

Guildford Philharmonic Choir

President: Sir David Willcocks, CBE, MC

Conductor: Jeremy Backhouse

NEWSLETTER



Editor: Margaret Dentskevich

ISSUE 6 - APRIL 2002

THE HISTORY OF THE GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

by Bill Bellerby

INTRODUCTION

We are proud that Doreen and Bill Bellerby have agreed to be our Honorary Patrons - they must be the longest and strongest supporters of the Philharmonic organization in Guildford.

Both born in Wales, they married in 1941 and Bill, already in the army, received a sporting injury and instead of being sent to India, was posted to Guildford. When Doreen heard from Bill that he had been given the responsibility of training hundreds of young women A.T.S. recruits, she decided her presence in Guildford was needed!!

Thus it happened that they both went to the Odeon Cinema in the Upper High street to listen to the first concerts in Guildford after the war.

Both Doreen and Bill are Honorary Freemen of Guildford and were given the M.B.E. for their services to the people of Guildford.

Bill has very kindly outlined the development of the choir from those early days.

Hilary Trigg



Bill and Doreen

1945 Crossley Clitheroe was the conductor of the Guildford Municipal Orchestra. The players were mainly amateur, with professional support. They performed at the Odeon Cinema on Sunday afternoons. Crossley Clitheroe formed the Guildford Festival Choir and a smaller teachers' choir also existed at that time.

1962 Following the death of Crossley Clitheroe, Vernon Handley was appointed as conductor of the Guildford Municipal Orchestra.

1964 In March the orchestra was renamed the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra and it eventually became fully professional.

At about the same time, Vernon Handley formed the Guildford Philharmonic Choir and the Proteus Choir, which consisted of younger singers.

Until the recent re-organization of the Borough's music scene (1999-2000) the choir and the chorus-master's fees were funded by the Guildford Borough Council.

Guildford Philharmonic Choir is now independent and arranges its own engagements with the exception of one official Borough Concert a year with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra.

Bill Bellerby

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR GRACE THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

The Guildford Philharmonic Choir sang at the Royal Albert Hall on October 18th in the first London concert with the new English tenor, Russell Watson, who has been top of the pop classic charts for months. Russell, who shot to fame in the last two years, had this concert sold out since August.

The choir sang several popular numbers with Russell and also had a "solo" spot with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, when they sang the Triumphant Entry from Verdi's *Aida*. At the end of the concert Russell, choir and orchestra received a standing ovation.

Alan Batterbury for the Surrey Advertiser 26.10.01

WHY DID ALL THIS HAPPEN?

Noreen Ayton explains:

Many people in the choir were curious to know about my connection with Russell.

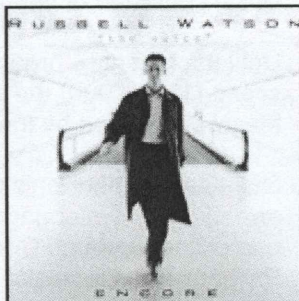


The answer is that there isn't one.

I have known Bill Hayward since 1970, first as accompanist to and later as conductor of the local choir I sang with when my children were small, and then as Director of Music at St Maur's Convent, Weybridge. He took up this post in the senior school at the same time that I was appointed in charge of music in the junior department and we worked together very happily for twenty-one years until I took early retirement in July 1994. When he moved to Shropshire six months later, we kept in touch and I jokingly said to him not to forget the Guildford Philharmonic if he ever needed a choir in this area.

A phone call to me from Bill in the middle of September set this 'gig' in motion for our choir. Bill, who trained at the Royal College of Music and later at the London Opera Centre as a répétiteur, is currently the music coach (some use the title 'voice coach') of the young tenor Russell Watson. The basic question over the phone that lunchtime was would members of the Guildford Philharmonic Choir be interested in backing Russell in six or seven numbers during a sell-out concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 18th October and possibly doing one or two numbers on their own to an audience of six thousand? What could I say but 'yes' - pending the committee's approval. It really came down to how many of the choir members were willing and able to take part and whether or not Jeremy was willing to rehearse us.

Russell had received no voice training before meeting Bill three or four years ago. As a trainee bolt-cutter in an engineering works, he had spent many of his evenings singing in the local clubs in and around his home area of Salford and Manchester.



He did not know how to read music and had been learning everything by rote, including songs and arias from abroad, which he imitated without the faintest idea of their meaning.

