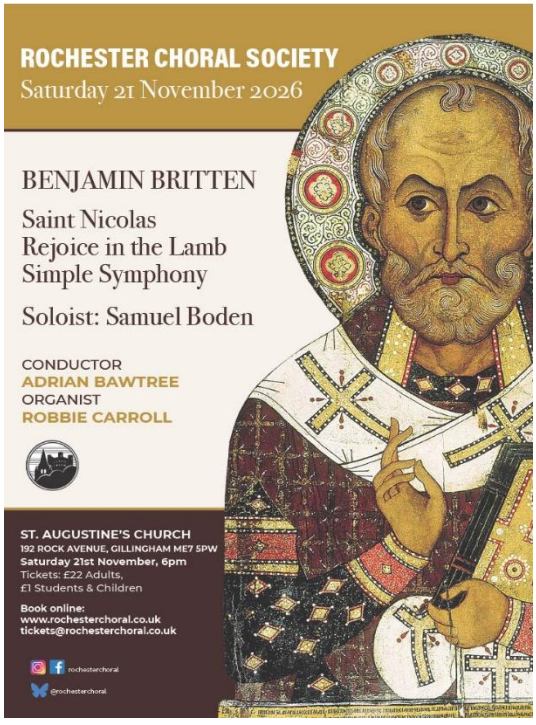
From: The Friends Secretary, c/o St. Nicholas Church, High Street, Strood ME2 4TR
Email: rochesterchoral@gmail.com

FRIENDS OF ROCHESTER CHORAL SOCIETY
Newsletter
September 2026

Dear Friend

As Sarah said in the previous newsletter, I am taking over as Friends' Secretary. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks on behalf of Rochester Choral Society to Sarah for all the assistance and kindness she has given the Friends over the last 10 years or so. She started back in 2016 by helping Malcolm Moulton – and then when he stepped down as Friends Secretary in 2021 (although he had retired from singing in the choir a few years earlier), she single-handedly took over. She remains on the Committee though – and she and I have swapped roles, in that she will helping with organising fundraising and social activities instead of me – and so, no doubt, you will hear from her again very soon.

In membership news, I am delighted to welcome **Adrian and Patricia Gulvin** who have joined us as Duet Annual Friends. I would like to wish them a long and happy membership of the Friends.



I am very much looking forward to our upcoming concert on **Saturday 21st November at 6pm**, in St Augustine's Church, Gillingham. Please note that there has been *a change of venue from what was previously advertised*. Unfortunately, a problem arose with St. John's Church Chatham, and we were very fortunate to secure St. Augustine's at short notice. It is the same venue that we used in the summer, and we thoroughly enjoyed singing in the spacious and airy church then (we hope that you appreciated the concert as well). You will find the church at the junction with Rock Avenue and the A2, just past the traffic lights at the top of Chatham Hill. Buses connect with Gillingham Station about a mile way, and **free parking will be available** at **Chatham Grammar** a short walk away. The postcode for the school is ME5 7EH [map]. We do still hope to hold a concert in the future at St. John's.

This November we will be putting on an all-**Benjamin Britten** programme – on the eve of his 113th birthday and almost 50 years to the day from the anniversary of his death. We will be singing ***Saint Nicolas, Op. 42***, a cantata based on a text by Eric Crozier and completed in 1948, and ***Rejoice in the Lamb, Op. 30***, a cantata completed in 1943 that uses text from the unusal poem *Jubilate Agno*, written by Christopher Smart (1722-1771) between 1759 and 1763. Incidentally, Smart was born in Shipbourne, baptised in Wrotham and schooled in Maidstone. The third piece will be ***Simple Symphony, Op. 4***, played by a string orchestra.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming **Samuel Boden** as our tenor soloist. We had originally booked him to sing the Evangelist in the *St. Matthew Passion* in 2024, but he was taken ill at the last minute and so could not sing with us. Although he has worked extensively in the UK and internationally with many leading ensembles, including Ex Cathedra, The Gabrieli Consort, The Sixteen and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, he lives locally, and his two children are Cathedral choristers. We are hoping that they will join their father in singing with us as the "pickled boys" in the *Saint Nicolas* – making it an all-round Boden family affair.

Tickets are on sale online: Tickets & Concerts - Rochester Choral Society
Please don't forget to select the "Friends Subscription" option for your tickets at £17. Non-Friends tickets are £22.

Extra events
The Rochester Choral Society has been asked to participate in some extra events this October. The first one is for a project called Nature Connects on Saturday 10th October, which will take place at Rochester Cathedral from 5 to 7.30pm. Based around the theme of harvest, this "unique event celebrates our personal, emotional, cultural and spiritual encounters with nature from the perspectives of different cultural traditions". Our Director of Music, Adrian Bawtree, will be leading us in some choruses from **Haydn's *The Creation***. Tickets are available from the Cathedral website.

Secondly, we will be taking part in **Oral History Medway**, led by local historian, **Robert Flood**. We will be hosting the **Black History Bus Tour** at the Corn Exchange on Saturday 17th October at 1pm, when we will be singing a condensed version of ***The Song of Hiawatha*** **by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**, which we performed in concert and on tour in Barcelona this year.

