

To: All Primary and Secondary School Head Teachers in Devon
Date: 9th January 2005

WE WERE THERE

a film of WWII experiences seen through British, German and Russian eyes

We have pleasure in enclosing a copy for your school of **WE WERE THERE**, an educational DVD that we have filmed and produced specifically for use in Devon schools.

The DVD has been funded by ourselves (EFC), Exeter City Council and The Big Lottery Home Front Recall among others. Through the DCC Education Department, it is being freely distributed to every primary and secondary school in Devon. The EFC is also providing a copy at no cost to each Devon independent school so that every pupil in Devon from Key Stage 2 onwards may have the opportunity to see it.

The film consists of live interviews with the wartime generation filmed during the 60th anniversary year of the end of the Second World War. Their accounts range from rationing in Russia, through evacuation and being blitzed in England to the experience of a (then) twelve year old German boy escaping the walls of fire when his mediaeval town centre was bombed. Often extremely moving, there are several reflective passages dealing with present-day feelings about what happened sixty years ago. It also includes some rare archive footage of Devon at the time.

We expect the film to interest - and to stimulate questions from - all age groups. It has been made as an educational resource and aims to share some of the real experiences and emotions of WWII – both in action and on the home front - with today's school generation.

Some Teachers' Notes are enclosed in case you and your staff may find them helpful. A supporting website - www.ww2wewerethere.org.uk - holds the DVD soundtrack and you can print more copies of the teaching notes from there, should you need them. The website also provides extensive links to other relevant learning support resources and two appendices to the Teachers' Notes: A Matter of Conscience and The Literature of the Second World War.

As the website Teachers' Notes are easily updated, any additional thoughts from your school that may help other schools will be most welcome. Equally, we would be very interested to hear about the responses to the film from your staff and pupils.

This may seem an unusual production for a choir but in 2005 the EFC performed Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* in Germany, Russia and at the Exeter Festival, combining each time with choirs from the other two countries. The three nations, once combatants, coming together in harmony, echoed Britten's original intention when writing the work, and the idea of making this DVD grew out of the performance project. Some music notes on the *War Requiem* are included on the website.

My fellow singers and I hope that your school will find the film useful and thought-provoking. Any feedback should be sent to me - alastair.logan@ex.ac.uk. Further information about the EFC's concert programme and the Britten performances is at www.exeterfestivalchorus.org.uk

With best wishes,

Dr Alastair Logan, Chair, Exeter Festival Chorus