

Xmas
1988

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Dear friends & relations:

Every year I am staggered at the number of exciting events and marvellous people that come my way: I've just been through my diaries for the last 14 months and have made 9 pages of one-line headings of some of the most super people and happenings that have illuminated my year: and, of course, there is NO way that I can include even half of them, otherwise this Newsletter would be even more unwieldy than it is, and you'd never get it. (It'll be late enough as it is - I'm typing this on Nov 19 - two months later than last year.)

And so, if you've got 15 minutes to spare, please 'set a spell' and rejoice with me in some of the glories that have rejoiced and moved my heart since I last wrote:

September 1987

Irene Willis, who had been my inspiring Associate Director of music at Trinity Church, Princeton, since I arrived here in 1983, took up her new and glorious position as Director of Music of St. James' Church, Madison Avenue, New York, in succession to the legendary Alec Wyton. Everyone was thrilled by her appointment, for she was, at last, heading a major church music program, having spent her whole life assisting others and, selflessly, making them 'look good'. We missed her sorely, but rejoiced in all that lay before her and the good people of St. James'.

My newest carol, "Alleluia, sing Noel" was published: a set of most beautifully printed copies arrived from Basil Ramsey in England - I was thrilled. I had written it six years previously when Noel Hurvick was

born. Noel is the younger brother of Chris, for whom I had written *Little baby, born at dark midnight* ten years ago (which incorporated his name in the text: "Christ-over us all doth reign"...). So I was pleased that both lads, sons of Phil & Joan, who were members of my Blackburn Bach Choir, had a carol each now!

Four days later I composed, in desperation, a short two-treble anthem for Buffy Caruso Gray, a member of my Princeton Singers. She had asked me, months previously, to write something for her upcoming Children's Choir Festival and nothing had been forthcoming. I dashed this anthem off in about 45 minutes!

The next day I sent another anthem to one of my publishers - an arrangement for soprs and baritones (with different words) of Fauré's "Pie Jesu" - called "Loving Savior, hear my prayer"... and three days later I completed the first draft of yet another arrangement - "O Rest in the Lord" for three-part choir. An interesting month!

Irene Willis called me from New York - she was in tears: the doctors had just told her that she had cancer. We prayed together over the phone - where else could we go?

The next day I told Trinity choirs of Irene's news - there were tears and numb shock - for she had drawn everyone together by her abounding love; why had this happened to her, just as life was opening up for her? There was no answer.

October

My greatest privilege at Trinity is not to direct one of the most ambitious Episcopal choir programs in the USA, but to lead a few choir boys and girls once a week in their confirmation class. These are stimulating times. My first class this year (with four sixth grade lads) was particularly good with lots of questions being sparked off.

To Philadelphia on a lovely sunny day to record an appeal for funds for WHYY-91 FM radio: Philadelphia's classical music station: this was a thrill as well as an honor - for I used to enjoy popping into BBC Radio Blackburn in the 'old days'. It was good to be surrounded, once more, by the highest 'fi', enormous recording spools and the extrovert personalities of radio folk, whose lives are one continual bounce!.. "Hi! I'm John Bertalot, director of music of Trinity Episcopal Church, Princeton and founder/conductor of the Princeton Singers: I moved to the Delaware Valley 5 years ago from England, where I used to enjoy listening to BBC Radio 3... but NOW I listen to 91FM!"

Gave a talk to the Christian Union of Westminster Choir College, here in Princeton. A lovely group of students. I had intended, among other things, to tell them that Jesus heals today, and to illustrate this by telling of a fairly spectacular healing experienced by a Princeton University student which I saw happen. However, when I arrived to give the talk I found this particular student there - and so I invited him to tell of his healing - which he did... it happened some two years earlier and he is as right as rain now. Hallelujah!

The Stock Market dropped 300 points - glum faces all over Princeton!

My trusty camera, which I bought second hand ten years previously, had finally given up, so I sallied forth to New York to buy a new one. After pricing a lot of cameras in a lot of shops off Fifth Avenue, I decided on a Nikon 2000, complete with zoom lenses, flash and carrying bag. Expensive, but glorious! (See the fruits of my extravagance in this Newsletter.)

