

# JOHN BERTALOT'S NEW YEAR'S NEWSLETTER '92

Happy New Year!

This annual NEWSLETTER, sent to 1,000 friends and relations all over the world, gets increasingly difficult to write - not because there is a dearth of supra events to share but, on the contrary, because there are so many that I always have to leave out more than I want to put in - which can often lead to misunderstandings from friends who have blessed me in so many ways and expect, rightly, that their love should have been recorded. After last year's multi-coloured production (we're back to B & W this year) I wrote three letters of apology to particularly close friends who were, seemingly, ignored. This pain increases yearly, and I tremble to imagine whom (*whom?*) I shall hurt this year, for I've interacted (as the Americans would say) with more friends than ever before, and I can only mention in these 12 pages a tiny fraction - taken almost at random. Here goes:

## SEPTEMBER 1990

7 Fri. Spent 5 1/2 hours at a committee meeting at Trinity Church, Princeton, helping to put the final touches to the planning of this year's national conference of the Association of Diocesan Liturgy and Music Commissions (how more gloriously can a Body be named?) to be held 20 miles from here in November. Six of us had been involved in this ADLMC process ("prarcess") for over a year and, happily, the time of our deliverance was nigh! I celebrated later in the day by weeding out 38 ties from my geographically arranged collection - leaving me with only 296! Felt denuded.

11 Tu. I'd been thinking for some time, due to increasing pressure from Princeton friends, of getting a computer-wurrd prarcessuh for the music office at Trinity. Being but a kid in such matters I sought advice from Those Who Know and I was quickly flooded with Good and Helpful Advice from many Princeton friends. (Here's the first example of missing out names!) **Bob Berglund**, major tenor in my Princeton Singers, who runs, with his wife, **Barbara**, an advertising agency near here, certainly Knows (they live by these machines) and estimated that it would cost \$9,000 for appropriate plastique 'n glass covered equipment for office and home. Ho hum, thought I.

17 Mon Am involved in planning another national conference - for the Association of Anglican Musicians - 'AAM' - (which started life 27 years ago as the American Cathedral Organists' Assoc - but now has widened its membership to include musicians and clergy from many other leading Episcopal churches - it now numbers over 600!) Our 1993 conference will be held in Princeton - we felt it appropriate to invite my Princeton Singers to entertain the troops during the course of our deliberations. We also thought of the Abp Canterbury. What a good ideal!

19 Wed Trinity had been seeking a new Rector for two years following the retirement of **Johnny Crocker** - Vestry search parties had travelled all over the country,

from California to the deep South, investigating likely prospects - listening to sermons and reading resumes. The Vestry spent over 3 hours discussing likely prospects this evening and we felt that the Time was Drawing Nigh when the long interegnum would be rectorfied.

20 Th Our two new young assistant organists, **Greg Vick** and **Terry Simpkins**, both students at Princeton's Westminster Choir College, had begun the season brilliantly; we felt we were in for a good year. Terry said, after attending a full practice of our ebullient and highly gifted choir of men, boys and senior girls, "Being here is like coming into a cage of lions!" My sentiments exactly - if you're not on top, you're underneath!

26 Wed Writing and arranging music is one of my increasing joys: My emotional arrangement of "**Abide with me**" was published today (by Augsburg). The next day the proof of my arrangement of "**I know that my Redeemer liveth**" arrived from Flammer - I tried to do what Handel would have done if he'd thought of it first! - and 24 hours later, also from Augsburg, came the proof of "**Amazing Grace**". Happily all are selling very nicely, thank you.

## OCTOBER

3 Wed My greatest joy here is to lead the choirboys' confirmation class. This year I had a particularly intelligent and questing group. One of the boys asked me, in the middle of the first class, "Why do you believe in God?" What a good question! (Why, dear reader, do you believe in God?)

8 Mon To New York City with my adopted "American Mom", **Jean Matthews** (she was married the year I was born) for a concert, in Lincoln Center, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The Battle took place on my 9th birthday - I remember it well, for all my friends had to go home several times during birthday tea because of incessant air raids. The concert in NYC was a spectacular - we had the BBC Concert Orchestra, the BBC Singers and the band of the RAF! I was considerably moved when, during the playing of the two national anthems at the beginning of the concert, the whole audience, made up mostly of Americans, sang with considerable fervor (fervour), "God save our Queen"! This was only topped at the end of the evening when we all stood and bellowed, with Anglo-pate-reardic intensity, "Land of hope and glory." There wasn't a dry eye in the place!

11 Th How greatly can small moments affect one's life! Today, after coming out of my office on the 2nd floor of the separate music building at Trinity (or 1st floor, in English architectural numerology), I found myself floating, headfirst, down the flight of wooden stairs. I can remember thinking, during the seeming 2 miles' journey, that this was a very foolish thing to be doing on a busy Thursday morning, and was grateful when the process was brought to an end with a dull thud. After a couple of moments' disorientation I discovered a fair amount of blood being splashed around and felt that Help might be Needed - which necessitated climbing the stairs again to call the general office on my

office phone. Succour came and I was quickly whisked off to the Princeton Medical Center where my nose was X-rayed and sewn up, very neatly. Medical opinion was that I might have broken it, but they weren't sure. (I thought drs knew everything!)

And so, with this encouraging news, the following day, I flew to Lexington, Kentucky, to lead a two-day workshop at the cathedral for choirmasters, heavily disguised by a pair of dark glasses, as my face resembled a Turner sunset. As ever, when indulging in such jaunts, I received marvellous hospitality - my host, **Jeff Smith** - the cathedral organist, gave up his bed for me and slept on the couch. It was a happy visit - my talks (demonstrating how easy it is to teach kids to sight-read music, which few of them do in this country, and to sing high notes, from top C and above, equally easily, which even fewer kids do), were videotaped for those who couldn't be there - but, alas, I have no record of this technicolor period of my life as the film in my camera was improperly loaded. I don't believe that an event has really taken place unless I can record it on film!

17 Wed Princeton is a marvellous place full of amazing people. Today, at the boys' confirmation class, we were talking about Mother Theresa: "Oh yes," said the boy who'd asked me The Question two weeks previously, "my cousin spent several months in India working with her!"

18 Th Eventful day: A Princeton surgeon, Dr. Farmer, inspected my nose and said, "Yes, it's broken and twisted. I'll have to straighten it out for you. It'll only take 24 hours" ...OK. The proof of my arrangement of "**Were you there**" arrived from Flammer, two versions (SATB and S with accompaniment) of my new carol "**See the baby Jesus**" arrived from publisher **Ken Robertson** in England, and I received a most enthusiastic letter from **Don Hinshaw** about my book "**It's so easy to teach children to sight-sing, if you have five wheels**" (which, I now gather, should be published in 1992). We also had 4 1/2 hours of choir practice with the caged lions, as usual!

