



Sarum Seminar News and Views

A Journey to the Hebrides *by Evelyn McMillan*

Everyone seems to have some far-away place that is calling to them. A place they have heard or read about that has sparked their imagination. China, Patagonia, Iceland, Africa and New Zealand are places that call to many, but for me it was the Hebrides. The Hebrides Islands lie off the western coast of Scotland. Familiar names of the Inner Islands include Mull, Skye, and Jura, while familiar names of the Outer Hebrides include Lewis, Uist, and Harris — of Harris tweed fame.

My original interest was sparked by a recording of the Scottish tenor, Kenneth McKeller, entitled, "Songs of the Hebrides." It is a recording of folksongs from the islands, and in the background you can hear the sea crashing and the gulls calling. I listened to it hundreds of times, until I, too, felt them calling to me. The opportunity to go there finally presented itself one summer in the 1980s when my family and I traded our Menlo Park house for the Edinburgh house of a professor who needed to be at Stanford for the summer. We traded houses, cars, neighbors, churches, and gardens.

Their house's ideal location made exploring Edinburgh on foot easy, and the availability of their car made exploring Scotland easy. Soon after settling in, it was off to the Hebrides for a few days. We drove across Scotland with a stop below Stirling Castle where a monument to Robert the Bruce marks the site of the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. After spending the night in a rambling old hotel in Ballachulish, near Loch Linnhe, we took the ferry to the Isle



of Mull, which is one of the most easily accessible of the Hebrides Islands. Mull receives many visitors who come to experience its natural beauties as well as the charm of its pretty fishing villages with wonderful names like Tobermory. Mull also serves as the pathway to Iona, which is located right off the far western edge of Mull.

Traveling across Mull is an adventure in itself as the road is a one lane road with pull-outs. When we met another car one or the other of us had to slip into a pull-out, sometimes by backing up a quarter of a mile or so. The other adventurous aspect of the road was provided by the local sheep. We could quickly find our car completely engulfed in a flock of sheep, and there was nothing to do but turn off the engine and wait for them to decide to get off the road. There was no hurrying the process so it was best to just enjoy the novelty of it. All in all, it takes a long time to drive the 50 miles across Mull. After a night in the Mull Hotel it was on to Fionnport where we met the ferry to Iona, an isle so close, and so small, that you can easily see all of it across the water. We left the car at the dock and walked on to the ferry, as did everyone else except the visiting nurse who was headed to Iona for her weekly call on her clients. She was driving a Morris Mini which the boatmen essentially picked up by the bumpers and set down on the ferry. On the Iona side they did the same, laughing and waving as she putt-putted down the island's one mile of paved road. We walked off the boat into the cold, grey, intermittent sleety drizzle that even my down parka could not allay, only to find

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Evelyn McMillan, editor

Bob Nyden, layout

that the children of the village were swimming merrily in the bay. I shuddered to watch them, shuddered to think of what winter must be like on Iona if this constituted so fine a summer's day as to be perfect for swimming in the bay. When they emerged from the water they were whooping with glee and were the color of lobsters.

Iona is a special place to be, and not only for the hardness of its children. It is considered a sacred island for its role in the Christianization of Scotland and northern Europe. It all started in c.563 when the monk Columba landed on the island with twelve companions. The legend is that he was determined to find a spot from which it would be impossible to see his beloved native Ireland. His purpose in coming was to establish a monastery from which other monasteries could be founded. In this he succeeded as Jarrow, Lindesfarne, and Kells were all founded from Iona. Columba lived to be 75, dying in 597, and was buried on the island. His evangelizing work was carried on by his successors and the Iona community survived even after the Vikings discovered the place and plundered it on several different occasions around 800. However, it became necessary, after suffering the massacre of 68 monks at the hands of the Vikings, to transfer part of the community, much of the remaining treasure, and the primacy of the Celtic Church to the monastery at Kells. It is thought that the Book of Kells might have originated at the scriptorium on Iona and then been taken to Kells for safe-keeping during this time.

There has been a succession of monastic buildings on the island with the early wood, daub and wattle giving way to stronger wood buildings, and those giving way to stone buildings after the Viking raids. In 1200, St. Columba's Celtic monastery became a Benedictine monastery, and an Augustinian nunnery was established nearby. The stone buildings from the 13th century served the community until the Reformation, in 1560, when the buildings were abandoned to the elements. In the 18th and 19th centuries interest in the island started to revive, and in 1901 and 1935 serious work was done to restore the stone buildings. The Abbey has been completely restored but the Nunnery remains in ruins.

