

## **Joe Hogg: an appreciation by Peter Beaven, formerly Director of Music at Chiswick Parish Church**

I've known Joe Hogg for all my adult life (and the difficult bit just before !) and strangely, although we lost touch once or twice, our paths happily kept crossing. I first met Joe when I first started playing at Holy Trinity Church Hounslow in the days before the cult of charisma struck Hounslow High Street. Then Holy Trinity boasted the best choir in the area and as a result the liturgy there was carefully prepared with good music. The legendary Alec Gurd was the choirmaster who nurtured good choirs and good music wherever he went. Joe was a faithful tenor at Holy Trinity for many years. With the introduction of junk music, the unhappy departure of Alec Gurd and the subsequent liturgical upheavals there, Joe, like a few others, followed Alec to St John's Isleworth. There for a few years all was rosy and Joe was happy singing in a good, enterprising choir. In November 1984, when Alec died, Joe witnessed the music falling to bits, either by dereliction or design, and felt it was time to move on again.

Meeting him at a local RSCM event, he told me of this story. He had 'guested' with a few choirs in the area but hadn't felt at home with any of them, so I invited him to sing a choral evensong at St Nic's one Sunday, 'just to have a good sing'. He was made to feel so welcome by the choir and clergy that he stayed, slowly getting involved and committing himself to a church where he felt part of the family/team and could usefully make a contribution. Above all he felt the stability that St Nic's offered was a rare jewel.

Around the time I was singing a lot with St Paul's Cathedral Choir, Joe was also singing there with the Cathedral's Chorus, and we frequently used to bump into each other in the crypt or upstairs. Joe was also a member of the City Glee Club. Through his links with Alec Gurd he became a member of Hayes and Harlington Light Operatic Society. He was intensely proud of being made an Hon. Life Member of this society a few years ago. He sang, tap-danced and acted his way through many shows and reviews. Before I knew he'd just learnt to tap, I asked him why he was carrying a pair of shoes in a bag (a bit like an organist...) before Friday choir practice. He then astounded me by donning his tappers and doing a routine in the chancel (Psalm 150 v.4). He was actually rather good!

Joe always had a neat turn of phrase and many were the times when he would gently elbow me and, in conspiratorial tones, whisper '...ere what d'you think....?' Most of the gems that followed were apposite, sometimes saucy but always funny and, sadly, unprintable. The art of humour is governed, so they say, by good timing and Joe at his best knew the very moment to 'corpse' a choirmaster.

He was a gentle man in the truest sense – he was perhaps a rare bird of his generation. He rejoiced in seeing other people happy and smiling, especially young people. To me, Joe was always supportive and encouraging in all that I did, especially in my formative years. He even put in a good word for me when Alec Gurd and I were going through a

ruck. Joe felt it important to encourage youngsters, not to put them off. How well he showed this too at St Nic's.

It is a strange irony that at the time we cut Joe's cakes in honour of our girls' baptism, I used the words of the Carol Service that was imminent, remembering those who weren't with us: 'those who rejoice with us but upon another shore and in a greater light'. I didn't know it at that moment, but our Joe had just reached that other shore. He was a man of many talents (I hesitate to call him a polymath for I can hear him saying something comical). A keen singer, a tap-dancer, an actor, a cake maker of extraordinary talent, a gentle humourist, a listener and an observer of people, and one of the most kind-hearted men I've had the good luck to know. God be with you, Joe, and Thanks.