

NEWS & VIEWS



232 SPRING 2024



Hampshire Police, Romsey, Rushmoor Oddfellows and Basingstoke MVC

Raised over £2,800 for their local Air Ambulance



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Crawford's Corner

Publications Officer - Bob Swallow



Well, here we are in another new year with all its resolutions and opportunities of making a memorable time.

The year we have entered is, of course, a leap year though I don't think I will be leaping anywhere any time soon. I find that these days it takes me long enough to walk anywhere. I try to walk 12,000 steps a day and it is getting more and more difficult to do.

We have a story in this issue of a choir who became the Lancashire Choir of the Year 2023. They must now be thinking what do they need to do to become the Lancashire Choir of The Year 2024. The Nelson Civic Ladies Choir will have a reason for working hard in their singing this year.

I will not be singing in a choir from March onwards as my choir has decided to call it a day as our numbers are falling and we are all growing older. It is a shame but a sensible decision. It makes it so nice to read about choirs who are growing in

numbers and planning new activities and concerts.

The Rossendale Male Voice Choir has been in song for a century and is looking forward to its second century. It must be so great to have a strong and active membership, and be so certain of a bright future.

Barnstaple Ladies are looking forward to their 40th Anniversary this year continue to develop, encourage new members and raise funds for local charities, all of this stemming from their choir family and their love of singing.

Something I will not be doing this year, and it's the first time in many years, that I will not be going to the NAC Conference. I am not afraid of sea travel but I don't feel up to the distances I would need to travel to get to the cruise ship and back home afterwards. It's a shame but it's the way I feel.

This brings me to another thought I am having at the moment and that is that I have edited this magazine for a number of years and I am feeling that it is time for someone younger to take on this role. I have enjoyed doing this job but it is be-

coming more and more difficult to motivate myself to do it. There must be someone out there reading this magazine who has the skills to do this job. If you are reading this, please think about it. I wouldn't be at all surprised if you couldn't make a far better job of it than I.

Let me know at

publications.officer@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk

Right, I have wittered on for long enough now so stop reading this drivel and start reading the good stuff that other writers have sent.



Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman - Brenda Wilkinson



Even though the past few months have been really hectic, it's a marvellous feeling to be doing everything without cautionary thoughts and doubts.

I think we have all relished our rehearsal times in anticipation of celebrating Christmas like we used to

and, without exception, all the choirs I have spoken to over this festive period have really embraced this regained freedom. It will take some time to catch up on all the 'lost' opportunities but as the saying goes 'we will get there'.

We have some very interesting articles in this issue ranging from choirs enjoying catching up with their followers at

concerts, to Midlands East Group hosting a full day workshop led by Edward-Rhys Harry who was the guest speaker at last year's conference in Taunton, and there is an article and details of the NAC's legacy fund which we are launching. I hope that 2024 is going to be everything you want it to be and I wish you well.

Brenda Wilkinson

Music Review Spring 2024

Liz Moulder - Music Review Officer



One of the most important roles for an MD is planning a concert programme, a task that is dependent on so many differing facets. Over the next few issues, I am going to focus on various vocal groups beginning with male or lower voices. As an MD of a male voice choir I am aware of the many debates around the current repertoire associated with our choirs. However, I can say that the new music that I have introduced since joining ECMVC over thirteen years ago, has been a success with both choir and our audiences. So I hope that some of the pieces I have researched over the past few months may interest you.

There Will I Be, composed by Craig Courtney in 2014 uses two biblical texts for the libretto. Starting with baritone and tenor solos it uses a beautifully shaped melodic line which is picked up by the choir before we are introduced to a second contrasting melody again introduced by soloists then the choir. A close four-part unaccompanied section leads into a thick textured two-part crescendo before a rising semitone change of key where the two different melodic lines are merged in a more complex contrapuntal section. It has a typical male fortissimo climax but then gently decrescendos into a quiet two chord finale. The accompaniment supports throughout moving between chords to a more com-

plex quaver arpeggio style. Published by Beckenhorst Press this is available through Banks Publications.

In complete contrast, *Why We Sing* composed by Greg Gilpin and distributed by Hal Leonard, is a straightforward, 'jolly' sing. Again, it builds up from a solo or small group introduction moving to a tutti unison section of the main melodic line then into four part close harmony. A contrasting bridge section takes us back to the melodic line but with an added descant suitable for a soloist or small group. Found and taught during covid, the words are still uplifting and relevant today. With a big fortissimo male voice flourish, this has always had a very positive response from our audiences as well as being enjoyed by the choir.