30 Tues **Bruce Webber**, our interim rector, co-chair of the ADLMC 91 committee and friend, told me that the Venerable **Leslie Smith**, archdeacon on Newark, NJ, had been appointed (or 'hired' in Americanese) as our new Rector. I was delighted, and dropped him a note to say so. So much for searching in California when, all the time, Our Man was only 30 miles up the road!

## **NOVEMBER**

5 Mon The ADLMC Conference opened in New Brunswick, NJ, with much joy and efficiency. The opening service (at which my senior boys and girls sang - superbly) was notable for a riveting sermon by a distinguished theologian who used un-Episcopal language to declare "we need to say a personal yes to Jesus rather than 'it depends upon what you mean by...' (which is adult safety/control manipulation mechanism)." You could hear a pin drop.

A week later my Singers gave a concert in a most beautiful church (pristine white woodwork, chandeliers and deep pile carpet on the floor). The place was packed and, as ever, I introduced the items to the audience. One of them told me afterwards, "You remind me of Benny Hill". So much for erudite musicianship!

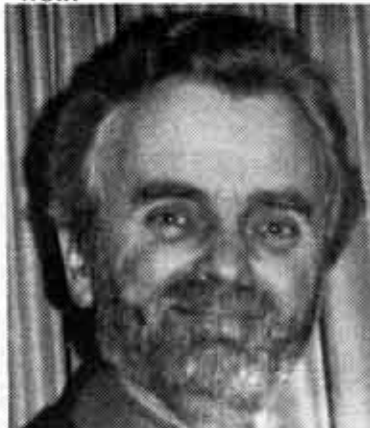
Two days later our new Rector came to sit in on our services. At the Peace I went up to greet him. "Hello, John," he said instantly, "thanks for your letter." That's a pastoral man!

22 Th On the 4th Thursday in November the great American holiday of Thanksgiving is celebrated. A number of my good friends here always make sure that I am included in their family feast - what a joy it is to eat turkey and cranberry sauce in such convivial company, finishing with a generous portion of pumpkin pie. American conversation centered, on this Thanksgiving Day, on **Margaret Thatcher's** resignation. (Thanksgiving on both sides of the Atlantic?)

The following day I popped into hospital for the prescribed 24 hours to have my nose fixed. Really, hospitals are so user-friendly these days! At every stage I was told, "Now this will happen to you," and it did; even to the anaesthetist telling me that I would swallow some blood during the op and therefore not to mind if my stomach wanted to get rid of it the next morning! My tummy did and I didn't! Choirparents **Costa** and **May Papastephanou** were kindness incarnate - for they whisked me to and from hospital with efficiency and gentleness. They also inspired me to a life-changing regimen: May let slip that she cycled 20 miles every morning at 5.30. "Where do you ride?" I asked. "On my exercise bicycle," she answered. Oh, thought I, what a Good Idea. Costa let slip that he made a point of getting to the office every morning a couple of hours before anyone else so that he could deal with his paper-work. Oh, thought I again, what a Good Idea!

During the next few days a steady stream of choir parents came knocking at my door bearing get-well cards and food, including an enormous turkey, which fed me for a month. Really, Princeton friends are truly marvellous. The following week May took me to see Dr. Farmer again who was pleased with his handiwork. "Don't shave for at least a week," he advised. "In fact, why don't you grow a beard - it's so much easier than shaving!" So I did. A couple of days later I went to the office 90 minutes before opening time and found that desk-work is controllable! I also bought an exercise bike which now graces my sitting room. So much for chance remarks!

Re-read Agnes Sanford's "The Lost Shepherd". In it she declares, "Why don't you pretend that God's promises are true, and act on them?... Study the four Gospels, see what Jesus Christ really said to do - and do it!" Wow!



## **DECEMBER**

7 Fri Popped in to Dr. Farmer's office for final check-up; his nurse looked at my flourishing beard and said, "It took my husband two months to do what you did in 2 weeks!" I believe the American word is 'virri'. I was later to receive a letter from **David Lowry**, musician extraordinaire, addressed to 'John Beardalot'.

A week later I began to open the flood of Christmas cards that had been arriving in my mail box for several weeks past. Thank you dear friends for sending me your greetings and, often, wonderful letters to go with them. Some were long - some short, but containing a jewel of news: "I've just got a first at Oxford". (I fully expected it). "Andrew is now the father of a 8lb 5oz baby girl." I still think of Andrew as a diminutive 10 year-old choirboy at Blackburn Cathedral! Some were glorious: "I value the inspiration you gave me in the cathedral choir - I can feel music, not just understand it - music talks to my soul directly, and it was you who taught me this...", and some tragic: "I'm fighting another bout of cancer."

TV can be an educational boon. During a nature program on brontosauri the narrator said, "...the secret of survival through the millenia of climactic changes is adaptation. Those species which could adapt to the new environment survived - those which could not did not." What a Lesson in Life!

Princeton really is a remarkable place. News broke today that four of my senior choirgirls won places to prestigious American Universities: Yale, Harvard, Princeton and M.I.T. (Explaining what MIT is to those in England who don't know would take longer than writing out its name in full!) A teen alto was later to be accepted both at Columbia and Yale - he chose the latter. But because Pr. is such a laid back place the form, when greeted by such news, is to pretend that nothing untoward has occurred. I can't do that and tend to bounce up and down when such glad tidings come my way.

22 Sat Read, in William Barclay's inspiring commentary on the N.T., "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love". Wow!

24 Mon Listened to King's carol service broadcast live in the home of close friends. Superb singing and lessons that had, quite clearly, been meticulously rehearsed. An inspiring 90 minutes which prepared us for our own packed midnight services. Enjoyed Christmas dinner with yet more friends, including Trinity's supa Assoc. Chm, **Robert Palmer** - which was rounded off in festive fashion by a generous helping of Harrods' Christmas pudding. Things are done in style here!

26 Wed Started arranging "**Softly and tenderly**" (a 19thC evangelical hymn) at the suggestion of another friend. Finished it the next day and sent it off to a publisher.

30 Sun Doctor-cousin **Andy Humphrey** called from New Zealand - he'd just become a father again (for the umpteenth time) - the cause of joy this time was **Leah**. I was the first to be told, for all English cousins were a-bed. Felt kinda glowy. Welcome, Leah! **Robert Schuller**, charismatic minister of the Crystal Cathedral in Los Angeles, said, on his weekly TV broadcast, "Your accumulated memories define who you are." On the other hand, one of our choir ladies at Trinity, **Sylvia Elvin**, said to me later that day, "The older you get the more like yourself you become!" Ho hum!

#### **JANUARY 1991**

Had a letter from the parent of one of my choirgirls: "My daughter is giving up ice-hockey so that she can come to choir, which is the highlight of her week!"

That's dedication for you. Received a letter from **Alan Thurlow**, organist of Chichester Cathedral, who said that his choir had sung my arrangement of "**Go, tell it on the mountain**" at their Christmas midnight service - so did we! He wants more arrangements like that. Met a friend in a Princeton supermarket who said that she had read my Christmas Newsletter the previous day in the bath - it had taken 45 minutes. She added, "I felt refreshed afterwards." Whether it was from the Newsletter or the bath she forebore to clarify.

