



NEWSLETTER

2012



www.escs.org.uk

Contents

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Vice Chairman's Report | 3 |
| Secretary's Report | 4 |
| Treasurer's Report | 7 |
| Conductor's Report | 8 |
| Articles & Recipes | 11-26 |
| Diary Dates | 27 |

Dates For Your Diary

Please put these dates into your diary:

'Last Night of the Croydon Proms'
29th September 2012
Fairfield Halls
Croydon

Choral Workshop
13th October 2012
St. John's Church
Old Coulsdon

Christmas Concert
8th December 2012
United Reformed Church
Caterham

Spring Concert
23rd March 2013
St. John's Church
Old Coulsdon

Summer Concert
29th June 2013
Woldingham Village Hall
Woldingham

Don't forget first rehearsal of the term is Tuesday, 4th September!

Please direct any feedback, comments or suggestions to:
George Feichter, email: george@escs.org.uk

And that is why, for our first twenty years, we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves. For the next forty years, we slave in the sun to provide for our family, after which we spend ten years doing monkey tricks to entertain the grandchildren. Then, for our final ten years, we sit in the front porch and bark at everyone."

So, now life has been explained to you.

There is no need to thank me for this information. I offer it as a public service.

And if you are looking for me, I shall be in the front porch!!

Ian Kennedy

Hiawatha!

Calling all singers to join the **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Centenary Choir** to sing, with orchestra, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. This will be part of a special concert, the penultimate event in a year of celebration of the music of Croydon's most famous 'son'. Coleridge-Taylor lived, worked and died – aged only 37 – in Croydon, but in his short life he was a considerable celebrity both here and abroad, especially in America, and thousands attended the annual performances of *Hiawatha* in the Royal Albert Hall.

Concert Date: Saturday 15th December

Venue: St. John the Evangelist, Norwood Hill, Upper Norwood. The programme will also include Coleridge-Taylor's Violin Concerto in G minor, Op.80, and his Ballad in A minor for orchestra, Op. 33.

Rehearsals: 7.30 on **Thursdays from September 13th** at Clyde Hall, Clyde Road, Croydon CR0 6SZ

Conductor: Jonathan Butcher

Soloist: Stephen Anthony Brown

Contact: Sue Simpson on

✉ sandsimpson@talktalk.net

☎ 01883-347120

Vice Chairman's report:

Thank You Richard!

After three and a half years of dedicated service to the choir as Chairman of ESCS, Richard Broadberry has decided to call it a day. His many and varied commitments are taking up progressively more of his time and he feels he can no longer devote enough of his efforts to being our Chairman and making sure our choral society continues to thrive.

Richard took over as Chairman from Cathy Pearce in September 2008 and was formally elected to the post in January 2009. He had been with the choir from 2001 as a stalwart member of the tenors. He then brought his organising skills to the position of concert manager, ensuring we were all sitting comfortably, smiling and ready for the off as Ian raised his baton...! As Chairman his aim has been to encourage us to be forward looking, making certain our concerts are arranged and organised well in advance and overseeing that finances are in place to bear the steadily rising costs incurred by all choirs. He has also ensured that the committee continues its regular formal meetings and has been fully involved in discussions, planning and decision making so that events can happen smoothly. And throughout, he has continued to act as concert manager!

We are all very glad that Richard will continue to sing with us. Following his successful lecturing commitment in Ireland this summer, he will be busy this autumn too so we may not see as much of him as we would wish, but he will still be with us, supporting the tenors and joining us at our Christmas concert. With luck, he'll still be entertaining us with his Irish songs at our parties too! We owe you a great deal and appreciate all your hard work. So, thank you Richard!

