

## Ruckinge on a September Evening.



Ruckinge church is a delightful 14th century building with wide views across Romney Marsh. Inside, it felt very welcoming with a good acoustic and we were fortunate that although our choir was small numerically, it was well balanced. The audience had come from far and wide, (one couple had trekked from beyond Sevenoaks), and we were very warmly received - they even laughed at Tom Clarkson's jokes! The concert went very well, so well in fact that our new piano's metronome decided to join us at one point. We even managed to sing 'Italian Salad' with only five 1st. tenors! A comment from one of the audience, afterwards, said it all, "I didn't know that English choirs could sing so well." The evening ended with the choir and its ladies sitting down to a buffet supper in the village hall and an invitation - "now you've found us, perhaps you'll come again." Autumn '05.

## A LONG TRIP



Doug Gealer's 'FEW' \* preparing to entertain a capacity audience at St. Sampson's Church, Cricklade, nr. Swindon in June. The choir, conducted by Denise Float, with Aileen Dickson at the piano, gave a performance which was warmly received and the 24 singers who had made the long journey could hold their heads high. The church had a marvellous acoustic and those of us present could only wonder what we would have sounded like, if we'd taken the stage with all our 40+ members. \* Doug's letter to the Summer issue complained about the poor turn-out at recent concerts. Autumn '05.

## A Possible Joint Concert In 2006

Some of you may know that for the last three winters I have lived in the French Alps and have taken the opportunity to join a local choir. This is a mixed choir known as Chorale Mabelvoy that draws its membership from around the valley of the river Isere in the Haute Savoie. The choir meets in Moutiers, an ancient town that commands a mountain pass on a road to Italy and that is now surrounded by some of the biggest ski resorts in the world. Despite the wealth that pours into the area during the winter season Moutiers remains a working town where the economy is based upon hydro-electricity, carbon production, mountain agriculture, cheese-making and now servicing and supplying the many outlying villages where the tourists stay.

Chorale Mabelvoy have been extremely hospitable to me during my winters with them and extended this welcome to my wife, Joan, when she stayed with me during this last season. In April we were able to take part in a joint concert with a choir from another alpine valley and this event inspired some of the Mabelvoy choristers to ask whether they would be welcomed in Kent should they be able to arrange a short tour. This has now become a definite proposal and we have pencilled in the weekend of 5/6/7/8 May 2006 as a possible date.

I have discussed the Mabelvoy proposal with some committee members of the Snowdown choir, my wife has spoken to the committee of the Sandwich Manwoods choir of which she is a member and it is now looking as if two joint concerts may be possible. The concert with Snowdown could be on Saturday 6 May, maybe at the Grand in Folkestone, and the concert with Manwoods could be on Sunday 7 May maybe at St Mary's Church in Sandwich. The Mabelvoy choir are now looking at possible travel and accommodation arrangements with a view to confirming everything by September/October of this year. I am looking at a possible social programme for the French visitors and one or two people have already expressed an interest in hosting one or two of them for the three nights of the tour. I would be interested to hear from anyone else who might like to add this experience to an unusual weekend.

The Mablevoy choristers are a great bunch of people with the same sort of age-range and variety of backgrounds that we have in the Snowdown choir. Like many French people they tend to be more formal at times and there is always a ritual of hand-shaking and kissing at the beginning and end of each occasion. However, they also know how to enjoy themselves and rehearsals always conclude with a sampling of the local 'vin' served from the rehearsal room fridge. Any event with another choir includes a great deal of home-made food and Joan and I couldn't believe our eyes and ears at the supper that followed the joint concert in April. Shortly after sitting down to a generous buffet meal each choir in turn began to sing their alternative repertoire. These were mainly traditional songs that became increasingly boisterous as the night (by now early morning) wore on. Stamping and clapping were followed by standing on chairs, standing on tables, dancing on tables and then reached a climax when the two musical directors (both highly respected "professeurs") demonstrated their prowess at jumping on and over tables whilst conducting the last songs of the night. So whatever views you may have about the French I can assure you that they certainly know how to party !