6 Sun Our new Rector gave his first sermon: "*The Good News of Epiphany is that there is absolutely nothing that you have ever done, no darkness that you have ever entered into, that can separate you from the Light of Christ!*" Wow and Hallelujah!

8 Tues At Trinity staff meeting I was asked to set to music, for choir and congregation, the **Passion according to St. Mark**, to be sung on Palm Sunday. This follows last year's successful experiment when I set **St. Matthew's Passion** (so now there are two!) Both use the text of the New RSV Bible. I sensed that the next few weeks would be filled with a fair amount of creative activity!

**Andrew Shenton**, organist of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton (where I began my career 33 years ago) came to stay for a few nights. He's seeking a place at Yale to get a doctorate. He told me that he was trying to trace all the compositions that St. Matthew's had commissioned over the years - from **Britten's** "Rejoice in the Lamb" through **Howells** and many others. "The only one I can't find," he said, "is the **Poston** Te Deum which you commissioned." "Wait a minute," I said, and went into my lumber room to look in a box I hadn't opened for years. A minute later I came out, full of smiles and said, "Here's her original manuscript!" He



was delighted and I was amazed, for my *forte* is losing things, not finding them!

12 Sat The US Senate voted to support President Bush in a war with Iraq. TV over here covers national debates live for hours on end: riveting and hypnotic.

13 Sun Led a Bible study in the gracious home of



**George and Kinny Gallup** - 21 folk were there and we enjoyed a suppa time - not least because two of the guests were celebrating their birthdays that day - a suitable chorus was sung over cake and tea in their honor in the delightful surroundings of the Gallups' spacious new kitchen; food for the body as well as the soul.

14 Mon 'Phone call from California: it was **Jim Gilliam** - former children's choirmaster of the Crystal Cathedral - he has hosted me a couple of times in Los Angeles and I had invited him to come to England with me this coming summer. He accepted. Great!

15 Tues TV showed so many people around the country protesting at the possibility of war - many of them were crying.

16 Wed War broke out. Read in my Bible, "... those who sow in tears...shall come home with shouts of joy."

19 Sat Read, in Barclay's commentary on Romans 1: "We will always get far more out of people by praising them than by criticising them... those who get the best out of others are they who insist on seeing them at their best." (Why is the obvious so un-obvious?)

20 Sun Took our choir of men, boys and girls to New York for the day: we sang morning service at St.Bartholomew's Church, Park Avenue, where **Jim Litton**, my illustrious predecessor at Trinity, is director of music. He has a particularly fine professional adult choir and we were going to join forces. When we arrived I found Jim rehearsing his choir in Howells' Coll. Reg. Te Deum. "Oh," said I, "I thought we were singing Howells' Coll. Reg *Gloria*." "Whoops," said Jim, "there must have been a mix-up: what shall we do?" "Don't

worry," said I, confident in the ability of my boys, girls and men, "we'll sight-read the Te Deum!"... which we did, very successfully. I was enormously proud of my lot!

Later that day we gave a concert in St. Patrick's RC Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. I told my choir that they were not to be surprised if, during our singing, folk walked around in the cathedral, for it is right in the middle of a busy city, and the Faithful are wont to pop in for a quick Hi or Hail en route to office or home. However once we began singing (on the magnificent high altar steps) we saw that the several hundred Faithful were sitting down and letting the music speak to them. It was a great experience for us, too: the acoustics of St.Patrick's are very similar to those of Blackburn (although St.Pat's is ten times as big) and we relished hearing our final *forte* chords echoing down that



gothically cavernous nave. **Greg Vick**, our organist, covered himself in glory, for we had been unable to rehearse in the building, (they *will* use it for services!), and so we sang works like "Greater Ireland" straight off. It was a glorious hour finishing with "Go, tell it on the mountains", the final chord of which seemed not only to resound down the entire length of the nave but also to bounce most of the way back, and we returned to Trinity euphoric. Read that morning in the ubiquitous Barclay commentary (on Philippians 1): "If Christianity does not make a man happy it will not make him anything at all!"

26 Sat Vestry Day at Princeton University, when we got to know our new rector. He said many illuminating things, one of which I found particularly helpful: "Change is frequently perceived as loss." Yes, indeed!

27 Sun Halfway through morning service at Trinity the fuses blew, silencing the organ and shutting down most of the lights. It was appropriate that we had just sung "Greater Ireland" (again) the climax of which is set

to the words: "... that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light!"

## FEBRUARY

1 Fri Drove to Yale to lead a two-day workshop for several combined chapters of the American Guild of Organists. It was a glorious drive, which took me over the spectacular George Washington Bridge (the east coast's answer to the Golden Gate Bridge). I'd planned to arrive at 5.45pm - got there at 5.44 (!) to be met by **Rodney Ayers**, last year's Trinity asst. Org who is pursuing a Master's degree in that hallowed place. Enjoyed a superb dinner with Rodney and several Yale friends, including **Walden Moore**, director of music of Trinity on the Green, New Haven, (who has two of my old choristers in his choir and was about to get a third). **Jim Kreger**, energetic choirmaster and organist, had so organised the workshop that the beautiful Great Hall of the Institute of Sacred Music was packed with organists and choirmasters for my talks. I was thrilled.

Two days later our choirs' steering committee agreed to provide the funds for a computer for the music office. Great! The only question now was which brand to buy and, again, choirparents who Knew (**Papastephanou, Stengel, Mathews & Vaughan** - sounds like a firm of attorneys!) came forward with sheaves of practical advice.

The next day I completed copying out my setting of the St. Mark Passion for congregation and choir. I must admit that Britten helped me considerably in its gestation - he is a great teacher if you know where to look! Received a letter inviting my Princeton Singers to sing for a week in St. Paul's Cathedral, London in '92, '93 or '94. I like planning ahead!

The following day I received a delightful letter from **Percy Welton**, my former department head at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He'd just returned from an examining tour in Hong Kong. He heard "... over 35,000 candidates, including one delightful young lady who rejoiced in the name Yung Man / all desirous of being assessed by Western standards in programmes of Western music, which puts the singers at a particular disadvantage (have you heard Cantonese opera?!)"

I'd been without a secretary for several months - my last very part-timer, had left us early in the season, and my office was rapidly beginning to look like the headquarters for a marathon paper-chase. Through the good offices of the choirs' steering committee two strong candidates appeared on the near horizon. My heart lifted.

Estimate for two computers (for office and home, including laser printer) had now sunk to \$7,000. (\$2,000 less than last September). Some aspects of dilatoriness can be financially rewarding. (i.e. It pays to wait!)

The following day I received a commission from **Richard Cock**, chairman of the Johannesburg branch of the RSCM, to compose a mass setting for the S.A. RSCM Summer School in 1992. There'd be 200 singers there, and he wanted it set for both choir and congregation. I'd been so excited by the singing of indigenuous SA singing when I was over there the previous year that I thrilled to the task - incorporating SA melodies and harmonies into the work.