Angela Smith

Secretary's report:

I would like to start my contribution to our summer newsletter by thanking all our members who have shown loyalty to ESCS, by standing by us over a difficult period. We all worked hard to produce the standard we reached at our summer concert, so much appreciated by audience and choir members alike. It was a happy and popular concert, particularly helped by Ian's choice of pieces which included something for everyone. Whilst on the subject of loyalty I would like to record many congratulations on behalf of ESCS to Aldwyn, who has been a member since the choir was formed over 50 years ago. He will celebrate his 90th birthday on September 1st, and is a wonderful role model to us all. Happy birthday Aldwyn!

We are fortunate to have a strong and effective committee, who voluntarily give up so much of their time for the benefit of ESCS. We will be having some changes of personnel from the beginning of the new term. Richard has decided that he has reached a point in his life when he would like to relinquish his post as Chairman, having given sterling service and putting us on track financially. An appreciation of his time as Chairman will appear elsewhere in this newsletter. As we have a particularly busy term coming up, the committee decided unanimously to appoint Melanie as Acting Chairman until the AGM, when it is hoped that she will be elected permanently. She has been in the choir for 26 years and has a wealth of experience and knowledge of ESCS. She has already shown her strengths in communication, forward planning and attention to detail. She is a loyal member and the choir is close to her heart. Angela Smith will remain as Vice Chairman and will also take up the vacant post of Concert Manager. She is happy to fill these 2 roles and has demonstrated her ability and effectiveness in organising us at concerts already. We are very pleased that Penny O'Meara has agreed to take over from Sue Simpson as Friends' Secretary. She is an ideal person for the post, as she has been in the choir for 30 years and has built up a strong knowledge base of friends and members over this period.

A MODERN PARABLE ON CREATION

With little reference to Milton's "Paradise Lost" or Haydn's setting of the seven days of Creation!!

On the first day, God created the dog and said:
"Sit all day at the door of your house and bark at anyone who walks past.
For this barking I shall give thee a life span of twenty years"
The dog said: "That's a long time to be barking. How about we make it ten years and I give you back the other ten?"
And God saw that it was good.

On the second day, God created the monkey and said:
"Do tricks, entertain people, make them laugh and I shall give thee a lifespan of twenty years"
And the monkey said: "Monkey tricks for twenty years? That's a long time to perform. How about I give you back ten years like the dog did?"
And God agreed and saw that it was good.

On the third day, God created the cow and said: "You must spend all day long in the field with the farmer and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer's family. For this, I shall give thee a lifespan of sixty years."
And the cow said: "That's a tough life you want me to lead for sixty years. How about twenty years and I give you back the other forty?"
And God agreed and saw that it was good.

On the fourth day, God created human, male and female, saying: "Eat, sleep, play and enjoy your life. For this I shall give thee twenty years"
But the human said: "Only twenty years? In addition to these twenty, could you possibly give me the forty the cow gave back...and the ten the monkey gave...as well as the ten the dog gave back? That would make eighty in all!"
And God agreed, but replied: "You asked for it!"

Makes about 800ml (most wine bottles 750 ml)

10 1/2 oz (300gm) granulated sugar
1 apple, peeled, cored and finely chopped
8 3/4 oz (250 gm) blackberries
3 cups (750ml) gin

This has a sweeter, mellower flavour than sloe gin. As there was a small "pop" when there jars were opened it is possible that there was natural yeast in the fruits and so further fermentation took place.

1. Put sugar into sterilised kilner jar
2. Add fruit and gin.
3. Seal, label with date and store in dark place.
4. Stir to dissolve sugar (as for sloe gin)
5. After three months bottle as for sloe gin

I am told that whisky, flavoured with blackberries (and probably other fruits) is good too. Not being a whisky drinker, I can't vouch for this.

Jane Tiernan

PS Images of sloes can be found on the internet

In May, Angela Smith kindly organised for a group of us to go to the Albert Hall to sing with massed choirs in a performance of Mozart's Requiem. It is very exhilarating to sing with a large choir and orchestra in such a prestigious venue, so many thanks to Angela for organising our participation in this event.

