

# NEWS & VIEWS



225 AUTUMN 2021

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# CONTENTS

225  
AUTUMN 2021

## 4 Crawford's Corner Chairman's Chat

## 5 Not just any choir

*Newquay Male Voice Choir* - 'We are not just any choir, we are a Cornish Male Voice Choir.'

## 7 Every trick in the book

*The Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir* - finding ways to keep our members informed, interested and ready to pick up where we left off

## 8 Rent of Room – five shillings

*Radcliffe Male Voice Choir* - Celebrating a hundred years of singing

## 10 Puzzle Page

## 12 Conference Update

## 13 Conference Booking Form 1

## 14 Conference Booking Form 2

## 15 Conference Timetable

## 18 The question of the hour...

*Gildenburgh Choir* - How can we get back to rehearsals

## 20 New Music Reviews

*Karl Harper* - Music Review Officer

## 23 Puzzle Solutions How to send stuff

## 24 Officer details Meeting dates

### Advertisers

2 Marsh Insurance

5 Majestic

8 Banks

10 Rayburn

16 Club Europe

17 SoundEscape

17 Lyn Oakes

19 OneStage

20 John Trent Wallace

21 Fred.Olsen

22 trybooking

22 Tim Knight

## 226 SPRING 2022

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# Crawford's Corner

## Publications Officer - Bob Swallow



'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.' Or is it 'Season of masks and taking lateral flow tests'.

Whatever, here we are in the Autumn issue of News & Views. If you look at the contents page you will see the effect that the past 18 months is still having on our members across the country.

There are only three submissions from choirs. I really feel for The Radcliffe Male Voice Choir trying to celebrate a century of singing while struggling to even meet to sing.

The Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir using their submission to explain the many ways they have used to keep

going as a choir. I must not forget to mention Newquay Male Voice Choir, who are not only a male voice choir but a 'Cornish' male voice choir.

I know there are so many choirs out there who have been exploring technology to meet virtually; their local neighbourhood to get together outdoors to sing safely and sharing recordings to sing in their homes so that when they return to 'normal' they have not forgotten all they took such time to learn.

Of course, the bad news is that returning to 'normal' isn't going to happen any time soon, so we have to keep exploring the ways to overcome barriers to joining in song. If you have found a great way that you feel might help others, write to me and let the membership know what a

great idea you have had and how it is working out for you. Are you back to meeting regularly? I am sure that the choirs of the NAC are waiting to share in what you are achieving.

I must say thank you to Celia Johns and Karl Harper who have been called upon at late notice to provide copy for me to use to fill out all too many gaps in this issue. Also, the advertisers who you will certainly notice as they take up a lot of space this time.

Don't forget to read about the forthcoming NAC Conference. If you haven't got your booking in yet, then now is the time. It has taken a long time to get to this point in planning the conference and Clive will be so pleased that it is finally happening in October.

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# Chairman's Chat

## NAC Chairman - John Croft



Welcome to the autumn edition of News & views. This is my last Chairman's Chat as I will be handing over the office at the AGM in Blackburn having completed four years. I would like

to take this opportunity to give my grateful thanks to all my fellow officers who have worked very hard and made my tenure enjoyable despite the very difficult circumstances created by the Covid pandemic.

I hope you had an enjoyable summer despite our lack of normal singing. It is very interesting to read how some choirs have

dealt with the various lockdowns and are now approaching what we hope will be normality. They demonstrate a rather confused message that still prevails where it is now up to individuals, committees and venues to decide what is safe. I hope you will all keep well and safe as we take our first steps towards singing together again and entertaining audiences.

We were not been able to celebrate our centenary year as planned due to Covid but we have re-arranged the events, taking an optimistic view of the future. Clive has presented our plans in this issue and I hope many of you will be able to join us to enjoy our postponed celebrations. Our conference in Blackburn will be taking place in October; it promises to be a very

exciting and enjoyable event with top class speakers and a gala concert at Blackburn Cathedral. Full details and a booking form are in this issue.

As part of centenary activities we are offering member choirs free advertising in our publications, which are the three editions of News & Views and the Year Book. Any choir can have a half page advert in any edition free of charge. Please contact the Services Officer to arrange.

This will be the last issue in 2021 so may I wish you all a very early Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Please keep sending in reports of your choir's activities, and enjoy your concerts throughout the festive season, if possible.





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# Every trick in the book

## The Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir - Yorkshire South – John Keating

At the time of writing, July 2021, we are all looking forward to returning to 'normal' rehearsals after 15 months of trying every trick in the book to keep our members informed, interested and ready to pick up where we left off, as I am sure many, if not all, choirs have been doing.



During lockdown, each committee member has kept in touch with a group of five or six members and help offered where and when needed and the choir kept informed.

We introduced a 'Part Practice' page to our website for individuals to rehearse at home and also made all our recordings available to listen to online to rehearse with and have been having Zoom rehearsals weekly until May 2021. We were very fortunate to have two members with sufficient property to organise outdoor rehearsals and made them available to us,

adhering to government guidelines.

Not every member has enjoyed these less than adequate methods of choir rehearsal, but we have had up to 25 members per time taking part, out of our present membership of 43. Thanks lads, it was worth the work organising them.

We have requests for concerts coming in and will be honouring several others suspended because of the pandemic.

Sadly, we have had members pass away during the pandemic but none attributed

to Covid.