22 Fri One of the many joys of living in Princeton is to be invited to dinner in gracious homes of generous friends. This evening (after spending the day in Philadelphia discussing ideas for a proposed CD to be made by the Princeton Singers in the summer) I drove 20 miles to the home of choir parents **Ted and Benita Ryan** (their son, **Alex**, comes to choir 3 times a week, chauffeured by dedicated parents!) They live in the most beautiful home I have seen in America (and that's saying something!) It dates from 1680 and has been added to during the last 300 years so that it now goes round corners and up and down steps in a most attractive way, lit by subdued spotlights, and it's approached by a long driveway which winds its way through undulating Pennsylvania farmland. Bliss!

The Ryans had assembled a fascinating covey of guests, including the new director of music of St. Patrick's Cathedral, NYC, **John-Michael Caprio**, who's a near neighbor, and another guest who's a friend of President Bush. The conversation, as you may well imagine, sparkled: "Nietzsche is not my kinda guy, but he did say that 'without music, life would be a mistake.'" "John Calvin said, 'there are as many reminders of our mortality as there are loose tiles on the roofs of Geneva.'" A fascinating evening - I had to drag myself away far too early in order to be alert for the morrow, as I was leading a one-day workshop at Westminster Choir College. Choirmasters from seven States turned up; we talked not only about music but also about the power of our Christian witness to the choristers in our choirs. One of them said, "My best friend is a Jew." It was some time before I realized what he meant! That night I attended yet another party - given for the parents of our choirboys in yet another gracious Princeton home by two of our most supportive choirparents. Life is full here!

25 Mon **Robbie Griffith**, ebullient and efficient choir parent, was appointed as secretary to the Trinity music dept. I was thrilled, for she said that she could come in at anytime I wanted. During the course of the next few weeks my office gradually became a civilised place, and papers were relegated to files, or to neat piles marked "for your immediate attention". I felt that Things would Get Done in this new regime.

Two days later the Gulf War ended. Along with the rest of the world I had watched the whole process on 24-hour TV, riveted by the immediate reporting of events and of the frightening advances made in military weapons. Life would not be the same again.

## MARCH

2 Sat Party for the parents of our choirgirls in my home. (The previous year it had been held in the home of dedicated choirparents **Gus & Connie Escher**, who have a beautiful swimming pool in their back garden which they generously opened to our girls at the beginning of our season. They said, rashly, that this was a fixed invitation for the foreseeable future. We accepted!) But this evening, in my crowded house, one parent, **Alan Ryan** (no relation to Ted & Benita), who is a professor at the university here, told me that it was an accepted lecture-giving technique to "...tell them what you are going to say, say it, and then tell them what you have said." I'd recently worked this out for myself and found it enormously helpful not only to enable students to remember what I've said, but also for clarifying my thoughts as to what I really want to communicate.

6 Wed Received a most delightful letter from **Roy Massey**, organist of Hereford Cathedral, in response to my letter congratulating him on his recent Lambeth doctorate. He had been thrilled to be offered it, and his cup ran over when the RSCM offered him the glorious scarlet and ivory Mus.D. robes worn by **Gerald Knight**, former director of the RSCM and great mutual friend. Roy is a marvellous person as well as a gifted musician and I shared in the joy which his honour had brought him.

8 Fri To Knoxville, Tennessee, to lead a two-day workshop for choirmasters. A lot of musicians there. When I was about to show them how I taught kids to sight-read (with four live kids I hadn't seen before to demonstrate on - on whom to demonstrate with), one boy said, "I can't sight-read", but half an hour later found that he could, and was wide-eyed at what he was achieving! Such moments make life worth-while.

10 Sun Our new Rector was installed with due ceremony and splendor by the bishop of New Jersey, **Mellick Belshaw**. We sang my arrangement of "Amazing Grace" as the anthem, with the congregation joining in the penultimate verse - what a great sound! Afterwards, just to keep a few of us out of mischief, my Princeton Singers gave a concert in a university concerts hall - and were given foot-stomping acclaim at the end, after which our concerts' manager, **Ann McGoldrick**, gave us a party in her lovely home to round off the day. That was quite a weekend!

16 Sat One of the great feasts in Trinity's annual calendar is that of St. Rummage. For six months dedicated parishioners sort through an incredible range of pretty high-class of unwanted goods ranging from antique silver-ware, through 'better dresses' to a yacht or second hand car. And every year we seem to raise more cash for the church's ministry - this year it was again in excess of \$30,000, some of which was raised by choir folk who kept the queues of customers happy with endless cups of coffee and cookies from 6.0am onwards, and also provided them, and the helpers, with a supa lunch. It really is great fun! I managed to get a bargain in the book dept: buying 30 Perry Mason paper-backs and the Complete Sherlock Holmes for only \$20!

I had to leave the fray early to go to Newark Airport to collect **Bunny Ashley-Botha**, director of music of the South African Boychoir, who was coming over here for several weeks to study what happens boychoirwise in the USA, for there are many such choirs (secular) scattered far and wide in this great country; the finest of which is in Princeton - the American Boychoir - directed by **Jim Litton**, (see January), who holds down that position as well as being Dir. o' M. of St. Bart's NYC. I don't know how he does it all! Bunny had been a generous host to me the previous summer when I enjoyed the enormous privilege of conducting his choirs in their idyllic home in the Drakensburg mountains. (See last year's Newsletter).

Despite Bunny being exhausted from his journey from S.A., I whisked him off, the next day, Sunday - after morning services - to New York City where my Princeton Singers were to give a concert in St. Bart's Park Ave (see above para). That was an eventful time as

the car of one of our splendid lead tenors broke down en route, somewhat decimating our ensemble. But it went off OK - the audience being most responsive, and afterwards a number of us celebrated in due style in a most excellent Italian restaurant a couple of blocks away - "Paparazzi's", which I commend wholeheartedly; delicious cuisine and low prices. The liquid refreshment was, happily, effective, so much so that, after the meal, several of the Singers poured me into a cab to take me to my hosts' apartment off Broadway, where I was staying the night...

...because the next day I was leading a music workshop for choirmasters and schoolteachers at Saint Thomas' Church, Fifth Avenue which went extraordinarily well. As usual I demonstrated how easy it was to teach children to sight-sing and that the process is *fun!* Halfway through working with four schoolchildren (making them do all the work, for it is they who will do the singing, not the choirmaster), one 12-year old girl, who found that she could do it after all, broke into the most lovely smile - and so I whisked her around to face the teachers to show them that it really *was* a fun process as well as creative and productive! Point made.

**Bunny Ashley Botha**, meanwhile, had been given



splendid hospitality with **Jim Litton** at the American Boychoir School, and thus began his 3-week American tour which he found joyful and stimulating. It was so good to be able to repay, in some small measure, hospitality to a delightful and generous host who has welcomed me to his magnificent country three times in the last 20 years.

