

# ALTON TOWN COUNCIL



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Wartime Tribute and New Work to Feature at Alton Proms

Organisers of one of the highlights of Alton's social calendar, are hoping that it will more of a case of Vivaldi's *Summer* from the *Four Seasons* than Handel's *Water Music* at this year's Last Night of the Proms, following near non-stop rain which hampered last year's event in the town's Public Gardens.

Now in its fourth year, the rousing occasion has quickly become a firm favourite with concert-goers from Alton and across the region.

Building on the ongoing success of the initial concerts, this year's crowd-puller on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July is set to be even better, and the best pitches in the gardens are likely to be snapped-up when the gates open at 6pm, as groups of friends and families set out their picnic rugs and unpack hampers of fine summer fayre.

The traditional programme of popular music will be lead by Alton Concert Orchestra with contributions from Alton Community Choir, Alton Choral Society and the Three Belles, a female close harmony group who perform in the 1940's style.

Coordinated by Alton Town Council, it will be the culmination of months of careful planning and rehearsals by the town's musical elite who will be performing a programme of light classics, with a traditional second half including Edward Elgar's patriotic *Pomp & Circumstance March* and culminating in rousing renditions of *Rule Britannia* and *Jerusalem*, in which participation by the audience is a real must.

Alton Concert Orchestra Chairman, Dr Chris Leggett said "Our conductor, David Budd, has been rehearsing us hard through a varied and challenging programme which is potentially the best yet. For this, the fourth year of the 'Last Night of the Proms', we have four groups performing and four conductors. We have a world premiere thanks to Chris Gardner, and a new soprano soloist, Jane Mabbitt who will sing three pieces including *Britannia*. Let's hope the weather is more cooperative this year"

Whilst the second half adheres to a much-loved format, this year's opening half features pieces to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain fought in the skies of southern England, and a brand new composition, the *Hampshire Suite*, written by Alton resident Chris Gardner who also will be conducting its premiere.

Born of a desire to create something with local connections for this event, the piece is based on folk songs and folk dances which are known to have been sung and played in Hampshire in the 19th Century. Chris Gardner says "It would be a little surprising if this was the first piece written for this combination, but I have to say I do not know of another one".

The most interesting instrument will be the Melodeon and Chris had to work with closely with the ACO to understand the limitations of the instrument, which plays only in two keys, to integrate it successfully within an orchestral score. Chris continued "People will be very welcome to join in noisily with the hornpipe (bring something to bang or blow) and even to dance to the final jig, in which the clarinets and trombones appear fall out of the pub after a few too many drinks....."

Once again, food and refreshments including a bar will be available in the gardens. Concert-goers are encouraged to make a night of it by bringing rugs, deckchairs, picnics and Union flags, which will also be on sale.

The evening is costing in excess of £3,000, much of it on the marquee to house the orchestra. Whilst met in part by the Town Council, sponsorship has been forthcoming from many local businesses which are advertising in a souvenir concert programme, available on the night. Although the event is entirely free to enter, there will be a retiring collection on all gates at the end of the evening to help offset costs.

- **In the interests of Health & Safety, the Public Gardens will remain closed until 6pm on the day to allow for setting-up, rehearsals and sound-checks. The Town Council apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.**

Ends

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For photos of the 2009 event, visit [www.lnotp.co.uk](http://www.lnotp.co.uk)