Beauty is her Name composed by the American female composer Earlene Rentz, lives up to its title. The close four-part harmony with some interesting modulations requires a beautiful tone, ensemble balance and the ability to sing a well-shaped phrase. The last chord, the tonic relative minor with a Tierce de Picardy, is unexpected but delightful. There is an optional violin part which could also be played on the flute adding further interest to the performance. Published by Carl Fischer this is definitely going to be included in my choir's repertoire very soon.

Now if you would like to challenge your own musicianship as an MD and your

choir's vocal skills, then *Gloria* written by Geraint Evans in 2021 is the piece for you. Moving constantly between differing time signatures there is also contrast in the texture of the parts, syncopation and key changes in abundance. This will certainly keep everyone on their toes, including the accompanist but it is a glorious sing! Published by Banks Music it would be suitable for many occasions. It would be well worth the effort to tackle this more complex piece.

The poem, *February Twilight*, by Sarah Teasdale, has been set by Tim Knight as a short but atmospheric close harmony piece which requires excellent vowel sounds and the ability of the choir to control their tone throughout the piece. The adagio tempo may pose problems re breath control but it does help to create a calmness and stillness to the performance. This is published by his own company at www.timknightmusic.com.

So, five very different pieces requiring a range of technical vocal skills, the ability to sing a lyrical melodic line with an even tone and clear diction but more importantly, they offer all choirs the opportunity to present new music to their audiences which hopefully makes them aware that yes, the Welsh hymns of our roots are there but we have moved on to embrace new, exciting composers who are skilled musicians who can impact both choirs and audiences alike.

Digital Downloads and Copyright

We recently had a query regarding digital downloads and Copyright. My understanding of this is that you may purchase music from many publishers as a digital download most of whom clearly state that their music is protected under copyright law.

By paying for the music you are agreeing to abide by their conditions. Normally these are that you are buying copies either for a specific number of choir

members or unlimited but for **your choir only**. You must not duplicate it or share it with anyone outside of your choir.

There is also the PMLL Amateur Choir Licence which allows you, for a fee, to photocopy sheet music without worrying about copyright infringement. However, there are still some exceptions to this.

Remember that copyright ceases seventy years after the death of the composer and lyricist. Changes and arrangements can be

made if you clear the copyright the majority of which are owned by four main publishers. Printing off words is technically still illegal.

Keeping records of your purchases, with invoices and checking the copyright policies of all websites, will ensure that you are following the guide lines re copyright.

Remember, that it is your responsibility to check everything

NAC Legacy Fund

Our celebrations of a hundred years of the National Association of Choirs began with the delayed concert in November 2022. This was followed by the release of the Centenary Songbook early in August 2023. We now wish to tell you about our legacy fund - an opportunity for NAC choirs and groups to apply for a loan, grant or part funding to further the development and experiences you can offer your choirs. The main focus of this legacy is to encourage choirs to work together whatever the focus. Here are some of the areas that you might like to consider:

WORKSHOPS

- a) Focusing on vocal health and the development of vocal techniques
- b) Exploring new repertoire and genres
- c) From rehearsal to performance
- d) Warm ups and cool downs as an integral part of your rehearsal

Any of these could be put together to form a half or full day workshop and help can be given in the organisation of the event.

TRAINING for MUSICAL DIRECTORS

The NAC will help facilitate the professional development of MDs using professional conductors to run either one day workshops or a series of training days improving the skills of those responsible for choral development. This could be delivered through the NAC paying a percentage of the fees required to attend the workshops.

Joint concerts - the legacy fund could provide a bridging loan for choirs covering the deposit for the hiring of a concert venue. No interest will be paid on this loan.

Accessing professional advice. Organise an event where professionals could provide up to date information on a range of topics to your group or choirs such as performing rights, copyright, health and safety etc.

We are able to provide contacts of known professionals and experienced amateurs who would be the presenters of these workshops if required. You may well have other experiences you wish to explore which the officers would be willing to consider.

There is a simple application form to fill in available on the NAC website which will require information about your activity along with detailed costings. Money can only be sent to a recognised choir/group account. No monies will be released to individuals. All applicants must provide an accurate, detailed and clear budget proposal. All successful bids will need to submit an appraisal and financial statement after the event in order to judge its success. The NAC will not directly or indirectly contribute to individual groups or choir funds.



