

Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge

Newsletter May 2010

INTRODUCTION

Merger with The Gregorian Association

The proposed merger of The Gregorian Association with The Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge was voted upon and approved at the recent AGM of The Gregorian Association. A merger with the Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge by means of a transfer of the assets and liabilities of the Association to the Schola were confirmed in order that the Association may be dissolved as a registered charity.

The Gregorian Association began in 1870 with the aim of improving the standard of singing in the Church of England through plainchant. They achieved their aim very effectively, substantially influencing the content of the English Hymnal, now New English Hymnal, which with the Manual of Plainsong containing the psalms and canticles set to Sarum chant, is still widely used in our cathedrals and larger parish churches. The Gregorian Association has a long and distinguished history, especially as a publisher of plainsong music for the liturgy.

The financial assets that the GA would transfer are substantially more than the outstanding, major liability, which is to pay Peter Wilton to edit a new edition of the Manual of Plainsong in order to include the antiphons proper for daily prayer in accordance with Common Worship, set to traditional (Prayer Book) texts. This is still widely used in cathedrals. He is also editing chant settings of the modern texts as recommended in Daily Prayer. The idea is to publish this revised Manual of Plainsong on the internet so that anyone can copy it free of charge. It is therefore proposed that the name "The Gregorian Association" should be retained at least for publication purposes, although it will be made clear that it is a part of The Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge.

There is much in this exciting development for the Trustees of the Schola Gregoriana and our Director, Jeremy White, to discuss, reflect and advise upon, but in the meantime we are delighted to extend a warm welcome to members, associates and life members in their application for membership as Associates of The Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge.

Membership News

The Schola is pleased to welcome Nigel Coulton and Paul Kenyon as Associates.

We record with grateful thanks the contributions of Miss Dorothy Allen, Edward and Mary Tolan, Martin Lightowler and William Knight, who have retired from Associateship.

Sadly, we record the death of Associates Miss Grace Briggs and Mrs. Ruth Chasseaud, as well as that of Timothy Lawford, a friend but not an associate in recent years.

EVENTS SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER

A novice's reflection on the Ushaw Weekend

“Once Begun is Half Done”. My First Encounter with the Schola.

The first few steps into a new hobby are always the hardest. Like walking into the dark, every stride involves unknown outcomes. Surprises may not be a good thing, and in many ways it seems that by going on a residential weekend I was making a leap rather than a step. I had no idea what to expect at Ushaw College. Attracted by second-hand information, I found a website that was up to date and appeared welcoming of beginners. I clarified the level of my ignorance in an email, and received a fast and friendly response. I was due to attend a three day gathering with people I did not know on a subject I liked but knew little about. I had never done anything comparable, but I thought that no matter what, I would have some interesting stories to tell later.

As the day loomed nearer, so many questions emerged. Much depends on perception. A central question is just how much the subject appeals. When considering activities that involve others, the issue is a little more complicated. Roughly formatted: do I like the other people who like the thing that I like? My budding interest in Gregorian chant began years ago. But really, aside from listening and learning a little notation, there was never any scope for formal training. I would not say that my voice was trained. I am well aware that in many respects I would have to know more before I would be considered a beginner! The real issue becomes, can a specialist group tolerate me? While I cannot answer this last question definitively, I can answer the other questions easily. My first experience with The Schola Gregoriana was a step into the unknown. I did not encounter any obstacles, and by the end of the weekend I was more confident. At no time was I in the dark.

The people I met were uniformly friendly and helpful. They came from a wide cross-section of backgrounds and held a common interest. The intense nature of the course could be daunting if not for the fact that there was no competition. I felt I could explore at my own pace. It was like a smorgasbord of Gregorian chant. I was totally exhausted at the end of the first day. I enjoyed the great food and the spacious room at the college, but my strongest memory was the music. I felt really able to understand the music when exposed to it in an intensive way. Overwhelming yes, but for me the music became even more beautiful. Participation really opens vistas. Perhaps instead of taking a leap in the dark, I felt the exhilaration of climbing a mountain. When I reached the top I could look down and see the path I had crossed, but really I know that for most people at the weekend it was only an anthill. In fact I have much further to go, but I very much look forward to the journey.

Murray Eiland

Gregorian Chant Network, Saturday 30th January 2010 (meeting arranged under the auspices of the Latin Mass Society)

A meeting took place at the London Oratory at the end of January to launch a new initiative, the Gregorian Chant Network. Several members of the Schola Gregoriana attended, including Bernard Marriott, Alan Henderson and Christopher Hodkinson. Currently informally constituted, the objective of the Network is to forge ties and enable collaboration between the various individuals, groups and organisations that sing and promote chant in the UK. Other organisations currently involved include the Latin Mass Society, the Association for Latin Liturgy, Una Voce Scotland and the St Catherine's Trust.

