

# The Baroque Singers

[www.baroquesingers.co.uk](http://www.baroquesingers.co.uk)

December 2009

## A busy and exciting time

Welcome to the first ever newsletter of the Baroque Singers. The choir celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2007 and more than 30 years on, going from strength to strength, we felt it was time to trumpet ourselves with an annual publication.

The 2008-2009 season has been a busy and exciting time for the Baroque Singers. In September 2008, the choir gave its first concert of the new term at Michelham Priory in Sussex. We performed a selection of medieval choral music as part of a medieval themed fair. The event had not been highly publicised so we were fortunate to have drummed up a last minute and appreciative audience, consisting mainly of stall holders!

The choir gave its traditional Christmas concerts in early December 2008. For the first time, we sang in the beautiful surroundings of All Saints', Tudeley. There was a palpable sense of inspiration as the choir performed a selection of festive music, to the stunning backdrop of the famous Marc Chagall windows. For our second December concert we returned to St. Barnabas, Tunbridge Wells. Both concerts were well attended and notable for us giving the first performances of a carol by local composer, Laurie Dunkin Wedd.

In March 2009, we contributed to a German cultural evening at Sevenoaks Museum. On the bill were a selection of German folksongs and Brahms' Lullaby!

In April, we teamed up with Crowborough's Singing for Fun, in a concert at St. Leonards-Mayfield School, to raise funds for a new community arts centre in Mayfield. The success of the event raised over £1,000 towards the project.

We journeyed to St. John's, Groombridge, for our annual May concert. Always a delight to sing in this most beautiful of churches, we have now grown accustomed to the perpetually ticking clock, often out of time with the music we're singing! For our second May concert, at St. Paul's, Rusthall, we were joined by a fully professional orchestra in a concert celebrating birthday boys Handel and Haydn. It was generally agreed that by performing with such fine players, our standards were raised. We are also very grateful to Peter Dutton, our now regular and highly accomplished organist.

The term finished with our triumphant trip to Wiesbaden, Germany (for further information see articles by Heather Styles and Stella Crawford).

*By Mark Mortimer, Music Director*

## **Tunbridge Wells singers royally received in Wiesbaden**

In March this year the Baroque Singers, from Tunbridge Wells, took part in a celebration of German culture in the nearby town of Sevenoaks. Two months later nine choir members and their Music Director went one step further by visiting Tunbridge Wells' twin town of Wiesbaden, in south west Germany.

The centre of musical activity for the venture was the Church of St. Augustine of Canterbury, an Anglican/Episcopal church with a multinational congregation. The visitors were hosted by members of the church congregation throughout their stay.

Their visit, from Friday 22nd to Monday 25th May, coincided with the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Twinning Charter between Tunbridge Wells and Wiesbaden. On the evening of 22nd May the English party was officially welcomed to Wiesbaden with an enjoyable reception at the Neues Rathaus.



The following day, the Baroque Singers joined with singers from Wiesbaden and the surrounding area for a choral workshop at the Church of St. Augustine. The workshop was led by the Baroque Singers' Music Director, Mark Mortimer, and preceded a concert at the church in the evening.

Mr Mortimer mentioned that this year is the 200th anniversary of the death of George Frideric Handel, who was born in Halle, Germany. The concert included a performance of Handel's 'Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened'. The programme also encompassed madrigals by John Dowland, Thomas Morley and John Wilbye; Anton Bruckner's motet 'Locus Iste'; 'O Taste and See' and 'The Turtle Dove' by Ralph Vaughan Williams; and John Ireland's 'The Hills'.

On 24th May, the Baroque Singers took up an invitation from Choir Director, Ivan Williams, to sing with the Church of St Augustine choir at the Sunday morning service. The visitors then spent the afternoon and evening exploring in and around Wiesbaden, before their homeward journeys on 25th May.



The Baroque Singers' Chairman, Timothy Oyler, said: "We had a great time this year in Germany. I hope our recent visit to Wiesbaden will become the foundation for further musical exchanges. To this end we are exploring the possibility of our Wiesbaden friends coming to Tunbridge Wells to sing with us in 2010 when we can repay the wonderful hospitality we received in Germany and make more beautiful music together."

*By Heather Styles, choir member*

## **A few days in Wiesbaden**

On 22nd May I arrived in Wiesbaden at around 1.00pm. It was a warm sunny day. I sipped a latte outside a cafe and watched people passing by.

Later I met up with Heather and our host, Kathy, collected us. We were accommodated by her South African family. She was very pleasant and the house was lovely.

Later, the choir gathered at the Rathaus (City Hall) as guests of the Mayor of Wiesbaden. The

champagne flowed and it was an excellent start to the weekend! After speeches, we were invited to enjoy the view from a balcony looking over a large cobbled area with attractive buildings in the centre of Wiesbaden.

A group of us had a meal afterwards. It was a memorable evening.

On 23rd May, we had a workshop in the morning at the church. It went well. About 12 singers from Wiesbaden joined us. After the rehearsal, it was still sunny, so I decided to visit a park.

The concert went very well. We received a warm round of applause. A group of us went to a restaurant nearby afterwards. It was warm, so we were able to eat outside which was pleasant.

On 24th May, feeling unwell, I did not make it to the church in the morning. Our choir was joining the local choir in a service. I felt better by lunchtime and joined others in the grounds of the Kurhaus. We listened to a jazz singer.





We wanted to see some sights. We went to see the Kochbrunnen. It is here that 15 different springs meet. In the 19th century, it was the focal point of all those who had come to take the Wiesbaden waters. Another al fresco meal in the evening - I could get used to this!

On 25th May, I went to the church to say goodbye to those returning home by minibus. Then Kathy dropped me at the station and I began my journey home. I believe that a good time was had by all!

*By Stella Crawford, choir member*



## **An appeal for Friends**

The Baroque Singers is a non-profit making organisation. Concerts are often expensive to put on, including costs for hiring of music and professional instrumentalists.

With effect from 1st January 2010 we are establishing a Friends Scheme. For a donation of £30 per calendar year, you will become a Friend of the Baroque Singers. Your name will be put in our concert programmes and you will be ensuring the future of Tunbridge Wells' premier chamber choir and our ability to put on high quality concerts. We look forward to your support. Please contact Treasurer, Andrew MacLaren, on 01892 514792 or [andrewmac888@hotmail.com](mailto:andrewmac888@hotmail.com)

## **An appeal for new members**

The Baroque Singers is always seeking new members to join its ranks. A love of the classical choral repertoire, some experience of choral singing and quick sight-reading skills are preferred. Please contact Music Director, Mark Mortimer, on 01892 524315 for further details.

## **Concert dates for your diary**

Friday 4th December 2009, 8.00pm: Christmas carols and motets at St. Mary's Church, Leigh.

Saturday 5th December 2009, 7.00pm: Christmas carols and motets at St. Barnabas' Church, Tunbridge Wells.

Saturday 1st May 2010: Concert (venue tba).

Saturday 8th May 2010: Concert at St. Peter's Church, Southborough.