And finally, we have been invited to sing excerpts of **Adrian Bawtree's *Make More Sail*** on Trafalgar Day (Wednesday 21st October) at Wouldham Church, 7.30pm. The church is running activities throughout the day in honour of Trafalgar Day, including a cream tea in the afternoon and some small displays for people to look at – and culminating in the concert at the end. The reason for Wouldham's interest in Trafalgar Day is because Walter Burke – the purser in the Royal Navy at the time of the Battle of Trafalgar – lived in Wouldham and has a headstone in Wouldham Church. We will be singing a shortened version of *Make More Sail*, which we last sang in the summer – and the narration (taken from the viewpoint of John Pasco, the Signals Officer aboard the HMS Victory) will this time be performed by Adrian Lacey, who is a bass in the choir.

Verdi Requiem concert – Saturday 13th March 2027

We are very much looking forward to performing the **Verdi *Requiem*** in the Cathedral in March next year. The last time we sang it was in 2006 and so it is long overdue for us to sing this magnificent piece in our wonderful Cathedral again. We would like to make as big a sound as possible and so we are inviting guest singers to join us. If you are interested in singing with us (or if you know of someone who would like to join us for the concert), then here is some information about it below:

Director of Music and Accompanist:

The programme will be under the direction of **Adrian Bawtree**. Adrian was Director of Music and Organist at Rochester Cathedral from 2022 until July of this year and he is also a co-Director of the Kent Arts and Wellbeing Partnership. Our Accompanist is **Robbie Carroll**, who is currently Acting Director of Music and Organist at Rochester Cathedral.

Rehearsal schedule and venue:

Rehearsals will be held from Tuesday 5th January to Tuesday 9th March (including the Tuesday of the February school holiday). Our rehearsals start at 7.30pm and finish at 9.30pm with a short break in the middle. Our rehearsal venue is **St. Nicholas Church, High Street, Strood ME2 4TR** [map]

We normally hold a rehearsal on the Thursday before the concert – so on Thursday 11th March (in the Cathedral) from 7.30 to 9.30pm - and on the Saturday morning of the concert, usually from 9.30am to 12 or 12.30pm in the Cathedral. ***The concert itself will start at 6pm.***

Attendance:

We expect a minimum of 75% attendance at our rehearsals – and we would hope to see everyone who can possibly make it at the Saturday morning rehearsal on the day of the concert.

Cost:

The participation fee for the term would be £50.

Contact:

If you are interested in singing with us then please get in touch with our Secretary, Julie Hopkins, at rochesterchoral@gmail.com

Summer concert – Saturday 3rd July 2027
Our Summer Concert in 2027 is going to be a little different this year. We have been invited by the **Maidstone and Medway Sinfonia** to participate – along with other choirs from the Maidstone and Medway area – in their centenary concert. We will be performing **Beethoven's *Choral Symphony No. 9***, **Brahms' *Academic Festival Overture*** (ending with our involvement in ***Gaudeamus Igitur***) and a new work to be composed by local composer **Jacob Bride**.

The concert will be held in All Saints Church, Mill Street, Maidstone ME15 6YE – and it will start at 7.30pm.

Subscriptions
Finally, it is that time of year when I need to remind our Friends who pay their subs annually that Friends subscriptions are now due. The annual subscription is £30, or £50 for a couple, and you can pay it either via online transfer or by cheque sent to The Friends Secretary, Rochester Choral Society, c/o St. Nicholas Church, High Street, Strood ME2 4TR.

Our bank account details:
Name: Rochester Choral Society
Sort code: 40-39-02
Account no: 21028936

If paying online, please could you let me know that you have made the payment by email to: rochesterchoral@gmail.com

If you would like to upgrade your subscription from annual to life, then please do contact me at the email address above. The life memberships are £300, or £450 for a couple.

If you are already a Life Friend, or if you pay by Standing Order, then you need take no further action. If you are not sure if you have a standing order set up, then please do drop me a line at rochesterchoral@gmail.com

I would like to express my thanks on behalf of Rochester Choral Society to all of you for the generous support that you have given the choir over the past year, and I look forward to seeing you at the concert in November (if not before).

With my very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Mary

Mary Burslem
Friends' Secretary

Future concert dates for your diaries:

Saturday 21st November 2026 St. Augustine's Church, Gillingham, 6pm	**Britten: Rejoice in the Lamb, Op.30** **Britten: Simple Symphony, Op.4** **Britten: Saint Nicolas, Op.42**
Saturday 13th March 2027 Rochester Cathedral, 6pm	**Verdi: Requiem** *(Guest singers welcome to join us for the term's rehearsals and performance.)*
Saturday 3rd July 2027 All Saints Church, Maidstone, 7.30pm	**Beethoven: Choral Symphony No. 9** **Brahms: Academic Festival Overture (ending with Gaudeamus Igitur)** **A new work to be composed by Jacob Bride**

You can always find details of upcoming performances on our website: Tickets & Concerts - Rochester Choral Society