Bel Canto bound for Biberach

LOCAL choir Bel Canto are heading to Germany this week. Seventeen members of the 25-strong ensemble will be singing at Biberach's 'Christkindlesmarkt'.

'This is probably the sixth time that I've been,' said conductor and former peripatetic music teacher Christine Anthony.

'I first started taking choirs over there with the Schools' Music Service and made some great friends there.'

During the Second World War, two large prisoner-of-war camps were located at Biberach, with Oflag V-B for officers, and internment camp Ilag V-B for allied civilians, mainly from the Channel Islands.

'Bel Canto last played in Biberach five years ago – the town has a Guernsey Week – and we were invited over again in October. But we decided to go at Christmas time. We'll be playing at the town's main church on the Sunday but also at the outdoor market. We're all looking forward to it and I've been told it snowed there last week.'

The choir was formed in 2002 by girls who attended the Schools' Music Service and who were members of the Guernsey Girls' Choir. Its name means 'beautiful singing', which described the qualities of the great 18th- and early 19th-century Italian singers. But for the choir, it means something else.

'Bel for beautiful, Canto for "C Anthony", and O, for "old girls", to describe them being the former Girls' Choir.'

On the trip the singers will be joined by accompanist Anthony Tennant and also by the father of one of its members.

'His mother was in the internment camp during the war and he really wanted to see where she was,' said Christine.

'A couple of the other girls also had relatives there during the war.'

The choir will be singing Christmas carols – with the exception of one.

'We've been told we cannot sing Silent Night, because that's reserved for Christmas Eve.'

As soon as the girls come back from Germany, they'll be straight into performing here.

'On 9 December we'll be singing at Les Cotils and on 19 December at Blanchelande Park Nursing and Residential Home.'