At about this time, Bill was working with a group known as The Three English Tenors, a pale imitation of Pavarotti, Domingo and Carreras. When one of the original three decided to break with the group, Russell was installed in his place and received a limited amount of help from Bill, who recognised his potential not as a true operatic tenor but as one who would appeal more to the general public. He began to improve his technique, understanding and pronunciation of the words, which led to more offers of work.



Russell Watson

However, their paths did not cross again until some eighteen months later, when Russell, having been offered a contract with Decca, was told that he must get some serious coaching before the recordings could be made. He immediately contacted Bill in Shrewsbury and the really hard work began. Russell's first CD 'The Voice' was continuously at the top of Classic FM's charts for almost a year in 2000-2001 and now the second, 'Encore', released at the end of October, also selling very well. He has sung in front of the Queen, the President of the USA, at the Final of the World Cup and at the opening of the new Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, to name just a few of his engagements. Unhappily, his marriage has broken up and he rarely sees his two young daughters.



Tesco's car park, Brooklands - members of the choir assemble before boarding the bus to go to the Albert Hall

'Our' concert was Russell's first solo concert at the Royal Albert Hall. As those of us who took part know only too well, the final selection of numbers involving the choir was liable to change at the drop of a hat (and did!); apparently this is quite par for the course with his management, but it drove me crazy. Those of you who know me well will understand! The real crunch came when we were told at the eleventh hour that the full group of 95 singers was expected to rehearse at 2.30 on the day (a Thursday!); I told them very firmly indeed that this was an impossible demand and we got by with a surprisingly well-balanced group of fifty-one, which proved to be quite sufficient.

With less than a week to go, the powers that be had decided that our special contribution should be the Triumphant Entry from Verdi's *Aida*, which we duly practised, only to find at the concert rehearsal that the section for the tenors and basses had been cut - without telling us! However, our efforts in the evening were much appreciated, applauded and cheered by the huge audience (especially our solo spot) and both the conductor Michael Reed and Bill said in e-mails to me later the same week that they look forward to working with the choir again 'when an opportunity arises'.

Noreen Ayton



Rehearsing in the afternoon with Mike Reed conducting the Royal Philharmonic

The Guildford Philharmonic Choir will be singing with Russell Watson again on 27th April 2002 at the Brighton Centre. Approximately 85 members will be participating in this concert.

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SNIPPETS:

- Sir Robert Helpman was asked for a comment after the New York opening of the Musical *'Oh Calcutta'* (one of the first shows with scenes of nudity). He said "The trouble with nude dancing is that not everything stops when the music stops".
- Swans sing before they die - 'twere no bad thing should certain persons die before they sing' Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 - 1834) Epigram on a Volunteer Singer'.

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CONCERT NEWS

ORB & SCEPTRE

On the 6th April 2002 the Guildford Philharmonic Choir, Orchestra and soloists, performed a special concert to a full audience in Guildford Cathedral to celebrate Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee Year. This carefully planned concert programme could have foundered with the sad death of the Queen Mother at 101 the previous weekend.

In the event, Canon Maureen Palmer's carefully chosen introductory words, followed by a minute's silence, led perfectly into the very quiet opening of Britten's superb setting of the National Anthem, making a compellingly moving start to the evening. 'Zadok the Priest' followed immediately after the climactic end of the Anthem, and set the tone for the rest of the programme. The emotional atmosphere was held to the last notes of the "Land of Hope and Glory" theme from Elgar's seldom heard 'Coronation Ode'

This was a magnificent evening and a fitting musical tribute to commemorate Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee

S.J

ORB and SCEPTREAFTER-THOUGHTS.!



What a great concert this was, and what a treat to sing to a full house! Tell your friends, and family about its success.

Let's make a big effort to make this happen again for our future concerts -enthusiasm is infectious!

Our next concert in May will be even better! We need to advertise our concerts to ensure that we get a good audience every time

1. Distribute all publicity material as widely as you can.
2. Take the time to send handbills to anyone who may be interested
3. Offer to get tickets for them
4. Invite them to coffee after the concert.
5. Tell them about the next concert!

Alan Batterbury

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'MESSIAH'

On the 3rd November 2001 we performed Handel's Messiah in Guildford Cathedral. The following is part of the review written in the Surrey Advertiser:

'Handel did not need fireworks.....'

.....Jeremy Backhouse brought out the Baroque dance feel to the music, encouraging a light, fast, bouncy attack from the choir and from the excellent Brandenburg Sinfonia. The choir was noticeably more confident in the second half and the chorus *Since by Man Came Death* admirably showed off their command of the atmosphere, phrasing, dynamics and diction. *Worthy is the Lamb* was an impressive climax.