NAC Legacy Funding Application Form



Return completed form to

general.secretary@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk

<u>Group/Choir</u>	
<u>Event Co-ordinator</u> <u>Contact details</u>	
<u>Event Title</u>	
<u>Date</u>	
<u>Venue</u>	
<u>Lead Practitioner</u> <u>Music Qualifications/</u> <u>Experience</u>	
<u>Description of Event</u>	
How will you evaluate its success?	
Involved Costs	
Group/Choir Funding	
Request funding From NAC	
Bank details of Group/Choir	
Signatures	

2023-24 Season...

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir - Scotland West - Anne Kay

Conductor and Director of Music
Cameron Murdoch

The start of the 2023-24 season found us busily rehearsing for a tour to the Highlands of Scotland in late September. Over the years we have had many visits north staying in the beautiful village of Strathpeffer. Our first concert of the tour was performed in the Spa Pavilion and gave us the opportunity to meet up with friends from the Dingwall Gaelic Choir. In addition, we made some new friends as our Dingwall chums had united with members of the Inverness Gaelic Choir to form Eadarainn (pronounced, I hope, Ed-a-rin) a name chosen to represent their new venture and meaning 'between us'. Their two conductors, Ross Brindle and Jamie MacGregor, worked very well together and the performance at the concert was very special. We were delighted that they had enjoyed our rendition of *The Road Home*, by Stephen Paulus, so much that they had commissioned a translation to the Gaelic. It was particularly suited to the ethereal nature of Gaelic singing.

Our second concert saw us visit St Giles Church, Elgin. Some members of the choir were alarmed that they could hear a brass instrument being played in the street and thought it might interfere with our concert. Really? One trumpet versus Glasgow Phoenix Choir in full voice? No chance!

The third, and final, concert of the series took place in Ness Bank Church, Inverness, raising funds for Marie Curie. And what a concert it was. I had the pleasure of joining the audience and was so proud of the great job done by everyone – Cameron, our amazing conductor; Matthew McIlree, our brilliant accompanist; and, of course, all the wonderful voices that create such a special sound. It was gratifying that each concert had a great turn out and we were delighted with the warmth and enthusiasm of each audience.

In Inverness, however, the gentlemen of the choir, fearing a low turn-out, decide to press-gang passersby into attending. While their efforts weren't really needed, they did draw in a good few people who would not have thought of coming into the concert and many of whom made a special



point of making their appreciation known afterwards. As publicity officer, I will be commissioning them to repeat their fine work everywhere we go from now on.

October and November were quieter months for us. We hosted an Open Rehearsal in October, hoping to attract new singers, in particular, tenors and basses. We did recruit a few new people, but, while delighted with that, there was not a man amongst them. Where are all the men who sing in their cars, the shower, at parties? Our next concert involved a return visit to Kirkintilloch in a joint venture hosted by St Mary's Parish Church and St David's Memorial Park Church in aid of the East Dunbartonshire Food Bank, which is hosted by the Kirkintilloch Baptist Church. Organisation of this concert was aided by our inside man, tenor steward, Richard Davies. Thanks to him and his fellow organisers for their efforts in hosting a great concert.

And so, to December – always a busy, but enjoyable, time for the choir. At the beginning of the month, we revisited Our Lady and St Ninian's Church in Bannockburn to perform a sold-out concert. Not only sold out but sold-out weeks in advance. They needed a bigger boat... eh, church! Our usual accompanist, Matthew, was unavailable for the day, so his younger brother, Joseph, stepped into the breach and did a grand job. As well as the efforts of the choir, we heard a very moving, indeed distressing, account of the effects of Motor Neurone Disease on the life of a sufferer. It's a devastating condition and we were very pleased that the concert raised £3,000 for MND Scotland. Later in the month, we returned to two favourite venues – the

Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh and Moncreiff Church, East Kilbride. Both of these concerts were well attended and raised money for Prostate Cancer and the church building fund, respectively. It is a real privilege and an added bonus that our hobby, which gives us all so many benefits, can also help others.