Another of the high privileges which I enjoy here is to lead a circa monthly Bible study for adults. This month's was held in the

gracious home of George & Kimmy Gallup; 24 adults were there for afternoon tea and talk - we enjoyed a really good time - Wow! One member told us of her recent healing, which encouraged us to pray for Irene Willis.

November

Conducted a "Come and Sing Honegger's King David" on a Sunday afternoon - a somewhat challenging feat to put the whole thing together in two hours - soloists, orchestra, narrator and chorus - but it was fun. More so as we were to sing it later in the season at Trinity (tho' with more than 2 hours' preparation!)

The next day I flew to Houston (to rhyme with 'Euston') Texas, for the ADLMC Conference - the Association of Diocesan Liturgy and Music Commissions - a group of about 150 clergy and musicians from all over the USA. This was a particular delight for I found that I was sharing a room with Alec Wyton (who always seems to feature in these Newsletters) a predecessor of mine at St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, and "Mr. Church Music" over here. The four days were spent listening to a variety of rather good lectures on theology and music, and relishing the amazing skyscrapers of that city, many of which are built of mirror glass - causing incredible reflections all over.



The day after I returned I played for the NJ diocesan service in Trinity Cathedral, Trenton, where we had a scratch choir (volunteers who turned up an hour beforehand to learn an anthem and rehearse all the other music). This, also, was incredible, for we had to rehearse in the cathedral as others were rehearsing processions, moving this and that and generally turning the place into a noise factory. However, the service went well - which was good, for the Presiding Bishop preached!

The following week the Presiding Bishop came to Trinity, Princeton, to celebrate and to enjoy lunch with us. It was good to chat



with him and his wife - and to find we had mutual friends (John McCreary, organist of Honolulu Cathedral, and his wife, Betsy) - for the Presiding Bishop had been bishop of Honolulu before his recent election.

The next day Irene Willis called me from her hospital bed in Philadelphia (she was there for one week in three until the end) to tell me that her NYC Rector had told her that the letter she wrote to the parishioners of St James' Church telling them of her cancer

but also of her living faith in God, had done more for the unity of the church than anything he had done! She even received some flowers from Archbishop Tutu!

December

Started a post-confirmation group with some of last year's lads: one posed the question: "Why aren't Christmasses as happy now as they were when I was 5?" i.e. How can I find joy? The eventual answer we came up with was, "By giving joy to others!" "Oh, yes!" said one of the lads, "that happened to me last Christmas when I gave special presents to my parents; that made me VERY happy!"

Three days later I had a letter from the Choristers' Guild saying that they had accepted my setting of "God is our hope" for publishing (the one I wrote in 45 minutes!)

That weekend my Princeton Singers gave a Christmas concert in St. Mark's Church, Philadelphia. We expected an audience of 50, but discovered that 300 had turned up - AND they gave us a standing ovation - nice!

Sunday 20th was to be a very special day for me, for, that evening, a select group of the MBG choir was to sing a service of Nine Lessons and Carols in Princeton University Chapel - a marvellous building, comparable in size and acoustics to King's, Cambridge; this was to be 'my' King's. That morning, I began to feel rather peculiar and went home to bed - thinking I'd be OK by the evening; I wasn't - so crisis arrangements had to be made - Robert Palmer, Trinity's assistant choirmaster, conducted, and Anne Smith, the assistant organist, played. I heard, afterwards that the whole service went very well indeed (we'd rehearsed it SO carefully) - the Chapel was packed, the Bishop was there, and the choir sang the first performance of my new carol "Alleluia, Sing Noel" - I heard the recording - it was great!

(A few weeks later I received a letter from

Alan Thurlow, organist of Chichester Cathedral, who told me that they sang "Noel" for the main service at the Cathedral on Christmas day and that the sound of the last chord ringing round the cathedral was super. Wow, again! He plans to record it!

I managed to return to Trinity for the big Christmas Eve services, but succumbed again on Christmas Day - staying in bed for 10 days with bronchitis and taking off 6 lbs! Certain wonderful chairparents rallied round, brought me food, took me to the doctor and generally made me feel REALLY good - the most wonderful people - thank you.

