

St Lawrence Chobham Handbell Ringers: Annual Report 2008

We started out thinking that 2008 would not be a busy year, but that's not what happened! You will see from the list below that from March to the end of the year scarcely a month went past without us taking forward some musical activity.

January: Team visit to Pantomime
March: National Rally (Chester)
April: Performance at the West London Synagogue
June: Wedding Rally
July: SE Regional Concert
August: We were represented by 3 team members at the Orlando International Symposium
September: Canterbury Rally
October: Songs of Praise
Opening of the new church hall at Our Lady and St Dominic's, Farnborough
November: Guildford Cathedral Festival Service
Christmas season (17 performances, including The Lightbox Museum in Woking)
January 2009: New Year Birthday Rally at Aldershot

Particular highlights were our performances at the West London Synagogue, and Songs of Praise and the Celebration of Christmas Service in Chobham Church. In each case we played really well and received warm appreciation from our audiences. The Wedding Rally in June was significant as we won a prize for the best dressed team (our chimney sweep outfits were almost authentic!) Well done to everyone for carrying it out so well.

It was an honour to be asked to play in the annual concert of the South East Region of Handbell Ringers of Great Britain, which was at Cleves School in Weybridge on 20 July. We have been asked to play in the 2009 concert too, on 28 June, so we obviously played quite well!

We have a strong link with the church of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Dominic in Cove, Farnborough, as several team members attend that church. We were privileged to be one of two music groups asked to play at the opening of their new Church Hall and a very enjoyable musical evening was the result.

Three team members had the wonderful experience of travelling to Orlando, Florida, to take part in the 13th International Handbell Symposium. We thought that the music (much of it original music for handbells) was excellent, and the Symposium was well organised. More of the team are hoping to attend the 14th Symposium in Osaka, Japan, in 2010.

The Festival Service in Guildford Cathedral is always a wonderful opportunity to hear massed handbells locally and 2008 was no example, with lovely music arrangements to celebrate St Cecilia's Day. This year the service will be held on Sunday 21 November and promises to be another enjoyable event, with beautiful sounds in a beautiful setting.

It's been another year of consolidation and development. We started the year by choosing pieces with a range a range of rhythms and tempos that were more complex than previously. It is to the credit of everyone – new and experienced members alike – that we have mastered these pieces and performed them well.

We had to work quite hard to get our Christmas repertoire up to scratch, but we succeeded, and in the end played well. I am pleased that we have also been able to record another CD of Christmas music – a lovely way to mark the bells' 100th birthday.

Once again we owe a big debt of gratitude to Andrew Body, Chris and Sandra Bedford (Sandra is a member of our team committee), Linda Scrivener and Mike Driver for their help and support during the year. In particular, during the recent recording of our new CD and during the time last year when the church was being redecorated. A big thank you, too, to James West for playing one piece with us during the Celebration of Christmas Service. We hope that we will be able to do this again on many occasions.