All of our concerts are important to us, but one we work very hard for is our Christmas concert in Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. We know that, for many people, it is a big part of their special Christmas traditions. This year, as in 2022, we were joined by Whitburn Band, currently Scottish champions, Scottish Open champions and 12th in the brass band world rankings. They are an amazing group of musicians and offer us that extra challenge of attempting to drown them out. I'm not sure we would manage if we didn't have the assistance of the sound engineers at the hall. Our other guests were Glasgow CREATE Junior, Senior and Chamber Choirs with conductor Claire O'Reilly and accompanist, our own, Cameron Murdoch. Their selected music was a delight, and everyone was astounded by the beauty and maturity of the many solo voices we heard. As an extra special treat, we also had a solo performance of *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* performed by Matthew. Work starts on building the new roof of the concert hall in January! It was that good.

After a busy month, we were quite pleased to have the opportunity to lie down in a darkened room until early January. From all at Glasgow Phoenix Choir, best wishes for this new year – may it bring peace, happiness and loads more singing.

Hampshire In Harmony

Hampshire Police, Romsey, Rushmoor Oddfellows and Basingstoke MVC Southern Counties - Chris Holland

On 21 October 2023 four Hampshire MVCs combined to perform in a fundraising concert in support of the Hampshire and IOW Air Ambulance. Over £2,800 was raised for the charity which provides a vital life-saving service to our community.

The concert was held at Thornden Hall in Chandlers Ford and hosted by television's BBC South Today's Jo Kent.

Over 120 voices sang four joint numbers producing both sensitive and powerful renditions of classic male voice pieces including *American Trilogy* and *Morte Criste*. The choirs were brilliantly led by their respective Musical Directors, Geoff Porter, Marion Maxey, Richard Childress and Philip Viveash-Brainch, with each conducting one of the four joint numbers. The choirs also performed four pieces individually, demonstrating the varied genres of male voice arrangements. The audience which included the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Eastleigh, renowned composer and arranger Dr Haydn James and Richard Corbett the Air ambulance's CEO, was sensitive to the different



emotions evoked by the range of songs, be it clapping along to the Hampshire Police MVC's *Radetzky March* or being moved to a stunned silence by Romsey MVC's interpretation of *Prayer of The Children*. Basingstoke MVC performed an enjoyable selection of more contemporary numbers which included Sting's *Fields Of Gold* whilst Rushmoor contributed a thoughtful and balanced mix of contem-

porary and traditional pieces including *Yesterday* and *When The Saints Go Marching In*.

Those present witnessed a unique event for the county and showed their appreciation with generous applause for each choir and a standing ovation at the end of the concert, which finished with a reprise of *What Would I Do Without My Music*.

Music Quiz

1. Which 19th century pianist and composer is best remembered for his choral work *German Requiem*?
2. By what name is Beethoven's 9th *Symphony* better known?
3. Best known for his oratorio *The Messiah* Georg Frideric Handel also wrote this great oratorio which includes choruses about swarms of insects, fire and hail, and darkness and an aria about frogs and diseased cattle.
4. Which great German poet wrote the text used for Beethoven's great 9th *symphony* (the *Ode to Joy*)?
5. Which Italian opera composer known primarily for his operatic comedies wrote a setting of the *Stabat Mater*?
6. *Belshazzar's Feast* is a 'partita for chorus and orchestra' by this British composer, best known for composing the scores for Laurence Olivier's Shakespearean films, and for the royal march *Crown Imperial*.

**Answers
on Page 22**

Lancashire Choir of 2023

Nelson Civic Ladies Choir - Lancashire North - Caroline Greaves



Nelson Civic Ladies Choir was recently awarded the title of 'Lancashire Choir of the Year 2023'. This competition is organised by Lancashire County Council and is open to any choir based in Lancashire.

The initial competition requires choirs to send a video of a performance, from these just 6 choirs are selected to appear at a live final, which this year was held at Lancaster University Great Hall. The final was compered by Tim Uffindell.

The judging panel for the competition consisted of Saphena Aziz, Director of Inclusion at Curious Minds; Jane Irwin, Soprano; Matthew Thomas, Musical Director



of Rossendale Male Voice Choir and County Councillor Phillippa Williamson, leader of Lancashire County Council. In their comments the judging panel complimented the brilliant communication between choir and conductor and the fantastic piano accompaniment.

Nelson Civic Ladies Choir is actually based in Colne in Lancashire. It is led by musical director, John Garrett, and accompanied

by Elizabeth Cockshott. The choir has members from all over the Pendle Area. In fact from January 2024 they will become Pendle Ladies Choir. The choir took a vote in 2023 and agreed that it was time to change the name to reflect where we are based. We don't want to lose the legacy of our original name, so for some time we will be Pendle Ladies Choir (formerly Nelson Civic Ladies Choir).

