Cromwell Singers Festive Fun, at St John the Evangelist Church, Newbury, on Saturday, November 24.

THE Cromwell Singers' concert of festive fun was a great success. We were welcomed by the Rev Trevor Maines, who set an informal and friendly atmosphere. Musical director Sarah Cope, with her great sense of fun, clearly inspired her enthusiastic choir who enjoyed their singing.

To the delight of the audience, the choir started their programme with a medley of songs from Oliver!. From the very first note, their performance was captivating. The song Consider Yourself was exhilarating.

I so enjoyed the choir's poetic Fields of Gold by Gordon Sumner (Sting). Their singing, rich in colour, sounded wonderful – particularly effective in the glorious acoustics of St John's. Another highlight was their joyful and animated rendering of the spiritual Good News, arranged by Will Gohl. They are very fortunate in their excellent accompanist Daphne George.

In several songs we were delighted to hear splendid solo singing from many members of the choir – too many to mention by name, but congratulations to all. The women in the choir gave a beautiful performance of Stephen Foster's Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair and the men treated us to an enjoyable rendering of Danny Boy.

Guest artist 15-year-old saxophonist Joe Pollard passed grade 8 with distinction in the summer. He is a member of Academy Saxophones for gifted and talented saxophone players in Berkshire. Completely at ease, he gave a superb recital. I was impressed with his wonderful sense of musicality. He treated us to one of his favourite pieces, a beautiful sentimental Ballade by Kiri Degg. His rhythmically exciting performance of Colin Crabb's Sax in the City – a salsa – was outstanding.

We were delighted to join the choir in singing well-known carols. Their sensitive rendition of the carol O Little One Sweet, full of colour, was really lovely. Another highlight was their bright and cheerful Do You Hear What I Hear?, a Christmas song written as a prayer for peace by Noel Regney and Gloria Shayne.

Singing As Long As I Have Music, this fun-loving choir brought a splendid occasion to a close.

HELEN BOMGARDNER

A retiring collection raised funds for St John's organ restoration fund and the Fair Close Centre.