

# ASSOCIATION OF CATHEDRAL VOLUNTARY CHOIRS

NEWSLETTER – November 2016

The 13<sup>th</sup> National Festival of the Association took place at Wells Cathedral on 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Voluntary Choirs taking part:	Singers	Music:
Wells Cathedral Voluntary Choir	28	Introit: <i>Locus iste</i> - Bruckner
Derby Cathedral Voluntary Choir	15	Responses: Radcliffe
Guildford Cathedral Singers	13	<i>Evening Service in G major</i> – H. Howells
Rochester Cathedral Voluntary Choir	11	<i>They that go down to the ships</i> – H. Sumsion
Chelmsford Cathedral Voluntary Choir	6	Psalms 142, 143, 145, 147 & 148
Ely Cathedral Octagon Singers	5	<i>Cantus Missae E<sup>b</sup></i> Op.109 for double choir – Rheinberger
Lichfield Cathedral Chamber Choir	5	Gospel Responses: Stuart Beer
Hereford Cathedral Voluntary Choir	4	Motet: <i>Prayer of Thomas Ken</i> – Owain Park
St Peter's Singers, Exeter	3	<i>Te Deum in G</i> – H. Sumsion
Carlisle Cathedral Voluntary Choir	2	<i>Jubilate in D</i> – J.D. Holroyd
Worcester Cathedral Voluntary Choir	<u>2</u>	<i>Give us the wings of faith</i> – Bullock
	94	<i>Evening Canticles in E<sup>b</sup> No.2</i> – Wood
		Anthem: <i>O quam gloriosum</i> – W. Byrd

**Director:** Michael Cockerham  
**Organist:** Matthew Redman

It was a bright and mostly sunny Saturday when singers converged on Wells from far and wide ready for the afternoon rehearsal at 2pm. Some had arrived earlier in order to contribute to an exhibition in the South Cloister about the Association and its member choirs. This exhibition was designed partly to give unsuspecting visitors and members of the cathedral congregation some idea of what was going on! The east end of the nave was bright with all the different robes of visiting choirs as the Director took us through the music for the weekend. In particular, Sumsion's '*They that go down to the sea in ships*' seemed a popular choice with both the singers and the many casual visitors who stopped by to listen to the preparations!



Rehearsal was followed by tea and cake in the South Transept:



Even with two cakes there was little left after the combined forces of singers, supporters and guests had partaken. The well-supported Evensong was taken by The Reverend David Wilcox, Priest Vicar, acting as Canon in Residence. Also in attendance were The Precentor, The Reverend Canon Nicholas Jepson-Biddle and the Bishop of Bath and Wells, The Right Reverend Peter Hancock, who gave the Blessing. We are most grateful to them all for their support.

A quick freshen up and it was across to Cedars Hall, the splendid newly opened concert hall of Wells Cathedral School, for pre-dinner drinks and conversation. Bishop Peter and his wife Jane joined us, and he addressed the diners after a magnificent roast dinner provided by Wells Cathedral School Catering in their Dining Hall.

After a jolly evening everyone managed to arrive on time for the Eucharist rehearsal next day. The combined force of nearly 100 singers did justice to the Rheinberger Mass and enjoyed the process! We hope the Director did too!

The communion motet was a World Premiere: *A Prayer of Thomas Ken* by Owain Park. Wells Cathedral Voluntary Choir, having received an unexpected donation in 2015, decided to commission a new piece to be sung at this, the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary National Event. As the Association was formed in Wells, it was suggested that the text used should be this prayer of Thomas Ken (1637-1711), Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1685-1691.

*O God, Make the door of this house wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship  
and a heavenly Father's care;  
Make it narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and hate.  
Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block to children, nor to straying feet;  
Make it rugged enough to turn back the tempter's power;  
Make it a gateway to thine eternal kingdom. Amen.*

Wells CVC was delighted when Owain, an established and award winning young composer published by Novello, agreed to accept the commission. A former pupil at Wells Cathedral School, Owain was Junior Organ Scholar in 2010-12 and Senior Organ Scholar in 2012-13. He was thus familiar with the Cathedral, the Voluntary Choir and this beautiful prayer, and expressed his pleasure at setting it to music for this occasion.

As Wells CVC was officially 'on duty' for the whole weekend, visiting singers were offered the opportunity to sing for Matins and Evensong on Sunday as well. Since Matins is less often sung in many cathedrals, it was a delight that over 20 singers were able to stay and join in. Advance planning for seating everyone in the Quire paid off, and all went smoothly with positive comments from both congregation and Clergy. The meeting for the Voluntary Choirs' representatives was squeezed in between the end of Matins and the rehearsal for Evensong, but no one went hungry, with a sandwich lunch provided by Cathedral Catering - and home-made cupcakes to fill up the odd corner!

It was sad to see the exhibition dismantled at the end of a busy weekend as it had attracted much interest and provided background information about the various choirs taking part. Every choir has its story to tell and we look forward to more of them at Guildford in 2018.