has become a mainstay of Christmas Day Matins. For the first time in one of these concerts, the Cathedral Choir joined with the parish choir to sing Wood's renowned *O Thou, the central orb*. The combined sound was surprisingly rich and elicited sustained applause from the packed audience.

The second half moved from Advent and Christmas to Epiphany and Candlemas. Works by Byrd, Poulenc, Eccard's *When to the temple Mary went*, Ernest Walker *I will lift up mine eyes* (men's voices), Holst and Tavener (his *Collegium Regale, Magnificat* with its orthodox chanted microtonal refrains), showed how impressively the choir can move into different styles with ease. A tribute to all. Throughout the concert Tom Winpenny's assured organ solos and accompaniments enhanced the programme. His solos were Mendelssohn's *Prelude and Fugue in D minor* and Dupre's arrangement of Bach's *Sinfonia* from Cantata 29.



The Cathedral Choir rehearses with St Peter's parish choir before the concert

These outreach concerts are an important part of the Music Trust's work. They not only display the choral riches of the flagship in St Albans, but also provide an enjoyable experience for the dedicated singers who give many hours each week in rehearsal and services.

Chris Muhley, *Music Trust Chairman*



A computerised impression of how the new Welcome Centre will look when it is completed.

# Alban, Britain's First Saint

## An update of the Project's progress

As spring begins, the Cathedral is now well into the building phase of the 'Alban, Britain's First Saint' project.

The extended archaeological dig finally ended in January following the removal of over 100 burials. At the start of December the archaeologists made their most important discovery: the tomb of Abbot John of Wheathampstead, one of the most interesting and successful of the mediaeval Abbots of St Albans. The papal seals that were found in his grave are a testimony to the privileges that he won for his monastery, and of his own national and international influence as he steered the Abbey through the Wars of the Roses. His discovery was a surprise to the team and his story will form a fascinating part of the intricate narrative to be told in the Cathedral's new interpretation.



above left – the recently discovered tomb of Abbot John of Wheathampstead;

below left – the three Papal Bulls that were discovered in the grave



With excavations finished, work on the new welcome centre building is now underway. Internally the Chapter House has already undergone significant changes to accommodate new learning spaces for schools, adults and families and a new café area, raised to the level of the new entrance building to provide one open, accessible welcome space. Other works continue behind the scenes developing the new interpretation and event programmes which will bring the stories of the Cathedral alive for new and existing visitors.

The new welcome centre is due to open in summer 2019 but in the meantime the Cathedral continues as ever, with services and events taking place as normal. Please do keep an eye on the music lists for up to date information.



above right – Ross Lane explains the finds to a group of interested children

To keep up to date with the project as it develops, you can subscribe to the "Alban, Britain's First Saint" blog by visiting:

[albanbritainsfirstsaint.wordpress.com](http://albanbritainsfirstsaint.wordpress.com)

or visit the Cathedral's website:

[www.stalbanscathedral.org](http://www.stalbanscathedral.org)

# Talented Young Musicians perform in Cathedral

St Albans Cathedral hosted the seventh St Albans Young Musicians Competition Finals on Sunday 25 February, giving over 50 local students the opportunity to perform in the incredible setting of the Cathedral's nave. Supported by St Albans Cathedral Music Trust, the aim of the competition is to provide a unique platform for young musicians and extend the musical outreach of the Cathedral as well as to bring the work of the Music Trust to a wider audience. This year's

judge, Paul Chapman had insightful comments for all competitors and the difficult task of selecting the winners of each category. Chris Muhley, Chair of the St Albans Cathedral Music Trust, said, "In this, its seventh year, we were delighted with the outstanding quality of the young musicians who entered the competition. Well done to everyone who entered, to our finalists who performed and to our winners on the day."



above – Sedona de Silva, Winner of Primary Piano solo

## Winners

Ensemble: **Parmiter's Saxophone Quartet**  
Primary strings solo: **Ella Harrison**  
Primary Wind Solo: **Cecily Maxwell**  
Primary Piano Solo: **Sedona de Silva**  
Secondary Strings Solo: **Lucy Hillman**  
Secondary Vocal Solo: **Rosanna Milner**  
Secondary Wind and Brass Solo: **Christopher Price**  
Secondary Piano/Organ Solo: **George Throup**

The winners will be performing in a Concert  
in the St Albans Cathedral Nave on  
Saturday 28th April at 12.30pm



photos: Tony Price

right – members of Parmiter's Saxophone Quartet with Paul Chapman, this year's Judge

## Music Trust News

We say farewell and thanks to Laura Bloom and hear from newly-appointed Music Trust Administrator, **Shirley Anderson**:

"As well as my work in the Cathedral Development Department, I am a local mother of 2 children, Olive and Stanley aged 8 & 6, and am also the Chair of the Abbey School PTA. Before that I worked as a PA in London to three Directors.



I have run four half marathons and completed the Yorkshire 3 peaks, raising lots of money for various charities, including bowel cancer and Dementia UK. Partial to the odd challenge I am training for my first marathon this year, the Loch Ness Marathon in September – one of the most scenic runs in the UK and I am 3 months into going alcohol free for a year!"