I would like to record our thanks to Sachiko and her family, Angela Balfour and Jane Tiernan et al for organising and contributing to the wonderful day we had at Anne of Cleves Palace. There will be an article in the newsletter about the day, but suffice it to say, it was a resounding success and raised a substantial amount for the choir.

Also I must again thank Joan Ferrison for continuing to make us the ever popular marmalade, even though she can no longer come to choir and has health problems to contend with. We receive about £100 a term for the choir from Joan's efforts, and it is very much appreciated.

In case you are wondering, we are hoping to audition 3 potential accompanists early next term. We shall all miss Jeffrey hugely, but life goes on and he has reached the time in his career when he should have a choir of his own. Fortunately we shall see him again when he comes to accompany us at our workshop.

Now, here are some important dates for your diary:

- 1) The Fairfield Halls concert on September 29th with a Diamond Jubilee/Olympic theme. We need about 30 people to come and sing in this.
 - 2) The Skittles evening on October 3rd at Limpsfield British Legion. Do bring partners/spouses/friends etc.
 - 3) Choral workshop - we shall be singing choruses from Mendelssohn's Elijah - on October 13th at St. John's Church, Old Coulsdon. Please think where you can put posters up and encourage as many of your singing friends as you can to come and join us.
- As always, I would like to thank Ian, especially for bringing along his never ending supply of superb student soloists, and coming up trumps in composing and printing the programme when George

was unavoidably indisposed.

I will conclude with a quote from Jeffrey's letter of thanks to the choir for his leaving gifts. Referring to his new choir -
" I hope we'll be able to make some pretty decent music, but I fear that I already know they will not match East Surrey for sheer community spirit and friendliness. Long may your wonderful society continue to flourish"