Much of the groundwork for the meeting was undertaken by Joseph Shaw, chairman of the Latin Mass Society, who introduced the meeting and led a debate on the organisation's potential objectives and activities. The composer Colin Mawby, formerly Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, also addressed the meeting, giving a very informative introduction to conducting techniques for chant and to his personal philosophy of sacred music. After a further period of discussion the day concluded with Vespers, sung by the participants in the Little Oratory.

One of the most valuable results of the meeting was to bring many people from all over the country into contact with one another, and this will certainly result in a number of productive collaborations in the coming months. A website (www.gregorianchantnetwork.org) has also been launched which will serve a useful function in publicising choirs, events and resources.

Christopher Hodkinson

Associates' Winter Weekend, Hawkstone Hall, Shrewsbury, Feb 5-7th February

This weekend was held at Hawkstone Hall, an early 18th Century grade 1 listed Georgian mansion, now belonging to the Redemptorists of the London province. It is difficult to know where to start in describing the weekend: the drive up to the beautiful and imposing building; the welcome from guest mistress Sister Laurice; the realization that the stunning public rooms were at our disposal; the incredible carvings of alabaster, marble and wood; the gilt decoration of the elaborate plaster work; the modern and comfortable bedrooms; the apparently endless supply of coffee, tea and biscuits; the wonderful gardens. All this, and more, was ours for the weekend.

Having had coffee and tea we went to the (at that time warm) chapel to rehearse for the Requiem Mass for Benefactors in the New Rite followed later in the evening by Compline (New Rite). Bernard Marriott had, with forethought, brought cases of red and white wine and a brisk trade took place in the bar so that those who wished to chat and drink until late in the evening on both days could do so.

Saturday saw us singing Mass for St Paul Miki and Companions (early Japanese martyrs) in the New Rite and later rehearsing for Vespers and Sunday Mass, Vespers being of the Saturday before Sexagesima (Usus Antiquior).

The Saturday evening talk on "*The chant in our parishes as it was, is and could be*" was given by Christopher Hodkinson, who was also one of our cantors.

This erudite exposition was followed by questions and meant that Compline did not start until after 10.00pm! This, however, did not prevent people continuing to enjoy the contents of Bernard's bottles for some considerable time after.

Sunday saw some of us in the chapel at 8.00am for Anglican Communion before breakfast. Rather later than intended, a breathless Andrew Macintosh rushed into the chapel saying "Put not your trust in sat navs . . ." as he and his wife had been directed to the wrong (locked) gate and had had to drive round the outside of the grounds looking for a way in. As usual, he gave us a thoughtful service which led us quietly into the rest of Sunday.

Rehearsals followed and we assembled for our final Mass (of Sexagesima Sunday), offered as were all our services by our honorary chaplain Father Guy Nicholls.

This gives the outline – but there is more. Jeremy and Philip had decided that the way forward was to introduce a more relaxing programme which I am sure was enjoyed by us all. We had time to drink coffee and chat, we had time to walk in the gardens –we had time. This meant that we sang well because we were not rushed. We sang some chant chosen for its simplicity, which enabled us to feel the music rather than looking too hard at the notation. What a joy this approach proved to be as we were not too tired to give our whole minds and hearts to our singing.

Philip's direction was just what was needed, and to our amazement culminated in our giving a very reasonable performance of polyphony when we sang Orlando di Lasso's 'Perfice gressus' during our last Mass. Had an outsider been present at the rehearsals he or she would never have believed that we would finally all start and finish together and get the right notes and time in between! A great success.

So our thanks: to Grey for finding such a wonderful, peaceful location for us; to the staff of Hawkstone Hall who provided such a glorious and immaculate setting, a friendly welcome and incredible amounts of food for our delectation; to Helen for being mistress of the keys and labels; to Barb and Ron for their quiet efficiency (we will miss them very much when they return to America in the summer, but send our best wishes for all that they do in the future); to Bernard for being 'liturgical supremo' and master of the wine; to Father Guy and to Andrew for their untiring and inspiring

work on our behalf; to all our cantors who sang so beautifully and enabled us to start on the right note; and last but certainly not least to Jeremy and Philip.