This elegant and quite polished performance deserved a better audience, and it definitely deserved to be heard free from Guy Fawkes interference.'

Jane Garrett Surrey Advertiser, 9th November 2001

COMING SOON -

'ELIJAH'

by Felix Mendelssohn

Guildford Philharmonic Choir

with

Forest Philharmonic Orchestra

in

Guildford Cathedral

25th May 2002 at 7.00 pm

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)

The German composer, Felix Mendelssohn was one of the most naturally gifted musicians of the nineteenth century, developing his skill to a high degree while still a boy. Although he grew up surrounded by Romantic influences, his inspiration was essentially Baroque and Classical music, which his compositions reflect. He was a Romantic chiefly in his skillful use of literary and other stimuli; his Classical inclinations led him to embody these in music of traditional form and elegance.



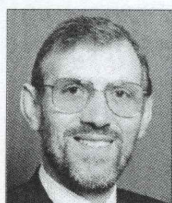
'Elijah' was first performed in Birmingham, 26th August, 1846. It was one of the three oratorios written by Mendelssohn. Motivated by the religious dissention occurring at that time in Berlin, Mendelssohn focused on a similar conflict that took place in Judea during Elijah's time over the divinities Jehovah and Baal.

from notes published by the Handel & Haydn Society

MORE SNIPPETS:

- 'Classical Music is the kind we keep hoping will turn into a tune.' - Kim Hibbard (1868 - 1930)
- Music is a beautiful opiate, if you don't take it too seriously.' Henry Miller (1891 - 1980)
- 'Convicts are the best audience I ever played for'. Johnny Cash (1932—)

THE BLACK ART OF CONCERT PLANNING



As Treasurer, my principal responsibilities are for the financial aspects of concert planning, but I will take you through some of the other aspects of concert planning.

The first stage is to book a venue. Every June/July there is a meeting at the Cathedral where the various choirs and orchestras bid for slots for TWO years ahead. Naturally, everyone wants a Saturday evening in November, March and May because these months tend to give adequate rehearsal time when starting the season in September.

The result is that we frequently get unsuitable dates

The next stage is to identify a programme, an orchestra and soloists. Jeremy does this in consultation with your Committee.

In the meantime your Treasurer gathers financial information in order to prepare a budget for each concert. This can be difficult and extra costs often creep out of the woodwork. To reduce the chances of items falling into cracks, we have a standard Excel workbook with spreadsheets with key and minor tasks for each member of the team.

Typical costs are as follows: -

Orchestra and orchestral music	£3,250 to £5,000
Conductor and soloists	£1,750 to £2,350
Publicity	£1,000
Venue and royalties	£1,000
Commission on tickets	£ 250
Staging	£ 360
Programme preparation & printing	£ 350
Organ/piano and player(s)	£ 325 to £1,000

The costs for recent concerts were as follows: -

Sea Symphony	£10,640
Messiah	£ 8,920

These costs vary with the type of musical programme. The cost of soloists is rising. The Cathedral has become our preferred venue but even here we have to pay the Civic Hall 10% plus VAT on every ticket THEY sell. When we sing in the Civic Hall we pay for the venue and 10% plus VAT on EVERY ticket sold. Clearly there is a financial bonus for the Choir members to sell tickets rather than let people use the Civic Box Office.

The Committee then has to consider what to charge for tickets and how many need to be sold to cover our costs. We have to pitch the price so that we are not out of step with the market. Other sources of income are adverts in the programmes and the sale of programmes themselves. Sponsorship can also assist. For example Debenhams sponsored Ghislaine Morgan the Soprano soloist for *Messiah*.

We made a loss of £50 on the Sea Symphony and, disappointingly for such a "cash cow" type of work, a loss of £535 on *Messiah*.

There has been much debate about publicity and both Alan Batterbury and myself believe that excessive expenditure on publicity may be ineffective. The most effective publicity is direct action by members of the Choir. Clearly some programmes are easier to "sell" than others but enthusiasm about what we offer does help. The sad fact is that, with so many groups offering performances in and around Guildford, members of the Choir HAVE to be the main engine for ticket sales. Without this we cannot continue to perform to the standards and with the quality of orchestra and soloists we have come to expect.

B.C.

100 CLUB WINNERS

Bob is also in charge of running the GPC 100 Club. Members of the club pay £12 a year for each share.