See you all on September 4th,

Gill English, Hon. Sec.

~~~ 000 ~~~

### **Friends**

Long years ago, though more than 14 (*pace G & S and Patience*), when I was Hon. Sec. and looking, as always, for ways of boosting audiences and funds, I found in the archives something about 'Associate Membership' which had long since lapsed. It was easy enough to resurrect as a 'Friends' scheme, which I have continued to run ever since. It's been a nice way to keep in touch with choir members past and the friends and relatives of choir members present. I'm delighted that Penny, who has been a member of the ESCS almost as long as I have and a friend for even longer, is now taking over as Friends' Secretary. Thank you to all our Friends for your support and friendship over the years.

**Sue Simpson**

than needlework pins). A needle is fine.

7. Put pricked sloes in a jar

8. Add required amount of gin and sugar

9. Shake well and store in a dark place.

10. Shake/stir every two days for a couple of weeks to help the sugar dissolve.

11. Leave for 2/3 months stirring occasionally. I am told that bottling after a year is even better. My patience does not last that long!

12. Drain off the fruit and bottle.

13. Enjoy. Just remember that you are drinking neat gin! (Tastes good with ice cream.) Some people add soda water and a twist of lemon. One friend mentioned adding Champagne...(A recipe for Kir gives 4oz dry white wine, a teaspoon of cassis (blackcurrant) and ice. Kir Royale uses champagne (or cava etc) instead of white wine, so if you also substitute the sloe gin for cassis .....

14. Once the gin is drained off you can stone the sloes and mix with melted chocolate – your own liqueur chocolates. So far I have only tried this with the sloes picked in August and these were still a little hard. Next year I will try with the October crop.

### **Damson Gin**

1lb damsons (450 grams)

750ml gin

350gm castor sugar

Damsons left after the spirit is bottled can be eaten with ice-cream or yoghurt.

Remove stems from fruits and prick with a fork (freezing overnight first will break the skins – worth a try – I haven't used damsons, but this didn't work for me with the sloes). Proceed as with sloes – if you prefer a sharper brew use less sugar – more can be added if (no, be honest, when) you taste at the bottling stage.

### **Blackberry and Apple Gin**

(apple can be swapped for pear and gin for vodka)

## The Recipes

Vodka can be used instead of gin and damsons instead of sloes. The proportions of the three ingredients are different in the two recipes (I used the first one). Enjoy experimenting.

### Sloe Gin

1lb sloes  
1 litre of gin  
8 oz sugar  
Jar(s)  
Bottles

I have found that the sloes I picked later (October) made a darker, stronger brew than those picked in August/September. One friend, whose second bottle was made from fruit picked a month or so later preferred the earlier brew. Each to his own. This homemade brew is less like syrup than the commercially available products, but if you like it this way, perhaps if you can leave it for longer before consumption.....

### Method

1. A sterilised (washing in a hot dishwasher will do this) "kilner" (or equivalent, glass, preserving) jar. Well, let's be honest several. These come in various sizes and the biggest is I think 1 1/2 litres. Sainsburys et al stock them in August/September, but at no other time. Hardware shops have a more ready supply. Remember the sloes and sugar will take up some room. A 1 litre capacity jar will just hold the gin!
2. Buy gin and sugar.
3. Keep the gin bottles and save some wine bottles for finished product. If you are making some for presents you can buy attractive bottles on the internet and then design your own labels.
4. Pick sloes ( 1 lb of sloes will approximately fill a pint measure).
5. Weigh required amount.
6. Prick the sloes. This **is** tedious. (I have tried freezing them on the grounds that when used, you do not need to prick them, but I found I still had to prick them). I can hold two sloes at a time and stab them several times with a long pin (quilting pins are longer

### From our treasurer:

Draft accounts to 31st August 2012 show cash balances increasing from £10,880 by £1,360 to £12,240.

The non-investment income surplus increased by £1,110 from £160 to £1,270. The increase comprised:

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Reduced expenditure  | £1,636 |
| Less: reduced income | 526    |
|                      | -----  |
|                      | £1,110 |
|                      | -----  |

The large expense reduction was mainly savings on the orchestra we had in the previous year, offset in part by the one-off cost of black folders and red bow ties.

The income was down mainly on reduced ticket sales and gift aid tax repayment. In part this was offset by record fund raising - £2,050 for this year and special donations of £295.

Financially, the choir is on a sound footing. We must watch:

- the selection of music for future concerts: our Spring concert experience would seem to indicate all Latin concerts are not popular