Three days later I received a wonderful letter from **Martin How**, Southern Commissioner of the Royal School of Church Music in England, inviting me to send two of my best boys to sing with him when he directs a hand-picked choir of men and boys which will sing the daily services in Canterbury Cathedral for two weeks in August. I was thrilled, and began casting in my mind who the lucky lads might be.

Palm Sunday: we sang my setting of the St. Mark Passion for choir and congregation - which went very well indeed, not least because we had recorded it during the past two weeks for relay over local radio, so we knew it pretty well. I thought that it might be worth sending to a publisher - for it was the fruit of 3 months pretty solid work. I sat back to see if there would be any response.

The following week The Men arrived to make me a new sidewalk and driveway outside my home. My house had been undergoing pretty extensive renovation for the last four or five years - new bathrooms, kitchen, deck,

french windows, loft ladder and genuine imitation wood aloominum siding on the front which will never need painting. The Men set about their task with a will and



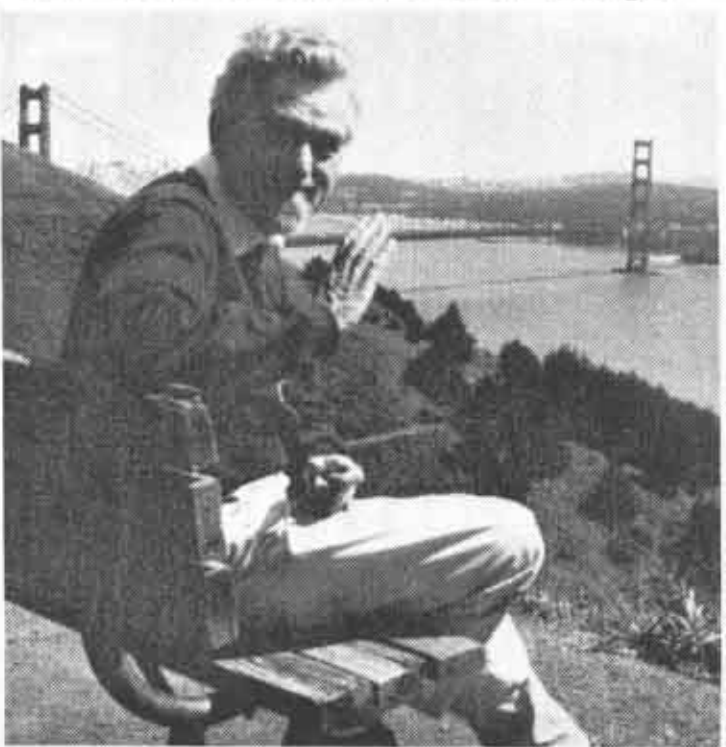
the whole thing took only a couple of days and their labors made the outside look as good as the inside (when it's tidy!)

**APRIL**

Led a children's choir Festival in Pennsylvania the Saturday after Easter, for which I had composed one of the anthems - or 'songs' as Americans call them. (Such terminology drives me up the wall!) The organisers had expected a choir of 130 kids - but 184 turned up! It was a lively time and my hosts, as ever, provided lavish and delicious hospitality. What a privileged life this is!

Two days later I flew to the West Coast. Two days in San Francisco guided by former Trinity choirman **Louis Weiner**, now concerts' mgr of S.F. Cath. Glorious views of the Golden Gate Bridge thrilled me to the core. My host, **Jonathan Dimmock**, gave up his bed for me and slept on the couch; he excused himself from entertaining me on my first evening as he was conducting a concert in the new home of a friend. This home had cost \$18 million, and in order give it a suitable setting the friend had had 250 mature trees flown in by helicopter to plant in the bare ground. I love America! Then two days in Seattle, with **Ralph Carskadden**, former canon of Seattle Cathedral - it was my turn to sleep on the couch! His home is filled with ecclesiastical *objets d'art*, most of which he had created himself. He's also a superb chef and threw a dinner to which he'd invited **Peter Hallock**, doyen of American cathedral organists, whom, surprisingly, I'd never met. A glorious evening of gossip and laughter! And then, to earn my plane ticket, I spent three days in Portland, where I conducted yet another 2-day workshop for choirmasters, and my host, **Michael Cooley**, slept on the couch! On the first evening I gave an address to the choirmasters on 'Communicating the gospel to children.' In my bible reading that morning (Luke 9) I'd read, "Go and proclaim the kingdom of God," - so I did!

**Glorious Golden Gate Bridge**



**Peter Hallock & Carskadden Art**



My week on the warm west coast had persuaded me that having a beard was a sticky, itchy, time consuming and not very hygenic self indulgence. So I took it off. What a relief! I walked into the office the next day to see what the response would be - and nobody noticed! But at choir practice later that day all the boys did, and some of them almost wondered who I was!

The following weekend I attended a conference in New York entitled, "How to stay spiritually healthy despite being a church musician!" This had attracted a lot of attention in church music circles and it proved to be a most helpful 'dry-run' for our national conference to be held in Princeton in the summer of 1993. It was also a good day out - I bought three more ties from a stall in Greenwich village ( for \$10) which further swelled my almost unmanageable collection to well over 300!

Received a letter from one of my English publishers (a good line!) - **Barry Brunton**, in Ely, who told me that he'd just received an order for music from a **John Bertolette**, a musician from Philadelphia, and had we met? No, we hadn't, but, as it happened, my Singers were giving a concert in Philly three days later, so I dropped a hasty note to my near namesake to ask him to come to the concert. When I arrived at the church I found a note awaiting me from JB saying that he couldn't be there as he was giving an organ recital in the city at the same time! - but he'd come immediately it was over to say hi! Our concert lasted a little longer than we'd intended because, as we were halfway through Gibbons "O clap your hands" we noticed some of the audience rushing out of the church (that's not a usual reaction to our singing!) - a few pages further on we saw smoke pouring through one of the church windows and heard the wailing of fire-engines, and so, in view of the competition, we stopped in mid phrase and went to watch the excitement. It turned out that someone had set fire to a load of trash stacked just outside the church - there was no danger to the building itself. And so, after a longer intermission than we intended we began the second half with a more joyful performance of "O clap your hands" - the words seeming appropriate to the occasion. Despite the extra length of the concert (which was further prolonged by the ringing of the Angelus for five minutes as we were about to begin our last piece), John Bertolette arrived 15 minutes after we'd all left. Meeting him is a pleasure delayed.

## MAY

3 Fri Flew to Richmond, Virginia, to lead a 2-day workshop for choirmasters I was hosted by **Andy Koebler**, director of music of All SS Ch, who has one of the most enthusiastic boy-choirs I have encountered in this country. Not only do they sing well, but, when I was watching Andy take them for a rehearsal and he said, "Now let's sing 'Greater Love'," the boys responded with a hearty "Oh, good!" I wish I knew how to instill such enthusiasm! One particular joy of this visit was that, some months previously, Andy had asked me if I knew of an English church choirmaster who might like to arrange an exchange visit. "Yes," said I, "try **Trevor Webb** in Bearsted, Kent. He has a large and equally enthusiastic choir - and I was born there." And so these two choirmasters were planning for All Saints' choir to fly to England the following November. I knew that they would have a mutually supa time! (They did - please read all abahit it in next's year's NEWSLETTER - assuming, of course, that I finish this year's, which is very late.)

