

## Report of the Acle and Bure to Yare Benefice Choir 2023-2024.



The choir is directed by Dr Michael Nicholas, well known as a former 'Master of the Music' and Organist at Norwich Cathedral. We are accompanied at the Organ by several fine organists, of whom the most regular is Timothy Patient. We consist of regular singers supplemented by other skilled musicians, some of whom are called in for the very last rehearsal – we are nearly always short of Basses and often of Tenors too. The singers are drawn from a wide area, with just a few actually living in the Benefice, so we are very grateful to those who come, sometimes from a long distance, to make the Choir viable. We usually meet on a Monday evening at Acle, recently substituting the Church Hall, when available, for the church, which is more expensive to heat.

This last year started at Reedham with the St Mark Passion by Charles Wood – a little known work, but well received. This was on Good Friday, sung as part of a devotional service. This was followed on 5<sup>th</sup> May by an Eve of Coronation Service at Acle, when we sang 'Hail, gladdening light' by Charles Wood, Psalm 121 set by Walford Davies, Byrd's 'O Lord, make thy servant Charles our king', Howells' 'Behold, O God our defender', and Forbes L-Estrange's 'The Mountains Shall Bring Peace', a new anthem commissioned by the RSCM to celebrate the Coronation.

After a break over the Summer, we started rehearsing again in Autumn, singing Evensong at Norwich Cathedral on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October – something of an honour as usually visiting choirs only get the Saturday Evensong slot. It was followed by the Carol Service at Acle. It had been planned to take place at Reedham, but an unreliable organ and problems with the leaking roof and possibly crumbling ceiling led to a last-minute relocation to Acle; many thanks to the Acle congregation for welcoming us there. There was a varied selection of choir items, including two pieces arranged by Michael Nicholas, old favourites such as 'A Spotless Rose' & 'Tomorrow shall be my Dancing Day', Bob Chilcot's, 'The Shepherd's Carol', and culminating in the rousing 'Sir Christémas' by William Mathias.

In 2024 we have been travelling outside the Benefice with a visit to St Edmundsbury Cathedral to sing Evensong on 20<sup>th</sup> April; our Anthem was Ireland's 'Greater Love' and we repeated the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in A Minor by Noble we had sung at Norwich. Planned for 12<sup>th</sup> May (yes, I know it is the same day at the Annual Meeting) is a Concert at Great Yarmouth Minster when we will be tackling 'In exitu Israel' by Samuel Wesley, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord' - Purcell, 'Ave Verum Corpus' - Colin Mawby, 'God is gone up' - Gerald Finzi, repeating 'Greater Love' and enjoying the wonderful 'Requiem' - Gabriel Faure. Now we just need an audience, so please come along if you possibly can.

We are still benefiting from a sum of money given to the former 'Reedham Quire' for the purchase of music copies, and we also have received generous donations from choir members. Often expenses have been taken from collections at Services, but use of a professional organist, and rehearsal and other performance costs can be quite high. Many thanks to those who have contributed through donations at Services and otherwise.

Thanks are due to Kate Ashcroft, who brings her electric Keyboard to practices – this has made it much easier for the Choir and for Michael. Thanks also to the choir members and their tolerant partners. Many, many thanks to Michael Nicholas who adds this commitment to a very busy 'retirement'; his energy and enthusiasm are amazing.

Kati Cowen, Choir librarian, Mistress of the Robes and general factotum.