NOTES

GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL

Lent Term 2025

Girl choristers at St Catherine's school, Bramley

Out and About

As part of our commitment to sing Choral Evensong in the Diocese each term, members of the Cathedral Choir visited Esher Parish Church this Lent Term for a very special service on Women Composer Sunday. Accompanied by George and Katherine, the boy choristers and lay clerks received a wonderfully warm welcome and sang to a capacity congregation.

The music for the evening celebrated the work of female composers, with Joanna Forbes L'Estrange's Responses, Cheryl Frances-Hoad's Merton Service, and Judith Weir's setting of Vertue.

A particular highlight of the service was the introit, *Radiance*, composed by Theo, a student parishioner at Esher. It was a joy to include a piece so closely connected to the church community and to share in the rich tradition of Evensong together.

In March, our talented girl choristers took part in the annual St Catherine's residential, which culminated in a truly memorable concert on Saturday 1 March.

Over the course of two days, the choristers immersed themselves in rehearsals, team-building activities, and even found time for a

fun group face mask session with the Sub-Organist and Organ Scholar! A particular highlight of the weekend was a beautifully reflective Compline by candlelight, bringing a sense of calm and contemplation amidst the busyness.

The final concert was a triumph, showcasing the hard work and musical dedication of our young singers. The programme featured a rich variety of repertoire—from Parry's dramatic *Long Since in Egypt's Plenteous Land* (with poised solo recitatives by Freya and Annie), to contemporary gems such as Cecilia McDowall's *Bless Me to This Day* and Ellen Wang's *There is a Place I Know*.

The evening also celebrated individual musical talents, with outstanding vocal solos accompanied by Peter Hicks on double bass, Bella (chorister) on double bass, and Ella on cello.

It was a weekend full of music, laughter, learning, and friendship—a shining example of the vibrant choral life we're so proud to nurture here at Guildford Cathedral.

Boy choirsters at Esher Parish

'A fun face mask session'

Girl choristers at St Catherine's school, Bramley

Multi Talented

We love to celebrate the talents of our musicians. We were delighted to be able to present a huge range of talent from our girl choristers on Sunday 16 March, who brought their instrumental skills to a post Eucharist showcase. The informal concert included pieces on saxophone, piano, cello and flute with pieces up to Grade 8 standard! Pieces included Chopin *Prelude in E minor*, Degg *Ballade in Eb minor for saxophone*, *The Lord is My Shepherd* harmonised by David Marriot, and Haydn *Cello Concerto No.1: 1st Movement.*

The concert was accompanied by our wonderful Sub-Organist Asher Oliver and Organ Scholar George Baldwin, and was a smashing success with a large audience to support including our new Dean, the Very Reverend Bob Cooper.

And for the third year, we were delighted to listen to George Baldwin in the Organ Scholar Coffee Concert in March. With a beautiful programme of carefully selected favourites from his repertoire, George wowed us with music by Gerald Finzi, J S Bach, Percy Whitlock, and Charles-Marie Widor. Coupled with carefully written programme notes, this concert was a joy to listen to.

Sharing the Music

Music is one of the world's greatest treasures - and at Guildford Cathedral, we believe it should be shared as widely as possible. Choral music, in particular, holds a special place in our hearts, yet opportunities for young people to experience it are becoming increasingly rare.
That's why we are committed to helping the next generation discover the joy of singing through our Schools and Colleges Evensong Project. This term, we were delighted to welcome two visiting choirs: Farnborough College on 7 February and Godalming College on 14 March.
At the latter service, our own Changed Voices (former boy choristers who now sing tenor or bass alongside our Lay Clerks) also took part—offering both inspiration and encouragement as older role models for the students.
These collaborations are a key part of our mission to widen access to choral music and ensure its future remains vibrant and inclusive.

Something Special

The Lent Term at Guildford Cathedral has been rich with musical highlights, each one reminding us of the depth of talent, dedication, and joy that music brings to our worship and community life. But amongst these, two moments stood out as truly extraordinary: the Installation of our new Dean, The Very Reverend Bob Cooper, and the powerful Holy Week concert that set the tone for Easter.

