

98

THE CHERWELL SINGERS

THE CHERWELL  
SINGERS

1978-1998  
20th ANNIVERSARY  
PARTY

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHERWELL SINGERS

In early 1977 I was singing in a University chamber choir which ground to a halt. Rather than join another University choir I decided to form a group of singers who were not dependent on university terms.

I asked my neighbours Joelle Mann and Peter Brown to help run the group and the first tentative steps took place in the Basement of the Franks' Semi in Tackley Place in 1977, with eight singers.

After six months without a conductor we asked the late Og Thomas to direct us and the first concert took place in the Methodist Hall in New Inn Hall Street, with a rapidly expanded group of 20 singers. At this time we changed our name from the Walton Well Singers to the no less parochial name of Cherwell Singers.

After four years we were asked to sing in a conference and hit on the idea of earning money from conference singing to help underwrite ambitious concerts with hired orchestras which inevitably lose money.

Twenty years on, after eleven conductors, we are still going strong.

Christopher Franks



*The Earliest known Pictorial Record of the Cherwell Singers (1984)*

*Christopher Franks, Chris Emllyn-Jones, Hugh Whittaker, Simon Street, Jeremy Cox  
Greta Rye, Margaret Johnston, Theresa Gray, Jennifer Barnes, Joelle Mann, Hildred Younie  
Annabel McLeod, Janet Jeffs, Glynne Butt, Sarah Franks, Judith Ackrill, Anne Fenwick*

### THE CHERWELL SINGERS: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

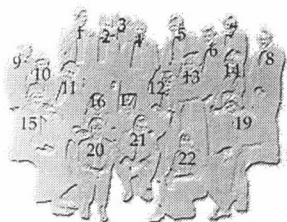
What has changed in 20 years? Well, we're a lot bigger than the original eight singers: our optimum size ranges from 18 to 26 singers (6-8 sopranos, 4-6 altos, 4-6 tenors and 4-6 basses), though our average size is about 22. Our constitution ensures that the choir remains a small chamber group, and over-enthusiastic conductors are kept under control by committee members who sit in on auditions! The committee is also in charge of concert and conference organisation, our music library and finance, leaving the conductor to concentrate solely on the music. The aim of singing the choral chamber repertory to a high standard remains, and looking through the concert history, we seem to be keeping up with

regular favourites while also introducing new works and styles from all countries and centuries. Our most recent innovation is to split the choir to sing music for only SA or TB.

Regardless of changes in personnel, the Cherwell Singers remains one of the friendliest choirs around. The atmosphere owes a great deal to the sense of continuity provided by long-standing members who frequently put choir engagements above other commitments, and who work with each new conductor to ensure our continuing success and high standards of performance and vocal quality. The size of the choir ensures that every singer bears a significant part of the responsibility of the blended whole, with the result that the group is exceptionally sensitive to moods both of individual singers and the conductor. This is our biggest asset, though it can sometimes be a liability!



*The Cherwell Singers (1986)*



1. Paul Mayhook 2. Martin Price 3. Guy Peskett 4. Bill Johnstone 5. Tim Wainwright 6. Richard Coleridge 7. Martin Ruck 8. Paul Lewis 9. David Sutton 10. Rosemary Keavy 11. Derek Fowler 12. John Tucker 13. Kipper Walker 14. Janet Jeffs 15. Margrit Campbell 16. Joanna Tucker 17. Sue Dillon 19. Virginia Allport 20. Claire Singleton 21. Julian McNamara 22. Mary Lewis [missing Chris and Sarah Franks (perhaps they were late?), Julia Craig-McFeely (camera-shy), Peter Jones (behind the lens)]

Among the many aspects of the increasing professionalism of the choir over its lifespan is our smart logo (shown on the front page), and elegant letterhead (overleaf), which also adorns the glossy black publicity folder used to advertise our services to colleges and hotels where conferences are hosted. Currently we have a long-term relationship with Ericsson communications, for whom we have performed a short concert recital four or five times a year since 1990. We also have an infamous regular engagement singing for the annual bun-fight of members of the British Shops and Stores Association. Nearly every conference organiser we sing for has come back to us for return engagements, and recently having the chaplain of New College among the tenors has also meant about ten weddings or baptisms a year, often with new music to learn for each event.