January 1st 1988

I was invited to a quiet party at the home of John Sully and Kathy Rohrer (John and Kathy were so gracious as to meet me at Kennedy Airport when I came to Princeton five years previously - they are founder-members of the Princetong Singers and the most wonderful friends.) When I arrived at their home I found that they had also invited some of the strongest pillars of Trinity to help celebrate my first 5 years there. A wonderful surprise and a glorious evening. The only drawback was that I hadn't brought my new camera to record the evening for the archives (and for this Newsletter!)

Tuesday, 12th: the first of a series of lectures at Westminster Choir College - (arranged by Irene Willis) for their graduate students on "How to teach children to sing and to sight sing" (This was one of Irene's good days.) Frauke Haassenmann managed the 'how to sing' bit, and I did the sight singing. We were introduced by the new head of the church music program at WCC, Ronald Annatt (who is also currently the President of the American Guild of Organists - a Person of Consequence.) We discovered that three of us had succeeded Alec Wyton in

various posts: Irene at St. James, NYC, Ronald at St. Louis Cathedral and I at Northampton. I felt a photograph was in order.



Ten days later I flew to Springfield, Vermont to lead a workshop on 'how to teach choirkids to sight sing easily.' This was a total joy for I stayed in the farmhouse home of Mark & Nancy Hull where they and their 3 children made me feel so at home with exquisite cuisine and a nice warm bed. The workshop went very well indeed - large gathering of Vermont choirmasters, and some clergy, who entered into the spirit of the day with great enthusiasm. This, coupled with the beautiful VT countryside (rather like Devon) with little hills everywhere, and villages and streams nestling between ... this made my 24 hours there very special.

On my return home I found a packet from John Scott - choirmaster of St. Paul's London. He had sent me a cassette of his choir singing Victorian Evening Canticles - TOTALLY GLORIOUS! And with this gift came a letter in which he told me that he had just revised the St. Paul's chant book and included one of mine - sung to psalm 141. I was thrilled and felt that I had finally made it!

February

The enthusiasm shown by Trinity folk is sometimes almost more than I can stand. At

the February meeting of the Choirs' Steering Committee (a flexible body of singers and parents) no fewer than 17 interested members were present. No wonder Things Get Done around here!

Received a letter from Sir David Willcocks (in response to one I had sent two weeks previously in which I invited him to conduct a private rehearsal of the Princeton Singers immediately before their August tour of English Cathedrals) - he said a most gracious "yes!"

For some time it had been growing on me that I should make a new Will, and so on 12th I typed out the first draft: this was a spiritual experience, for not only was I telling my executors what to do with my body when I had finished with it, but also, in making bequests, I realized that the things I owned were not wholly mine - they were just passing through my hands for a few years, and would go to my nearest and dearest for them to love for a few years until their own time came to pass them on to yet another generation. Also it was fun to do, for there was a large element of "Christmassy giving of presents" ... "Now, I wonder who would like THAT?... of course...!"

Incidentally I discovered that I had given a tenth of my possessions to charities. The next day, in my Bible reading I read "After you enter the land I am giving you... present to the LORD... a tenth..." (Numbers ch.15) WOWEE!

Saw "Hope and Glory" - a film about a 10-year old boy in England during the 2nd world war. I could hardly restrain my excitement - for that kid was ME. Almost everything that happened to him happened to me. The air raid shelter at school was exactly the same as the one I had to go down - and when I saw him collecting shrapnel after a raid and shaving off the buttons that soldiers had given him, I

suddenly realized that I STILL HAD my shrapnel and buttons in my desk at home!

Popped up to Buffalo, NY, to lead another 2-day workshop on teaching kids to sight-sing plus "Communicating the Gospel to children" - something I feel fairly strongly about. This was another glorious time - being hosted by Marilyn Cornelius and enjoying a good time



with Bruce Neswick, organist of Buffalo Cathedral - a very live wire in things musical in the USA.

The next day I took Trinity's MBG choir to sing morning service at St. James, Madison Avenue, NYC. It was wonderful to work again with Irene Willis - who bubbled over with joy at every turn - no-one would realize that anything was amiss with her so strong was her will and joyous her spirit. Our combined choirs brought down the roof several times during that service - not least during Parry's "I was glad" which I conducted whilst Irene played, from one console, both the East AND West organs at full and merry blast!

