

## **New Organist and Choirmaster for St Mary's, Lapworth**

A baby boomer born in Edinburgh shortly after my father returned from service in WW2, my earliest musical tuition was at the hands of my mother, a music teacher and singer of some repute. Mum also conducted the local Townswomen's Guild Choir who, along with the WI, had kept the home fires burning during the war, as readers of a certain vintage will remember. Although my father worked in a bank, his real love was as a talented violin, and later viola player. While other teenagers were at the Saturday night hop, I would frequently be found at home playing string quartets with my dad and his chamber music companions. Being brought up in a musical household, I never considered this an unusual childhood, and if my contemporaries did, they never mentioned it.

Music studies continued at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music (where my mother had been a student in the 1930s; it was called the Atheneum in those days). I was fortunate to study conducting under Dr. Kenneth Barritt, a student of Sir Adrian Boult, who was himself a student of that doyen of the English baton and founder of the Proms, Sir Henry Wood. After graduating in 1968, a teaching position followed in Edinburgh where I was also a tenor lay clerk in the cathedral choir, and later in St. Andrews where I became organist and choirmaster of St Andrews Church. In 1978, in order to preserve my great love for *la vie musicale*, I abandoned the classroom and ventured into the world of educational publishing, eventually setting up my own publishing house in 1993. Throughout all this time runs a constant thread of music from the singer, sometime violinist and organist, and, most frequently, as conductor of choral and operatic societies, chamber and church choirs, and symphony orchestras; in short, everything from *Annie Get Your Gun* to *Zadok the Priest*.

After a move to the midlands, I took up the post of musical director of the Warwick and Kenilworth Choral Society, during which time I conducted more concerts than any of my predecessors. As well as playing the organ, I have been heavily involved in the musical life of a Warwick primary school where I help to run a boys and a girls choir as well as playing for school shows. I love being involved with young music makers and to experience the joy they get from public performances. I'm also chair of governors at the school.

For the past ten years I have been organist at St Mary's, Stoneleigh where sadly, there is no choir. These are strange times to be taking over as organist and choirmaster at St Mary's, Lapworth, because it was the possibility of working again with a choir that encouraged me to apply for the post. However, even though we can't sing on Sundays at the moment, we are managing to have Friday evening choir practices via Zoom. I am so looking forward to us all being able to meet up again and sing together on Sundays. I have lots of new repertoire that I hope to introduce to the choir, and I hope we may be able to venture beyond Lapworth and perhaps make the occasional cathedral visit to sing evensong once things settle down and something approaching normality returns. In the meantime, I am very much enjoying playing the Lapworth organ. Finally, I can't thank Father Patrick and the congregation at Lapworth enough for being so supportive and for making me feel so welcome.

*Ron Binnie, February 2021*