Princeton is an amazing place full of wonderful people who, sometimes, drop a remark which trumps any ace that I might hold - and the beauty of it is that they don't even know they've done it - until they read of it in an ensuing NEWSLETTER. A delightful lady, a most active member of our church, took me to lunch in Princeton's French restaurant ( I only go there where someone else pays!) for she wanted to talk about the church's music budget which had to be cut this year, in common with so many other churches throughout the country, due to the state of the economy. I remarked, conversationally, that I'd just seen a supa program on TV about the Queen Mother. "Oh yes," said my hostess as she took another sip of wine, "my neighbor receives an invitation to Her birthday every year!" I took a sip of

wine to cover my joy at such an unconsciously glorious remark, for I know her neighbor - the story is true! I told my hostess, at the end of the meal, that an account of this hour would appear in my next NEWSLETTER - but I didn't say why, and I know she had no idea why! Incidentally the object of the meal (see above) came to a happy fruition. More specific than that I cannot be!

That same day I wrote over 20 letters to potential hosts whom I hoped to see in England in August. Setting up such a tour is incredibly exciting, for I don't know if dear friends who would be willing to put-me-up will be able to do so, due to their own vacation plans; nor if they would be able to put-up-a-stray-American-from-California (to wit, one **Jim Gilliam**).

The next day I was chewing the cud with my neighbor, opposite, **Fred Hermanns**, who told me that he and **Sue** had just installed air-conditioning in their home and what a major difference it was making to their lives, for the temperatures in May were breaking 50-year records day after day. That set me thinking - for summertime in Princeton is unbearable - temperatures in the high 90s (or above) and near 100% humidity. OK, thought I, this is the only thing that now needs doing to my house to bring it up to snuff - I'll get air conditioning, too. So I did, and whatta difference it makes! Instead of coming home and flopping, sack-like, into a chair, I actually have the energy to Get Things Done, thanx to my new artificial user-friendly environment. The morning of the Hermanns encounter I had read in my Barclay Bible notes a story about Lord Reith, first chairman of the BBC, who said, "I don't like crises, but I do like the opportunities they provide." How splendidly this had worked out for me that day!

Two days later Trinity's clergy and lay executive staff enjoyed a 2-day-away at the beach. A parishioner lent us his vacation house which is actually on the N.J. beach and we enjoyed sun, sea, surf, food, fellowship and a little business. "This," I told my colleagues, "is very similarly situated to a house I intend to find in England this August, for I plan to retire to the seaside [Shoreham, Sussex, where I grew up] in 5 years time." They were pleased for me, and I looked forward the more eagerly to my summer vacation to discover exactly where this house was awaiting me. *If you've got the stamina to continue reading, gentle reader, you'll find a house saga awaiting you if/when you reach 'August'*

31 Fri Finished composing my Mass for the South African RSCM - I was pleased with it, for it includes S.A. melodies and harmonies. I began to copy it out neatly to send to Richard Cock in S.A., hoping that he would like it, too.

## JUNE

3 Mon Flew to Minneapolis for a week's conference of AAM (see September 17), which was held in a glorious RC University with a magnificent modern chapel, one wall of which was wholly stained glass. A great program of speakers and musicians, addressed us, including **Owen Burdick**, new director of music of Trinity Church, Wall Street, NYC, a friend of many years (it was with his parents I stayed the nite I was poured into a NY cab! - see March) and the **Tallis Scholars**, who sang a Josquin Mass for us at Mass on our third day. Owen had composed an exciting work for choir, organ,



narrator and electronics (he earned his doctorate with this sort of thing) on the theme of peace, which thrilled us all mightily. I also met **Mark Dirkson** there - son of a famous father (dad had been Choirmaster-Precentor of Washington's National Cathedral) and we enjoyed some rich Christian fellowship together. He invited me to stay with him and his wife, **Beth**, the following month for the 4th July celebrations - which I did. It was good to mark the independence of Britain from America together. (It takes two to be independent!) At the end of the AAM conference I gave a preview of the goodies that awaited the delegates when they come to Princeton in 1993; and when I announced that the the Princeton Singers would be on the program there was a burst of applause from all assembled. Most satisfactory!

13 Th Received two letters from Augsburg Publishing house - they have accepted my setting of the **St. Mark Passion** and also my arrangement of **Softly and Tenderly**. Great! Hinshaw's telephoned to say that my book on teaching kids to sight-sing would be published in 1992! Great, great! Letter received from Flammer, another of my USA publishers. (Elgar used to say, 'if you've got a good idea, use it twice!') who wanted me to set the Holst version of "**In the Bleak midwinter**" because Harold Darke's setting was such a winner. I replied that this was fine by me, because Harold Darke had taught me the organ, so I began it the next day and finished it 24 hours later!

15 Sat **Blackburn Cathedral Old Choristers' Association**, was, this weekend, celebrating the 25th anniversary of its founding - and as I was the founder-chairman, I telephoned **Peter Fielding**, its dedicated secretary, to send my good wishes to all who had come for a splendid dinner, addressed by **Francis Jackson**, former organist of York Minster. I was told that it was a great weekend, attended by OCs from many other associations as well as our own and I was thrilled. I looked forward to seeing as many Old Choristers as I could when I came to England in August.

18 Th Received a delightful letter from **Richard Cock** in S.A. They'd enjoyed my visit there so much last year that they want me to come again. OK by me! I sent off my neat-neat copy of the S.A.Mass (SAM) to Richard for next year's RSCMSA course.

## Princeton Singers' Recording!

23/24 Sun/Mon Spent two most remarkable days in Philadelphia, making a CD of the Princeton Singers. We took over a superb RC college chapel (Daylesford Abbey), which has acoustics similar to those of Blackburn Cathedral and sang our hearts out, recording 400 years of English Church music in 30 hours! Thanks to the dedication and musicianship of the Singers, the skill of our recording engineer, **George Blood**, who records the Philadelphia Symphony, and the inspiration of our producer, **Tom Whittemore**, former member of the Singers, the whole experience was magnificent and we were thrilled by the potential we had committed to tape. We eagerly looked forward to George and Tom putting together the best bits (as only modern technology can do - even to singling out one note from one take and inserting it into an otherwise satisfactory second take) and coming up with a product for which we, and many other folk, had long awaited. At the time of writing this letter we're still a-waiting, but are bearing our souls in patience!

## R.C. sunshine after C.D. recording



25 Tu **Nancy Metcalf**, our church office manager, asked me when I was getting the new computer for my music office. Her question, coupled with a resolution from the choir steering committee a few days before, seemed to be telling me, "GO!" And so, two days later, **Robbie Griffith**, our energetic music secretary, placed the order. The cost had come down still further, thanks to un-planned dilatoriness on my part, to \$4,500 for a MAC LC which could write music print-ready, and laser printer.