The Installation of Dean Bob
Crredit Marie Davey

A Musical Welcome for Dean Bob

On 26 January, we gathered to celebrate the Installation of Dean Bob with a service filled with personal resonance and musical splendour. At its heart was William Walton's *Te Deum*, a work composed for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. Known for its dramatic textures, brilliant brass, and soaring choral lines, this 10-minute piece is one of the greats of 20th-century English liturgical music, and a rare treat to hear live.

Its inclusion was especially significant. Both Walton and Dean Bob hail from Oldham, and Bob vividly remembers the composer visiting his primary school in 1976 to take a school assembly. Even more wonderfully, Bob's great-aunt was Walton's housekeeper. Performing the Te Deum was not only musically thrilling but a deeply personal tribute.

The service also featured music that reflected places and themes from Dean Bob's life and ministry. Stanford's *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in B flat* spoke to his Anglo-Irish heritage, while the Kenneth Leighton *Responses* connected to his many years of service in the Diocese of Wakefield. Judith Weir's *Antiphon*, a setting of George Herbert's *Prayer*, brought a moment of reflection, with Weir's interplay of solo voices and massed chords serving as a kind of musical punctuation.

The service closed in magnificent style with Walton's *Crown Imperial*, performed by our Cathedral Choir and Organ, joined by members of Septura, an ensemble that brought rich brass brilliance to the occasion. Other musical nods to Bob's journey included hymns chosen to reflect significant places in his life: *God of All the Ages* for County Durham, and *Jesu, Lover of my Soul* set to the Welsh tune *Aberystwyth*, marking his university days.

It was a service full of tradition, meaning, and musical joy - a fitting welcome to Dean Bob, and a reminder of how music can honour, uplift, and connect.

Holy Week in Song

Later in the term, on Saturday 12 April, the Cathedral hosted a deeply moving Holy Week concert, bringing together our choristers, professional soloists, and a full orchestra to present *Holy Week*, a modern Easter Oratorio by composer Chris Wood. This powerful retelling of the Easter story in music and narration captivated the audience and was a fundraising event in aid of Music on the Hill, supporting the future of music at the Cathedral.

The programme also included Lenten favourites: Lotti's *Crucifixus à 8*, Allegri's *Miserere Mei*, Barber's *Agnus Dei*, and Tavener's *Funeral Ikos*. Each piece added its own layer of reflection and beauty, and the concert as a whole showcased the dedication of our musicians—especially impressive given their full commitments across Holy Week and Easter.

One audience member summed it up perfectly:

"It was a fantastic concert – beautiful music throughout and a wonderful telling of the very moving story of Easter in music and song. Well done to all involved and thank you!"

Holy Week Concert
Credit Nicola Pratt

Showcasing Women Composers

This Lent Term, the Cathedral marked International Women's Day with a special focus on music by female composers. Throughout February and March, our organists presented a month-long series of organ voluntaries, each showcasing the rich and often underrepresented legacy of women in composition. These post-service performances featured works by Louise Farrenc, Nadia Boulanger, Cecilia McDowall, Fanny Mendelssohn, Ethel Smyth, and others, highlighting both historic and contemporary voices. The series culminated on Women Composer Sunday (9 March), when services were enriched by music written exclusively by women. It was a joyful and inspiring celebration of the talent, diversity, and contribution of women to the world of sacred music.

The King of the Instruments

The organ is a truly magnificent instrument, so vast and powerful that it can only be housed in grand buildings like our Cathedral. In the hands of a single musician, it can evoke the sound of a full orchestra, thanks to its many stops, multiple keyboards, and the skillful coordination of hands and feet.

Far more than just a background instrument, the organ adds depth and dignity to the Cathedral's worship and ceremonial life. It accompanies our choirs, provides stirring solo performances, and offers musical punctuation to processions, graduations, and state occasions. It even fills those moments of sacred stillness that call for reverent sound rather than silence.

Our main organ began its life in Rosse Street Baptist Church, Shipley, Yorkshire. Originally built around 1866 as a three-manual instrument, it was expanded in 1899 into the four-manual organ we know and treasure today.