March

Call from the New Jersey June Opera: they are presenting Britten's "Midsummer Night's Dream" in the spring and would like ten

supa boys to sing the boys' parts therein. Could Trinity oblige? Most certainly!

Trinity's Annual Rummage Sale has to be experienced to be believed. It takes a team of dedicated ladies and men a whole year to prepare, and it gives a focus of increasingly intense activity to the whole parish as the Great Day draws nearer. The choirs participate fully in all this, providing food and drink to the customers who begin gathering by 5.0 am. Some supa bargains can be found therein: I bought 27 books for \$6.00 - including a first edition (in pristine condition) of Boswells' "London Journal". The sale raised \$28,000.00. Not bad!

Proofread "O Rest in the Lord" (which was later to sell over 12,000 copies in only four months!) and "A Prayer for Church Musicians" which I had composed to mark Irene Willis's years of inspired service to Trinity's music - she shared my joy that 'her' anthem was to be published.

April

The next day **Bob Walker** arrived to stay for a few days. Bob had been a pupil of mine at Northampton and has since blossomed in the publishing world - his many compositions are published exclusively by Novellos, and he brought me a recording of the first performance of his first symphony, given under Andre Previn, recently, in Exeter Cathedral.

It was fascinating to see him respond to his own music. "That's a perfect cadence that goes wrong on purpose!" He told me, MOST generously, that he tells his students at the London College of Music that at one of the lessons I gave him (when I explained to him the significance of the leading note) "Suddenly I understood what music was!" WOW!

The Princeton Singers gave yet another concert in Philadelphia where we were given a standing ovation: encouraging, as much of the music we sang there would be included in our forthcoming England tour.

Began arranging Bach's "Flocks in Pastures Green" for S.A.B. choir and easy organ, and a couple of days later sent it to Flammer.

May

Telephone call from **Jean Anne Shafferman** at Flammer to say that on her desk at that moment was a letter to me asking me to arrange "Flocks" for S.A.B. and easy organ - but she hadn't mailed it!

Final class at WCC for the "How to teach kids..." (Irene was in hospital again). We had a marvellous time with the grad students looking on as Frauke Haasemann and I did our bit in leading the children who had been taught by the students for the last ten weeks. I had written a 4-part canon for the kids, incorporating clapping as well as singing - and THEY READ IT straight off! The students and I were thrilled by this, for It Really Works!

June

The next day my 'lodger', **Bill Gorton**, who is very handy around the house, dug a drainage trench for me in my back yard (= American for 'garden'). I'd had problems whenever it rained heavily - the water had nearly come into the house - but, a couple of days later it rained very heavily, and the drain worked!

The day following we had the final supper of the season for the choir of Men, Boys & Girls. This was a most glorious occasion: a number of dedicated parents had decorated the church hall - the tables had candles and flowers on and 150 people came - bringing food, drink and much great fellowship. I made my customary brief speech (no more than half an hour) thanking everyone for all they had done to help forward the choir program that year - many wonderful achievements and many people to mention. Then I sat down to

allow the chairman of the choir steering committee, **Pegi Stengel**, to say her say. She said, "John, stand up!" "Oh, oh" thought I, "What's coming now?" She continued, "You've often told us that the present you most valued when you left Blackburn was a certificate signed by the choristers of Blackburn Cathedral, and so we've decided to go one better." Whereupon the head girl, **Kim McCruden**, came on carrying an ENORMOUS package, 3ft by 2ft - which I unwrapped, to reveal a glorious collage of photographs of all the choir members, autographed around the border and most beautifully framed. I was speechless! Pegi then said, "Don't sit down; we've heard that when you go home in the evening you like to put your feet up - so we've got you another present." The head boy, **William Georgantas**, came on with a square box, beautifully wrapped. "Ah," thought I, it's a footstool - how nice!" But when I unwrapped it I discovered, to my greatest joy, that it was a VCR - something I've long wanted. Not only was I speechless, but also not a little overcome! Pegi then said, "Don't go. We've heard that your television reception isn't much good, so we've decided to fix that, too!" and three of the teens came on with the most enormous TV set. I just didn't know where to put myself! You will realize, gentle reader, just what a wonderful place Princeton is to be - what a privilege it is to work with such talented, loving and generous people - Hallelujah!