Draws are made each month for prizes of £20, £15 and £10, except in June and December when there is a single prize of £100

Month	1st - £20		2nd - £15		3rd - £10	
January	John Trigg	73	Kathy Stickland	18	Rachel Edmondson	98
February	Margaret Dentskevich	54	Geoff Forster	33	Chris Robinson	59
March	Iris Ball	13	Jean Monro	81	Maralyn Wong	80
April	Max New	29	Pamela Woodruffe	7	Michael Dawe	95
May	Gillian Rix	46	Jeremy Backhouse	96	Colin Jameson	60
June	Margaret Dentskevich	54	£100			
July	Bob Bromham	99	Michael Dawe	26	Sue Hinton	78
August	Mike Dudley	4	Tony Macklow-Smith	47	Margaret Parry	79
September	Jane Kenney	88	Kathy Stickland	18	Valerie Wilkins	53
October	Max New	38	Tony Cousins	58	Colin Jameson	60
November	Max New	38	Celia Embleton	27	Roger Barrett	61
December	Michael Dawe	26	£100			
January	Ros Plowright	10	Judy Smith	41	Margaret Tingley	9
February	Ros Plowright	10	John Trigg	73	Max New	38
March	Kathleen Aldridge	68	June Windle	21	Michael Dawe	26

FUND-RAISING

It is essential that we keep trying to raise some funds for the choir from within the choir membership, because it enables us, amongst other things, to keep our membership subscription down. With this in mind, we have organised several fund raising events this season so far, and have raised the following amounts.:-

Rehearsal refreshments	£171.60
Foreign Coin Exchange	£100.00
Small Change.	£ 34.00
Christmas Cake Raffle	£ 86.00
Christmas Card Sales	£190.00
Quiz Night.	£226.00



Jackie Alderton

Quiz Night - Report

9th February, 2002

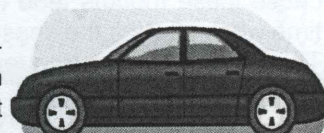


Once again we were able to use the friendly venue of St. Nicolas' Church Hall, Guildford, to hold our Quiz Night, where the brains of Guildford were gathered for an evening of "racking", whilst also enjoying a substantial meal and good company.

Those of you who were unable to come missed a lively and successful evening. We hope you can come to the next one!!!!

Car boot sale

Our next fundraising venture is to sell our collection of goodies at a car boot sale very soon.



Many thanks to those of you who have donated items for sale. My garage has forgotten what its purpose is

It hasn't seen a car for about 5 years now!!
.....I think the expression is "full to the gunwales"!

Finally, thanks to "The Team" (Margaret, Rachel, Mo, Chris, Kate, Mary C Mary B and Norman), for all their willing help in raising funds), and to all those who have bought cards, raffle tickets and who have donated small change, foreign coins etc, it all helps the cause!!!

Jackie Alderton

MEMBERS

NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Since September the following people have joined the G.P.C.:

David Baxter T2	Alison Blenkinsop A2
Tim Keller B1	Carolyn Edis A2
Kieron Walsh B1	Miranda Champion S1
Julia Maitland S1	Ann Sheppard S2
Maggie Smith S2	Angela Hall S2



Alison Blenkinsop

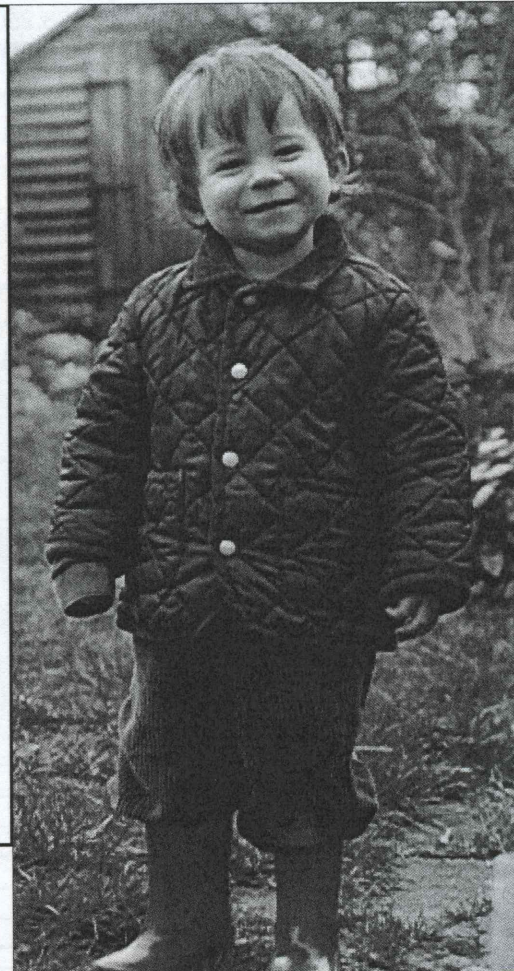
We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all new members of the choir and hope that they enjoy a long and musically rewarding time with us.