We are now looking forward to our centenary year celebrations and are joining with other male voice choirs who are celebrating their centenaries in 2024. Our friends we have performed with in the past, Scunthorpe MVC and Colne Valley MVC, both formed in 1924, have already agreed to join us in joint concerts in various areas.

If your male voice choir, ladies' choir or mixed voice choir is celebrating your centenary in 2024 and would be interested in joining our celebrations, the more the merrier, please contact [johnkeating9454@aol.com](mailto:johnkeating9454@aol.com) initially and we can take it from there.

These occasions take some organising and the sooner we start the process the better.

Stay safe and well, best wishes to you all.

# Not just any choir

## Newquay Male Voice Choir – Cornwall - Jim Christophers

2020 will be remembered for a very long time as the year in which the world fought against a Coronavirus pandemic. Male voice choirs were hit hard by the restrictions and regulations brought in by the Government to try to stem the spread of an insidious disease that threatened the health and well-being of vulnerable people across the land. Essentially from 23 March all amateur choral activity stopped as the first national lockdown was imposed. This is a reflection on how an ordinary male voice choir in Cornwall desperately tried to stay engaged and motivated over a year and a bit that was unlike any other.

Newquay Male Voice Choir proudly asserts, 'We are not just any choir, we are a Cornish Male Voice Choir.' However, apart from this particular distinction, we seem to be pretty much representative of our choral genre – a group of men of a certain age who gather together to share an enthusiasm for and enjoyment of singing

and, certainly in many cases, the 'craic' that goes with it. We practise once a week, present concerts as often as we can and particularly enjoy meeting up with like-minded choral groups in shared events. On the 23 March 2020 our world fell apart when the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced a National Lockdown in response to the Coronavirus pandemic that was beginning to engulf the world.

Firstly, I should express our enormous admiration and thanks to those choirs who very quickly adapted to a virtual digital world and kept the male voice choir movement in the spotlight. Evidence of how successful they were is easily available via YouTube. For us, this proved to be well out of our technical reach so, like many other similar choirs I suspect, we struggled to adapt to this very different environment.

As I write this, with a promising weather forecast, 30 members of the choir (28

singers plus our MD and accompanist) are planning to get together in a couple of day's time for a rehearsal in the car park of our local theatre. This will be the first time we have been able to meet face-to-face since our last weekly choir practice held on 11 March last year! This has encouraged me to reflect on how we have functioned since then.

On 23 March it appeared that a rug had been pulled from beneath us. Our whole raison d'être had been removed. However, it seemed likely that things might be back to normal by the summer, or at least September. We just needed to sustain things for now. Then there emerged a realization that COVID was more insidious and life-threatening than anything we had experienced before. Furthermore, virtually every member of the choir fell into the Government's 'vulnerable' category. Whatever we may attempt to do would need to be very cautious and require very careful consideration of the ever more



constraining restrictions and regulations that were being imposed.

Our initial, instinctive, reaction was to make sure that members were properly connected via the telephone. Weekly e-mail messages invited members to contact, for example, the next person on the choir list, someone in another section with whom you do not usually converse. We also shared choir 'news', and things that we were learning during lockdown (It's easier to cut hair with clippers than with scissors; be careful when ordering on-line; Facetime and Skype are wonderful things). We created a 'Lockdown Looks' gallery in which we shared photographs of our new unkempt tonsorial appearance.

By April I was asking whether anyone had any knowledge or experience with an app I had heard of called Zoom that apparently some choirs were making use of. There was not much of a response! However, in the middle of May we had our first virtual committee meeting on Zoom. We logged on for the free option so only had limited time, but it worked. We had found a way in which this small group of five could 'meet' to discuss ideas and issues related to the choir and its response to lockdown. With some easing of restrictions, things were beginning to look more promising.

In June there was some further easing of restrictions as we entered a summer that promised something approaching normality. However, without the choir being able to rehearse, a review of the choir's future bookings led to all remaining concerts

being postponed to 2021 but with some prospect that we may be asked to participate in most of our usual Christmas activities (little did we know).

On 26 June we had the first of a number of choir get togethers on Zoom. There were 12 participants, and my notes record that 'it was not very productive' with most of the limited time we had dealing with 'technical issues relating to sound and vision'. We established that Zoom does not support synchronized choral singing and that our 'turn taking' would need to improve if we were to take things further.

On 1 July, 100 days into our lockdown, I sent my last weekly e-mail out to members. The road ahead was looking less rocky, there was further easing of restrictions. We had survived for nearly four months with choir members by and large engaged, motivated and with a sense of momentum.

There followed a summer and autumn of frustratingly false hope. To begin with restrictions and regulations continued to be eased and people found opportunities to get out and about more. We were encouraged to 'eat out to help out' and were granted permission to meet in groups of no more than six in a person's garden, something which added a new dimension to choir committee meetings. However, there was still no opportunity for choirs the size of ours to get together and the science surrounding the transmission potential of aerosols produced during singing sounded alarm bells. But as the summer progressed news was coming through the grapevine of choirs who had

developed covid secure approaches to gatherings. We consulted enormously helpful advice from 'Making Music' and the 'Association of British Choir Directors' and made contact with two local choirs who had successfully managed to bring their members together in large open sided barns. Could we do the same? There followed a period of research of potential premises and discussion considering the 'can we but should we' dilemma of bringing together a group of potentially such vulnerable people. By the middle of September, we had found somewhere and had begun the interesting task of undertaking a health and safety risk assessment. However, tantalizingly, just as we seemed ready to move forward, restrictions were reimposed, and we found ourselves back where we started.