Lauren's Second And Jamie's Last

Mendip Male Voice Choir – South West - Simon Martin

A capacity audience enjoyed the MMVC Annual Christmas Concert held at St John's Church Midsomer Norton at 19.30 on Monday 18 December. The concert, which sold out by mid-November, was the last of five in their Christmas Season following concerts at Timsbury, Oakhill, Combe Down and Peasedown St John.

At St John's the choir was joined by soloist, Lauren Cheshire, who sang six modern musical theatre numbers in two highly entertaining sets. Lauren has recently finished training at the Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts in London and performed in Evoke Productions, Christmas Panto –

'Peter Pan', Dance Nation at Mountview. Lauren has also performed with the MMVC once before as a young teenager over a decade ago and was delighted to sing with them again.

The 70 strong choir included some 18 new members who joined in September under the choirs '20 Mendip Men Needed' campaign in which they pledged to rehearse and sing in the annual concert, though some have sung in more, and be sponsored to raise money for Prostate Cancer UK. Through their sponsorship and money from the concerts at Oakhill, Peasedown St John and some from the annual concert

over £4,000 has been raised for this great charity, as well as £1,500 for Romanian Charities through the Combe Down Concert. The choir thanks everybody for their contributions and the new members for their hard work in learning a repertoire of thirteen pieces sung without scores.

However, the concert was tinged with sadness for all members as it was the last concert with Musical Director, Jamie Knights. Jamie has been a great Musical Director and Conductor for the last 11 years but wants to spend more time with his family and plans to leave the choir in the spring. Choir Chairman, Richard Lus-



1919, have been underway for some time and a selection process for the new MD will hopefully take place in the new year'.

To join the choir there is no audition or requirement to read music and potential new members are welcome to turn up at rehearsals held each Monday from 19.30-21.30 at St Mary's School, Timsbury, 7 miles south-west of Bath to see how they fit in.

Or more information is available on the choir's website

www.mendipmen.co.uk

combe, explained 'We will be very sorry to see Jamie leave, the choir has blossomed with him, we have great fun, and the rapport Jamie has with the choir and

our fabulous accompanist, Phil Every, who continues with the choir is exceptional. Efforts to replace Jamie who is only the 5th Musical Director since the choir started in

100 year 'Hobby'

Rossendale Male Voice Choir – Lancashire North – Paul Heaton



In 2024 the men of the Rossendale Male Voice Choir will celebrate their centenary, recalling the extraordinary achievements of their forebears.

The choir's centenary performances will look back with pride at the 'hobby' which for 100 years has delivered performances to the highest of standards, with one competition adjudicator commenting 'they have shown, and continue to show, all that male voice singing can be and should be, often attaining the unattainable'.

From its humble beginnings, this choir of

men from the mills – most of whom couldn't read music – went on to win the National Eisteddfod an unprecedented four times. The choir has competed and performed nationally and internationally and had multiple appearances on radio and TV.

For the 'ordinary chaps' who've been part of the choir these 100 years, it's been a life changing experience, bringing musical, cultural, and life opportunities which for many would otherwise have been unimaginable.

Even a brief delve into the choir's 100-

year history reveals an astonishing story of the triumphs and adventures of a community of men, bound together by camaraderie and a love of choral singing. It's also a fascinating insight into local culture and social history, set against the dramatic changes and momentous events since the post WWI days of the early 1920s.

On the 24 March 1924 a couple of dozen men responded to an article in the Rossendale Free Press and met at Spencer's café at 99 Bank Street, Rawtenstall. It was resolved that 'the Goodshaw Glee Union be disbanded and that the new choir be



named the Rossendale Male Voice Choir'. Fred Tomlinson was appointed temporary conductor 'until we get someone proper'. He was to remain as the choir's conductor for the next 52 years!

Taking on the responsibility, Fred, in his warm Rossendalian accent, said 'all I want is somebody that has a voice, wants to use it and is willing to be shown the best way to use it'. The scene was set, and Fred quickly set about preparing the men for the festivals and competitions. He added 'The best thing we can do, if we want to get anywhere at all, is to go into competition against other choirs'.

Within 6 months of its foundation the choir came third at Colne and in 1926 took first prize at the Wallasey Festival. But on their next outing they got trounced, with one adjudicator commenting on the choir's performance of the test piece 'well, at least they got to hear how it should be sung'.

