

Saturday 21st March 2015.

Frances Webb

On the first day of spring we welcomed Frances to Somerset Branch for her first time conducting. We began with a lovely version of a beautiful song, *Ave Verum Corpus*, by **Mozart**. As it was originally for voices, it lay well on recorders and a smooth sound was produced after Frances had talked us through suitable dynamics and breathing. We followed this with another short piece, **Michael Praetorius' *Branle le torche***. A very exciting sound was produced, before we moved onto the third, much longer piece, *Rhosymedre* by Vaughan Williams. Although a few of us had played this before, Frances told the group about the origins of the piece, the fact that it had been written for a pipe organ in Wrexham, and was a hymn tune. Helen then translated *Rhosymedre* from Welsh to English as she apparently had been to school near Wrexham. We played it a few times, bringing out the chorale tune which runs through the piece.

Tea was then served by Helen – including a lovely orange cake, after which we looked at the centre spread music from the current magazine – *O Waly Waly* arranged by **GJ Badley**. Although the tune (a Somerset folk song) doesn't appear until near the end, the arrangement was quite interesting and simple enough to play.

We then moved to a much more challenging piece, **Byrd's *Fantazia*** number one, set for 6 parts, each with their own difficulties and complex rhythms. We worked at this for a while before giving a convincing performance. The final piece of the afternoon with a fun piece by Johann Strauss – his *Pizzicato Polka*. By pretending that we were pizzicato strings we produced a good sound, even if a top E (3 ledger lines) was required from the sopranino.

We concluded the afternoon in the way we had begun, with another play through the lovely Mozart *Ave Verum*.

Thank you very much to Frances for coming to conduct and guide us through a lovely selection of music. We hope that you will come again in the future.