CHERWELL SINGERS

THE CHERWELL SINGERS:

Helen Angus, Wendy Ball, Virginia Benet-Clark,  
Sarah Darby, Sarah Franks, Nancy Kenny,  
Alison L'Estrange, Joelle Mann, Melody Mobus,  
Carol Pedley, Alison Street, Julianne Toolan,  
Isobel Waters; Peter Brown, Jay Conder,  
Harry Eden, Christopher Franks, Chris Palmer,  
Simon Street, David Sutton, Michael Toolan,  
Bryan Wells.

Conductor: Og Thomas

conducted by Og Thomas

Present a programme of

SACRED and SECULAR SONGS

with

Philip Augar	Violin
Elizabeth Harre	Horn
Alexis Megann	Piano

at

Wesley Memorial Church,  
New Inn Hall Street, Oxford

Friday April 25th at 8.00 p.m.

Admission by programme 60p

IN AID OF THE OXFORD KIDNEY UNIT

PROGRAMME

Choir:- Miserere - Sweelinck  
Agnus Dei - Morley  
Alle Psallite - Anon  
Locus Iste - Bruckner  
Sanctus - from the Missa Luba  
Vinea Mea Electa - Poulenc

\*\*\*\*\*

Romance in F Major  
for Violin and Piano - Beethoven

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Choir:- Mass 'Quarta Toni' - Victoria

\*\*\*\*\*

Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano -  
Lennox Berkeley

\*\*\*\*\*

Choir:- Steal Away  
I got a Robe arranged by Beth Brown  
Deep River arranged by Beth Brown  
Did'nt my Lord deliver Daniel?  
arranged by Sol Berkowitz  
The Crown of Roses - Tchaikovsky  
Evening Hymn - Kodaly

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INTERVAL AND REFRESHMENTS

*The First Cherwell Singers Programme  
(looking suitably antique!)*

# THE CHERWELL SINGERS

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After 20 years of experience, entertaining conference audiences is now down to a fine art, and this is one of the most enjoyable aspects of performing together: the luxury of having a captive audience who haven't required energetic publicity to bring them in makes for a relaxed atmosphere for everyone, particularly those who have usually been running around for weeks with handbills and posters. By now, we are so familiar with our conference repertoire that we could probably sing it from memory, and inevitably that means that communication between choir, conductor and audience is at its ideal best. Although it sometimes seems as if we're turning out the same old chestnuts, the programmes we offer are constantly, if gradually changed to keep performances fresh without sacrificing the particular quality gained from singing music that we know intimately.

Because of our busy conference schedule, we are now one of the few choirs in Oxford that consistently shows a healthy bank balance, allowing us to meet the original intentions of the founders, that of hiring professional players and original-instrument Baroque bands to accompany us. Most recently our solvency has allowed us to pursue a policy of regularly offering the proceeds of major concerts to support a charity with some connection to the choir: Amnesty International, the British Dyslexia Association, The Samaritans, Oxfam and The National Autistic Society have been recent beneficiaries.

Choir dress is now 'black tie for men, and black with a splash of red for the ladies', which ranges from jackets or scarves to some very splendid black and red hooped socks. The result (seen in the 1996 picture) is smart without looking like a uniform, and is occasionally complemented by the addition of red folders for music. We also have a set of surplices for church events.

Concert formats are pretty predictable, but one of our more ambitious excursions was the Victorian Evening, for which we managed to dress in more-or-less Victorian clothes, with the gentlemen splendidly in tails. For this event we produced an authentic-looking souvenir programme book, filled with drawings by Tenniel and Bab, and adorned with elegant borders and some extremely absurd contemporary advertisements (cover opposite).

The busy schedule of the choir is a reflection of the energy and commitment of its members, and promises a long and healthy future.