From the ferry at the bay, a walk through the village and down the path for a quarter mile brings you to the restored Abbey itself. No silent, looming, brooding, remnant of a long-forgotten way of life for this Abbey. On the day we were there dozens of pup tents were pitched in its lee, as the Abbey was hosting a youth conference from Glasgow. Everyone's laundry flapped on the tent poles, and empty crisps packets blew around in the wind. There were teenagers everywhere. Everywhere except in the cloisters as the cloisters

were being used as a race-track by one energetic little three-year-old who was careening around the corners on her tricycle. The teenagers knew to stay out of her way, and the tourists learned the same quickly. She seemed determined to set a world speed record for tricycle racing in cloisters. And what could be a better place to ride than under the shelter of those ancient stones — no wind, no rain, and no Morris Mini — just the odd tourist in the way now and then?

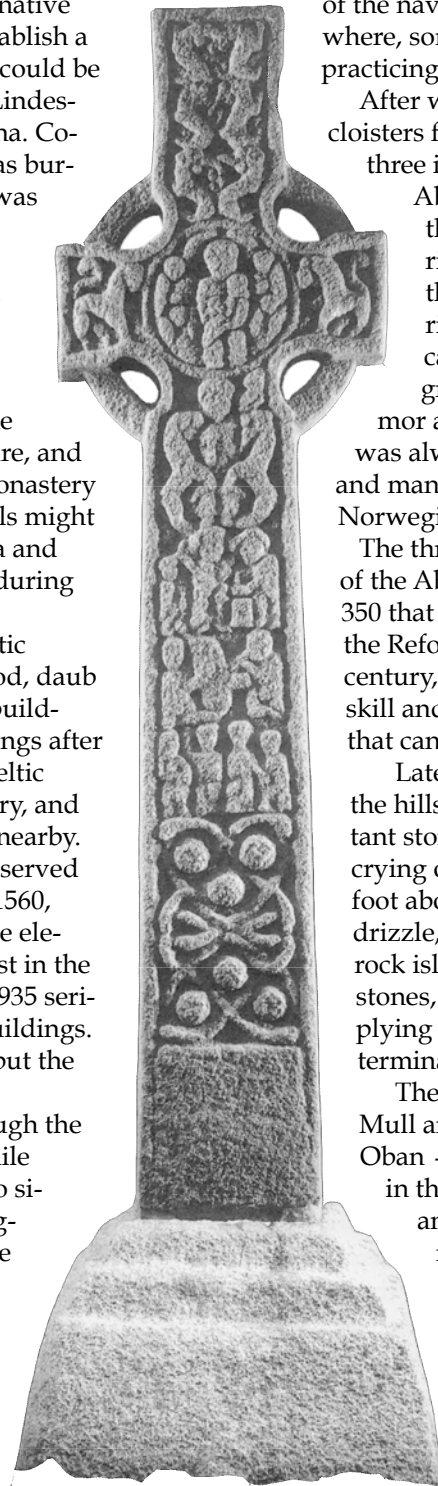
When we opened the heavy wooden doors to the church itself, the leaves and crisps packets swirled in with us and coursed gently up and down the central aisle of the nave. Again, there were teenagers everywhere, some clustered in earnest discussion, some practicing for coming services.

After walking through the church, viewing the cloisters from a safe distance, and admiring the three impressive standing crosses in front of the Abbey I wandered through the grassy area that has been used as a graveyard for centuries. I was intrigued by the grave markers that showed the progression of those centuries from the early, round field stones carved with a simple cross to the elaborate grave-slabs carved with knights in full armor a thousand years later. Being buried at Iona was always considered to be a special privilege, and many Scottish kings, as well as some Irish and Norwegian kings, are buried there.

The three large standing crosses that are in front of the Abbey are the only ones remaining from the 350 that were located on the island at the time of the Reformation. These three were made in the 8th century, and their carved decorations show great skill and much of the same artistry and aesthetic that can be seen in the book of Kells.

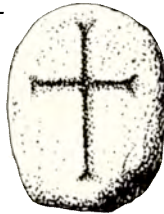
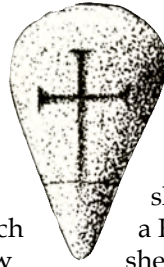
Later in the day, while wandering around in the hills above the Abbey looking for some important stones, it was possible to listen to the gulls crying overhead and my children moaning underfoot about the folly of stumbling around in the drizzle, in a cow pasture, looking for rocks on a rock island. We never did find the important stones, but I enjoyed watching a young sheep-dog plying his trade with budding skill and great determination as he herded four sheep home.

Then, too soon, it was back across the water to Mull and on to a larger ferry (with the car) to Oban — thereby missing all those sheep standing in the road across Mull. Oban is a lovely town and well worth a visit on its own. The ferry ride to Oban was under suddenly crystal blue skies and the view across the water was a delight. From the water we could see McCaig's Tower, modeled after the Colosseum of Rome, and built by a rich banker at the turn of the previous century in order to give employment to the local stone masons during the winter.