Then in December came the vaccinations. Once again, the momentum of the pandemic shifted. Conversation within the choir now focused on who had had the vaccine, which type had they received, whether there were any after-effects and, eventually, who had received both doses. We stepped away from 2020 and into 2021 with a renewed positivity tempered with a realism acquired from our experience to date.

Momentously, on the 13 January 2021 choir members were invited to their first proper singing opportunity on Zoom. Participants were promised 40 minutes of 'mayhem, mirth and music'; 16 members attended. We certainly had fun as we grappled with the technology. The 'mute all' function came into its own and

allowed us to experiment with some 'social singing' with one participant singing the melody of a song while the others (all muted) sang along with them in their own homes. At the time it was the best we could do, but it was not entirely satisfying. However, shortly afterwards things improved no end when we paid a subscription and signed up for Zoom properly. This now afforded more time, allowing our MD to take us through a set of breathing and vocal exercises to support our singing. Having our accompanist with us also encouraged us to experiment singing our part (while muted) with the accompaniment in support (not as successful as we had hoped it might be). We also had one or two solo performances.

This is how things continued; a mixture of 'fun and frolics' and 'chaos and confusion', on a weekly basis up to 3 March when we made a significant breakthrough. Thanks to some remarkably generous support

from a very good friend and colleague in South Wales (many thanks, Amy), we learnt how to 'share audio'. This gave us access to the digital files containing the tracks that we had recorded for our CD. (Yes, by an extraordinary quirk of good fortune, having done the recording immediately before lockdown, we had managed to produce a CD despite all the various restrictions and regulations of 2020.) This gave an enhanced singing experience with individuals who, while muted to all others, were able to sing their part ostensibly as if in the full choir. This is what we have done weekly since.

In between the musical events, social get togethers saw us sharing gardening tips, telling our favourite jokes, celebrating our most memorable sporting moments, recalling instances of mistaken identity...

And there we have it. We hope to be back inside rehearsing by the end of June and have optimistically pencilled in a public

performance for 13 August this year. We have our fingers crossed that this will take place and be the first of many other singing opportunities to come.

That's what we did, but what did we learn?

This is probably best encapsulated in this comment, received from one of our choir members, 'The last year has reinforced my conviction that one of life's essentials is friendship and our need for companionship. Belonging to a choir has been a lifeline for all of us and, whilst Zoom has not been suitable for communal singing, it has enabled most of us to maintain group contact and enjoy the laughter and camaraderie that is such a vital part of choir life. Possibly even more vital as most of us are retired and many lead otherwise solitary lives!'. Tony, many thanks for this.

So, what did you do during lockdown?



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# Rent of Room – five shillings

## Radcliffe Male Voice Choir – North West – Rob Peters



### Radcliffe Male Voice Choir Centenary 1921 – 2021

The first recorded mention of Radcliffe Male Voice Choir is an expenditure sheet beginning on 5 December 1921. The initial outlay being Rent of Room – five shillings (25p). Obviously, this year, 2021, was to have been our choir's glorious Centenary with all manner of grand concerts and splendid events to celebrate 100 years of song.

That this momentous Centenary was not celebrated as it should have been will be no surprise to anyone. Covid restrictions and 'lockdowns' meant that Radcliffe Male Voice Choir was unable to render a concert during most of 2020 and only now, mid August 2021, have we met again for our first face-to-face rehearsal. We are rehearsing for a couple of regular Christmas concerts and of course our Centenary will be acknowledged at these but will not be the celebrations we would have liked.

There are not many choirs who can claim such a record. In a bundle of mere historical facts here set down, hopefully truly, is represented – scarcely fully, for that would be nigh impossible – a taste of the past of this iconic choir.

At that first general meeting, held in the local Co-operative Hall's Club Room, 39 members were present and it was decided, amongst other decisions, to appoint a President and three names were given who would be interviewed at some

future date. Quaintly, the minutes end: 'This closed the meeting after which supper was served.' (Signed) RT Jones

Throughout its 100 years existence the choir has had many highs and lows. Winners on several occasions of the Blackpool Festival, St Annes, Huddersfield and other prestigious choir competitions, to near extinction when only the Committee were turning up for rehearsals.

The choir had a reputation for its renown in reputable competitive events and won many cups, shields and rose bowls.

Radcliffe MVC's success led to a change in the rules for male voice choir competitions. Up to 1935 all male voice choirs competed in the same class regardless of the number of voices. When our choir won at the Blackpool Festival that year with 36 choristers and beat choirs with 60 or 70 singers, classes were introduced for different-sized choirs.

In those days, the choir rehearsed twice a week and sometimes three when preparing for competitions.

During the Second World War many of the men joined the forces but the choir was kept going by the older members. A minute in the records shows a five shilling (25p) gift from the choir to each man serving in the forces.

One of the 'legends' of the choir is an im-

promptu concert during the blitz on Manchester in the Second World War when the choir was returning to Radcliffe after a concert. As they waited on Victoria Station for the electric train the air-raid siren sounded which meant no trains until the 'all clear' was heard. Others rushed for the shelters but the conductor stood upon a beer crate, raised his arms and, gathering the choir said, 'Right, lads, *Comrades in Arms*'.