*The Cherwell Singers (1998)*

SOPRANO Sarah Franks, Louise Locock, Caroline Higginbottom,  
Kipper Chipperfield, Sue Bignal, [missing: Joanna Tucker]  
ALTO Helen Maidlow, Rosemary Keavy, Virginia Allport, Beryl Pratley,  
Stella Holman, [missing: Peter Jones, Claire Singleton]  
TENOR David Sutton, Derek Fowler [missing: Rob Harnish, John Tucker]  
BASS Guy Peskett, Paul Mayhook, Paul Lewis, Christopher Franks, Richard Coleridge



**THE CHERWELL SINGERS PRESENT**  
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MISS CRAIG-MCFEELY

AN EVENING OF

# **VICTORIAN ENTERTAINMENT!**

WHICH MAY BE SEEN

**LIVE at 8 o'clock ON**

**FRIDAY 20TH AND SATURDAY 21ST DECEMBER**

at

**THE HOLYWELL MUSIC ROOM**

Holywell St., Oxford

IN WHICH WILL BE PERFORMED

**ALL MANNER of  
ELEGANT and GENUINE  
MUSICAL ITEMS!**

INCLUDING NUMEROUS SONGS BY THE FAMOUS MR ELGAR,  
EXTRACTS FROM LIGHT OPERA AND

**LITERARY READINGS**

FROM THE PARLOURS OF OUR ANCESTORS

Admission, £5., concessions, £3.

Available from Blackwell's Music Shop or on the door



*Programme for the Victorian Evening, 21 December 1991*

# CONCERT HISTORY

Below is the first known attempt to chronicle the activities of the choir since its foundation. Sadly, there are some gaps, but we are working on filling those in. Now that we have established this history, we'll be keeping it up to date for our next anniversary!

Conductor	Date	Venue	Programme
	Dec 1977	Christ Church	Carols
Og Thomas	25.4.78	Wesley Memorial Church	Sacred/Secular songs
	18.1.79	Friends Meeting House	Debussy & Kodaly with Jack Gibbons (piano) & Katy Thomas (flute)
	28.4.79	Bampton Arts Centre	Brahms <i>Liebeslieder Waltzes</i> with Glynne Butt & Jack Gibbons (piano)
	13.7.79	Friends Meeting House	Summer Madrigals with Christine Woodward (flute) & Sheila Freeman (oboe)
	23.11.79	Maison Française	French Chansons & Folksongs with Marion Creasor piano & cello
	19.5.80	Holywell Music Room	Brahms, Lefebvre, Mozart & madrigals with the Nicolas Wind quintet
	2.7.80	Friends Meeting House	Madrigal & Purcell <i>Ode to St. Cecilia</i> with string quartet
			CHRISTMAS CONCERT?
Robin Bowman	29.3.81	Merton Chapel	Bach <i>St John Passion</i>
	4.7.81	St Giles Church	Debussy, Tudor Anthems, Madrigals & William Eden with the Hughenden Consort
	8.12.81 & 10.12.81	St Andrews Church & Balliol Chapel	Bach Chorales, Bernstein <i>Chichester Psalms</i> Poulenc <i>Quatre Motets</i>
David Andrew	23.3.82	All Saints Headington	Tudor Anthems, Madrigals, Britten <i>Flower Songs</i>
	29.6.82	Friends Meeting House	Brahms <i>Liebeslieder Waltzes</i> , Vaughan Williams with Bryan Kelly
	30.1.83	Exeter Chapel	Byrd <i>four-part mass</i> , Bruckner & Poulenc motets
	20.5.83 & 1.6.83	All Saints Headington & Unicorn Theatre	Seiber, Rutter, Finzi, Negro Spirituals
	30.6.83	Keble Chapel	Kodaly, Purcell, Britten
	3.7.83	SS Mary & John	Britten, Purcell & Finzi
			CHRISTMAS CONCERT?
Jeremy Cox	1.2.84	St Mary Magdalene	Britten <i>Hymn to St Cecilia</i> , Walton, Elgar & Vaughan Williams