### JULY

9 Tues The glorious computer arrived - Oh, frabjous day! I felt that I had scraped into the 20th century by the skin of my teeth as, with Robbie, I embarked on a long voyage of discovery, no less significant for me than that of Columbus, 499 years before. On what, gentle reader, do you think this NEWSLETTER is typed? No - you're wrong - it's being typed on my MAC LC at home - but that's another story for next year's NEWSLETTER!

11 Th To tea with Jean Matthews (my American 'Mom'): she shared a *bon mot* of Churchill:  
'We make a living by what we get;  
we make a life by what we give!'  
Why haven't I heard that before?

## Robbie Griffith, seated, with Nancy Metcalf (L) & May Papastephanou



13 Sat Went to the office to experiment with the new computer (Robbie Griffith having been using it for the last four days - typing out the choirs' year's schedule book - 50 pages). I turned it on and then spent two of the most frustrating hours of my life trying to get it to do something - nothing worked. If I'd had a brick there'd be no more computer!

14 Sun Asked a choir member, **Joan Nielsen**, to show me how my computer worked. She did - very patiently - as a result of which I spent 5 straight hours in front of it going triumphantly cross-eyed!

23 Tues Had been giving lot of thought as to which two boys I should nominate to sing with Martin How's choir at Canterbury next month; decided on the younger brother of our superlative dep. head boy **Jesse Antin**, (whose voice was about to change), **Judd Antin**, and another younger brother (of **Darcy Ramadge**, whose voice was changing) **Sage Ramadge**. The Antins and the Ramadges invited me to a dinner party that evening when we talked Canterbury and English history; those two lads were about to enjoy an unforgettable experience!

And so to ENGLAND for my month's vacation.

### AUGUST

This, dear readers, is the most difficult part of my NEWSLETTER for I shall, by reason of lack of space, have to miss out most of the many glories that **Jim Gilliam** and I enjoyed. For example, we stayed in nineteen different homes, including Addington Palace and Windsor Castle, and enjoyed hospitality from many, many more dear friends, two of whom I hadn't seen for nearly 40 years! All I can do...and please understand, O wonderful hosts and friends who are not mentioned... is to recount what happened in our first few days and leave out the rest, or your patience in pluffing threw all this will be exhausted:

Stayed a few days with cousins **Dick & Sheila Charge**, in Reigate, who live a most convenient few minutes' bus ride from Gatwick Airport, unjetting and getting Jim (who had flown from Los Angeles a day later) used to rarified English Ayre. Delighted in reading the Daily Telegraph again: Three quotes from one edition:

1 From 'thought for today' - a meditation on the Road to Emmaus story: "...*involvement in theological discussion does not of itself ensure awareness of the presence of Christ!*"

2 From the obituary of **Alec Vidler**, who was Dean of King's, Cambridge during my student years: "*He once described himself as a sceptic in faith's clothing but Malcolm Muggeridge summed him up more accurately as 'a man who believed with all his heart and doubted with all his mind.'* How very sad. But, to quote an observation, by Trinity's late sexton, on a parishioner who died with similar doubts, "He knows now!"

3 From previews of today's TV programmes: "**MAHABHARET**": *The 93-part Indian epic continues its stately progress. Hindi, with sub titles.* "**David Threlfall**, who has gone on to greater, moodier things, *plays a subversive vegetarian.*" "**Columbo** is a great character, but will he ever be able to make an exit without suddenly poking his lived-in face around the door again to say, 'Oh, by the way...?'"

Dick and Sheila took Jim and me to their parish church for morning service; if any experience could encapsulate English village church worship at its very best, this was it. The very name of the village, **Nutfield**, conjours up centuries of English history! As we approached the lovely 700 year-old building, the bells began ringing - English change-ringing - and the ringers could be seen from inside the church pulling on the ropes, under the tower, in their shirt sleeves. Marvellous! The service was pure 1662 - unchanged in every respect from the service I knew as a boy, except that we prayed for the Queen instead of the King! The Rector, **Graham Williams**, was a nephew of **Ralph Vaughan Williams**, whose music epitomised the very essence of England between the wars. Graham led the service so sensitively - and had chosen hymns that everyone knew - I was able to sing them all from memory. The organ playing was excellent and the sun shone. But the high point of the service came, for me, when the lay reader approached the lectern to read the second lesson (the parable of the workers waiting in the market place to be hired): he looked round the congregation and then began to recount the story (in beautiful Elizabethan English) wholly from memory! We were spell-bound. Never have I been so moved by the delivery of a lesson. And, more than that! this wonderful man turned out to be the father of a contemporary of mine from Cambridge days, **Tim Todhunter**. Tim was a choral scholar in Corpus choir and a great friend, and I had stayed with him and his family in their home nearby when we were students, 35 years ago! I hadn't seen his father since then, but, when speaking with **Robin Todhunter** after the service, the years slipped away as we talked about the auld days and I insisted on a photograph to remind me of that magical and most inspiring hour. Robin subsequently invited me to stay with him when I next come to England; I accepted with joy!

Jim and I then drove to ELY to stay with **Peter and Constance Heald**. Both dear friends from early Blackburn days nearly 30 years ago. They had met first



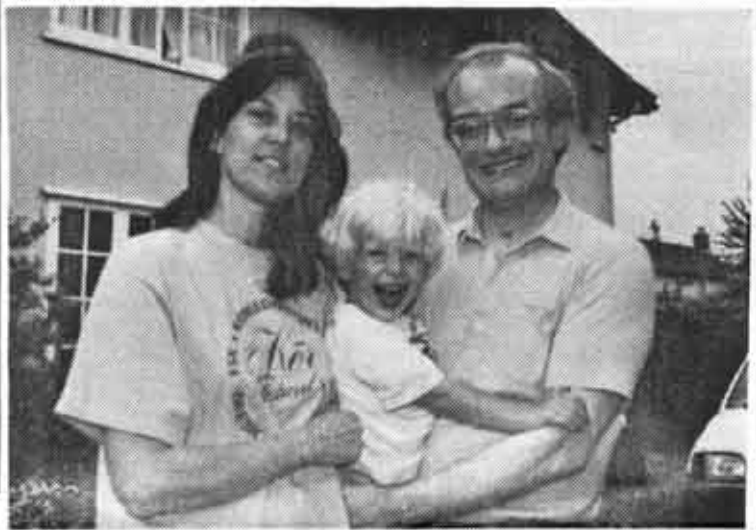
when members of my Blackburn Singers and subsequently married. Pete now sings in Ely cath. choir and dispenses healing to the locals through homeopathic medicine, whilst Constance is Chapter Clerk - probably the only woman cathedral chapter clerk in the country. They invited the new Dean of Ely round from drinks, **Michael Higgins**, who was another old friend from Blackburn days, having been Rector of Preston, the 'big city' some 10 miles from Bbn. It was good to hear all the gossip over several cheering glasses of spirit.