**Laura Bloom** is still at the Cathedral and has moved into the role of Visitor Services Officer, one of the new HLF funded roles appointed to support the 'Alban, Britain's First Saint' project.

She will work with volunteer groups and staff on the Cathedral floor to ensure visitors have the best possible experience at the Cathedral. She will be looking to recruit more volunteers and bring different audiences into the Cathedral through new events, tours and activities.

Laura will help to develop the new welcome centre to be a warm, welcoming and informative entrance to the Cathedral when it opens next summer.

# St Albans Cathedral Music Trust

## Patrons' Evensong

Saturday 6th October 2018

Watch the choir rehearse and then attend Evensong at 4pm in seating exclusively reserved for Patrons. All followed by a reception in the Old Rectory, home to the Dean, and an update on the work of the Music Trust.

## Advent Procession

Sunday 2nd December 2018

This atmospheric service begins at 6.30pm. Music Trust Patrons are invited to stay for a drink afterwards in the North Transept and then join the Trustees and fellow Patrons for dinner at Lussmanns. Booking details will follow later in the year.

Further information from 01727 890231 or email: [music-trust@stalbanscathedral.org](mailto:music-trust@stalbanscathedral.org)

## Recent Music Trust Commissions

The Music Department recently commissioned the distinguished Swiss composer **Carl Rütti** to compose a short work for upper voices and organ. Rütti's music has been performed internationally and includes a Requiem composed for The Bach Choir and a carol for the Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols at King's College Cambridge.

Rütti has composed a setting of the medieval carol *When Jesus Christ baptised was*. Few composers have set texts about Christ's baptism, yet it is central part of the church's Epiphany celebrations. The piece will be performed, next year, at the Epiphany & Candlemas carol service on Sunday 4th February at 6.30pm, sung by the Abbey Girls Choir.

The choristers have enjoyed singing the new work, which alternates lightly jazzy sections with reflective passages, and concludes with a soaring *Alleluia*.

The work has been generously sponsored by **Rogers Covey-Crump**, and it is dedicated to the memory of another stalwart supporter of music at the Cathedral – **Pat Hurford** – who died in October. Commissions for the Cathedral Choirs in recent years have included works by Cecilia McDowall, Judith Weir, Alec Roth and Philip Moore. The Music Department hopes to continue to encourage new commissions in the future.

## How you can help

The St Albans Cathedral Music Trust has been established to support and develop the tradition of choral worship and promote music of the highest quality in the Cathedral.

Those who give a minimum sum of £100 are invited to become a patron of the trust. Patrons receive a number of benefits including invitations to the annual Advent Carol Service and Dinner, and advance notice of cathedral sponsored concerts.

In addition, the Trust operates four special schemes to acknowledge particular generosity and to keep donors informed of our work:

- Under our **Endow a Day's Music Scheme**, a gift of £7,500 (or £6,000 with Gift Aid) donated over a maximum period of five years gives the donor the opportunity to be associated with music in the Cathedral on a particular date each year, in perpetuity
- In return for a gift of £25,000 or £50,000 under our **Endow a Chorister Scheme** the donor has the opportunity to have their name associated, in perpetuity, with a particular chorister's or lay clerk's place in the choirs
- The **Organ Restoration Fund** is still open for those who wish to allocate their donation to this specific aspect of our work, including a **Sponsor a Pipe** scheme, details of which may be found in a special brochure
- The Music Trust has been honoured to receive gifts from supporters who remember the Trust in their Will. Leaving a legacy to the Trust is one of the most effective ways that you can support music at the Cathedral and help safeguard its future. In recent years, Tax-efficient **Legacy Gifts** have supported the organ appeal and the purchase of new pianos for the nave and song school

We are always happy to discuss with donors how they might best support the Trust. For more information contact **Christopher Muhley** at the Trust's address below.

## About the Trust

Registered Charity No: 1051072

St Albans Cathedral Music Trust is an independent trust established with full charity status to receive and administer funds.

### The Trustees

Christopher Muhley *Chairman*, Ralph Abel Smith, Professor Tim Blinko, Moira Dean, The Very Reverend Dr Jeffrey John *Dean of St Albans*, Andrew Lucas *Master of the Music*, Pete Letanka, Christopher Melliush, Lady Shelagh Nichols, John Palmer, Sir Peter Trevelyan, Gini Trower.

## Looking Ahead

### Saturday 28th April 2018–12.30pm Young Musicians Competition, Prize Winners' Concert

A concert in the Nave, performed by winners of the 2018 Young Musicians Competition.

### Saturday 14th July 2018–7.30pm St Albans Bach Choir and Cathedral Choirs Joint Concert, performing:

### Mendelssohn's – Elijah

Tickets now on sale at the Cathedral Box Office  
T: 01727 890290 or online at:  
[www.stalbanscathedral.org](http://www.stalbanscathedral.org)



Contributions and enquiries to:

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Tel: 01727 890231

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