On several occasions the choir has been recorded and has been on radio; in 1949 the choir made four recordings for the BBC one of which was transmitted to the Commonwealth.

In 1974 the choir cut half an LP record with Radcliffe Borough Band on the other side. The year 1978 saw the choir appearing in the BBC TV programme 'A Grand Sing'.

Over the years the choir has enjoyed joining with other choirs for Massed Choir concerts, from 150 voices at Tameside Theatre to 1,000 voices in the Gmex Centre, Manchester which is the old Central Station now a huge exhibition venue. Our favourites, though, were the 500 voices Massed Male Voice Choir concerts each November given at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester (now a hotel) under the baton of the late Arthur D Bellis (CWS MVC) in aid of the Lancashire Organ Trust with Nigel Ogden (Radio 2) at the keyboard of the mighty Wurlitzer organ, previously sited in the Gaumont Theatre, Manchester.

For our 60th anniversary it was decided to ask local celebrated musician, singer and song-writer Peter Skellern to arrange a piece for the choir. This he did, rehearsing it himself with us, and into our repertoire came *The Rolling English Road*; words by G K Chesterton, tune composed and arranged for TTBB by Peter Skellern especially for Radcliffe Male Voice Choir. This came about because Peter's father, Jack Skellern, worked with the choir's MD, Keith Heywood.

Some older members of the present choir remember listening to the choir in concerts when we were youngsters and also recall that long-time Chairman, Eli Bleakley, kept the choir and us kids supplied with his delicious home-made treacle toffee. It was generally supposed that it was so good because Eli lived in the end house of a row im-

mediately next to Radcliffe Gas Works.

Our longest serving member, Brian Taylor, joined in 1976. He is not our oldest chorister by any means. Brian was in the Operatic Society at Radcliffe Congregational Church (now URC) when Keith Heywood was MD for a few musicals there and Keith recruited Brian. Our choir has rehearsed in the school rooms there since 1938.

As well as winning Festivals and competitions in the past the choir, to this day, gives concerts in aid of many societies, churches, charities, good causes and for its own benefit. A change came to the type of songs we sang when MD Keith Heywood found that arrangements for lighter songs were being published. The choir now has a wide range of types of song in its extensive library and a good varied programme is always enjoyed by our audiences. 'I like there to be something for everyone in our concerts,' said Keith Heywood. His concerts were varied by including a double quartet drawn from the choir who sang a couple of items which were different from the usual repertoire. He also introduced audience-participation items and a lot of fun and laughter was thus engendered in our audiences.

Considering the choir's longevity there



have only been five conductors in all that time. The first was Hewart Critchley followed by James Savin in 1934 then James Kenyon Dove. Keith Heywood took over for one concert in 1965 and remarkably was still there 54 years later; resigning only in 2019 due to family health issues. The current MD is Catherine Hilton, until Keith's resignation our accompanist. Catherine's enthusiasm and sterling leadership during lockdown when she kept the

choir together via 'Zoom' rehearsals has meant that the choir is looking forward to our two Christmas concerts and into the future with other concerts being planned. There is a feeling of a bright future as getting back to face-to-face rehearsals has made the lads realise that we can still sing and sing well. Another era of male voice singing by Radcliffe Male Voice Choir is just beginning.

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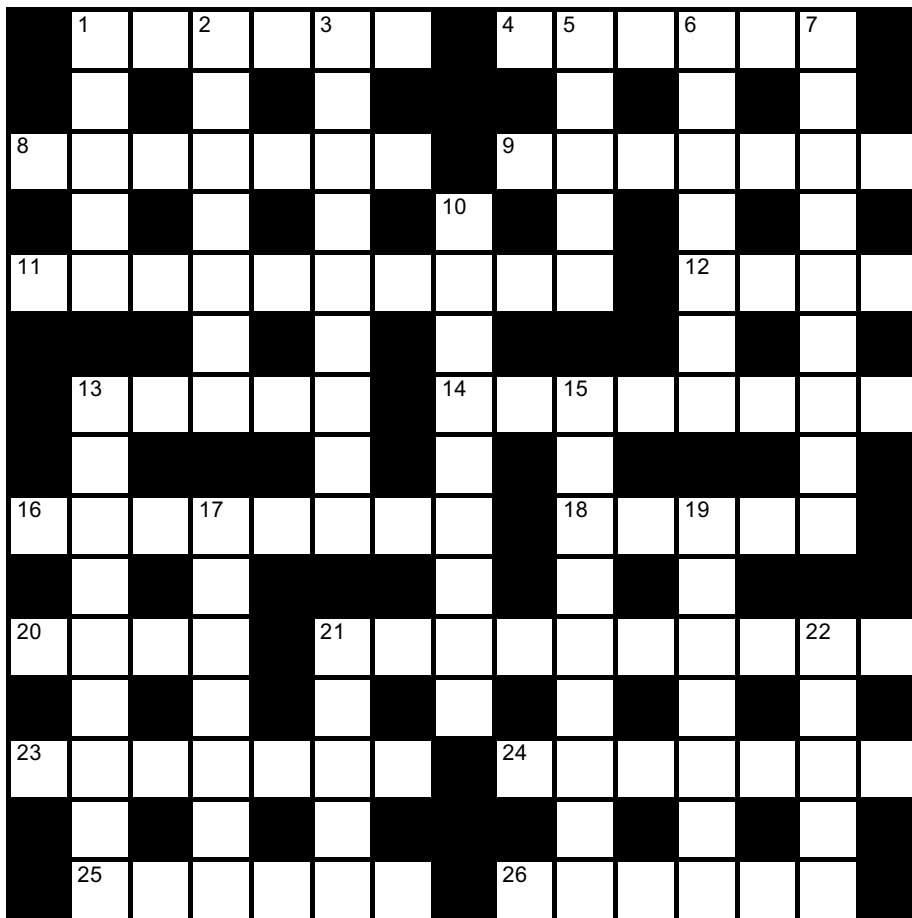
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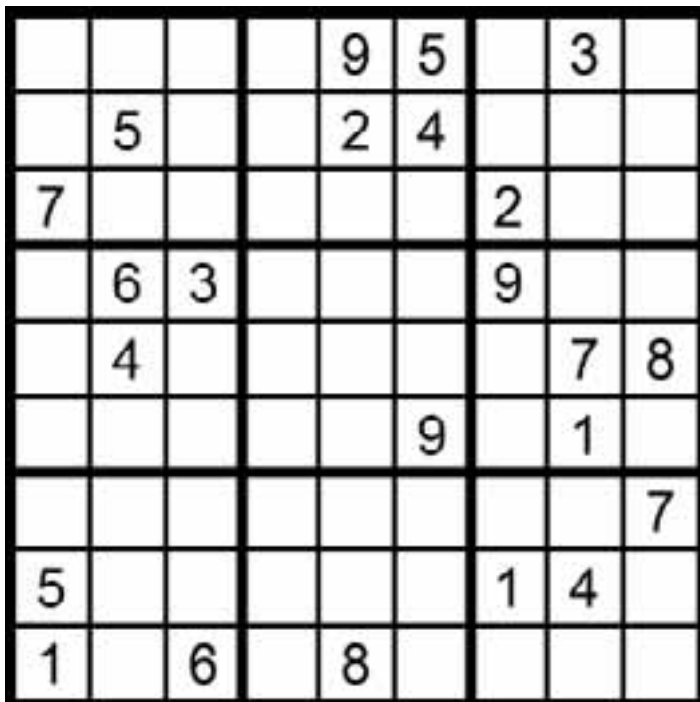