St. Martin's Cross, Iona

The journey has a strange little postscript that once again shows that it is a small world. In the hotel on the Isle of Mull, after dinner we had gathered in the lounge as one does in English hotels to drink coffee, chat, and read the newspaper. I was the one reading the newspaper, or at least I was pretending to read the newspaper. What I was really doing was eavesdropping on the conversation next to me in which an American woman was telling a French woman how to go about buying a Bible and then how to read it. I was quite intrigued; it seemed that the two women were both traveling on an organized bus tour through Scotland. About a year later I made one of my rare visits to the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church and discovered that I had come on the Sunday in which they were welcoming a new member of their ministerial staff. They said, by way of introduction, that she had recently been studying at St. Andrews in Scotland. When she gave the closing prayer I was quite sure it was the same woman I had



Iona Tombstones

been eavesdropping on in the hotel but microphones can distort voices, as can memory. I waited for about an hour after the service until everyone in the congregation had greeted her, and when she was alone I walked up and asked her if she had ever been on the Isle of Mull. She looked startled but said yes, she had. I asked if she had sat in a hotel lounge urging a French woman to buy a bible and again she said yes, she had, but how could I know that? So I confessed to my eavesdropping in such a far-away place and then she really looked startled. Her name is Peg Cantwell and some of you might remember her from her time here at Menlo Park in the 1980s.

Alas, I have never been back to any of the Hebrides Islands, but I can still hear them calling to me, and I hope now they will now start to call to you also. And if you want to start with the same recording I did, "Songs of the Hebrides" sung by Kenneth McKellar, it is still available, even after all this time. The things of the Hebrides endure.

Evolution Of A Project *by Julia Fremon*

I guess it all began one summer day in 2000 when I was on my own in Salisbury, and spent the afternoon wandering around the cathedral guided by Sarah Brown's wonderful book, *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd*. Here at last was a single source of information about every window and doorway, every tomb and statue — every feature of the cathedral interior. It made for a lovely day, but I was a little sad that I couldn't share it with my far-flung friends.

Then a few months later we all saw Stephen Murray's fascinating interactive CD about Amiens Cathedral, and Bob said, "Why not do a CD about Salisbury?" It would be for people who had visited Salisbury Cathedral and wanted to take it home with them to savor, and for people who were about to visit and wanted to study the cathedral in advance. We worked with Stephen and his colleagues at Columbia University over the next couple of years, but the project got too complex and finally died for lack of funding.

Meanwhile, our long-time friends Schaen and Vicki Fox had come on the 2001 Sarum Seminar trip, and (like so many Sarum travelers) Vicki had taken some fabulous photographs. She retired from teaching a few years later, planning to devote her energies now to photography. Aha!, we said, let's make an interactive tour of Salisbury Cathedral based on still photos rather than computer simulations! It could be a modest project with no upfront costs except our own time and travel.

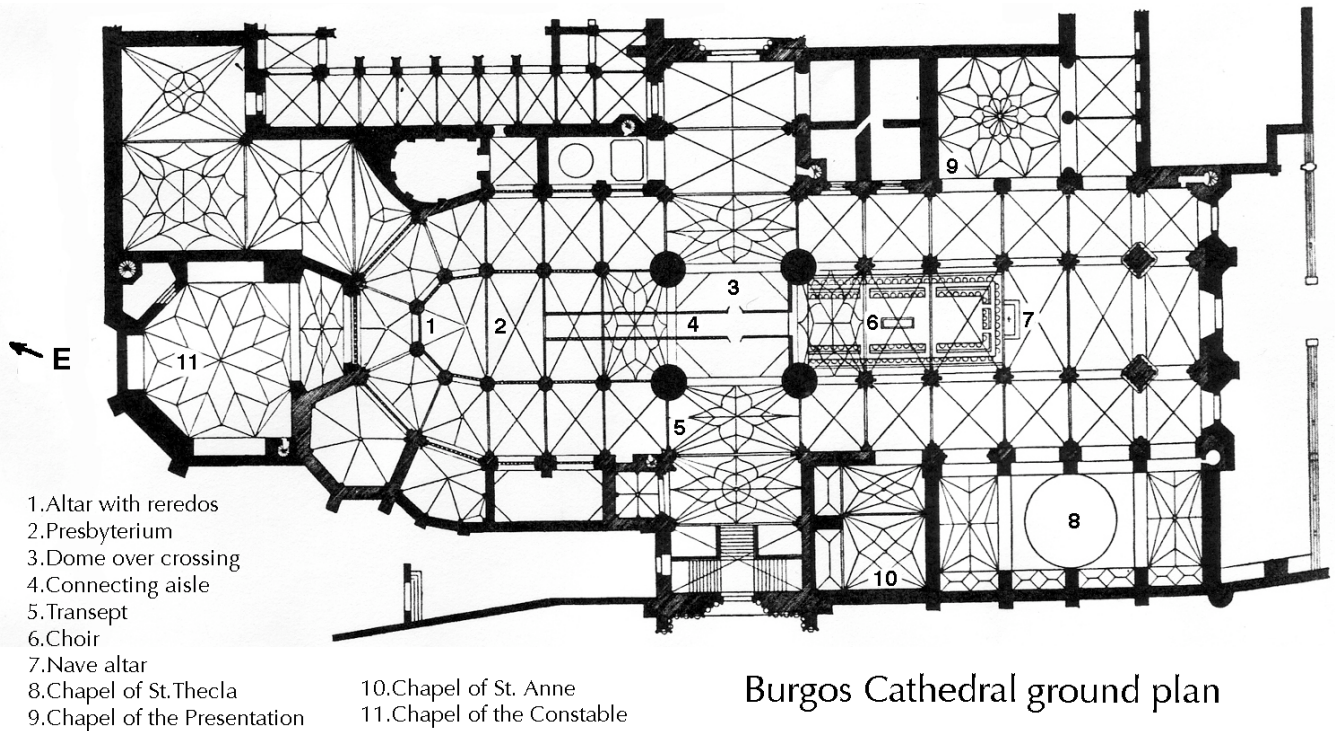
Vicki spent two weeks last summer taking pictures of Salisbury, with Schaen as her sherpa and note-taker. She came home with 404 terrific shots! She got a close-up of every statue on the West Front, almost all the stained-glass windows, all the major tombs and monuments, every chapel, plus views from the meadows, the lawn and the roof. After a little paring down, the collection is about 390 images, grouped in 15 chapters, on a CD that can be viewed on a PC or Mac.