Many more successes followed though, with more than 40 competition wins under Fred's leadership. The pinnacle achievement was the unprecedented three consecutive first places at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod (1952-54) and a fourth in 1958. These extraordinary successes were covered in the national and international press and back in Rossendale the Parks Dept created a 3000 flower tribute in Rawtenstall's memorial gardens. The Borough Councils provided official recognition of the choir's achievements on behalf of 'the valley' with dinners, ceremonies and the presentation of a wonderfully inscribed and illuminated Freedom Book. With a further 30 wins under the leadership of the other conductors, especially Beatrice Wade, the choir

has continued to maintain its reputation as one of the best in Britain.

In 1936 Fred established a 40-year series of Celebrity Concerts, bringing musicians of international fame to perform in Rawtenstall. Stars like Geraint Evans and Owen



Brannigan performed at the Picture House between engagements at venues including Covent Garden and the Royal Opera House. Associate members paid 2/6d (12.5 pence!) for entrance to three concerts a year. By 1937 the number of Associate Members had grown to 1,168 and it was proving difficult to find sufficiently large venues. Such was the success of these concerts that in the late 1930s Fred exchanged letters with the Hollywood film star and world-famous bass baritone Paul Robeson, but a busy schedule prevented him from coming.

In 1932 the choir made the first of over 30 BBC radio appearances and sang in the BBC documentary film *The Waters Of Irwell* in 1958. By the 1960s the choir's reputation marked it out as one of the most highly respected in the country, so when the BBC organised broadcast performances of Berlioz and Mahler in 1962 and 1964 at Liverpool Cathedral they chose the voices of the Men of Rossendale to sing alongside no less than three massed orchestras, including the BBC Northern

Orchestra. Heady days.

The 1970s brought TV success for three consecutive years on the BBC's A Grand Sing competition, and in 1978 BBC Radio Lancashire broadcast a one-hour special called *The Men from The Valley*, recalling the choir's early history. Many of the conductors have contributed to the choir's body of recorded work on LPs and CDs, and now the choir's performances are enjoyed internationally thanks to YouTube and various streaming services. Fred's youngest son, Fred Jr, sang in the choir for a number of years and went on to form the Fred Tomlinson Singers, writing and performing the choral pieces in *The Two Ronnies* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Fred Jr was responsible for classics like *The Lumberjack Song* and *Spam*. Michael Palin was amongst the mourners at Fred Jr's 2016 funeral.

The choir have travelled widely to perform and compete. In 1963 two DC3 Dakotas were chartered to transport the men to Cork for the festival, which they won, and in 1973 the choir travelled by Aer Lingus 737 to the Koorsfestival in Holland. The choir sang one of Fred's favourites, *The Two Roses*, on the tarmac, but because the pilot hadn't heard it there was a repeat performance at 20,000ft! Many other exciting and memorable trips followed, including Killarney in Ireland and to our twin town in Germany, where excellent relationships were established with Bocholt choirs. In 2007 the choir was honoured to give a moving performance of *Ave Maria* at the Menin Gate in Ypres, just before the playing of *The Last Post*.



As the swinging 60s merged into the psychedelic 70s, the choir entered a period of change and challenge. Fred Tomlinson MBE, who'd worked all his life at Ilex Mill and was the founder conductor with over 50 years of service, handed over to his son Ernest, himself an internationally acclaimed composer and conductor. The successes continued, though with fewer competitions wins – because

by now of course there were far fewer competitions. The choir won those prestigious BBC TV competitions and maintained their position as one of the country's top choirs – a tradition we still work hard to maintain.

Audiences changed too. Home TVs were the norm, top pop bands regularly featured at local venues like The Astoria, and blockbuster movies drew in big audiences. Interest in the choir's traditional celebrity concerts dwindled, with the last being in 1967.

But the choir has endured. Almost certainly because it strives for high standards, but also because it continues to *mean* something, to have *value*, to be *important*.

Winners of the inaugural Lancashire Choir

of the Year competition in 2022, today's choir has almost 60 members, with a broad repertoire ranging from choral classics to Oasis. We are a true community, where fun and laughter sits comfortably alongside the hard work and commitment needed to learn and perform pieces to a high standard. Many of our members cycle, golf, walk or meet up for a chat just because we're mates. There's a lot of talk about mental health and wellbeing these days, and the male voice choir is a place where there are clear positive benefits.