We have been very blessed that they took on the task of following Mary and in doing so put their own stamp on the Schola, taking us forward in an inspiring and joyful way. Roll on August and our summer weekend when once again we shall sing joyfully to the Lord and enjoy the fruits of the earth (especially the vine).

Mary Rose Kearney

Holy Week 2010 in Dorchester-on-Thames

Once again, at the invitation of the parish priest, Fr John Osman, a group of us sang the services of Holy Week in the delightful setting of the church of St Birinus in Dorchester-on-Thames.

Christopher Hodkinson led the group in all of the services: Tenebrae each morning from Thursday to Saturday, the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Good Friday Liturgy, the Paschal Vigil, Easter Day Mass and the Vespers and Benediction, and Mass on the Monday. With rehearsals in between, we must have sung for over thirty hours!

All this intensive musical work gave us (or at least those younger than your correspondent) the extensive appetite needed to consume the wonderful meals provided for us in the presbytery, most of which were brought in by kind parishioners. The toffee puddings were particularly sticky on the diaphragm!

On Easter Monday Fr John was joined by Fr Guy Nicholls and Br Lawrence Lew to celebrate High Mass using the old rite. As well as the chant of the propers, we sang polyphonic settings, including the Tallis *Mass for Four Voices* and the *Alleluia Surrexit Dominus vere* by Jacquet de Mantua. This was a fine service and a fitting end to a very uplifting celebration of Easter.

Finally, a big thank you to Fr John and the parishioners, who provided accommodation and meals, and above all a warm and appreciative welcome!

Paul Rouse

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 22nd 2010 Dedication of Mary's Memorial stone at Dorchester A headstone has been designed and commissioned by the Trustees, to carry an inscription written in Latin with the help of Dr Mary Smallwood, and this will be unveiled and dedicated with ceremony at St Birinus, Dorchester, where Mary was laid to rest in 2008.

May 29th 2010 Gregorian Workshop at the Inner Temple presented by The Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge. This promises to be a grand and large-scale event in the glorious surroundings of the Temple Church in London which will consist of study and preparation for a culminating 1st Vespers of Trinity Sunday. Included will be chants from the Templars' own breviary recalling their Foundation of this Church in

1185 from the forthcoming CD [*To be launched after Vespers Ed.*] and diversions such as a brief tea-time organ recital on the fine organ of the Temple Church,. There will be the opportunity to stay on for a celebratory dinner in the Hall after Vespers, to be sung by all participants of the Workshop. The Workshop is open to beginners and more experienced singers alike. The day will be conducted by Jeremy White and Philip Duffy, both expert teachers of the Chant.

The fees for the day are £35 for the day (£25 for students). The dinner (£50) is optional. Free parking will be provided.

For booking and more information: www.scholagregoriana.org and click on Events or ring 01223-263063

July 10th 2010 Templar Heritage Weekend at Henley-on-Thames We have received an invitation from the Templar Association to make some contribution to this event. It is proposed that we shall perform the Matins for the Feast of the Dedication of a Church as given in the Templars Jerusalem Breviary (c.1240) in its complete form with all three nocturns, as an event at which people can quietly come and go (about an hour and a half), and later a selection from the disc recorded last year.

August 27th-29th 2010 Associates' Summer Weekend at Sarum College, Salisbury Details are still being finalised. Once they have been, Associates will as usual receive invitations under separate cover.

September 4th 2010 Chant Day at Durham (to coincide with St Chad's Benedictine Weekend) We are grateful to Associates Tony and Vivien Hyland for proposing and setting in motion what promises to be a most fruitful collaboration. St Chad's College is running a Benedictine Weekend from 3rd-5th September, and this day, to culminate in Vespers in Bishop Tunstall's Chapel in the Castle (the chapel of University College, the Cathedral being unavailable) will form an event within that event. Clearly there will be an opportunity for cross fertilisation in the other direction as well, and Associates may wish to attend the rest of the weekend. This group may have the opportunity to foregather again in **November** to help celebrate the 850th anniversary of the consecration of **St Margaret's Church, Durham** (1160) with a Mass according to the rite in use at that date. This would probably be a Saturday/Sunday event, to include a workshop/rehearsals and Vespers on the Saturday afternoon.

Saturday, November 27th 2010 St Mary's Church, Stamford, Lincolnshire

Following the success of earlier workshops led twice by Christopher Hodkinson, and before that by Mary Berry, plans are in hand for the Schola Gregoriana of Stamford to host a Workshop featuring Chant for Advent and Christmas followed by a short Concert of Seasonal Music accompanied by projected illustrations of Stained Glass Windows which will be briefly introduced. All are welcome, to either or both of Workshop and Concert.