The next day (you will realize that that was quite a week!) **Bryan Lamb** arrived to stay for the weekend. Bryan is a friend of long standing - former senior old chorister of Blackburn Cathedral and now in military intelligence. He had come over to talk with his opposite numbers in Washington, and it gave me great delight to introduce him to many of my Princeton friends, to have him sing with the choir on Sunday, AND to show him my "Princeton Choristers' Picture" - he's



holding the Blackburn certificate! Two precious documents and one very special friend.

That same day cousin **Sheila** called from England to say that her husband, **Dick**, had had a heart attack and was in hospital. Fortunately we discovered later that it was not too serious, but it did mean that **Dick** has to take it easy for a few months. I looked forward to staying with them for a while in August.

The next day (and this is the end of the non-stop events) my arrangement of "O Rest in the Lord" was published.

Six days later I heard from another publisher that they had accepted my setting of "God of Grace". Great! And the same day (here we go again!) **Murray and Hazel Somerville** arrived with their Boychoir from Florida (touring the East Coast). Again, very dear friends with whom I have stayed a number of times. It was good to welcome them to my home, and to show them my new TV & VCR (see over).

It occurred to me that, having a VCR and supa TV, how good it would be to do more than just take photographs of the Princeton



Hazel & Murray Somerville: TV & VCR

Singers' upcoming tour of England - why not record it visually - so I sallied forth to an ENORMOUS electronics' shop some 20 miles away (on the advice of Pegi Stengel) and bought myself the most supa video camera which can do everything, except fry eggs. I felt well set and tried it out the next day at church when the Rector, Johnny Crocker, announced to the parish his retirement in 12 months' time. That was an historic, as well as very sad, time.

That same day (sic) I went to a performance of Britten's "Midsummer Night's Dream" in which ten of our best boys were singing. It was SUPERB! I was thrilled from beginning to end and enormously proud of our lads who excelled at every turn in the most imaginative production. The NEW YORK TIMES wrote, "I have never seen the [boys parts] more winningly played or heard their music better sung". Gosh!

The next day (sic sic) I went for a four-day conference of the Association of Anglican Musicians [AAM] at Vale - (i.e. the American Cathedral Organists' Association). Here we were regaled by a phantastique organ recital by Thomas Trotter, former organ scholar of King's, Cambridge, which brought down the house - I've never seen or heard playing like it. We heard an inspiring address given

by Geoffrey Rawthorne, Suffragen Bishop of Connecticut - he, also, was a Cambridge man. And the third supa thing that week was a concert by my Princeton Singers. Modesty almost forbids me to tell of the amazing response of the AAM members who 'came at us' in an incredible way during that never-to-be forgotten hour. Afterwards a number of them said that we were one of the very finest choirs in the USA, and the incoming President of AAM, Ben Hutto, said, "Singing doesn't come any better than that!" We were euphoric for a LONG time afterwards!

The following week I flew 1,000 miles south to Houston (again) for another conference - the American Guild of Organists' biennial gathering. 1,500 organists were there - we were attracted by a supa spread of talent - including Barry Rose, who gave a couple of inspiring talks on choirtraining (he'd just been appointed organist of St. Alban's Abbey whilst retaining his directorship of religious music at the BBC.)

King's choir, Cambridge was there under the delicate leadership of Stephen Cleobury. They were a dream. We had one special outing - to a Real Rodeo. As I was standing in line ("queueing") to get on one of the coaches I heard a familiar voice behind me saying, "John!" It was Stephen, all by himself - so I had the great delight of his company at that extraordinary event (we discovered that horses don't buck at these affairs because they're wild, but because they're darned uncomfy - they have a belt drawn tightly round a very delicate part of their anatomy and are trying to get rid of it. You'd do the same!) However the evening began with a great feast of Southern food served on long tables - into which we all tucked greedily. A couple of organists sitting opposite us were wearing stetsons. I asked if we could borrow them for a moment. Yes! →



The following week I flew to North Carolina to direct a week's RSCM course for choir-girls. That was a most beautiful experience, for the girls sang and behaved like angels, the food was supa, the accommodation (in log cabins in woodland round an enormous lake) was most comfortable, and the staff, led by Brenda Pruitt, was efficiency itself. Euphoria again ruled. The week was made even happier by having three Trinity girls there, including Pegi Stengel's daughter, Brooke, and also Nancy Hull, from Vermont, (see January).

