

# Music making in Alton



*The Christmas Concert*

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## Concert Report

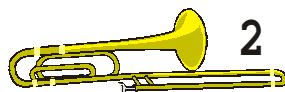
Christmas in Four Marks began in earnest on Saturday 13th December at the Church of The Good Shepherd, when Alton Concert Orchestra and Alton Choral Society presented a Festival of Christmas Music for a second year running to a packed audience. The forces of the orchestra and choir combined with the audience to raise the roof in the familiar carols.

Under their well-known local conductor, Graham Cross, the orchestra played the first of two non-seasonal pieces chosen to balance the evening's entertainment – 'A Moorside Suite' by Gustav Holst – originally scored for brass band. The two lively outer movements were tackled with gusto, especially by the brass section, and the central 'Nocturne' was notable for sensitive woodwind playing, including a passage for cor anglais.

The choir, looking very seasonal in red and white, sang an unusual and varied mixture of Christmas carols and songs under the direction of their conductor, Richard Toll. "We are making a bid to revive the some of the music played and sung in village churches in the early nineteenth century, when music in Churches was accompanied by a choir and band seated in the West Gallery", said the conductor. "This tradition was immortalised by Thomas Hardy in his novel 'Under the Greenwood Tree' and we are singing tonight one of the carols mentioned in the novel, 'Rejoice Ye Tenants of the Earth', as it would have been heard all those years ago." The choir also sang a very tuneful and rousing version of 'While Shepherd Watched', composed by John Foster, from the same tradition, both carols being accompanied by the orchestra.

## Diary

No Rehearsal, AODS		10th March
Spring Concert	7:30	24th March
First rehearsal after Easter break	7:30	21st April
No rehearsal, Half Term		2nd June
Last rehearsal before Summer break/AGM	7:30	TBC
First rehearsal after Summer break	7:30	1st September



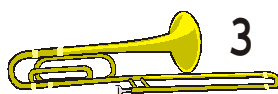
In complete contrast, the choir gave lively and moving performances of two of John Rutter's best loved carols, the 'Angels' Carol' and 'I saw Three Ships', accompanied by keyboards and bass. The harp obligato in the Angels' Carol was beautifully played by Mair Cross. In even lighter, sentimental mood the choir sang jazzy arrangements of 'Let it Snow'; and 'Have yourself a Merry Little Christmas'.

Following the interval, in which refreshments were served by the 'Friends of God' church group, the orchestra played Mendelssohn's 'Fingals' Cave' overture as a tribute to another Four Marks musician, Lawrence Storey, who had been the leader of the second violins and the orchestra's Treasurer before his death in July. It was an atmospheric performance that captured perfectly the ebb and flow of the sea in its various moods as individual instruments added brilliant orchestral colour to the sustained and sensitive playing of the string section.

Members of the Alton Fringe Theatre gave readings during the concert, including the extract from Hardy's 'Underneath the Greenwood Tree' as a cue for the choir. The orchestra also contributed five interesting arrangements of well-known carols, two of which were introduced and conducted by their new assistant conductor, David Budd. Graham Cross and three of the clarinet section played a clarinet quartet as an interlude before the choir, audience and orchestra brought the concert to a rousing finale with 'A Christmas Festival' by Leroy Anderson.

The audience responded generously to the musical feast with donations that totalled £1200 for the OK Club – a charity that brings together Oxford students and graduates to help the underprivileged in the Kilburn area of London.

*Chris Leggett*



## Chairman's Report

The orchestra continues to grow and attract new members, but we still have room for more string players in all departments – especially violins, violas, and a double bass. Another trombonist, French horn or bassoonist would also be a welcome addition, and because of our wide-ranging repertoire, we can also make good use of any saxophonists. Enthusiasm is more important than examination grade certificates, and in return we can offer encouragement and the fun of playing together in a friendly atmosphere.

We are at the beginning of a very exciting stage in the evolution of the orchestra. Amery Hill School will shortly be applying formally to the Department of Education and Skills to become a specialist Music School, and they have offered us a Partnership in their plans to develop as a centre of musical excellence for Alton town

and the surrounding villages. We have taken up their kind offer to move our regular Wednesday rehearsals to Amery Hill's main hall, and we look forward to working with them to foster music-making at all levels in the locality. Current plans under discussion are to share the concert platform at Amery Hill School with some of their musicians, including their Wind Band, and giving encouragement any of their students who wish to join our Orchestra.

There is also the possibility of encouraging the younger budding instrumentalists in Alton's feeder Junior Schools, and to work with the School and other groups to find out what musical scores exist in the area, and to develop a music library. Looking much further ahead, the idea of participating in 'Masterclasses' with community members promises to be exciting.

