

Choir Outings in the 1870's

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Considering travel was limited to journeys by foot, horse drawn vehicles and steam trains, the annual choir outings were in distance and duration similar to ours today.

The Recorder states that – *'The first week in October 1877 proved an especially memorable week in our parochial annals; on the Monday in that week the Choir visited the Zoological Gardens and Madame Tussaud's Waxwork Exhibition, and spent a very pleasant day among the lions and tigers, and effigies of important personages.'*

Another very full day out was held on October 15th 1878, when the eighteen members of the choir visited Oxford, which was reached at 11.45 am. They were met by Rev S Boulter *'who conducted them to visit Exeter Chapel, the Ashmolean Museum, the Theatre, the Bodleian Library, the Radcliffe Library, and New College Gardens.'* A dinner followed in Hemmings in Corn Market Street. *'The inner man having been fortified, a pilgrimage was made to the University Museum, Keble College, Christ Church, and Magdalene College ... it would be difficult to enumerate all the objects of interest seen on the occasion. Perhaps the boys were as much impressed with the veritable lantern said to have been used by Guy Faux on the memorable night of November 5th, 1606, as with anything. This relic is preserved in the Bodleian Library.'* The choir then visited the enormous 'Great Tom' bell of Christ Church (weighing in at 17,000 lbs). *'Every night punctually at five minutes past nine, 'Tom' tolls 101 strokes, the number of students on the original foundation. Altogether a very pleasant day was passed, and everyone was, we hope, well pleased with his visit to our great university town'*. The expenses were defrayed by subscription amounting to £5. 12s. 6d., again, the most generous being £1 from the Rector Rev W W Harvey, down to Mr Heath's more modest donation of 2/6d.

On 26th August 1879 the choir, (wearing identifying white rosettes), set off by horse drawn cart at 7.0 am for Wallingford Station for the first train to Paddington. Their destination was the Crystal Palace, arriving at 11.30 am where – *'...the fairy-like beauty of the place and its ever-varying attractions, were a source of unmitigated delight.'* In the Marble Hall refreshment saloon they enjoyed a dinner of *'hot joints of beef and mutton, peas, potatoes, ale and lemonade.'* The party re-assembled at 5.0 pm where *'another relay of refreshments gave renewed vigour for the homeward journey,'* and left Paddington at 7.0 pm arriving at Moulsoford at 9.30 pm where the cart met them for the hour's journey back to Ewelme – *'...greatly pleased with a day of unalloyed enjoyment.'* The weather was fine for the outward and homeward journeys, *'...but at noon it rained in torrents, so that the grounds of the Crystal Palace, which are very beautifully laid out, were lost from the pleasures of the day; but the interior gives subjects of interest for a week ... and a most enjoyable day was in no way spoiled by the capricious weather of 1879.'*

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