## Across

- 1 Carelessly upsets the equipment. (6)
- 4 Strike badly (6)
- 8 Dweller in Asian state (7)
- 9 And the baker and candlestick maker makes three (7)
- 11 Change cortège as I assign to a group (10)
- 12 Fasten a marine mammal tightly (4)
- 13 Falsely forge a man running errands (5)
- 14 Roughly work-in or use ferrous metal (8)
- 16 Jack making it colder (8)
- 18 Greek habit (5)
- 20 One moh (4)
- 21 Where the railway worker lives (10)
- 23 Well-proportioned and pleasing (7)
- 24 Sounds like wrong place for women's letters (7)
- 25 Travel on water (6)
- 26 Nuclear (6)

## Down

- 1 Finnish bath? (5)
- 2 Cockney thief makes a cuppa (3,4)
- 3 Rip up root curiously to make a pleasant smell (9)
- 5 Become hardened to unfamiliar urine (5)
- 6 Metal cutter that computer freak might have seen (7)
- 7 So many synonyms (9)
- 10 Two tongues available (9)
- 13 Soviet statesman (9)
- 15 Excess credit (9)
- 17 vomitted cash? (4,3)
- 19 Violent criminal (7)
- 21 Internment camp (5)
- 22 Scot I stupidly thought was a philosopher (5)



**SOLUTIONS  
PAGE 23**

To have your own copy of this page to work on go to [www.nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk](http://www.nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk) and look for the latest copy of News & Views then print the page. Easy!

# Conference Update

## Conference Co-ordinator - Clive Lawton



Hello to you all as I write on this bright Sunday morning in April. Weather like this makes me look forward to this year and the promising progress of the vaccine rollout together

with the chance of a return to normality for us all and particularly, in our case, to the return of singing together, meeting together and performing for the pleasure of our audiences. We are cautious in our optimism about the release from restrictions and are closely following government guidelines as the situation in the United Kingdom continues to improve. Where we will be in October remains to be seen. Rest assured that whatever the government advice is will be implemented throughout the conference weekend. Your safety is of paramount importance to your officers.

### Blackburn 2021 Conference 15 - 17 October.

The conference is centred at the Dunkenhalgh Hotel Blackburn.

The hotel is a spacious four-star hotel with all the amenities you would expect from a hotel in this category. There is a comprehensive view of the hotel on their website for your perusal. The conference hall is spacious and well equipped with a mezzanine floor to accommodate trade stands. All rooms are en-suite. The Gala Dinner will be accommodated in a separate dining room set aside for our use.

Our speakers this year will be David Lawrence and Douglas Coombes. Both have a website which I recommend for your perusal. The content of their seminars is listed



within this edition of News and Views.

There is a different venue for our Conference Concert. This year it will be held at Blackburn Cathedral which is about three miles from the hotel. Transport to and from hotel to Cathedral will be provided or you can use your own transport if you prefer. Choirs from a wide area will be performing at the Cathedral for your entertainment.

