**St MM Stories**

**Choirboys**

Later on, we used to play pew cricket with hexagonal dice. On one occasion, it turned into a more active version with a rolled-up sweet wrapper as a ball and a pencil as a bat. The “bowler” was about 4-boys’ distance from the “batter”. I think we were told off.

Choir stalls were vital for us choirboys –not just for the music but when the hamster came out of the cassock pocket where would it be during the sermon ?

Mike Selby getting bollocked by Mike E for curtseying instead of bowing in procession

I remember the day the organ pipe fell down as we were getting ready to process. It was one of the decorated ones at the front of the organ case. It fell just to the right of the organ stool with a loud bang. Could’ve been a nasty result if it fell a few minutes later.

I remember my very first choir practice, when as a 7-year-old I kept getting lost when anthems were being learned. No-one had told me that staves were in groups of four for the SATB parts, so I simply went down to the next one (the alto stave, then the tenor). Not surprising I got lost. A wise 8-year-old (Charles?) soon put me right.

My first Harvest was an early memory. Just after I started I remember being egged on to pinch a few grapes from the font when lining up for procession that morning. At the time I thought it was the naughtiest thing I had ever done!

Choir boy’s bun fight at Christmas.

I can still remember the first practice – Sumsion in G featured the Magnifipus (which I thought was hilarious) and the Punk Dimmittis (haha!).  The anthem was Greater Love – amazed by David Oldfield’s accompaniment.  Very early we also did Vivaldi’s Gloria at a school in Stretford (I left my coat behind).

Howard George being the “cute” little boy singing god be glorified in Britten St Nicholas with Sale Choral Society

Robert Mills had loads of odd ideas and taught me how to cut a pencil (wooden type ) in half with a sheet of paper.

**Choir Men**

We took turns to take Mrs Daniels to visit Cliff in Alti Hosp. CD made me sit down with them when I tried to dump Mrs D and retire. I discovered that there was a good guy hiding behind that fierce

facade. But if he was in hosp perhaps he was under the weather.

We usually performed the Matin Responsory at the west end. While doing this, at the point in the words where we sang 'and low, I see the power of God coming' Cliff Daniels kicked the brass water jug by the font which made a loud crash!

David Bird was nicknamed "Centre-stage" both on account of his interest in taking lead roles in local amateur dramatics and the fact that he could not sing quietly - a soloist rather than a choral singer -whether the occasion called for it or not (and usually not!)

Capt W. Roper-Weston was stern. I remember sitting in front of him when I was about 8. If he caught you chatting in a sermon, you’d get a crack across the back of your head with a hymn book. Not a wimpsy words-only version, but the hefty SATB one.

**Music That Went Wrong**

In Mike’s day, I got the honour of singing the first verse of “Once in Royal” at the carol service. Problem was, I didn’t know whether Mike was playing an introduction, or whether I should start singing immediately. I guessed wrong, so we were a line apart for some time. Quite embarrassing!

Mucking up Martin Bussey's Sir Christemas; he wasn't happy.  All the basses had a problem getting the first note correctly. If that was wrong, what followed was all wrong. I was daft enough to plunge in...about a third too high with disastrous results for all...

I think we were singing with Martin when after a few bars, it was obvious we were miles off – we stopped and started again. I seem to remember that after Mike left, this happened quite a lot as so many of the back rows were very inexperienced. David really note-bashed the parts and that helped the young tenor section enormously.

Mike asked me to play for some anthems. This frightened the life out of me. However, I asked for a church key to do some practise. Mike told me to give the north door a good bash and it would open. It worked!

Spending an hour practicing Locus Iste in Sheffield!

Hearing recording of Goss Wilderness on ST MM tour and trebles getting faster and faster in verse like a stampeding herd of cattle

I played a lot of anthems for David and I remember starting off The Lord hath been mindful in the minor key, to everyone's great amusement.

Another occasion we were doing the Mag and Nunc by Sumsion in G. It started fine but somehow between David and me it got faster and faster and it almost came off the rails. Not my best performance!

**Choir Outings**

I remember when at Whipsnade Zoo on our second Choir Summer Camp, when a frisky lion began mounting one of his lionesses. Having to explain what was going on to a bunch of trebles was a little embarrassing!

I would like to mention our trip to Norwich, when Rob Frier thought a WPC was a kissagram when he was stark naked dancing around our church hall accommodation one night!

DPO offering a “trip” to Blackpool & Rob & I ended up having to look after the kids whilst he was working at Rossal course – we lost them briefly on Golden Mile!

 David Baker driving.  David Baker falling over at Hadrian’s wall (Must have been singing at Carlisle)

We used to go to Southport for the choir trip. Apparently Doc used to chat up the senior ladies and get financial contributions. We went on the train from Exchange Station. I seem to recollect that we

had to sing somewhere. In some cafe / restaurant or something.

I vaguely remember that there was a choir cricket kit. Did we go and play after Choir practice in high summer if it was fine?

The trip to Norwich in August 1986 when, on the feast of the Assumption, Will and I lead the choir during Evensong on a circular procession from the choir stalls around the East end while singing that very Catholic hymn "Ye who own the faith of Jesus" to the tune by Johann Freylinghausen. Had never sung it before then nor since. And yet I remember it so well.

Another time John Heaton teaching me to swim in Chorlton baths. Again being a chef I decided it would be fun to introduce whitebait into the water; so hid the fish in my trunks until getting into the water whereupon they went everywhere the more people screamed and splashed about. Hillarious. But got sent out.

**So St Mary’s**

Midnight service on Xmas Eve: "Christians awake!"

Merbecke at Holy Communion and singing from the Lady Chapel. Love the idea that St Mary’s the Low had a Lady Chapel.

‘Lead Me Lord’ – first heard when I was in Reception at St. Marys Primary and always sung on Day School Sunday, never got the solo! (Thank goodness)

Christmas Day morning service was the most special – not because of the day but because of Darke in F. As a boy, I loved listening to the tenor section, little knowing how difficult it would be to sing the top notes after a skin-full the previous night! I would soon learn!

Then there was Peter Daniels who sang the solo in "Lead me Lord". And carried the cross, and his Dad gave him the nod when to move.

Teresa Binley – I can’t remember when she arrived in the parish, but she must have been a very early female addition to CoE clergy?

I joined after seeing an article in the local paper inviting people to an 'Open Choir Practice' to see what singing in the choir was all about. David Heaton spotted me and as soon as the practice was ended whisked me off to the Plough for some big beers. (By the way 'whisked me of'f is not a euphemism). Best bits: Singing  Wills Missa Brevis and the Leighton in D were top for me. We did Balfour Gardiner Evening Hymn a bit too much I think. I loved J.Ds suspensions thrown in wherever there was an opportunity..