	15.6.84 & 23.6.84	Unicorn Theatre	Vaughan Williams <i>On Wenlock Edge</i> , Grainger <i>Brigg Fair</i> , Delius, Rutter
	11.7.84	?	Celebration of Summer with Vuillaume quartet in aid of Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre
	7.84		Sainsbury's Choir of the Year Competition, Quarter finals
	23.9.84	All Saints, Spelsbury	Tudor Anthems, Folksongs, Vaughan Williams & Rutter
	1.2.85 & 2.3.85	Oxford, & Shaftesbury, Dorset	16th- & 17th-century Spanish Music with Gerald Garcia (vihuela)
Roderick Sharpe	6.7.85	St Paul's Walton St	Weber <i>Abu Hassan</i> with Oxford Sinfonia
Ben Driver			CHRISTMAS CONCERT
	22.3.86	St Barnabas, Jericho	Motets by Bruckner & Duruflé, Vaughan William <i>Five Mystical Songs</i>
			SUMMER CONCERT
	12.86	Ashmolean Museum	Concert in aid of Friends of the Ashmolean
	27.3.87	Ss Mary & John, Cowley Rd	Fauré <i>Requiem</i>
	11.7.87	St Mary's Charlbury	Britten, Vaughan Williams & Fauré
	15.8.87	Merton Chapel	Seiber, Britten & Vaughan Williams
Andrew Carwood	17.10.87	Bartlemas Chapel (for restoration fund)	Bruckner Motets, Tudor Anthems, Rutter
	12.87	Ashmolean Museum	Concert in aid of Friends of the Ashmolean
	13.2.88	University Church	Bononcini <i>Stabat Mater</i> , Handel <i>Coronation Anthems</i>
	2.6.88	Holywell Music Room & Stanton Harcourt Manor	<b>10th anniversary concert of Summer music: Tippett <i>Negro Spirituals</i>, Vaughan Williams <i>Shakespeare Songs</i>, part songs &amp; close harmony</b>
	9.7.88	Cokethorpe School	10th anniversary weekend Rehearsal & barn dance
	10.7.88	Cokethorpe School & Stanton Harcourt Manor	Tippett <i>Negro Spirituals</i> , Vaughan Williams <i>Shakespeare Songs</i> , Close harmony, part songs & madrigals
	25.11.88		CHRISTMAS CONCERT
	11.3.89	Merton Chapel	Bach <i>Magnificat in D</i> , Haydn <i>Nelson Mass</i> with Oxford Sinfonia



(cond. Philip Bond)	17 & 18.6.89	Bourton House	Purcell <i>Dido &amp; Aeneas</i> in aid of the Ashmolean
	20.10.89	Ss Peter & Paul, Hinksey	Gibbons, Purcell, Bruckner, Leighton, Morley, Wilbye, Bennet, Handel
(cond. Julia Craig-McFeely)	18.11.89	Charlbury Church	Tudor anthems, Purcell, Leighton
	2.12.89	University Church	French Revolution concert with the Oxford Sinfonia, Gossec, Berlioz <i>Fantasie on Shakespeare's Tempest</i>
	18.3.90	Merton Chapel	Monteverdi Vespers
	4.4.90	Holywell Music Room	Madrigals & folksongs
	23.6.90	New College Antechapel	Duruflé <i>Requiem &amp; Quatre Motets</i> , Poulenc <i>Litanies</i> with Oxford Sinfonia
Magnus Williamson	8.12.90	Yarnton Parish Church	Schütz <i>The Christmas Story</i> and assorted carols. Cancelled due to heavy snowfall
	23.3.91	St Aloysius	White <i>Lamentations</i> , Bruckner & Tallis Motets
Julia Craig-McFeely	6.7.91	Merton Chapel	Handel, <i>Coronation Anthems &amp; Dixit Dominus</i> with Baroque Band
	21.12.91	Holywell Music Room	Victorian Evening
		Parish Church, Abingdon	Victorian Evening
Andrew Carwood	11.4.92	Merton Chapel	Scarlatti <i>Stabat Mater</i> , Bach <i>Jesu Meine Freude</i> , Purcell Anthems
	20.6.92	University Church	Britten <i>St Nicolas</i> , Poulenc, Duruflé, Messiaen
Julia Craig-McFeely	12.12.92	St Barnabas, Jericho	Italian madrigals & Venetian sacred music
(cond. Edward Higginbottom)	15.3.93	St Michael in the Northgate	Joint concert with KoriOslo of English and Norwegian music in aid of RNLI
	27.3.93	Keble Chapel	Elgar <i>Great is the Lord</i> etc., Tallis <i>Lamentations</i> , Poulenc <i>Litanies</i> , Langlais <i>Messe Solennelle</i>
	7.93	Holywell Music Room	Purcell <i>King Arthur</i>
	19.11.93	Merton Chapel	Handel <i>Coronation Anthems &amp; Dixit Dominus</i> in aid of The Samaritans
	22.1.94	Holywell Music Room	Dramatic Music: Monteverdi, Britten <i>Gloriana songs</i> , Pizzetti, Vaughan Williams, Frank Martin <i>Songs of Ariel</i> , Wood, Rutter with Robert Sherlaw Johnson (piano)