For further information: www.scholagregoriana.org and click on Events, or contact The Administrator, Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, 01223-263063

The Dedication of the Temple – CD by Cantors and Associates Choir of the SGC.

We had hoped that Brian Johnson at Herald Records might have been able to release the disc in Autumn 2009, but the realities of production and sequencing of releases mean that it will now appear on 29th May after Vespers at the Inner Temple Workshop. We have high hopes for the disc, which contains excellent performances and will be handsomely produced, as well as enjoying the prestige of content devised and edited by Dr David Hiley. Furthermore, it will be on sale at the Temple Church where it was recorded (and which receives many visitors and tourists) and has aroused the interest of the Templar Association

PERSONAL VIEW

The Origins of Chant

Last autumn the Clerks' Group toured the country with a programme entitled "Qudduson", an amazing programme which featured Coptic and Asyriac chant from Christian traditions earlier than our own Gregorian. Alongside the six core members of the Clerks' Group were three expert practitioners; George Qas-Barsoum, who has enjoyed a long and active history with the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch practising the Edessan school of Syriac chant, one of the oldest known Christian chant traditions; Merit Ariana Stephanos, a Coptic Egyptian / German composer and singer with groups such as Joglaresa; Al Farabi and her own Arabic/Jewish group Jaljala, and one of the great singers of Arabic chant; Abdul Salam Kheir, expert amongst other things in Muwashahat (classical Arab song) and long associated with the Dartington International Summer School.

They offered glorious examples of their chant in music which complemented astonishingly the Gregorian or Ambrosian chant and polyphony of the western tradition to which we are well accustomed. The concert comprised five sequences, each one being a mixture of examples of the four traditions, the final one being accompanied in part by the "oud" (the Arabic form of the lute). The wonderfully uplifting final section of the "Halleluia" sequence, where all four traditions were heard simultaneously, revealed what was emerging in our awareness; namely that the four different styles were utterly complementary, especially when sung with such attention to tuning. However, as the Director and originator of the project Edward Wickham made clear, the project was not one which sought to meld the traditions, but to reveal the individual character of each. "Each musical tradition has its own discrete, proud identity, and Qudduson is not intended as a reductive fusion of these distinct elements, nor of the faith traditions that inspire them: but rather as a celebration of the diverse and transcendent qualities of the human voice."

Talking afterwards to Ms Stephanos and Mr Kheir it was fascinating to learn that they would welcome developing projects which linked their own and Gregorian chant. Indeed the impression was given that they were actively seeking them. In the Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge we have, it can be argued, securely established our own identity in our own tradition under Mary's firm and clear guidance over the last three decades. Could we now be in a position to explore connections with (these) other Christian chant traditions, or even with the Arabic and Judaic ones also on offer in the Qudduson project?

Stephen Johnston

In his reply Jeremy White, Director of The Schola Gregoriana stated his view that since there was more than a full-time occupation to be had by the Schola's Directors and Scholars in continuing Mary's vital and pioneering work into the re-invigoration of the chant tradition within the Catholic Church, such a move would most likely dissipate the energies of the Schola. [*The recent amalgamation of the Gregorian Association into the Schola presents a further fascinating and potentially enhancing but time-consuming challenge to our distinctly finite, which must furthermore claim our full attention. Ed.*]. Jeremy further stated that the development of an initiative in this direction would potentially be to duplicate the excellent work of the Clerks Group and others in this area.

2011/2012 – Companion CD for ladies

Our Director, Jeremy White, is planning, together with David Hiley, a CD of chant connected with women's convents which will probably include interesting items such as farced readings from the Fontevault Gradual and some early polyphony from the Las Huelgas MS. This project would take the same form as the Templars project – rehearsals, concert, recording sessions – and would similarly employ some professional lady cantors and a larger group of invited Associates and friends. Equal opportunity is alive and well with the Schola!

Message from the Hon. Treasurer

Associates who do not have Standing Orders for payment of their Annual Subscription are requested to send a minimum of £10 to the Hon Treasurer, Bernard Marriott Esq, 47 Western Park Rd, Leicester
LEICS. LE3 6HQ

Editorial Comment

Contributions (e.g., reviews of events, or Personal Views) by Associates are always very welcome. Please send them by post to: SD Johnston, Hon. Secretary, 93 Scotney Street, Peterborough, PE1 3NE, or, preferably, by email to: stephenduncanjohnston@gmail.com.