The next morning Jim and I popped into Ely to spend an hour with **Barry Brunton**, ('one of my English publishers!') who has a flourishing music shoppe in that fair city. (He kindly agreed to print and distribute this NEWSLETTER for avid readers in England). Barry owns one of the largest catalogues of choral music of any publisher in England - how he manages to control it all single handedly, I know not. If you want any English choral music Barry is almost certain to be able to get it for you. (Address: 52a Broad St, Ely, CB3 9DA. Tel: 0353-663252)

Then on to Cambridge to attend an occasion of great moment: the dinner to mark the retirement of **George Guest** as music director of St. John's College after more than 40 years. This was an incredible privilege: I'd known George for 38 of those years and he hasn't changed a hair! Jim and I were togged up in tails n' tux (in Americanese) and rejoiced in mingling with 198 other guests similarly attired for a superlative dinner in St. John's historic dining hall. In front of each guest stretched rows of knives and forks as far as the eye could see and five assorted glasses were lined up in between ready for liquid cheer of varying hues. George has had a sparkling galaxy of organ scholars under him down the years who have gone on to great heights - and they were all there: **Sir David Lumsden**, (Princ. Royal Academy of Music, London), **Stephen Cleobury**, (now at a little chapel a few hundred yards up the road), **John Scott**, (St Paul's Cathedral), **David Hill**, (Winchester Cathedral), **Peter White**, (Leicester Cathedral), **Jonathan Bielby**, (Wakefield Cathedral - he had the extra distinction of having had John Scott as one of his choirboys!), **Jonathan Rennert**, (St. Michael's, Cornhill)...on and on. The evening ended with the 180 or so former choral scholars from George's most distinguished choir serenading him in close harmony. There wasn't a dry eye.



The next day Jim and I popped in to take tea with **John & Joann Rutter**, who live in a delightful cottage some 10 miles south of Cambridge. I noticed, on the wall of the cottage a plaque dated 1683. "How marvellous to live in a 300 year-old house," I remarked. "Oh, no," said John, "it was restored in 1683, but it was built 300 years before that!" (It's about due for another restoration if history is any guide!) John was busy checking the latest recording of his Cambridge Singers ('Hail, gladdening light') prior to flying to the USA the next day for the American premiere of his Magnificat, but he made time to show us around his amazing office (a modern two-storey building in his garden) and to delight in their two lively sons, **Christopher & Nicholas**. Chris went missing when it came for photograph time - I hope they found him after we left!



Now I'm going to stop the day by day account right there, even though every day was exciting and packed with glories. For example, the next day we stayed with two very dear friends who took us on their yacht on the Norfolk Broads, and then on the next day to stay with a friend I hadn't seen since student days, and on, and on, and on...receiving such lavish hospitality at every turn that at the end of the month I'd put on 6 lbs! One host, as is his custom, broke open the champagne on our arrival, even though it was the middle of the afternoon, and another lent us his flat for two days. We spent a most happy day in Canterbury seeing **Martin How** conduct his superlative RSCM choir and, guess what, my two Princeton lads had been placed right next to the conductor- in the head boys' place - I was thrilled! One reason I'm cutting this short is because I've told that part of the tale in fair detail in a long letter I sent to all the old choristers of Blackburn Cathedral, some 200 of them, last October- their response has been amazing - because, that month, some of them changed the course of my life:-

For the last six years I have been steadily planning my retirement (which is creeping up rapidly - summer of 1996!) My cherished wish has been to return to Shoreham in Sussex, where I grew up, to buy a house on the seashore and rejoice, as in days of long ago, in the sound of waves beating on the shingle, to smell the briny air and to live, once more, near my cousins, many of whom live in the south of England, even though it will break my heart to leave all my very dear American friends who have welcomed me so lovingly and lavishly to their wonderful country where I have been made to feel so thoroughly at home, and where the creation of beautiful music in the company of so many highly gifted and dedicated friends has filled my cup to overflowing. And so, with an eye to the future (and because house prices were at a 'low') when staying with dear friends in Shoreham that month, I found my seaside house and began taking steps to buy it.

HOWEVER, when I arrived for three days in Blackburn I was so overwhelmed by the welcome I received from cathedral old choristers at every turn (I attended a dinner at which some 30 of them turned up, and I visited many, many more) and was so battered by the compulsion of their insistence that I come back to the North of England, that I capitulated, with joy, and cancelled plans for Shoreham, even though it hurt to have my relations so far away, and began looking for a house oop theyer... which, eventually, I found (after making a quick half-day dash up the M6 when attending **Roy Massey's** Three Choirs' Festival in Hereford). This house - a modern bungalow with 'cathedral ceiling', the most luxurious kitchen and bathroom I have seen and a view of cows from the front window - is only 200 yards from where I used to live... in a village (Mellor) set on a hill just outside Blackburn, with a delightful church and super market just around the corner (everything's just around the corner in Mellor) and a village post office where the postmaster licks the stamps himself when you post a letter there! I'm expecting, daily, to hear that this house is now mine - please plan to come and visit me there, dear American, and English friends. There's a spare room and I can always pop over to the farm opposite for a pint of milk from Mellor cows if we run out!

#### SEPTEMBER

And so back to Princeton, to find mail a foot high

awaiting me, including letters from Augsburg accepting my **St. Matthew Passion** for congregation and choir, and Flammer accepting my arrangement of **In the bleak midwinter**. What a great start to yet to another year's adventures in music in collaboration with flourishing church choirs and dedicated colleagues who challenge and thrill me at every turn. Included in the plans are two recordings for the **BBC** by the Princeton Singers (**Choral Evensong will be broadcast on Wed, 8th April**, and also an hour's music of American choral music and meditation in tandem with bishop **Jack Spong** of Newark). Please listen, dear English friends on BBC Radio 3. Dunno when the latter will be relayed.

One of the reasons this letter is so late is because I received a commission, from **Howard Seymour**, to write a major anthem ("**The Crown of my Rejoicing**") to help celebrate the 25th anniversary of St. Wilfrid's School, Blackburn, where he is director of music, and I've spent every spare minute on it for the last couple of months. I finished it last week and look forward to hearing how it goes when it is performed in Blackburn Cathedral in May. (Britten's influence is again clear! - I like his music!)

But just before the season got under way I celebrated, if that's the right word, a major birthday - and was thrilled to welcome almost 60 friends to my home. Halfway through the proceedings, **May Papastephanou**, chairman of our choirs' steering committee and good friend, called the party to order to give me a present (even though I'd forbidden guests to bring anything except themselves and some food!) I unwrapped it gingerly, for it felt like a lead frisby, and was overwhelmed to find that it was a silver tray, inscribed with facsimiles of the signatures of all my maternal cousins from England, Zambia and New Zealand: suddenly they, too, were all there alongside my dear American friends. My cup ran over. Halleluia!



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