The choir performs and competes locally and nationally, in a variety of venues from the Bridgewater Hall to valley churches, pubs and supermarkets, often as charity fundraisers. In March 2023 the choir was honoured with the award of a Certificate

of Achievement, presented by the Mayor Councillor Anne Cheetham in recognition of the choir's 100 years of success. The award celebrates the choir's role as ambassadors for Rossendale and its contribution to the valley's cultural life. It's a wonderful privilege for the men of today's choir to be able to honour the incredible achievements of their forebears and to launch the choir onward into its second century!

www.rossendalemalevoicechoir.org.uk

Forward To Our 40th Anniversary

Barnstaple Ladies Choir – Devon - Lynne Beer

How wonderful it is to have completed a full year of engagements, just as it used to be before the pandemic. We are thrilled to have undertaken 20 engagements in 2023, this included Concerts with Tamar Valley MVC, The Wyndham Singers, Bois Goetre Hen Male Voices, South Molton Town Band, Centre Stage School and Barnstaple MVC. Just a few of the wonderful concerts we were privileged to take part in. These events have enabled us to raise well over £5,000 for local charities.

In 2024 we are looking forward to our 40th Anniversary which we intend to celebrate in style. An anniversary dinner is arranged, a Grand Concert with guests and a weekend away visiting Northern Ireland in September when we will be enjoying singing with Portadown and Ballymoney MVCs, we also hope to sing at the Visitors Centre at Giants Causeway.

The Barnstaple Ladies Choir formed in 1984 when several members of the disbanded Tomlin Singers decided to start a new choir as their MD had retired. Over the years the membership has steadily increased to 34 including one of the original Tomlin Singers who is still singing with us. This incredible lady is Mary Chant who was the choir's MD for 37 and through that long service led us with her love and



skill of singing to become a very well respected choir.

After Mary retired in 2021 we were extremely lucky to find talented Lorraine Homewood who originally comes from Northern Ireland, hence our anniversary tour to that region. She is an experienced piano teacher and accompanist and has worked at the Royal Opera and Glyndebourne Opera. She moved to North Devon in 2018 and teaches piano and violin, accompanies North Devon Choral Society as well as being our Musical Director. She is continuing to lead our progression and we are learning new pieces all the time to add to our extensive repertoire.

The choir has a varied programme which we are always updating. It ranges from

popular to sacred songs as well as songs from the shows. We always enjoy singing with other choirs and bands whether local or further afield.

So, we look forward to our 40th Anniversary year as we continue to develop, encourage new members and raise funds for local charities, all of this stemming from our choir family and our love of singing.



97th Annual General Meeting 35th Annual Conference Weekend 17-19 April 2024

Conference Coordinator update

This time of year, with total darkness descending outside at 4.30pm finds me in the office much earlier. I have finished a revised timeline today for the cruise conference. Listening to comments and views expressed about the first draft included in the Autumn 2023 News and Views I have included more downtime to enjoy the ship on the Thursday of the cruise. The revised timeline is presented overleaf. Fred.Olsen have started to contact all passengers to request final payments. At this point it is a good idea to check you have

booked for coach transport if required and this is included in your final payment.

You may need car parking either at Liverpool or Southampton. If you have not booked, then it is a good idea to contact them now. I have included the telephone numbers below. I have negotiated a special reduced offer for our passengers.

Liverpool CPS 03450713939

Quote you are with the National Association of Choirs. The account is open. The charge quoted is £37.50 for the cruise parking.

Southampton ABP 02380488870

Quote NAC2024 Charge quoted is £27.50 for cruise parking.

Conference 2025.

I am working on conference 2025 at the moment. Details will be published in the following News and Views.

kindest regards

Clive

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sales@lindsaymusic.co.uk – or

Why not give us a call? We're always pleased to discuss your needs in person 01767-260815



SING WITH THE SPIRIT

Traditional Afro-American songs arranged by Douglas Coombes [SATB choir with piano/keyboard accompaniment] ISBN 978-0-85957-204-0 PRICE £7.95

This is a through-composed choral cycle of 10 Afro-American Spirituals offering a substantial work when performed in totality. Having said that, the songs can easily be performed as individual items owing to the nature of the keyboard links. The parts lie well within the accepted norms in all voices and Douglas Coombes' arrangements reflect the varying moods of the songs – from the rhythmic and up-tempo *Down by the riverside* to the reflective *My Lord, what a morning*, or

the heart-wrenching *Deep River* to the joyous *Now let me fly*. This volume is a useful anytime repertoire book.