I spent a most delightful weekend in Pennsylvania at the summer retreat house of the Officers' Christian Fellowship, led by General Clay Buckingham, where two dear English friends, Mike & Pat Warwick, were staying. (Mike is assistant secretary of the Officers' Christian Union - the English equivalent). Here I experienced the most beautiful Christian fellowship with military families who were vacationing there, 'midst rolling hills, and pretty intense dedication from teenagers (who were doing the cleaning work) upwards. At breakfast one morning I asked a Colonel who was sitting opposite me when the Christian faith become a reality for him. He started to tell me, and after about a minute he stopped talking and I

could see that he was trying not to burst into tears, so meaningful was his Christian experience! I heard another Colonel tell of his experiences: at one time he was on a six-week tour of duty in the Arctic, and was unable to wash. He said that the bath he had at the end of that period was unbelievable, "but that was nothing to the experience I had when I met the living Christ who washed me through and through. He has completely transformed my marriage and I cannot even remember what was in the porno magazines which I used to look at in the Mess!" That is some testimony! I also met another Englishman - Wing Commander Dan Gleed, who kindly invited me to visit him in August. I looked forward to that.



Gen. Buckingham, Pat & Mike W., Dan Gleed, JB

Two days after I returned from the OCF weekend, Sir David Willcocks, former conductor of King's College choir, Cambridge, came to lead my Princeton Singers for a glorious two-hour private rehearsal which thrilled us all, so gracious and inspiring was he. At one point he told the choir, "Conducting you is like driving a Rolls Royce - you respond instantly to my every wish!"



At the very end of the month my "Prayer for Church Musicians", dedicated to Irene Willis, was published. I sent her the first copy - she was in hospital in much pain.

August

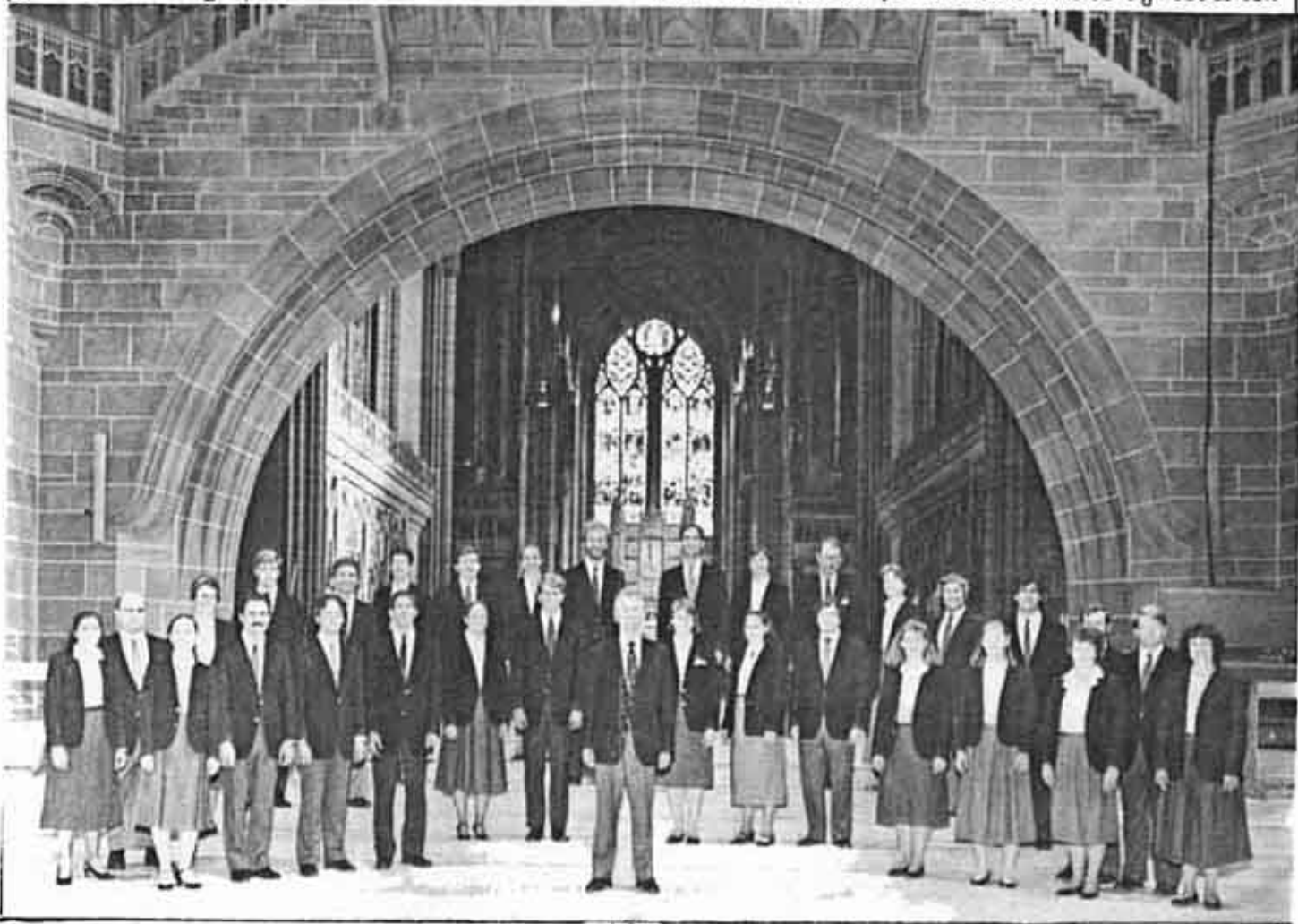
What can I say about the Princeton Singers' tour of Cathedrals and parish churches? I could double the length of this Newsletter if I told even half of the glories and love that were showered upon us from every corner:

At Blackburn Cathedral we ran out of programs and extra chairs had to be brought in, and the enthusiasm of so many of my dear friends from my Blackburn years engulfed us. And we sang Christopher's and Noel's carols, and both lads were there to take bows after their carols. Several of the Singers asked for their autographs!

Derek & Marilyn Crompton had arranged hospitality for all the Singers in the homes of Blackburn mutual friends. (Derek was one of my first new choirboys when I first became organist of Blackburn Cathedral way back in 1964!) Many warm trans-Atlantic friendships sprang up during those four happy days.

At Liverpool Cathedral [below], Ian Tracey was the perfect host and superb accompanist. He told us that our singing was MUCH more exciting than a Rolls Royce - "more like a Porsche!" - and that we were America's answer to the Tallis Scholars and the '18'. WOW!

At Chichester Cathedral, where we sang daily services, we revelled in the glories of the Anglican heritage and visited some of the supa places around - notably the Weald and Downland Museum (50 acres or more of restored



ancient houses in their original condition; I was amazed how primitively my ancestors had lived - no glass in the windows and a hole in the roof to let the smoke out from the fire which was placed in the middle of the floor. I certainly had a new perspective on auld thatched cottages!) It was also the greatest possible delight to meet **Michael & Dorothy Darke** again - Michael being Harold ("In the bleak midwinter") Darke's son - "HED" having taught me the organ at the RCM many years ago. It was a particular joy to spend an evening in their idyllic cottage which really did 'nestle' in the depths of the Sussex countryside. There I met their nephew, **Andrew Darke**, who used to sing in my Blackburn Bach Choir - he happened to be 'passing through' that evening.

We gave a concert in St. Mary's Church, Shoreham (AD 1103) where I began my musical career as a choirboy at the age of 8. This came about because cousin **Sheila** was living with us at that time (with her own family - it was wartime and her father was in the army).

She it was who first took me to St. Mary's Church - from which everything else followed - choirboy, young organist, college, university and exciting career in church music which has taken me around the world. I was thrilled beyond measure that Sheila, with husband, **Dick** (who, happily, was recovering from his heart attack - see 'June') were there where it all began for me 49 years before.

What brought my whole life together (which had previously been divided by the Atlantic) was being with cousin Sheila as she talked with **John Sully & Kathy Rohrer**, (see Jan), two of my dearest American friends and co-founders of the Singers. Everything clicked for me at that moment and since then my English and American lives have become a unity.

