

Byrd to Britten at the palace on the banks of The Thames

Liveryman Alan Paul writes Led by President Peter Fowler, members of the Livery Club and their guests enjoyed a wonderful day at Hampton Court on Saturday 12 May, the music, architecture, gardens, food and glorious weather combining to make a truly memorable experience.

The centrepiece of the day was a recital by the Choir of the Chapel Royal, a body of priests and singers that used to travel with the Court as it moved between various Royal palaces including Hampton Court, now permanently based at St James's Palace.

The Hampton Court choir comprises 14 boy choristers drawn from local day-schools and 10 gentlemen, under the direction of the distinguished organist and choirmaster Carl Jackson. Although there is no choir school, the choristers rehearse twice a week and perform to cathedral standard, singing two services on Sundays and certain other holy days as well as making recordings for radio and television.

The choir sang a programme that fittingly encompassed music of the Tudor and Elizabethan periods and the age of William and Mary, rounded off by works from the Victorian era and the 20th century and ending with Britten's *Te Deum*. Represented in the programme were composers who were

themselves gentlemen of the Chapel Royal – Tallis, Parsons, Byrd, Gibbons, Purcell and Greene.

The power of the choir was demonstrated in Thomas Weelkes's *Alleluia, I heard a voice*, which rang to the rafters of Henry VIII's magnificent painted, fan-vaulted oak ceiling. Appropriately, Carl Jackson included *A Hymn for St Cecilia*, written for our Company by Herbert Howells [Master, 1959-1960].

Between the groups of choral works, instrumental interludes were played by Robert Patterson, Assistant Director of Music, on the early-18th century Schreider organ.

The recital was followed by lunch in the Tiltyard Restaurant, pleasantly set among the old walled gardens on the site of the former jousting ground.

Afterwards, members were free to look at the gardens or to tour the various state apartments and rooms of the palace.

Earlier in the day, Steward Alan Paul led the group on a garden tour, including the newly restored Privy Garden, which drew gasps of surprise and admiration from those who had not previously seen this extensive layout of formal parterres and statuary, stretching all the way from Wren's south wing of the palace to the banks of the Thames.



Palace of varieties: the Musicians' Company visit to Hampton Court was a day of "surprise and admiration" – for the music, the architecture, the gardens, the food, and not least the wonderful, wonderful weather! The Choir of the Chapel Royal rang the rafters with Thomas Weelkes, and a fine time was had by all



Margaret Alford