Many of our delegates instructed me to transfer their full payments from last year to October this year which I have done. For new bookings, I have included a booking form within this edition of News and Views and hope to see as many of you as possible this year. If I can provide further information not included, please feel free to contact me on 07939012458 or [cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com](mailto:cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com)

### Kendal 2022 Conference 1-3 April

2022 sees the conference back, hopefully, to its usual date two weeks before or after Easter. As with all our planned conferences, all are one year later than originally planned. Kendal is a lovely town situated in the scenic lakes and mountains of Cumbria. We will be staying in the Castle Green Hotel, Kendal which is about a mile from the centre of town. The conference facilities are excellent in the hotel with all the rooms served by lifts. All rooms are en-suite. Our speakers for this year are Alan Bullard and Tim Knight. Again, both have extensive websites which are recommended for your perusal. Several choirs will be performing at our annual conference concert.

As it is over eighteen months since the officers visited Kendal for a Members' Open Forum (MOF) we thought it would be a good idea to re-visit Kendal to meet the



choirs again in person to plan the event.

To this end we will have the next MOF in Kendal on 26 June 2021. Any member can attend the MOF and we hope as many will attend as possible. The meeting is from 11.00 to 3.00 on the day. Lunch is provided. Please let me know if you are attending, for catering numbers. The meeting is at the Castle Green Hotel.

### Taunton 2023 Conference 24 - 26 March

As it is a while since the team visited Taunton for a Members Open Forum, we plan to travel to Taunton to reconvene to discuss the conference and concert. The date for the MOF is 25 September at the Holiday Inn, Taunton.

I am pleased to say we have a choir volunteering to head up the conference concert as by coincidence it is their centenary in 2023 so a double celebration. We have the Holiday Inn at Taunton planned for the event. The venue for the concert is to be discussed when we convene in September this year. We hope that the speakers for this conference will be Bob Chilcott and Paul Whitaker.

### The Centenary Concert for the National Association of Choirs

This will be staged at the King Georges Hall Blackburn on 19 November 2022. Due to Covid 19 the concert is on the date that the Association was formed 102 years on.

Look forward to meeting you at a forum or conference venue in the future.





## National Conference Booking Form 1 15-17 October 2021

**Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa**  
Blackburn Road Clayton le Moors, Accrington, BB5 5JP

### Conference Costs

#### Full Conference Stay

The price quoted is  
**per person for the whole conference**  
There are no single room supplements  
Price per person for whole conference  
includes admission to all lectures  
two nights bed breakfast and evening meal  
refreshments  
and free admission to Saturday evening concert  
per person **£230**

Stay an extra night -  
Thursday Single £83 BB - Double £90 BB  
Sunday Single £58 BB - Double £60 BB

Deposit of £70 with booking form  
Balance by 1st August 2021.

Reminders will be sent

**Room Type - single double twin**

#### Day Delegate (Saturday)

Please circle requirements

Day delegate fee including refreshments and lunch **£40**

Evening meal Saturday add £25.00

Concert ticket Saturday add £10.00

Friday Gala Dinner add £35.00

#### Day Delegates

Payment in full when booking (non-refundable)

**Extra nights can be booked both before and/or after the conference through the NAC at a favourable rate  
If you wish extra nights to be arranged for you please add a note to the booking form  
and I will book these on your behalf**

**You must inform us in writing of any cancellation by 1 August 2021**

(Cancellations after this date will incur a charge of 50% of the total fee payable)

Substitute guests will be welcome

Amount submitted £\_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed forms and deposits to the address below

Cheques should be made payable to  
**The National Association of Choirs**  
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You may pay by BACS  
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Account no. 00012575  
Reference. Conference.

THE PERSONAL DETAILS OF EACH DELEGATE MUST BE ENTERED ON FORM 2

Clive Lawton - Conference Coordinator, 20 Arthur's Court, Stretton, Burton upon Trent Staffordshire DE13 0GS  
01283 569677 or 07939012458 conference.coordinator@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk



## National Conference Booking Form 2 15-17 October 2021

**Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa**

Blackburn Road Clayton le Moors, Accrington, BB5 5JP

The event is open to all who wish to attend on payment of the appropriate charges

### Guest 1

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone Home.....Mobile.....

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

Disability [wheelchair user/handrails required etc.].....

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

### Guest 2

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone Home.....Mobile.....

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

Disability [wheelchair user/handrails required etc.].....

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

**PLEASE PHOTOCOPY THIS FORM FOR MORE GUESTS IF REQUIRED**

**Please return your completed forms and deposits to**

**Clive Lawton - Conference Coordinator, 20 Arthur's Court, Stretton, Burton upon Trent Staffordshire DE13 0GS**

**01283 569677 or 07939012458 conference.coordinator@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk**



## National Conference Provisional Timetable 15 - 17 October 2021

**Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa**

Blackburn Road Clayton le Moors, Accrington, BB5 5JP

### Friday 15 October 2021

2.00	Delegates arrive, register at reception and collect delegate pack
3.00	National Officers' meeting
3.30-5.00	Come and Sing with Celia Johns and Karl Harper
7.30	Reception National Officers and guests
7.30	Delegates and guests assemble for dinner
8.00.	Dinner is served - 3 courses with wine
9.30	After dinner entertainment
12.00	Bar closes