Mervyn & Gladys Dow, friends of MANY years



John Sully, Kathy Rohrer, JB & cousin Sheila

standing, arranged our hospitality; one of the most glorious moments of the tour was a happy half hour on the church tower the following morning from where we enjoyed superb views of the sea and the South Downs which were nothing less than idyllic. Those brief 24 hours in Shoreham were made complete for me by the vote of thanks after the concert which was given by the vicar of Shoreham Beach Church, **Colin Blagg**, for I had been organist of that tiny church over 40 years ago whilst still a schoolboy. Nostalgia came in bucketsful!

Going even further back (if that were possible!) - we gave a concert in Bearsted Parish Church, near Canterbury, for I was born in Bearsted (when the world was much younger) - a picture-book English village with a village green where cricket had been invented, surrounded by historic houses going back to the 13th century, and a beautiful old parish church, which has a supa choir directed by **Trevor Webb**. Trevor and **Marion** had arranged our hospitality in choir members' homes, and that was a beautiful time.

But the most amazing hour came when I was taking a photograph of the house where I was born. When I lowered my camera I discovered

a man leaning on the gate looking at me; he said "Can I help you?" (which means "What are you doing? - go away!") I said, "Oh, I was born in this house." He hesitated for a moment and then said, "Oh, come in!" So in I went, accompanied by Trevor and Marion (who had driven me there) and we enjoyed a most happy tea on the patio at the back of the house with its present owners, **Reg & Ann Guinett**. And if that weren't enough, Reg telephoned a neighbour, **Nora Williams**, who had lived there all her life and said, "Nora, do you remember a family called Bertalot?... well come over and have some tea!" Nora knew my newly-married parents when they first moved into this, their first home, 59 years ago. What an hour that was!

Our tour ended with a privileged and glorious weekend singing services in St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, where we were graciously received by the organist, **Christopher Robinson**, whom I've known for 35 years, and by the Succentor, **Stephen Jones**, who sang the priest's music most beautifully. Old friends from so many places came to see me that unforgettable weekend, and the tour ended with a supa dinner for Singers, guests and relations, including cousins **Joan & Llewellyn** from London, when the Singers presented to me, among other presents, with two toy cars - a ROLLS ROYCE and a PORSCHE!



Christopher Robinson, cousin Joan & Rolls, JB, ex-Singers' President Astrid Caruso & Porsche, President Eric Swartzentruber.

After the tour I stayed for a night with **Wing Cdr. Dan & Vicki Glead** (see July) in their home at RAF Brize Norton. They gave me a most gracious dinner and invited, as surprise guests, **Sqn. Ldr. Mike & Pat Urwood** (see July again). That was a supa reunion of Christian friends. The next morning Dan drove me to his command on the Station (after looking under his car for IRA bombs - what an age we live in!) Dan gave me a guided tour of his HQ - the Air Traffic Control Centre - a long dark room filled with TV monitors showing all aircraft in flight over England - totally fascinating! And, if that weren't enough, he drove me along the runway directly behind an aircraft which had just landed. Oh, that I had had the freedom to photograph THAT!

...But on the last day of my vacation, when staying with cousins **Dick & Sheila**, I received a telephone call from Princeton: Irene Willis had just died. The world stood still. I returned to Princeton to lead the music for a glorious service, in Trinity, of thanksgiving for a life of a Christian whose energy, gifts and overflowing love had transformed everyone she touched a little more into the likeness of their Saviour. 80 singers, who came from as far away as Washington DC, formed the superb choir. **Ronald Annett** had composed an anthem for the service and he accompanied the choir as they sang the anthem which I had composed for Irene 18 months earlier:

O GOD, WHOM SAINTS AND ANGELS DELIGHT TO WORSHIP IN HEAVEN; BE EVER PRESENT WITH YOUR SERVANTS WHO SEEK THROUGH ART AND MUSIC TO PERFECT THE PRAISES OFFERED BY YOUR PEOPLE ON EARTH; AND GRANT TO THEM EVEN NOW GLIMPSES OF YOUR BEAUTY, AND MAKE THEM WORTHY AT LENGTH TO BEHOLD IT UNVEILED FOR EVERMORE; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

That beauty Irene beholds in fullest measure.

John Bertalot

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