	26 & 27.3.94	Merton Chapel & St Mary's, Buckland	Palestrina <i>Stabat Mater</i> , Lassus <i>Missa Bell'Amfitrit' altera</i> , Vivanco, Byrd, Tallis Sheppard motets
	2.7.94	Exeter Chapel	Leighton <i>Mass for Double Choir</i> , 20th-Century English Anthems
	3.9.94	Stanton-St-John	Festival Concert, Madrigals, Partsongs and Tudor Anthems
	22.10.94	St Cross Church	Brahms, Palestrina, Mendelssohn, Stanford, Rutter etc.
	19.11.94	University Church	Bach <i>Mass in B Minor</i> with Oxford Sinfonia
	17.12.94	St Michael at the Northgate	Christmas Music
Julia Craig-McFeely	1.4.95	Exeter Chapel	Vierne <i>Messe Solennelle</i> , Brahms <i>Messe &amp; Motet</i> , Duruflé <i>quatre motets</i>
Julian McNamara	24.6.95	New College Chapel	Haydn <i>Nelson Mass</i> , Mozart <i>Vespers</i>
	11.11.95	Magdalen Chapel	Dvorak <i>Mass in D</i> , Janacek <i>Otcenas</i> , Bernstein <i>Chichester Psalms</i>
	15 & 16.3.96	St Leonard's Watlington & Merton Chapel	Vaughan Williams <i>Mass in C</i> , Tallis <i>Lamentations</i> , Victoria <i>Tenebrae Responses</i> , Poulenc motets
	22.6.96	Holywell Music Room	Brahms <i>Liebeslieder Waltzes</i> , Elgar <i>from the Bavarian Highlands</i> , Schubert
	23.11.96	University Church	Fauré <i>Requiem</i> , Poulenc <i>Gloria</i> with Oxford Sinfonia
	22.3.97	Merton Chapel	Bach <i>St John Passion</i> in aid of The Samaritans
	5.7.97	New College Chapel	Flights of Fancy: English/French madrigals & light music (Rutter <i>et al</i> )
Julia Craig-McFeely (cond. Andrew Carwood)	6.12.97	University Church	Duruflé <i>Requiem</i> , Vaughan Williams <i>Oxford Elegy &amp; Fantasia Christmas Carols</i>
	28.3.98	Merton Chapel	Lobo <i>Lamentations &amp; Libera Me</i> , English Anthems in aid of Oxfam
	6.6.98	St Mary's, Thame	Music from the reigns of English Queens in aid of Amnesty International
	13.6.98	Exeter Chapel	Duruflé <i>Messe cum Jubilo</i> , Fauré <i>Messe Basse</i> , Poulenc <i>Litanies</i> , François d'Assise, French motets in aid of the National Autistic Society
	9.7.98	Corpus Front Quad	20th anniversary dinner and concert of madrigals and partsongs