

Hull and York Evensongs

The final week of May was a very busy one for the Stamford Bridge Singers. On Saturday 27th May the choir sang Evensong at Hull Minster and then on Wednesday 31st they sang Evensong at York Minster.

Hull Minster is a large church in the centre of Hull, and the choir were warmly welcomed by all the staff at the Minster, especially the people in the café. After a short introit – Bruckner's *Locus Iste* – the choir processed into the quire to sing the canticles to the setting by Stanford in C, and the versicles and responses were by Thomas Tallis. The Director of Music, Stuart Nettleship, had arranged the Lord's Prayer using a familiar Tallis tune, which the choir sang unaccompanied. The anthem was by Rachmaninoff - *Bogorodyse Dyevo* – which the choir sang in Russian, and in a Russian style, complete with very low bass notes. The Minister and the Minster staff and the small congregation were very appreciative of the choir's role in leading the evening worship.



York Minster has a well-deserved reputation for musical excellence, and it was quite an honour to be



invited to sing an Evensong during half term when the York Minster choir was away. The acoustic of this Gothic cathedral is amazing but not always easy, and the choir did really well to adjust to this singing space. What was quite unexpected was the number of people who attended the service; it seemed that these were a mixture of regular Evensong worshippers, some friends of the choir as well as a number of tourists. It was thought that the congregation numbered about 200, and what was also a bit unnerving was that the congregation were very close to the singers. However, this did not put off the choir, who sang the Stanford in C canticles with great gusto, as well as the Tallis versicles and responses, together with Stuart's Lord's Prayer. For at least one in the congregation the highlight was the

Rachmaninoff *Bogorodyse Dyevo* which was sung so dramatically, that in the quiet sections you could "hear a pin drop" and in the loud sections the "hairs stood up on the back of the neck". For both Evensongs the organ was skilfully played by Nicholas, the choir's very sympathetic accompanist and in the final voluntary at York he really showed off his talent as an organist.

The word Minster dates to Anglo Saxon times where a Minster was seen as a mother church or mission church. In both Evensongs the Stamford Bridge singers skilfully and sensitively contributed to the worship and so made their contribution to the musical life of both churches.