Tim Keller

Other folk are soon to take their audition and we wish them all "GOOD LUCK" and look forward to seeing them amongst our number very soon.

(We all dread our regular ordeal by audition, so don't feel you are on your own!!!)



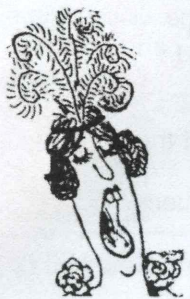
WHO IS THIS LITTLE MAN ?
No prizes for getting the correct answer, but see page 8 to check.

THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO THE CHORUS

In any chorus, there are four voice parts: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Sometimes these are divided into first and second within each part, prompting endless jokes about first and second basses.

Each voice part sings in a different range, and each one has a very different personality. You may ask, "Why should singing different notes make people act differently?"

The fact is that the four voice parts can be easily distinguished, and I will now explain how.



THE SOPRANOS are the ones who sing the highest, and because of this they think they rule the world.

They have longer hair, fancier jewellery, and swishier skirts than anyone else, and they consider themselves insulted if they are not allowed to go at least to a high F in every movement of any given piece.

When they reach the high notes, they hold them for at least half again as long as the composer and/or conductor requires and then complain that their throats are killing them.

Sopranos have varied attitudes toward the other sections of the chorus, though they consider all of them inferior. Altos are to sopranos rather like second violins - not really necessary. Tenors, on the other hand, can be very nice to have around; besides their flirtation possibilities. To sopranos, basses are the scum of the earth - they sing too loud and are useless to tune to because they are in that low, low range.



THE ALTOS are the salt of the earth - in their opinion, at least.

Altos are unassuming people, who would wear jeans to concerts if they were allowed to.

Altos are in a unique position in the chorus in that they are unable to complain about having to sing either very high or very low, and they know that all the other sections think their parts are pitifully easy. But the altos know otherwise. They know that while the sopranos are screeching away on a high A, they are being forced to sing elaborate passages full of sharps and flats and tricks of rhythm, and nobody is noticing because the sopranos are singing too loud (and the basses usually are, too).

Altos get a deep, secret pleasure out of conspiring together to tune the sopranos flat. Altos have an innate distrust of tenors, because the tenors sing in almost the same range and think they sound better.

Altos' other complaint is that there are always too many of them and so they never get to sing really loud.



THE TENORS are spoiled. That's all there is to it. For one thing, there are never enough of them, and choir directors would rather sell their souls than let a halfway decent tenor quit. And then, for some reason, the few tenors there are, are always really good - it's one of those annoying facts of life.

So it's no wonder that tenors always get swollen heads. The one thing that can make tenors insecure is the accusation (usually by the basses) that anyone singing that high couldn't possibly be a real man.

In their usual perverse fashion, the tenors never acknowledge this, but just complain louder about the composer being a sadist and making them sing so damn high. No conductor in recorded history has ever asked for less tenor in a forte passage.

Tenors feel threatened in some way by all the other sections. Of course, the tenors would rather die than admit any of this. It is a little-known fact that tenors move their eyebrows more than anyone else while singing.



THE BASSES sing the lowest of anybody. This basically explains everything.

They are stolid, dependable people, and have more facial hair than anybody else.

The basses feel perpetually unappreciated, but they have a deep conviction that they are actually the most important part, despite the fact that they have the most boring part of anybody and often sing the same note for an entire page. They compensate for this by singing as loudly as they can get away with.

Basses are the only section that can regularly complain about how low their part is, and they make horrible faces when trying to hit very low notes. Basses like altos - except when they have duets and the altos get the good part. As for the sopranos, they are simply in an alternate universe which the basses don't understand at all. When a bass makes a mistake, the other three parts will cover him, and he can continue on his merry way, knowing that sometime, somehow, he will end up at the root of the chord..

Anon



A man walked into Boosey & Hawkes, the music publishers, and ordered some sheet music by Schubert. When it hadn't arrived three weeks later he visited the shop again to enquire about his order. The assistant explained the delay may have been that the music was out of print.