- the use of orchestras
- one-off expenditure

### Michael Pearce

### **From our conductor:**

Having been immersed for over much of the summer in the absorbing excitement of the Olympics, I found myself having to create reasons to avoid developing permanently rectangular eyes. Real work seemed aeons away. Regrettably, this state of Elysium could not last. Work has had to be done....and very soon we shall be resuming rehearsals at ESCS.

At the end of June, we presented a programme of music from stage works, incorporating opera, operetta and music theatre and, happy to say, this proved to be one of the most popular and (I think) best concerts of recent seasons. Our young soloists added to the pleasure of the evening. All in all, I think it fair to say that for both audience and performers alike this was one of the most enjoyable programmes we have presented.

This was the final concert in my seventeenth season as musical director of ESCS, during which time I have overseen a wide variety of music, most of which has been well received even if standards have been somewhat variable. It is no secret that over the past few years, like so many other similar organisations, ESCS has found life tough at times. We have a very firm nucleus of loyal members and have recently been delighted to welcome several new voices into our ranks, but it is hard in a non-auditioned amateur choir to achieve and maintain high musical standards. When confidence dips, or when musical awareness and accuracy is slow to establish – especially when the average age of the choir is rising – the challenge cannot be overestimated.

The committee – to whom I extend my sincere thanks for their energetic and considered work on behalf of the choir – has regularly discussed ways of securing the Society's future at a time which is so difficult for so many choral groups. My own personal feeling is that, regrettably, many choral societies have had their best times. In the 1950s and 1960s, before television and technology took over, people created their own entertainment and interests. Amateur organisations flourished and singers of all ages took part

### **Sloe, Sloe, Quick, Quick, Sloe**

Invited to stay with friends in a Bedfordshire village in over August Bank Holiday 2009 (they have a Scarecrow competition) we went out picking blackberries. There were other hedgerow trees that had fruits which looked like small black grapes with a bloom on them. The trees (Blackthorns) also had long (1 inch +) thorns.. "What are these?" I asked, ignorantly. Sloes. I had an instant vision of my late father with a dreamy smile on his face saying " My aunt Mary (spinster, astute business woman and purveyor of ladies fashions to the discerning of Sidmouth) used to make wonderful sloe gin". Well if my great-aunt could .....

The following August, bearing brewed sloe gin as a gift, I was back in Bedfordshire. This time I made enough to give my family some for Christmas presents.

2011 was a wonderful year for soft fruit, strawberries, raspberries etc.... and sloes. The first lot came from Bedfordshire again (together with apples – and I found a recipe for blackberry and apple gin – see below). Perhaps there were sloes on Kenley Aerodrome I thought, as I set off to pick blackberries (for making crumble/mousse/ice-cream – yes honestly). Well, why weren't people picking all these sloes? The same problem the following week etc etc ..... It seemed such a waste, and sloes do not seem to be useful for much else – I have found a recipe for cooking lamb in sloe gin, but why waste the alcohol.....

Buying all this gin was becoming embarrassing – I tried to make sure I went to a different check-out each time at the supermarket – it was not as if I was downing three litres a week, it was all quietly brewing. Mentioning this indelicate amount of sloe gin I had on the go elicited comments of "Ooh, sloe gin, lovely or Oh I have never tried it but ...".

Many thanks to all my friends,, so many of whom offered to pay for the cost of the gin to sample my efforts (nobody asked me to make it after all!) and who enjoyed the results.





Tree's Garden - August 2012

in choral work. Nowadays, alas, the younger generation (by and large) is more interested in ipods, tweeting and (dare I say) a mindless pursuit of celebrity which regularly acknowledges little, if any, talent. There are exceptions of course, typified by the likes of the many young soloists who have sung with ESCS.

After a poor showing in the Easter programme, several members voiced concerns and opinions; some suggested potential remedies for avoiding similar sub-standard performances, amongst which were requests for selecting "easier" music. Whilst I understand and appreciate this thinking, in my opinion there is not very much "easier" music that will provide both membership and audience with variety and satisfaction. I have never chosen repertoire that I feel is beyond the capability of ESCS. To do so would be foolhardy. By the same token, however, I have occasionally changed plans when I have genuinely felt that, given the limited rehearsal periods, future repertoire will prove too challenging for the current membership.