My job has been writing the captions and chapter introductions. We had a great resource: a 60-page photocopied handbook by Roy Dixon, one of the chief cathedral guides, entitled "Notes for Guides in Salisbury Cathedral." Roy has pulled together and reconciled all the major scholarly works on the cathedral, and has tracked down the veracity of popular legends, to make the most comprehensive book on Salisbury Cathedral yet produced. My assignment, then, was to edit his descriptions into captions, match captions with the 390 photos, and add background and historical context from other sources.

We're now at the really boring part of the process — programming the CD, printing and production. We hope to have copies in the Cathedral Shop in time for the summer tourist season.

It's amazing how an innocent question — wouldn't it be nice to have a really good photographic guide to Salisbury Cathedral? — can morph into months of hard work over six years. But I think when we come out the other side, we'll be pleased with the results.





Sacred Space In Spanish Cathedrals *by Bill Mahrt*

Last November I sang with a choir from Portland, Oregon, *Cantores in Ecclesia*, on a two-week tour of Spanish cathedrals and other major churches, celebrating a Latin High Mass each day in a different city, singing Gregorian chant and especially the polyphonic music of Victoria. Typically, we would sing the Mass in the late afternoon, and then have dinner. The next morning would be spent seeing the churches and the city, and then we would travel by bus to the next city in time for the Mass in the late afternoon. It did not leave a lot of time for sight-seeing, but I was able to observe some major cathedrals. Having studied the cathedrals of Britain, I saw some interesting contrasts in the way the liturgical space was ordered, particularly in the placement of the choir, presbyterium, and altar. My remarks here are based upon the cathedrals I saw which still have their choir screens in place: Barcelona, Burgos, León, Segovia, Salamanca, and Toledo.

The prevailing phenomenon in English cathedrals is orientation: English churches not only face east but also have much of their liturgical ordering in the service of this orientation. Thus transepts, as at Salisbury, often have aisle formations on their east sides (but not on the west) since these aisle spaces can accommodate altars facing east. Likewise, in many English cathedrals, the easternmost axial chapel, usually the Lady chapel, can be seen from the choir, and its space relates closely to the space of the choir itself. This is particularly effective at Canterbury, where east of the altar, up a number of steps, there is a space where the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket once was; then, east of that is the corona. These can be seen as hyper-spaces — more easterly spaces that form a backdrop for and heighten the sacrality of the presbyterium and the altar.

At Salisbury, the blue Chartres glass of the Lady Chapel provides an important context for the whole choir, indeed for the entire space of the cathedral, since no choir screen blocks its view from the nave. There are notable exceptions in England, for example Winchester and Rochester, where the reredos completely block the view of the impressive spaces to the east.

Another interesting feature of English cathedrals is the placement of the choir and choir screen in relation to the transept and the crossing. In my observation, secular cathedrals generally have their choirs completely east of the crossing, while in monastic cathedrals, the choir stalls often extend back through the space beneath the crossing, or are even placed west of the crossing. An interesting case is Ely: here the awesome effect of the famous lantern is heightened by the space beneath it being completely open, unencumbered by any furniture. It is often forgotten, however, that in this former monastic church, the choir stalls occupied that very space under the lantern in a glorious clutter until the nineteenth century, when the neo-gothic revisions were made to the building, moving the choir to east of the crossing. Thus in England, there is no single placement of the choir in relation to the crossing; the impressive lantern tower above bears no normative relation to the ordering of the elements on the floor.