### Saturday 16 October 2021

7.00	Access to trade stands to set up
7.00-9.30	Breakfast in main dining room
9.30-10.45	David Lawrence (1) Talking about his current projects and commissioning music
10.45-11.15	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.15-12.30	David Lawrence (2) Practical singing session with an emphasis on European music
12.30-1.30	Trade stand presentations (six 10 minute presentations from trade stands present at conference)
1.30-2.45	Lunch and trade stand viewing (Lunch included in full delegate package)
2.45-4.00	David Lawrence (3) Conducting techniques
5.15	Early evening meal - 2 Courses
6.45	Coach leaves hotel for concert
7.30	Concert
10.00 Approx.	Following concert, light refreshments will be provided back at the hotel
12.00	Bar closes

### Sunday 17 October 2021

7am to 9.30am	Breakfast For those delegates wishing to attend local churches, details will be available at hotel reception
9.30am.to 10.30am	Douglas Coombes. Warm ups and cool downs Explanation and practice of S.O.V.T. (semi-occluded vocal tract)
10.30-11.00	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.00-11.30	Annual General Meeting
11.30-1.00	Members Open Forum
1.00	Conference closes. (Lunch available in dining room at members' own expense)
1.00	National officers debrief meeting (guillotined after one hour)

**Extra nights can be booked for both before and/or after the conference through the NAC at a favourable rate  
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# The question of the hour...

## Gildenburgh Choir - Anglia - Celia Johns

### ...how can we get back to rehearsals?

It is a question which I am asked on a regular basis by choir representatives. Even more so now that most of the restrictions caused by the pandemic have now been lifted. Unfortunately, it is not a question which has a quick and easy answer. I can only tell you my experience of returning to rehearsals with my own choir, the Gildenburgh Choir from Peterborough, to illustrate what might happen.

As background, you may remember that for well over a year I had been running choir rehearsals on Zoom. Monday evenings had always been rehearsal evenings, so that was the way it was going to stay, even if I couldn't actually hear anything from my singers due to the Internet lag and the need for everybody being muted. After sixteen months on Zoom we were all getting stir-crazy and would have done anything necessary to get back to face to face meeting and singing.

Government restrictions were to be lifted, and we could get back together – hooray! But wait a moment, it really wasn't that simple. To start with there were the risk assessments, to be done by both the choir and the venue – a local church hall. We had been rehearsing in the church attached to the hall, but it was found that we would have more room in the hall, so it was agreed that we would move. Our risk assessment was dependent upon what the church committee decided that they could allow, and that didn't necessarily agree with what we wanted to do.

We were hoping to restart rehearsals in mid-July, but the church and the hall were both being used as a Covid vaccination centre until the end of that month, so it wouldn't be until the beginning of August that the longed-for day would come. The delay did however allow us to consult with the choir members as to what they wanted to do, and whether or not they were prepared to come back, given the restrictions which would still be in place. To start with we would have to be socially distanced by at least one metre. Not really a problem; we were resigned to the fact that we would not be able to hear the per-



son sitting next to us – the singers had been putting up with that on Zoom for months. The main problem was that we were to wear face coverings at all times, even when singing. This had of course been a source of much discussion for months, at all levels from the DCMS down through the various choral umbrella organisations to local choirs. It was not a popular decision.

We surveyed our members. The results were not surprising. Of the 38 singers then on the books, only 18 were willing to come to our first rehearsal. Why were there so many unwilling to attend? There were some people with health concerns, and their non-attendance was understandable. The majority of the non-attenders stated that they would not come to rehearsals while the singers were required to wear face coverings at all times. We didn't have a choice if we wanted to restart singing together, so it was decided that we would start rehearsals on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, and just see what happened.

As I write, it is mid-September, and we have had six rehearsals together. The singers are socially distanced as required, and they are wearing face coverings, mainly the singers' masks which have been invented to help musicians at this time, and which give more space between the mouth and the fabric of the mask. My accompanist is also wearing a face covering, but I, as MD, am wearing a clear face

visor. I made a case, which was accepted by the choir committee, that I needed to communicate properly with the singers, and I could not do that if I too was wearing a fabric face covering. I also have a voice amplifier, which I can wear under the visor if necessary, and if the back row of singers cannot hear me speaking.

I was wondering what the state of the voices would be, given that my choir members had been singing to themselves in their own living rooms for well over a year. They had not been doing the proper warm-ups, they had mostly been sitting while singing, and voice projection when singing while others were in the house was difficult. My own voice was well out of practice, so I knew that we were likely to have a problem. Luckily the fears were not realised, and although muffled by the face coverings, the voices have mostly recovered from their lack of proper practice. Some of the top notes in all voices are not yet in good order, but that's a work in progress...

Although I do not currently have a balanced choir at rehearsal, people are beginning to come back, despite having to wear the unpopular face coverings. Some of my singers have been working on the unwilling members and have persuaded some to come and try the rehearsals. The largest number I have had attending up to now was 22 singers, which given that we have lost a few more members over the last few weeks is now around two-thirds of the singers. We are nowhere near con-

cert-ready at present but are working towards our first proper concert for two years at Christmas. The feedback I am getting from my singers is that they are enjoying themselves and are very happy to get back together.

The hall we are using is quite big, as you can see from the accompanying photo. This was of our second rehearsal, and there were some people away on holiday so it looks like rather a small choir! You can appreciate the distance between the singers, and the fact that they are all wearing face coverings; what you cannot see is that all four doors from the hall to the outside of the building are open to allow fresh air in. Also to ensure that any stray aerosols from singing were minimised, at that time we were only rehearsing for 45 minutes instead of our previous two hours. A decision was made a couple of weeks ago that because there had been no adverse reactions from the rehearsals, we would extend the weekly rehearsal time to one hour. Again, so far nothing bad has happened. All chairs are set out by two people before the choir members come in; at the end of the evening everybody is given a

sterilising wipe and has to wipe down their own chair before leaving the building. The chairs are then put away again by the same two people, wearing disposable gloves.

