



# SELBY ABBEY

AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY SINCE  
1069



## **Choral Scholarships 2026**

Selby Abbey offers three Choral Scholarships which are paid 'section-leader' singing opportunities. These are funded by a grant awarded in 2023 by the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation to support the development of church music at the Abbey. We wish to appoint an Alto, Tenor, and Bass Choral Scholar for the academic year beginning in September 2026. The period of appointment will initially be for one year, with the possibility of extending in further years, subject to mutual agreement and ongoing funding. We welcome applications from candidates of any age or gender.

## **Selby Abbey**

Founded as a Benedictine community in 1069, Selby Abbey grew to become one of the most prominent monastic institutions in the north of England. Dissolved in 1539, it is now one of the largest surviving medieval abbey-churches in the UK. Although many of the monastic buildings gradually disappeared over subsequent centuries, the Abbey Church survived more-or-less intact, retaining both its magnificent 12th century nave and its 14th century choir, and the Abbey became the parish church of the town of Selby which had grown around it.

Selby Abbey continues to serve its parish and the wider town and district of Selby as a place of Christian worship, teaching, and fellowship in the broad Anglican tradition. A founder member of the 'Greater Churches' Group within the Church of England, Selby Abbey remains an active member of that group's successor, the 'Major Churches Network'. The Abbey also hosts a wide variety of events and activities for the local and wider community, and is a popular a destination for visitors from Yorkshire, the UK and overseas. Key to this is the welcome the Abbey gives every day of the year provided by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

The current team at the Abbey includes the Vicar, the Operations Manager, Associate and Retired Priests, the Administrator, two Vergers, the Director of Music, Assistant Organist and Choral Scholars. There are also lay leaders, ministers and volunteers including the Churchwardens, Treasurer and PCC Members; a Reader, Recognised Parish Assistants; Lay Chaplains, Gift Shop Assistants; Eucharistic Ministers and Servers; Bellringers; Adult Choir (Adults and Children) and Junior Choir (aged 6-10); Tour Guides and Welcomers; Mothers' Union; Drama Group/Summer School Leaders; Youth Leaders; School and Children's Activities Team; and others who all contribute to the life and work of the Abbey. All (except the Vicar and Operations Manager) are part-time, and all are volunteers except the Vicar, Operations Manager, Director of Music, Assistant Organist, Choral Scholars, Administrator and Vergers. Selby Abbey Trust works to raise funds to maintain and restore the building through a series of 'appeals'. The magnificent restoration of the Abbey's 'Hill' organ in 2016 is one example.

There are 200 people in the regular worshipping community at the Abbey, with an average of 70 adults and 15 children at the largest weekly service (10 o'clock on Sunday mornings), though this increases to as many as 800+ for Remembrance Day and other seasonal services, including the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols by Candlelight.

The space within the Abbey itself includes an office/vestry near the west end, a coffee/gift shop in the north transept, a multi-purpose room in the old sacristy off the south choir aisle: the St Nicholas Centre, and a music/choir room in the former scriptorium above the old sacristy. We also have a church hall (the Hawdon Institute) adjacent to the Abbey and a Church Centre (St Richard's) on a housing estate within the parish.

## **The Town of Selby**

Selby is located in North Yorkshire on the river Ouse, about 12 miles from York. According to a recent national survey, Selby is the 6th best place to live in the UK, and the town enjoys good road, rail, and bus links with the cities of York, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, and London. The town is experiencing something of a cultural and artistic renaissance at the current time, benefitting from significant inward investment from the NHLF, the Arts Council, Drax Power and other Regional and National and Government sources to develop infrastructure, leisure, and retail services. Selby Abbey is looked upon as a key partner in this endeavour and the success of the Selby950 Festival in 2019, celebrating the milestone anniversary of the Abbey and the town which included several musical and choral events, is something on which we are keen to build.

