

Difficult Summer Turns To Autumn...

Another Half-Term week has come and gone, and we're still in the second 'lock-down' as I prepare another reflection on Fitz Choir people and music.

With Newcastle Cathedral closed, and our planned trip to Oxford cancelled when Christ Church Cathedral decided (understandably) to 'stand down' all their summer choirs this year, the frustration for singers near and far has continued. Many people have remarked that it's good to stay positive though, and still to be making plans. That motivated me to approach Oxford again, and they've offered us a 2021 'week' – subject to conditions, of course. The dates are Tues 17th August to Sunday 22nd inclusive. So far, our singers both in the north and the south are enthusiastic about this.

I'm particularly pleased that Tamsin Brown (D-o-M at St John's in Newcastle), who has done several cathedral visits, is willing to join us next August. Tamsin was to have played this year if our visit had gone ahead, and kindly said that she'd work with us in the future. We wish her all the best with completing her FRCO, hopefully next July.

Locally, Brinkburn Priory opened again in July (for visits booked in advance only), and I've continued visiting to play the organ. Sadly, I couldn't arrange one of our popular organ-based Choir gigs for August Holiday Monday. I did give an informal recital, with very mixed feelings – at the end I emerged into a lovely summer afternoon with just a gentle breeze, perfect for relaxing outside the Angler's Arms with the Choir... only I couldn't!

Depending on circumstances over the winter, I'd like to arrange some kind of Choir event for our N-E and Yorks people if possible. It would be partly to look forward to next summer. Somewhere in the south of County Durham would seem reasonably convenient for all concerned; we have contacts in Darlington, or perhaps even in Barnard Castle if people could see their way clear. Of course I'll keep everyone informed of any such comings and goings.

I have a bit of school work again, which I'm enjoying. It started conveniently as, on the railway front, Martin and I completed our six-month Network Rail contracts – sadly without actually being called up for 'cover' at a level crossing Box. We've kept in touch with our preserved railways – Martin at the East Lancs, and I at the South Tynedale, though it hasn't opened at all this year. Maintenance has continued at Alston, and we did put on two events for our youth team (STRIVERS). They visited Martin in August, then in October we had a training session at Alston Station, helped by Richard Graham – former STR Chairman and local Churchwarden. Unfortunately rain ruled out a visit to Martin's railway that day; perhaps it can be done on a dry winter's day before the 2021 season.



August 2020 – a 'Steam-Up' day for our STRIVERS at Martin's outdoor railway, Slaggyford.



October 2020 – a training event at Alston, on the track and in the signal box. Rain prevented a 'Steam-Up' this time.

Choir folk may like to know that our friend Anne Harrison in Durham gave a 'streamed' lecture on 20th November for the RSCM, on 'Hymns and the First World War'. Anne studied Music at Oxford, and we hope she'll be able to join us there next year. She was for a time D-o-M at Cranmer Hall in Durham, and I did some work there with Anglican and Methodist ordinands. You can watch Anne's lecture at: [Anne Harrison: Hymns and the First World War - YouTube](#)

Be assured that I'm 'on the case' looking for Choir opportunities. Meanwhile, we'll do our best to observe Advent before Christmas! Do let us know your news... and please stay safe!

Kieran
November 2020