If/when we hit a poor patch, we must all rally together to work as a unit and not abandon ship – even if at times aspects of rehearsal become repetitive or even frustrating.... or (heaven forbid!) perhaps even..... boring! I well understand that a member of ESCS or of any other choir has his/her own individual priorities. Regular attendance by all members clearly makes my job easier; standards and progress are easier to maintain and overall confidence will grow. Our success is determined by teamwork, not by any one individual. I urge all members to have to the confidence to sing heartily and without fear of "going wrong" or being louder than any colleague. Reflect on the quality (and quantity) of sound at the very end of the summer concert (Phantom medley) and wake those endorphins every Tuesday and in every concert!

At ESCS, there is an overriding and obvious warmth and friendship within the Society - not typical of all choirs, I assure you – and we must preserve this invaluable commodity. Tuesday evenings in the coming season will be occupied with music by Rutter, Faure, Vivaldi and others and we have Mendelssohn to look forward to

on October 13<sup>th</sup>, when we have our workshop day. So, lots to enjoy! Having restored higher standards in our summer concert, let us make sure we maintain and build on that quality during the 2012/13 programme.

I am delighted that discipline in rehearsals is much improved. Sectional rehearsals are often somewhat tedious, I know, but so often necessary and members' patience has been noted – and much appreciated. Please remember the word used in France for "rehearsal".... "REPETITION". Please also remember..... PENCILS.....and how they can be used. (This is the one area of choral discipline that has not improved significantly!) Reliance on memory alone is never enough, especially when pieces are rehearsed a week or more apart! Mark up scores to remind you of beats in a bar, awkward pitches, entries, dynamics etc. This can and will save time from week to week. Remember.....Memory alone will let you down!!

Once again I must put on record my sincere thanks to Jeffrey Gray for all his hard work and support; we all wish him well as musical director at Cranbrook AND DISTRICT Choral Society. To all members of ESCS: Thank you all for your support and enthusiasm. Long may they continue! Here's to more happy music-making in the year ahead.....and lively endorphins too!!

**Ian Kennedy**

### **Sunday 17 June 2012—An English Afternoon**

What a splendid English event at Bletchingley! A warm, sunny afternoon; walks through glorious English countryside; a visit to the site of Anne of Cleves House; sitting out on the lawn enjoying tea and home made cakes; and an amusing talk about Tudor Royalty, Anne and King Henry VIII. What more could anyone ask? And yet, a few of us, with some energy to spare, were loath to end our visit while the weather was still fair. We wanted to put off the return to our homes, being greedy for more history and more scenery. So we walked to the top of the village High Street to explore another historic site. The road name, Castle Square, gave us a clue as to the direction to take.

The remains of the castle cannot be seen at close quarters as they are within private property. But a footpath skirts the perimeter fence and, peering through the thick shrubbery, we could make out the steep outer banks of the castle. The earthworks date from Norman times. Stone walls, including a building about 75 feet square, were added from time to time by the Clare family who owned estates around Surrey and Kent. They also owned Tonbridge Castle on a strategic site on the River Medway. That became their chief seat until the C13. Bletchingley was abandoned. Little stone work remains as it was robbed out – much may have been used at Anne of Cleves House, and some can probably be found in village houses. The site was unoccupied until Victorian times when a private house was built within the castle banks.

But what really drew our attention was the spectacular view south over the Weald. This was a great site for an early castle – steep sided valley below and a view for miles. We had an extensive view of green rolling landscape of fields and woodlands, dotted with an occasional house including the house called Sandhills with its long brick wall snaking down towards a large lake. For us, the view was well worth the climb up the High Street and we finished the day with a feeling that 'all was right with the world'.

**Marion Davis**

# 'Last Night of the Croydon Proms' 2012 Concert

**CROYDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CROYDON PHILHARMONIC CHOIR**  
**CHANDOS CHOIR FESTIVAL SINGERS EAST SURREY CHORAL SOCIETY JOHN FISHER CHOIR**  
 Conductor – Darrell Davison  
 Soprano – Dorothea Herbert Solo Violin – Yuka Ishizuka