## Music at Selby Abbey

The Abbey Choir is RSCM-affiliated and currently comprises c.30 members: The 'SATB' adults are volunteers and the boy and girl choristers are paid a modest amount per attendance. The full choir sings at the main weekly Sunday Eucharist at 10.00am, and Choral Evensong on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month, with various additional services sung during religious festivals. For Choral Evensongs and some other major choral services, the choir is occasionally joined extra paid deputy singers. The choristers and some adult volunteers are frequently requested to sing at weddings on Saturdays - Occasionally Choral Scholars are requested to sing as part of a small paid-professional group of



singers whom are requested to sing in this context. In celebration of the Royal Jubilee in 2022, the Abbey Choir hosted a 'Come and Sing' performance of music including Vivaldi's Gloria, and in April 2023, it was invited to perform Fauré's and Coleridge's Requiems conducted by the composer Matthew Coleridge. Other annual choir events include a Choristers' Concert, Music for Passiontide and the popular Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. The choristers are supported by two volunteer chaperones who are also choir-members: they attend all chorister activities and assist with choir organisation and administration.

The Abbey's Junior Choir was formed in November 2022 and is directed by Karen Banks, accompanied by the Director of Music. The Abbey hosts a large number of visiting musicians in choral services and numerous concerts: these include visiting choirs,

orchestras, brass bands, schools, and other musical and community groups. Selby Abbey Trust supports the annual Organ Recital Series to which we invite distinguished organists from across the UK and abroad to perform.

The Abbey Choirs' activities broadly follow academic term-times, with additional rehearsals and services for the Abbey Choir during Holy Week, on Easter Day Morning, and on Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning. Choir holidays take place during school half-terms including at least one Sunday, and for at least one full week following Easter Sunday and Christmas Day. The choir summer-holiday runs from mid-July until early September. Choral Scholars are usually only required on Friday evenings and Sundays. The normal weekly schedule of music activities is as follows:

Tuesday	5.00pm	Music Theory	<i>Choristers only</i>
	5.30-6.30pm	Rehearsal	<i>Choristers only</i>
Friday	6.00pm	Rehearsal	<i>Choristers only</i>
	7.30-9.30pm	Rehearsal	<i>Full Choir (choristers till 8pm)</i>
Saturday	10.00-10.45am	Rehearsal	<i>Junior Choir</i>
Sunday	9.15am	Rehearsal	<i>Full Choir</i>
	10.00am	Sung Eucharist	<i>Full Choir</i>
	5.30pm	Rehearsal*	<i>Full Choir</i>
	6.30pm	Choral Evensong*	<i>Full Choir</i>

*\*Choral Evensong is usually sung on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month only. This pattern is sometimes interrupted by other evening services, e.g. Carol Services.*

## **The Music Department**

Canon John Weetman

Oliver Waterer

Ian Seddon

Karen Banks

Sue Tagert

*Vicar of Selby Abbey and Area Dean*

*Organist & Director of Music*

*Assistant Organist*

*Chorister Chaperone & Junior Choir Director (volunteer)*

*Chorister Chaperone (volunteer)*



## **The Abbey Organ and Pianos**

The organ of Selby Abbey was built in 1909 by William Hill & Son, and is renowned as one of the finest romantic organs in Britain. It is ideal for performing much of the organ repertoire, and for enriching and accompanying the liturgy. The organ was fully restored in 2016 by Geoffrey Coffin and Principal Pipe Organs of York. The Abbey also houses three grand pianos, including a Steinway.

## Overall purpose of the Role

The Choral Scholarships are flexible in that we intend them, depending on ability and potential, to appeal to students or to more experienced musicians of any age. In return for monthly pay and a modest time-commitment, a Choral Scholar will be able to make a fulfilling musical contribution, while having plenty of time for self-development, educational, work and other commitments.