If you look up, you'll see the console, where the organist plays, on the south side above the choir. The pipes are on the north side, split into two sets: one above the choir, and another above the Regimental Chapel. In total, the organ contains over 4,000 pipes, ranging from just a few centimeters to an impressive 16 feet tall.

This instrument is very much in daily use: it's our main accompanying instrument for services and choir rehearsals, a vital teaching tool for up-and-coming organists, and a key part of our musical life. With that level of use, it's no surprise that the organ occasionally needs a little TLC.

At the moment, we're investigating issues such as ciphering (when a note sticks and continues to play) and non-functioning notes, including middle C on the solo division, one of the organ's four keyboards. Repairing this means accessing specific pipes, which involves removing others to reach them - no small task! This work will likely take a few days.

So, if you happen to spot people working on the organ over the coming weeks or months, rest assured, they're simply ensuring that this remarkable instrument continues to serve and inspire everyone who worships, sings, or listens at Guildford Cathedral.

On the Road

Choir Tour

For the first time since 2019, Guildford Cathedral Choir is going on tour!

The Diocese of Guildford and the Diocese of Viborg in Denmark have an established link that has been growing over many years. This has seen pilgrimages from Viborg visit Guildford Cathedral. So when deciding on a good destination for our choir tour, Viborg seemed a fantastic choice.

Once the choir term at the Cathedral has finished, some of our choristers, lay clerks, chaperones and organists are heading to Denmark. From Monday 7 to Saturday 12 July, our musicians will be singing, exploring and generally having fun. What a wonderful way to end the academic year!

If you happen to be in Viborg on Tuesday 8 July, the choir will be singing in Viborg Cathedral at 5pm. And on Friday 11 July they will be singing in Trinitas Kirche, Copenhagen at 4.30pm.

I am sure you join with us in wishing our musicians a safe and fun-filled trip.

Organist on the Road

As well as keeping the Cathedral musicians in check, Katherine has a busy schedule of engagements elsewhere too. Over the next couple of weeks, alongside finishing the choir term and preparing for the choir tour, Katherine will also be performing three solo recitals.

- Saturday 7 June: Organ Study Day for the Royal College of Organists, part of their 'Play the Organ Year' iniative where she will lead two workshops on female organ composers and perform a recital at the Royal Hospital School in Ipswich
- Saturday 14 June: 50th Anniversary Organ Recital at St Mary's Church, Ewell. 7.30pm (suggested donation £10)
- Tuesday 1 July: Beaminster Festival Lunchtime Organ Recital at St Mary's, Beaminster. 11.30am (£12, tickets available online)

A Daring Descent

Looking ahead, on 14 June, four of our musicians will be abseiling down the Cathedral Tower to raise money for the music of Guildford Cathedral.
Team Music consists of two lay clerks, Ollie Turner and Fraser Ellson, Organ Scholar George Baldwin, and Liturgy Administrator Carolyn Howard-Jones. They will be climbing 249 steps up the tower together, and then one by one will abseil 160ft down, taking in the views on the way. We're hoping for good weather!

If you would like to sponsor them, or you know someone who would, you can either donate online: https://guildfordcathedral.enthuse.com/pf/team-music
or contact Karen or Nicola at fundraising@guildford-cathedral.org, or pop in the office and speak to us.