## A Gala Concert of Popular Classics

**The Fairfield Halls, Croydon**  
**Saturday, 29th September 2012 at 7.30pm**

**Programme includes:**  
*The Nutcracker Suite, The Blue Danube, The Can-Can Crown Imperial, I was Glad, Carmen Fantasy, Polovtsian Dances Hungarian March, popular arias, Stars and Stripes March, Fantasia on British Sea Songs and Songs from the Proms: Rule Britannia, Jerusalem and Land of Hope and Glory*

**Fundraising for youth groups of Croydon**

**FAIRFIELD HALLS** **CROYDON YOUTH THEATRE ORGANISATION**

**Tickets £20, £18, £9**  
**from the FAIRFIELD BOX OFFICE**  
**t: 020 8688 9291**  
**On-line booking: [www.fairfield.co.uk](http://www.fairfield.co.uk)**

**JUBILEE BOXES AVAILABLE**  
 Group discount available  
 For discounted car parking enquire at Box Office when booking.

**www.lastnightofthepromscroydon.org.uk**

**SPONSORED BY**  
**EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND WELLBEING**  
 Education with a Difference

Tel: 0208 688 8665 e-mail: [info@educationalexcellence.org.uk](mailto:info@educationalexcellence.org.uk)

### London Olympics 2012.

My grandson Sam and I were thrilled when we both received tickets in the Olympic ballot. Sam had two for basketball and I had two for synchronised swimming. I was very pleased with my tickets as I used to belong to a synchronised swimming club many moons ago, and know a bit about the intricacies of the sport.

When we arrived we were immediately struck by the friendliness and relaxed atmosphere at the Olympic Park. The swathes of colourful flowers were so beautiful and the waterway had been cleared, with grassy banks on which people could have their picnics within sight of the moored 'Gloriana'. The Park was teeming with people, but it was so big that it absorbed them all. They were strolling around, taking in the atmosphere and sporting all manner of clothing and flags from many different nations. The 'Games Masters' were cheerful and helpful. We were impressed with the basketball arena and had a good view of Nigeria v Tunisia and Brazil v Australia. We were told that the height of the doors in the arena were raised and the beds were longer than normal to accommodate the exceptionally tall basketball players! The arena can be deconstructed and recycled and is one of the largest temporary venues ever built for a Games.

We also obtained tickets for the football at the Cardiff Millennium Stadium which seats 74,000 people. You can imagine the enormous roar when the team for Great Britain came onto the pitch! They were playing South Korea, and in my opinion the standard of the British football was poor and we lost on a penalty shoot out. However, it was a good experience and worth attending. Then a few days later we went to the impressive Aquatic Centre in the Olympic Park to see the synchronised swimming. The standards, skills and costumes displayed were astonishing, especially the Russian team who eventually won the gold medal. Great Britain came sixth - a good result as it is the first time that they had entered a team in that event. The pool will provide facilities for the community, schools and elite athletes and will replace the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre pool.

The visits were a wonderful lifetime experience for us and one that we will never forget.

### Gill English



### LAST NIGHT OF THE CROYDON PROMS

Well, it might not be the last night of **THE** Proms, but I am told it is at least as much fun, if not more so!

If you look at the following poster you will see we are on the bill, and I do want to encourage as many of you as would like to take part.

This is entirely voluntary. We will be taking part in five items, which will not be rehearsed at ESCS, but I'm sure a lot of you will know the pieces already. What a thrill to be part of a two hundred strong choir, with an orchestra, in a large concert hall! Here is a list of essentials.

**Venue** - Fairfield Halls, Croydon

**Date of concert** - Saturday, September 29th, 7.30pm

**Rehearsal 1** - Friday, September 28th, 7.30 pm. (prompt start), in the church hall behind East Croydon URC, Addiscombe Grove, Croydon. CR0 5LP (I believe we have been asked not to park in the URC car park)

**Rehearsal 2** - Saturday, September 29th, 3.00 pm.-4.00 pm., Fairfield Halls, Croydon

**Dress for men** - DJs and black bow ties

**Dress for ladies** - Long black skirts or black trousers, with white blouses

**Music** - All the music (except the Parry) has been lent to us by the organisers and **MUST BE RETURNED ON THE NIGHT**. We are hiring the Parry ourselves, and copies of this **MUST** be returned to Jane Tiernan **ON THE NIGHT**, please

If you would like to take part, please give your name to Jane as soon as possible next term, and she will give you a set of music and instructions as to how to get to the Friday rehearsal venue.

If you, your families and your friends would like to be in the audience I suggest you book quickly, as it usually sells out.

See you all there!