The Spanish cathedrals are all oriented — they face east. Still, the focus of the architecture is very different. The typical disposition of liturgical elements in a Spanish cathedral can be seen in the plan of Burgos cathedral, given here. Most have a very impressive dome, a *cimborio*, over the crossing, such that the whole effect of the architecture at the crossing is an upward sweep into a brightly illuminated and highly decorated space above, described

by one critic as “dazzlingly rich.” Further, the choir stalls and the choir screen are to the west of the crossing, being completely out from under the dome. Thus the choir itself takes up to half the nave to the west. The western part of the choir screen does not usually even have a door in it; it simply makes a solid back for the choir stalls. The nave altar stands to its west. The effect of this disposition is that the altar and the choir balance each other off on either side of the dome, with the open space beneath the dome being the intermediary between them. In modern times, pews have been put into this space, but there is an aisle marked off by railings that extends from the choir to the presbyterium, making the connection between the two liturgically functional parts of the architecture. The altar is surmounted by a monumental reredos, providing it a backdrop and blocking any view of anything behind it. In fact, in most of these cathedrals, there is a solid wall that divides the altar area from the ambulatory which surrounds it. All of this has the effect, I submit, of focusing the attention to the center, the space beneath the dome. Thus, while the English cathedrals focus upon East as a transcendent direction, and therefore have a geographical focus, the Spanish cathedrals have a greater focus upward at the center, and this is a cosmic focus.

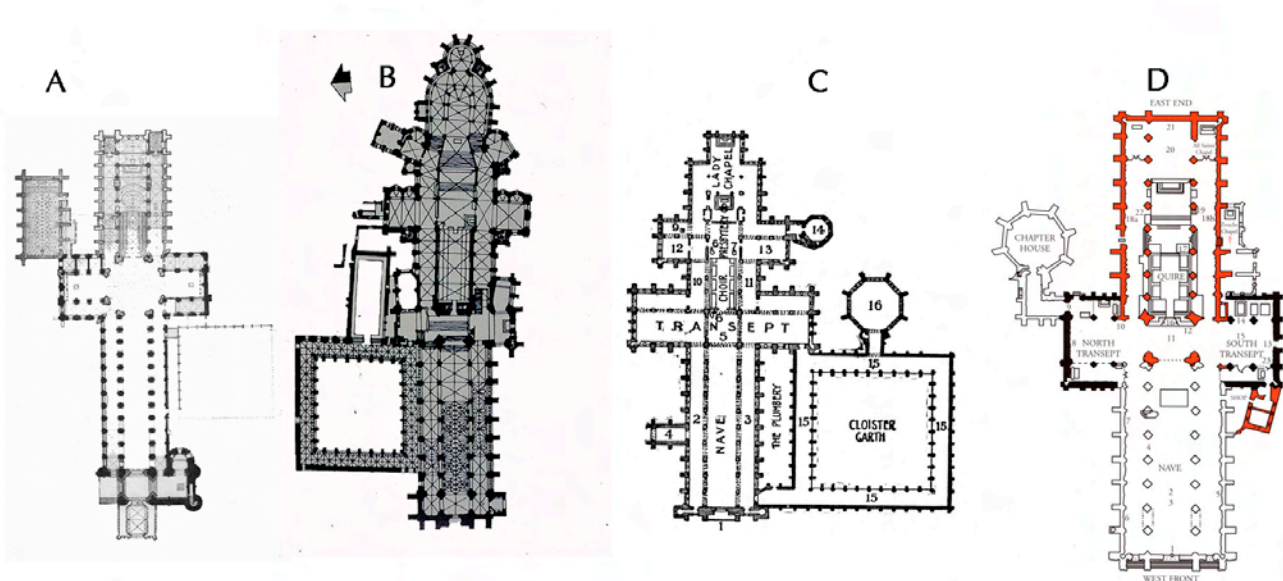
Side altars, in the English usage, are placed in orderly fashion in the small spaces created by aisle formations, at the east sides of transepts, and rarely along the sides of the nave. In addition, chantry chapels are fitted into spaces, usually small ones, between aisle and nave or choir. Side chapels in the Spanish cathedrals show no such discretion: they seem to co-opt extravagantly all

available space; some of them are larger than an average church. In Burgos cathedral, the Chapel of St. Thecla is as wide as the nave plus one aisle and is longer than the entire presbyterium plus altar. The reredos of its altar, in Churrigueresque style, is mammoth and impressive. In addition, four side altars within the chapel bear impressive reredoses of their own. Two of the chapels in Burgos (Constable and Presentation) have their own monumental domes. The liturgical center of the church is thus surrounded by an extravagant in-fill of chapels, some of which come close to rivaling that center.