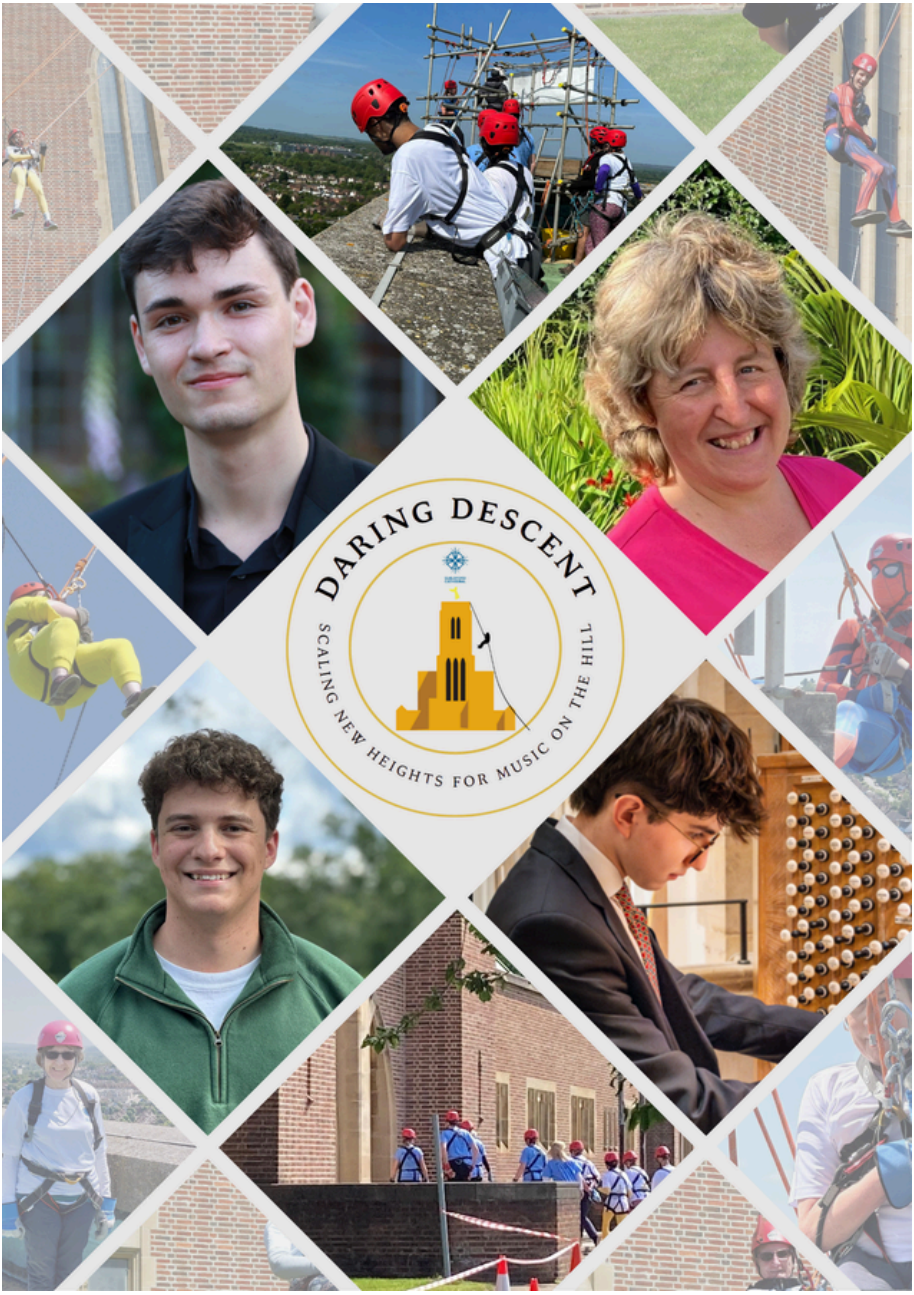
Each of the team has their own reasons for wanting to support Music on the Hill. Fraser and Carolyn wrote about why they were undertaking this challenge:

Fraser Ellson - Lay Clerk
Hi, I'm Fraser, one of the Lay Clerks at Guildford Cathedral. Luckily, I seem not to have a fear of heights and I am looking forward to abseiling off of the Cathedral. The Choral tradition of our Cathedrals is very important to me and as a Choral Director for the National Schools Singing Programme in Surrey, getting children enjoying their singing and engaging with music is equally as important. Aside from music, most that know me would agree, I bore them with inane conversation about cars, cathedral colleagues included!
I am taking part in this event to help preserve the excellent music provision at this Cathedral. I have been here for two years now, and have no intention of leaving soon, it is simply brilliant here! The repertoire is rewarding, and most importantly you can see first hand the impact singing in this choir has on the choristers in it, and those that take part alongside it in our 'Evensongs Project'.