On a sudden inspiration, the customer asked to look at the original order.

The assistant had written, not Schubert's "Could I but express in Song?"

.....but Kodaly's "Buttocks Pressing Song"

No wonder the music had not arrived!

(Courtesy of Frank Muir - BBC's My Word)

THE FREIBURG LINK

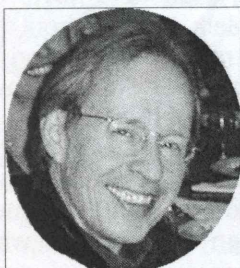
The Choir's link with the Freiburger Bachchor was initiated in 1990 by Kathy Atkins, who was then the manager of the GPO, and Cornelia Grisebach who was already involved with school exchanges.

Freiburg-im-Breisgau is a beautiful medieval town in the Black Forest region of Germany whose mountains and spas are justifiably famous. During visits in either direction, GPC members generally stay with Bachchor members, and vice versa. The warmth and generous hospitality of the Freiburgers is always outstanding. Our trips to Freiburg normally include an excursion to a place of interest in the locality and a superb 'Black Forest' meal.

Many Choir members have established friendships stretching well beyond the simple exchange visits. Since 1990, visits in both directions have been established, with the combined choirs giving the following performances:

- 1990 Guildford Cathedral, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, conducted by Sir Charles Groves.
- 1990 Freiburg Munster, Handel's *Messiah*, conducted by Hans Michael Beuerle (Conductor of the Freiburger Bachchor).
- 1992 Guildford Civic Hall, *Ein deutsches Requiem* by Brahms, conducted by Hans Michael Beuerle.
- 1994 Freiburg Stadthalle, *War Requiem* by Benjamin Britten, conducted by Neville Creed.
- 1996 Guildford Cathedral, *Stabat Mater* by Antonin Dvořák conducted by Hans Michael Beuerle.
- 1998 Freiburg Konzerthaus, '*Israel in Egypt*' by G F Handel, conducted by Jeremy Backhouse.
- 1998 Guildford Cathedral, *St. Matthew Passion*, by J S Bach, conducted by Jeremy Backhouse

From an article written by Norman Carpenter



Hans Michael Beuerle



Jeremy Backhouse



Freiburg Konzerthaus

THE NEXT VISIT

Plans are being made for members of the GPC to visit Freiburg to perform the Dvořák *Requiem* with the Bachchor in Freiburg Konzerthaus on Sunday November 10th 2002 (UK Remembrance Day). This will follow a performance of the work by the GPC in Guildford Cathedral two weeks earlier. The opportunity to take part in this exchange visit is open to any choir member wishing to go.

The usual timetable is for the hired coach to leave Guildford early on the Thursday morning and to return home so as to arrive on the following Monday evening. Most people go on the coach (together with a few spouses), but some go by car and some fly.

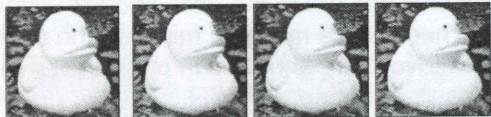
The coach arrives in Freiburg on Thursday evening for an informal reception, after which the visitors disperse, mainly to the homes of their prearranged hosts although a few prefer to stay in a hotel.

On Friday there is usually an (optional) organized excursion during the day and a combined rehearsal with the Bachchor in the evening.

Saturday is free during the day with another rehearsal in the evening.

The final full rehearsal is held on the Sunday morning, with the concert performance in the evening. After the Concert, the Burgermeister of Freiburg attends a formal reception for both Choirs, which is usually also attended by representatives of the Guildford-Freiburg Association..

Stephen Jepson



Answer to the question on page 6:

This is, of course, a photo of young George Backhouse taken just before his 2nd Birthday (16/03/02) - His Dad thinks his smile is as a result of all the tricks he's going to get up to in his Terrible Twos!!

I hope you have enjoyed reading this sixth edition of the GPC Newsletter. We have had a very busy and interesting year with great musical success. Let's work together to make the next one even better!

Margaret Dentskevich (Editor)

If you would like to make any comments or suggestions on this issue, please don't hesitate to contact me on 01483 768 789 or at rehearsal.

Newsletter design and layout are by **Margaret Dentskevich**.

Printing and production are by courtesy of **Alison Rawlinson's** company **ARCS**

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You will find more information on the Choir's Internet Web site <http://www.GuildfordPhilharmonicChoir.org.uk>