There is a sense of historical continuity in such a building, because it did not experience the renovations of the Gothic Revival, so pervasive in the English cathedrals. (The cathedral of León shows some evidence of reordering in the Gothic Revival – its baroque reredos was given away and replaced with an elaborate Gothic-style reredos of painted panels.) Rather, at Burgos cathedral, for example, major revisions were made in every century from the thirteenth through the eighteenth, revisions which were added to the building as it stood, so that they bear a congruity with all that had come before. The absence of a Reformation allowed the buildings to be elaborated in a constant and somehow coherent way. One is impressed, in the face of quite diverse artistic styles, by the fact that it all fits together. Another interesting stylistic feature of these buildings is that the Gothic style is still being built in the sixteenth century. The new cathedral at Salamanca (begun 1512) and the cathedral at Segovia (1525) are both enormous and elaborate Gothic buildings.

Quiz by Bob Nyden

Can you identify these English cathedrals by their ground plans? (Not all drawn to the same scale.)



Aly B. Canterbury C. Salisbury D. York

The “Lives” of New College, Oxford Choristers by Bob Scott

Any choir director will tell you -- just ask Bill Mahrt -- that there is more to leading a group of singers than just handing out music and waving one's arms about in front of them. Identifying the right mix of voices required to perform the pieces to be sung, recruiting of singers, scheduling rehearsals, planning programs, making sure everyone is on the same page as to date, time, place and music -- these and myriad other tasks all go with the sometimes thankless job of directing a choir. Difficult as this may be, the task of directing a choir of young boys adds infinite layers of complexity to this already challenging task. Case in point: The Chapel Choir of New College, Oxford.

As some of you know, last year Julia and I spent the Winter Term at New College, Oxford, where I was a Visiting Fellow. It was our pleasure to attend Evensong at the New College Chapel where we were treated to the angelic sounds of the New College Chapel Choir. Composed of boys ages circa 9 to circa 12, they do indeed sing like angels and they look like angels as well. The choir and the college were both founded in 1379 by William of Wykeham, the famous Bishop of Winchester. (The guest room in the Warden's house is still called the Bishop's bedroom and is the very place where William slept when he was in residence at New College.) The New College Chapel Choir is world-renowned. Their repertory of sacred music spans six centuries. In addition to singing evensong five evenings each week, they tour Europe and America three to four times each year, regularly record for major studios, and hold special ad hoc concerts several times a year. If you have ever heard them live or in recording, you will know how angelic their singing can be.

Thanks to one of the choristers, our nine-year old friend Will Hewstone, we learned that angels they are not. Basically, they are your garden variety English school boys, and all that this implies -- musically gifted but occasionally prone to the diabolical. Thus, in addition to everything else a choir director must do, the Master of the New College Chapel choir must cope with keeping 20-some bright, energetic, and sometimes mischievous, young boys in line.

The person in question is Edward Higginbottom, known affectionately by the boys as “Higgie.” He was appointed Choir Master in 1976, and over these past 30 years has evolved a finely tuned system of rewards and punishments (well, punishments mostly) aimed at keeping his charges in line and ensuring a quorum at services. Young Will explained to us how this system works.

When a boy is inducted into the choir, typically at age 9, he is automatically awarded five “lives.” If he behaves himself, which almost none of them do, he keeps his lives

for the duration of his tenure as a chorister. If he commits an infraction (for example, if he fails to watch the Choir Master when he is trying to lead them, or he arrives late for a service, or he talks out of turn, or forgets his music, or any of a series of more serious offenses) he is issued a warning, the New College Chapel version of a yellow card in soccer. A second infraction earns him a second warning. A third infraction earns him the loss of one of his five lives. That lost life can be won back by obeying all rules for seven consecutive days. But if this doesn't happen and he breaks another rule he immediately loses a second life and so on until he runs out of lives to lose.

At this point more drastic options are invoked. Having spent all five lives, the miscreant is permitted to continue to sing with the Choir but must wear a black robe at services, as opposed to the white robes worn by other members. If he steps out of line after that he may be further punished by being deprived of shoes during choral evensong and other performances. This is especially cruel because the Chapel floor is of stone, and standing on cold stone floors in stocking feet in the dead of winter can be painful to the legs. If that still doesn't work the nuclear option is exercised -- expulsion from the Choir. Will tells me that Higgie prefers not to invoke this option since it puts him down a singer, often one in which he and the school have invested a great deal of time and resources in voice training.