**Mel Watts-Read**

### **Site of Anne of Cleves's Palace at Bletchingley**

On a lovely sunny day we walked from Bletchingley village car park through the fields to a Barn (prepared with 60 chairs) where Mary Saaler, author of a biography "Anne of Cleves" gave us a fascinating talk about her, including her divorce from Henry VIII and how she kept her head!

The Farmhouse/Barn and a house nearby were all part of the site of the original palace given to Anne of Cleves by Henry VIII as part of the divorce settlement.

After the talk, home made cakes and tea were served on the lawn of the Farmhouse (home of choir member Angela). A perfect day. Many thanks to Angela for her hospitality and to the members who made cakes. They were delicious. A big thank you too to Sachiko for organising the outing for Choir funds. It was a great success..

\*ISBN 0-948695-41-2 Rubicon Press

**Wendy Aarons**

### **Highclere Castle or Downton Abbey?**

I was lucky enough to go on a trip to Highclere Castle with my husband's Egyptology group this summer. He of course wanted to see the antiquities brought back from the tomb of Tutankhamun, whilst I wanted to see the home of Robert Crawley, the Earl of Grantham and his family!

In reality Highclere Castle is now the home of the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl and Countess of Carnarvon but more famously, of George Herbert, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl, who was the financial backer of the search for Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings. He was a well known owner of racehorses who set up his own stud, named for the castle and was also a reckless driver at a time when few people owned a motor car. But by 1907 he had turned his thoughts to Egypt and begun to sponsor digs, an expensive pastime. His assistant was Howard Carter and it was he who excavated the new tomb in 1922 and discovered "wonderful things", the now world famous treasure in the burial chamber of Tutankhamun. They were lucky to achieve their goal because Lord Carnarvon had decided the search was simply too costly and had to be persuaded to finance one last season of excavation.

Although the majority of the treasure found was taken directly to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Lord Carnarvon spirited some of their finds out of the country and took them back to Highclere. It is these artefacts which form the basis of the exhibition on show at the castle today. They are well worth a visit. Some items are replicas made especially for the exhibition but others are original and date back 3,300 years to the Eighteenth Dynasty of the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. It's almost impossible to grasp how old these relics are, nearly 1,200 years BC. Amazing! I particularly liked the statuette of Tutankhamun on a small boat or skiff with his spear poised to harpoon something in the river, a fish? The lines of the statue were beautiful and fluid, full of motion. The display to show how Carter first saw into the burial chamber is also very cleverly done and gives a small taste of the excitement and awe he must have felt on first breaking through the tomb wall. Several

memorabilia had been placed by Lord Carnarvon in small cupboards in the thickness of a wall where a doorway divides one room from another. These had been closed up and forgotten and there was great excitement when they were re-found and placed on show for the public to view.

Lord Carnarvon's luck was not to hold as he died in April 1923 as the result of shaving off the head of a mosquito bite and developing septicaemia and then pneumonia. It was this that led to the myths of "The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb" and the "King Tut's Revenge", far from the scientific truth.

The castle has been used as the set for several films and TV dramas in the past, not just Downton Abbey. I particularly remember it as the backdrop for several of the "Jeeves and Wooster" programmes dramatising P.G. Wodehouse's novels and starring Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie in the title roles, but there is quite a long list of other well known productions set here, including the 1987 version of the Secret Garden where it featured as Mistlethwaite Manor. There is not very much specifically on show to highlight Downton Abbey. Obviously one can visit the rooms which are so recognisable to those of us hooked on the series! Each one has a label saying whose bedroom it is while the large reception rooms need no introduction. The guides were very good and could tell us all about the filming as well as the real family's history. It was fascinating. I can't wait for Series 3 to begin especially now that I "know" the house!

If you want to visit, the castle is quite near Basingstoke and easy to reach by car. We went along the M3, A303 and A34 but there are other ways all shown on the Highclere Castle website, [www.highclerecastle.co.uk](http://www.highclerecastle.co.uk). It is quite busy on Sundays (usually closed on Saturdays) so better to go during the week but check opening times first as you never know when they might be closed for filming!

**Angela Smith**