*Chris Leggett*

See page 8 for details of the Spring Concert.

Come early, as last year's concert was very well attended.



## David Budd

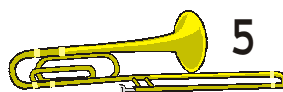
When I moved to Alton in April 2001, I was quite surprised to find out through Hantsnet that the town had an orchestra. However, for various reasons, I didn't even think of joining until I saw the orchestra perform at the 2002 Christmas concert, during which I was singing with the Alton Choral Society. In fact, it was a former colleague of mine I recognised amongst the clarinets who encouraged me to join. So, when the choir season came to an end, I blew the dust off my trumpet case, oiled the valves and took the plunge.

I took up the trumpet at school where they told me at first I didn't have enough puff. However, I literally scraped a Grade 8 and still remember the wry grin on my music teacher's face as he handed me the letter. I also sing bass. My real wish is that, one day, I'll be able to play the piano.

I've played and sung in lots of different groups; choirs, wind bands, big bands and even a Spanish town band (which is great as everyone shouts 'Bravo' no matter how badly you play). It's great fun and it's good to be part

of a big sound. However, there's something special about playing in an orchestra and prior to the ACO, I'd played in school orchestras, once as a student and then as a teacher, but never with accomplished musicians. As a trumpeter in an orchestra, you have to count a lot, but when you come in, it's generally to make an impact, hopefully the right one, of course. All trumpeters want to make an impact!

As a child, my parents took me to concerts and I used to sit in the front row and conduct the players. So when Graham offered tuition in conducting, I had to have a go. It's been a nerve-wracking, but thrilling experience and I am indebted to all my fellow strummers and blowers for their patience, encouragement and, of course, wonderful playing. Thank you, I'm hooked!



## Weddings



Debbie Slater (clarinettist) and Matt Hobbs were married at the old Barn, Blubeckers, North Warnborough, on 20th December 2003. It was a wonderful day – lots of umbrellas, angelic children, crying mums and a fantastic harpist.



Helen (cello) and Peter were married on 16th August 2003 at St George's Church, Badshot Lea. The reception (pictured) was at Farnham Castle.



# Thinking of Joining Us?

**We meet at Amery Hill School every Wednesday  
(except in school holidays)  
from 7.30 to 9.30**

The cost of joining is £5 for students and £10 for adults. We always welcome new players to the orchestra – there is no audition required to join and we do not insist on you attending every rehearsal. If you are thinking of joining then please contact one of the following:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>	<b>Position</b>
Graham Cross	(01420) 562234	Conductor
Chris Leggett	(01730) 893032	Chairman
Mac Newton	(01962) 773130	Secretary

Or visit our website: [www.altonconcertorchestra.org.uk](http://www.altonconcertorchestra.org.uk)

## Mission Statement

The Orchestra exists to serve the local community and to provide a forum for all musicians who enjoy playing in an ensemble. We have a policy of welcoming anyone without the requirement of an audition and we maintain no restrictions on section size within the orchestra. The music we typically play will require someone of at least Grade 3 standard but exams are not expected. The age range of players encompasses year 9 school musicians to retired members. We offer the opportunity for school players to stretch their playing ability.

Our music repertoire is wide and varied to suit all tastes and ranges from classical symphonies to show music incorporating big band and swing. The string section plays together and we are developing the wind section into a separate ensemble. Whatever your musical taste it should be well provided for.

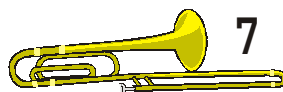
The Orchestra is run by a chairman and committee and the involvement of members in organisation is encouraged and welcomed. We have social evenings from time to time and produce concerts 3 to 4 times a year. Members pay a termly fee to cover music cost etc. We pride ourselves on our friendly, hardworking approach to our music making.

We are fortunate in enjoying a close community relationship with Amery Hill School and are very appreciative of their support with rehearsal accommodation.

Come and see for yourself.

We welcome opportunities to perform locally in aid of community causes.

Produced by Daniel Gill as part of his work in the Ian Karten CTEC Centre at Treloar College, Alton (01420 87640 / 547412)





# Spring Concert

Main Hall  
Amery Hill School

Wednesday 24th March

Concert starts at 7.30pm

Free Admission  
Retiring Collection

For more information visit our website:  
[www.altonconcertorchestra.org.uk](http://www.altonconcertorchestra.org.uk)

or contact the conductor (Graham Cross) on (01420) 562234