This past Christmas we visited Will and his family in Oxford. On the day of our visit Will seemed unusually tired and when we asked him why, he told us that he had spent the better part of the day with the Chapel Choir recording the *Stabat Mater* and other pieces for a major recording studio. The Choir worked away with only occasional breaks for nearly six hours. He reported that one of the choir members, the youngest of the lot, had that day broken a record for losing lives as a result of a single infraction. As the day wore on his energies flagged, and, at a particularly inopportune moment, he drifted off to sleep on his feet, in the process letting drop to the floor his entire musical score for the day. The resulting crash brought the recording session to an abrupt halt. Will told us that Higgie was not pleased and ended up fining the poor lad three of his five lives. Will said that as far as he knew this set a new record for the Choir.

I do not wish to imply that the Choir Master spends inordinate amounts of time coping with questionable behavior on the part of his charges. But from what Will tells me, it does seem clear that performing sacred music angelically may not be as effortless as it seems.

Your man in Oxford. Bob Scott



Book and Journal Reviews

From Elaine Kriegh:

Harriet O'Brien, *Queen Emma and the Vikings: A History of Power, Love and Greed in Eleventh-Century England*, Bloomsbury, New York and London. 2005.

Alison Weir, *Queen Isabella: Treachery, Adultery, and Murder in Medieval England*, Ballantine Books, New York. 2005.

When Arlene Okerlund spoke to the Sarum Seminar last year about her book on Elizabeth Woodville, queen to Edward IV, she commented that there was a renewed interest in medieval English queens. With that in mind I decided to read these two biographies. I found it interesting that both of these medieval queens have tainted reputations. Please note the *full titles* of both these biographies contain words such as "power," "greed," "treachery," "adultery," and of course, "murder."

Both books were well-researched and fast-paced reads. Emma is the more distant and less known queen but that makes her story no less compelling. Isabella is more familiar, perhaps more negatively stereotyped, but new research on Edward II has cast some doubts on the traditional assessments of his reign, his death, and Isabella's role in both.

Harriet O'Brien focuses on the pivotal role that Emma, a Norman princess in eleventh-century England, played at the time of the Viking invasions. She was at the center of a triangle that is delicately balanced among Viking, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman interests. Initially Emma was used as a pawn. Her marriage to the much older Aethelred the Unready was to secure a Norman-Anglo-Saxon alliance against the Viking encroachment. However, as Aethelred's incompetence became apparent, Emma became much more of a "player" in the balance of power. She became a risk-taker and ultimately a "manipulator" not only for her own survival, but for her three children from her marriage to Aethelred: Edward (later the Confessor), Alfred, and Godgifu. After Aethelred's death, she married Canute, son of Swein Forkbeard, the Dane who had triumphed over Aethelred. Two children were born of this marriage: Harthacanute and Gunnhild. Her marriage to Canute apparently was happy, but with his death, Emma again had to become pro-active to retain her wealth and power. History has always judged Emma harshly for her treatment of her three older children, supposedly sending them back to Normandy for their safety at the time of her marriage to King Canute, her lack of interest in them and her overt partiality to her other son, Harthacanute. O'Brien is less judgmental, interpreting her lack of communication as a protective action, rather than determined neglect. Emma was a gambler; she lost as often as she won. She was exiled twice and stripped of power by one of her sons.

Alison Weir's biography of Isabella was of special interest. Previously I have written reviews of Paul Doherty's

book *Isabella and the Strange Death of Edward II* and Ian Mortimer's biography of Roger Mortimer entitled *The Greatest Traitor*. Both of books broke new ground in the re-assessment of the reign of Edward II. I have enjoyed some of Alison Weir's previous biographies, but found her to be a little too quick to pass judgment with insufficient evidence. Weir usually tips her hand as to her judgment of her subject in the initial pages of her books. I was relieved to see that she consulted both Doherty and Mortimer in her research on Isabella. She also had an impressive bibliography of original source materials as well as secondary sources.

Isabella has always had the sobriquet "She Wolf of France" tacked onto her name. Numerous legends abound about her cruelty, her madness, her rashness. Finding the truth would not be an easy task. The woman that emerges from Weir's research is an Isabella who at heart wanted to do the right thing, did the right thing, but was undone by the most powerful of human emotions, love.

In some ways Emma and Isabella are much alike. Initially used as pawns in political marriages, they both found the resources within themselves to take control of their own destinies. Isabella tried to work with what she had been given. She was blessed with a strong sense of self-esteem, purpose and family loyalty. Edward must have driven her up the wall. His affairs with Piers Gaveston and Hugh Despenser the Younger caused her embarrassment and anger and forced her to become strong. Isabella, like Emma, became a risk-taker and manipulator. If she had not taken Roger Mortimer as her lover, her reputation would have been very different.

Alison Weir has gone a long way to rescue Isabella from an undeserved reputation. She still will be judged for her recklessness while in thrall to Mortimer, but the strength she displayed and the correctness of her actions, most notably when she confronted the Despensers, should be recognized as genuinely heroic. Far from going mad and rambling around Castle Rising, Isabella became a distinguished queen mother honored by her son Edward III.