While it is important to distinguish Selby Abbey as a Parish Church and not a cathedral, traditional choral services are a vital part of the Welcome, Worship and Witness we aim to provide, with choral music providing spiritual inspiration both to the regular congregation and to visitors. The Choral Scholars have an important role in helping to enrich sustain and develop this ministry. Successful candidates will have some experience as choral singers, will be keen to learn, develop and share these skills, and will act as 'section-leaders' in the Abbey Choir. The Choral Scholars will sing primarily in the Abbey Choir for all its 'full' activities and will help support and promote the Abbey as a distinguished centre of church music in the area.

The role will be an exciting opportunity to assist the Director of Music (appointed in 2021) in continuing to raise the musical profile of Selby Abbey and its choir. The successful candidates will offer dedication, skill, and enthusiasm in return for training to further develop, and the opportunity to perform regularly to a high standard in an inspirational setting. The treatment of all in our community with fairness, kindness, respect and dignity is very important to us: successful candidates will be expected to uphold these values at all times, and we hope will flourish in such an environment.



## Remuneration

Remuneration is **£3,500** per year, payable monthly through the payroll, and tenable on an academic yearly basis. Subject to satisfactory performance, progress and mutual agreement, the scholarship may be extended beyond one year. Additional fees are payable for non-statutory duties, including occasional weddings and funerals. Accommodation is not provided. Advice and training is provided as required by the Director of Music.

## **Holiday**

A minimum of 8 weeks of paid holiday per year, to be taken during choir half-terms and choir holiday periods.

## **Additional benefits**

- Performing traditional church music to a high standard in an inspirational setting.
- Being part of a diverse musical group within a friendly and supportive community.
- Regular training with the Director of Music as required.
- Use of the Abbey (or Scriptorium) for practice, performing and recording, subject to the Abbey Diary and the agreement of the Director of Music/PCC.
- Performing opportunities at the Abbey and elsewhere.
- Fees for occasional non-statutory services, events, and activities.

## **Hours**

During 'choir-term' time: a minimum of **4 to 6 hours** per week is required. In a typical week, this includes a Friday choir rehearsal (2 hours), a rehearsal and service on Sunday mornings (2 hours), and twice a month, a rehearsal and service on Sunday evenings (2 hours). In addition, a Choral Scholar is expected to spend the necessary time learning/preparing music thoroughly in order to provide a solid lead to their section of the choir, both at rehearsals and services. They would also be required for choir duties on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Day, Ascension Day, Christmas Eve (midnight mass) and Christmas Day, for one concert and up to four other choral services/events per year. Occasionally there may be obligations falling on a Saturday. These may include weddings, RSCM services/choral festivals, concerts, or other non-statutory services and events.

## **Responsibilities and Duties**

A Choral Scholar is responsible for:

- Taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the position.
- Their own musical development, organisation, preparation, time planning, and travel arrangements.
- Behaving in a manner appropriate to the professional and pastoral nature of this role.
- Familiarity and compliance with relevant church policies, and Safeguarding Training and Health & Safety Policies in particular.
- When needing to be absent for a rehearsal or service, arranging a competent deputy in liaison with the Director of Music.

A Choral Scholar's duties will include:

- Being present and singing at all rehearsals, choral services, concerts, recordings, and choir tours as directed. A choir schedule is published termly.
- Learning music and preparing thoroughly for all musical tasks.
- Acting as section-leaders in the (otherwise voluntary) Abbey Choir.
- To attend and perform at one choir concert (together with any associated rehearsals) per year, and up to four additional services per year.

## HOW TO APPLY

Applicants are requested to download the following from the Choral Scholar advertisement placed on the Abbey's website: [www.selbyabbey.org.uk](http://www.selbyabbey.org.uk)

1. Confidential Declaration Form
2. An Application Form

Applicants should complete **both** forms and email them, together with a brief covering letter, to Oliver Waterer, Director of Music: [music@selbyabbey.org.uk](mailto:music@selbyabbey.org.uk)

The closing date is **Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2026**.

If you require any assistance with the application, please get in touch. Informal enquiries over the phone are most welcome at any time – please email the Director of Music to arrange a call-back. Applicants who we wish to invite for interview will be contacted with further details shortly after the closing date.