There are various schools of thought about the wearing of face coverings at rehearsals; some people feel confident enough to want to discard the coverings and sing without any protection, while others would not come to rehearsals if their fellow-singers were not wearing face-coverings. At the moment this is a bit of a balancing act, and choir committees are having to go with majority decisions (as long as those agree with the rules laid down by the venue they are using). I can only refer back to my original comment, namely that there are no quick and easy answers to returning to proper rehearsals; choirs all have their own decisions to make in the light of their own members and their own venues. You may be encouraged to know that at a meeting of Singing Network UK, of which NAC is a member, the discussions were very much along these same lines – we are all having the same problems and we are definitely not alone.

**As a child I was given an Autograph Book, as a birthday present, by a favourite aunt. This was how she put in the first entry.**



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Karl Harper - Music Review Officer



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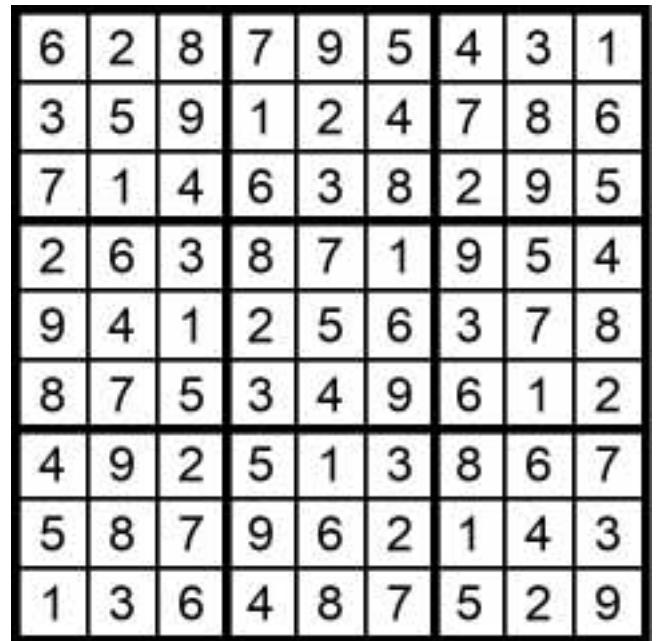
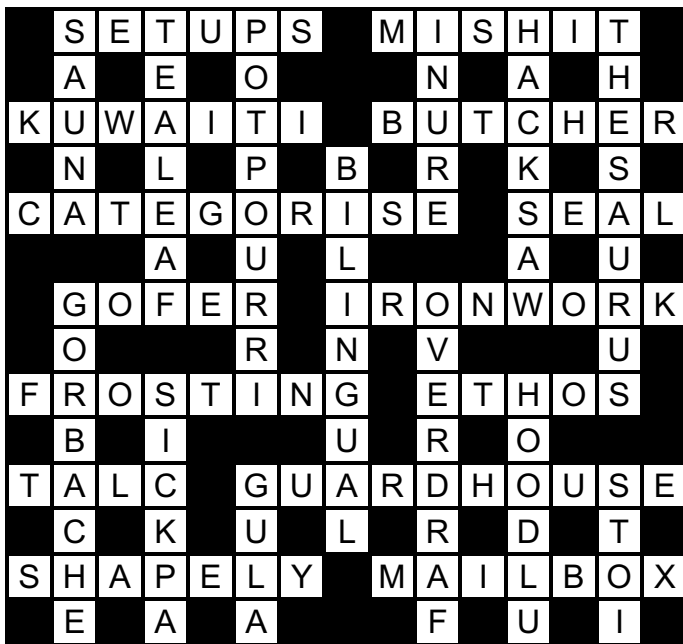


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‘Wow! that is a long email address’, I hear you say. Yes it is but you will find that once it’s in your computer you can just start to type it and your computer will offer to finish it for you.

Many of our contributors love to show their prowess by sending in wonderful finished articles with **coloured** headlines, five different fonts and many underlinings, *italics* and **bold** bits. Then, of course, I have to spend time taking them all out before I can set their article up the way you will see it in the magazine. I’m afraid I also have a thing about exclamation marks. I allow one per article. Anymore I remove.

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

### PHOTOGRAPHS

Send me pictures as high resolution .jpegs of 1mb or more, minimum 300 dpi.

### HOUSE STYLE

- We use Calibri 10pt in News & Views. (If you don’t have this, don’t worry I can soon change the one you use.)
- Set your paragraphs to single space with no spacing before or after paragraphs.
- Start with the name of your choir.
- Then the NAC group your choir is in.
- Tell me who has written it.
- Write your article.
- Quotes use single speech marks (same key as @ but without the shift).
- Dates do not include st nd rd or th
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## Meeting Dates

### Officer Meetings

**All Officer Meetings  
will be held using Zoom**

Tuesday 14 September 2021

Friday 15 October    Sunday 17 October 2021

Tuesday 11 January 2022

### Members Open Forums

Saturday 25 September

Conference weekend 16-17 October

Saturday 29 January 2022

## Closing dates for submissions to News & Views

Spring Issue  
31 December

Summer Issue  
30 April

Autumn Issue  
31 August