Carolyn Howard-Jones - Liturgy Administrator
Having worked for 8 years in the music department at the Cathedral, I'm genuinely in awe of all that my team achieve in making wonderful music for hundreds of services and a fair few concerts. The amount of sweat, blood (figuratively!) and tears that go into the work of music at the cathedral is second to none. It raises you up, the end result of planning, rehearsing, and upholding high standards of output. Hence the reason to fundraise for music and KEEP IT GOING!

TEAM MUSIC

Fraser, Carolyn, George and Ollie



Alumni Spotlight

My nine years as a chorister remain some of the most rewarding and cherished experiences of my life. I joined Guildford Cathedral Girls' Choir at the age of nine while still in junior school, before moving to St Catherine's, Bramley, for senior school. As a probationer, I was in awe of the older girls and thrilled to be part of such an inspiring and talented group of young women.

Some of my favourite moments include the tradition of 'Tuesday News,' Midnight Mass each year, our unforgettable St Catherine's residentials, and, of course, the incredible experience of representing Guildford in the Young Chorister of the Year competition.

Thanks to the outstanding musical education I received as a chorister, I am now in my second year studying classical singing at the Royal Academy of Music, and I'm still singing in a choir every Sunday!

I owe so much to Katherine, Paul, Richard, and Asher, who were instrumental in shaping my musical journey, teaching me nearly everything I know about music and singing. Their guidance and encouragement played a huge role in my decision to pursue a career in music. Being a chorister instilled in me values of respect, discipline, and kindness, and the friendships I made at Guildford Cathedral Choir will last a lifetime.

Dates for your diaries

Sunday 1 June
Boy choristers informal concert 11am
A free concert performed for you by our boy choristers following the 9.45 Cathedral Eucharist

Sunday 8 June
Patronal Eucharist for Pentecost 10.30am

Saturday 14 June
Cathedral Abseil 2pm
Come and support Team Music abseiling to raise funds for Music on the Hill

Sunday 15 June
Choral Evensong at Holy Trinity, Guildford 6pm

Tuesday 24 June
Open night for girl choristers 6.30pm

Sunday 29 June
Organ Scholar Valedictory Concert 3pm
George Baldwin performs his final concert, showcasing his work this year

Sunday 6 July
Choral Evensong with Valediction of Choristers 6pm

Saturday 20 December 2025
John Rutter Christmas Celebration
Save the date!

GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL

SAVE THE DATE

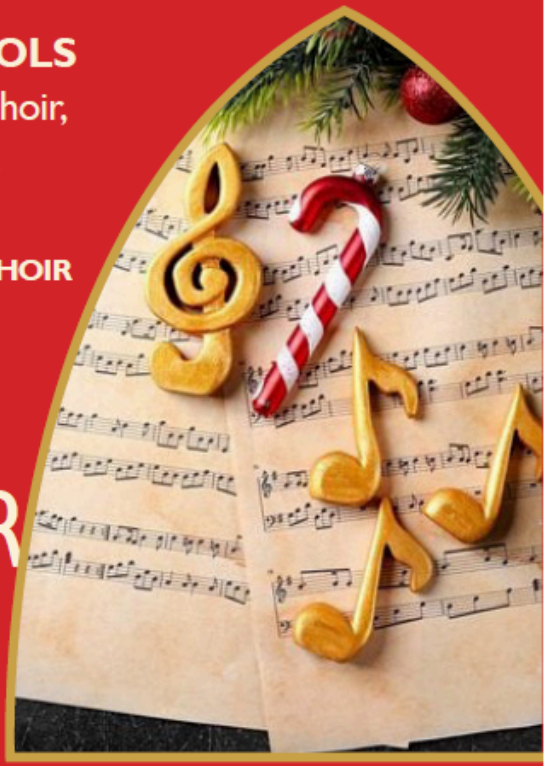
John Rutter's

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

in Guildford Cathedral

A FESTIVAL OF CAROLS

and Christmas music for choir, brass, organ and audience.



GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL CHOIR

CONDUCTORS

John Rutter and
Katherine Dienes Williams

SATURDAY

20 DECEMBER

7.30pm

BOOKING OPENS SOON!

www.guildford-cathedral.org