From A. Richard Jones:

Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age*, Basic Books, New York, 2002, ISBN 0-46502272-3.

Joseph L. Kirschvink, "Red Earth, White Earth, Green Earth, Black Earth," *Engineering and Science*, ISSN 0013-7812, Vol. LXVIII, No. 4 (2005), pp. 10-20. Viewable at <http://pr.caltech.edu/periodicals/EandS/> Click on archive.

Brian Fagan's book, *The Little Ice Age*, is a fascinating look at the weather from 1300 to 1850, which in a word, was bad. So bad that we now call it the little ice age. Starting with the great famine of 1315 to 1321, Fagan recounts a tale of storms, cold, droughts, crop failures, ice-bound shipping, displaced fisheries, floods, etc., which

Reviews, continued

harassed the subsistence farming economy of that time. He gives a great deal of historical context to these events, so that the whole is quite a readable story of the climatic background to history, though the notion that the climate *caused* historical events is carefully avoided. But, did you know that the Spanish Armada lost far more ships to stormy weather than to the British? Or that certain military campaigns were abandoned because of foul conditions?

Of particular interest to our group is the fact that the start of the little ice age ended the "medieval warm period," and that the time of this transition in the weather was also the time that the great cathedral building crusade lost steam, as it were. Although bad weather doesn't help the process of construction, the effect must have been more indirect. During the medieval warm period, the European economies had been generating the surplus wealth with which cathedrals could be built. Once the weather began to stress the subsistence farming base of the economy, the surpluses diminished and became sporadic. The lack of infrastructure for distributing large quantities of food even led to severe population losses at times. Under such circumstances, it isn't hard to understand why the application of resources to ecclesiastical buildings waned. So as always, it's the economy.

Fagan does not discuss Salisbury Cathedral, but it is interesting to correlate Salisbury's dates with the little ice age. Salisbury Cathedral was formally begun with a foundation laying ceremony on April 28, 1220. The first campaign of construction was complete by March 25, 1266, at the expense of 42,000 marks (28,000 pounds), but at that time, the crossing tower was shorter and the spire was not there. Later, the tower was raised by two stories and the spire was built, but the dates of this second campaign are less certain: all the proposals have been some-

time in the 1300's. In light of the great famine starting in 1315, it would seem that any proposed date for Salisbury Cathedral's tower and spire after 1315 ought to be regarded with great suspicion. Indeed, the current best estimate does precede 1315, supplanting earlier estimates in the 1360's or 70's.

Joseph Kirschvink's article offers a longer view of the climate. Starting when the early earth's atmosphere (exclusive of nitrogen) was primarily methane, Kirschvink describes how the fusion of two species of anaerobic bacteria resulted in a new class of organism—they used to be called blue-green algae, but are neither algae nor always blue-green—that produced oxygen as a waste product: the cyanobacteria, the ancestors of all green plants. This turned out to be a catastrophe and nearly a disaster. These new kids ate all the methane, replaced it with oxygen, and caused the strong greenhouse effect of the methane to vanish, leaving only the weak greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide. The earth promptly (in geologic terms) froze solid. All the water on earth was frozen, down to the depths of the deepest oceans, a state known as the "iceball." Had it gotten just a little colder, the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would also have frozen into dry ice (as it has on Mars) and the iceball would have become permanent and irreversible. This close call for life on earth was evaded by the persistence and gradual accumulation of carbon dioxide from volcanic eruptions, eventually thawing the iceball.

There have been two more iceball episodes subsequent to this first, longest one. The article explains the scientific evidence from geologists, biologists, and chemists that leads to these conclusions, and proposes a scenario of the temperature of the earth and the composition of its atmosphere over the span of geologic time. The Little Ice Age, of course, is not even a blip on this chart. However, both of these interesting publications should serve to inform our thoughts in the current debate on the climate.

Requiescant In Pace

Jim Boyd (1929-2004) was a member of Bob Scott's very first Continuing Studies course on cathedrals, and came on our first two trips to Salisbury. A retired architectural engineer, Jim was an accomplished photographer, producing stunning black and white images. All of us treasure the memory of Jim with his box camera and tripod on the cathedral walk, getting the image perfectly symmetrical and waiting so patiently for just the right light. He continued as a faithful contributor to our seminars as long as his health permitted, giving occasional talks, performing historical research and swapping books with friends.

Art Dauer (1936-2005) also went to Salisbury twice, the second time with his wife Anne. Art was a Stanford alumnus – he told us he majored in electrical engineering while taking as many literature courses as he could. After a career in corporate human resources, Art devoted his retirement years to energetic involvement in public service, sitting on numerous boards and advisory committees ranging from the University of Santa Clara business school to a foundation for the visually impaired to the Hoover Institution—as well as avid support of Stanford basketball and Giants baseball.