Contents:

- Down by the riverside
- Deep River
- The old ark's a-moverin'
- Go down, Moses
- Joshua fit the battle
- Little David, play on your harp
- Lonesome valley
- I got a robe
- My Lord, what a morning
- Now let me fly.

Duration approx. 28 minutes



Two useful SATB choral cycles with songs that can easily be performed separately to fit with your programme theme . . .

RAISE HIGH THE SONG

a choral cycle of seven songs about birds music by Douglas Coombes

[SATB with piano/keyboard accompaniment] ISBN 0-85957-059-2 PRICE £7.95

This cycle uses words by Thomas Heywood (c1575-c1650), William Blake (1757-1827), Alexander Wilson (1766-1813), Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and traditional folk poetry from the UK and the USA. Musically, it is not too difficult for the singers, and ranges in style from reflective (in close harmony) to the rhythmic and sheer good fun, via the highly dramatic second movement *A Robin Redbreast in a cage*. The piano accompaniment offers some challenges, but most amateur choirs will be able to take on this work with pleasing results.

Duration approx: 25 minutes





National Conference Booking Form 1. Fred.Olsen Cruise Ship Bolette Southampton to Liverpool

CONFERENCE COSTS

Full Conference Stay

The price quoted is

per person for the whole conference cruise

There are no single room supplements

Price per person for whole conference includes admission to all lectures
two nights bed breakfast, lunch, evening meal, refreshments, and all the facilities of the ship
per person £250

Return coach from Liverpool to Southampton £25

Car Parking at Southampton £25

Cancellation charges as per Fred.Olsen tariff available on website

CABIN TYPE

All cabins have either an ocean view window or porthole
For the cruise all Single accommodation will be in a twin cabin.

PAYMENT AND BOOKING

Payment and booking for the cruise are being handled by Fred.Olsen

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 cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference Booking Form 2 17-19 April 2024

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

Guest 1

Title
Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name as shown on
passport.....

Surname as shown on
passport.....

Nationality.....

Date of
Birth.....

Place of
Birth.....

Address.....
.....PostCode.....

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

Email
Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet
[type].....

Disability [wheelchair user]
please bring your own
chair.....

NAC
group.....

Choir
Name.....

Cabin type. Single or
twin?.....

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

cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference timetable 17-19 April 2024 M.S. Bolette, Southampton

Wednesday 17 April 2024

12.00pm	Delegates board ship, register at reception, and collect delegate pack
3.00pm	National Officers meeting
4.30pm	Annual General Meeting
7.00pm.	Gala Dinner is served - Main Dining Room
9.00pm	Ship entertainment Neptune Theatre

Thursday 18 April 2024

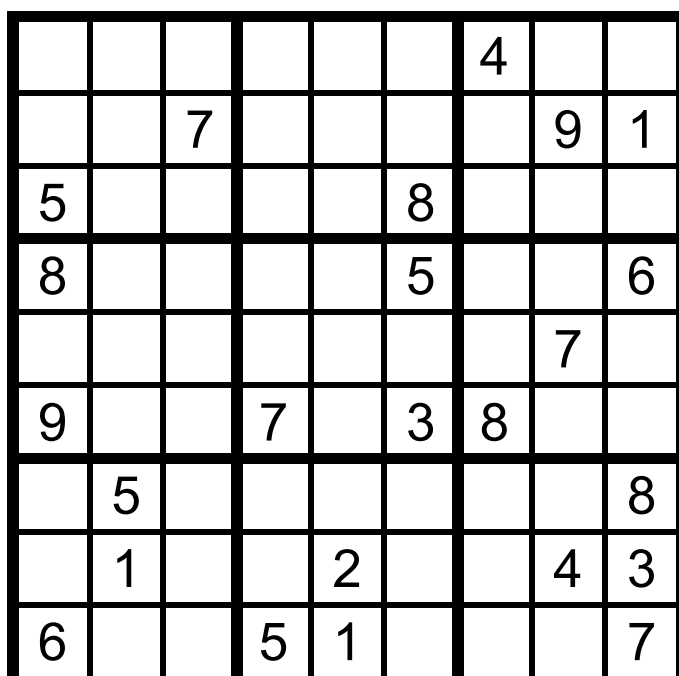
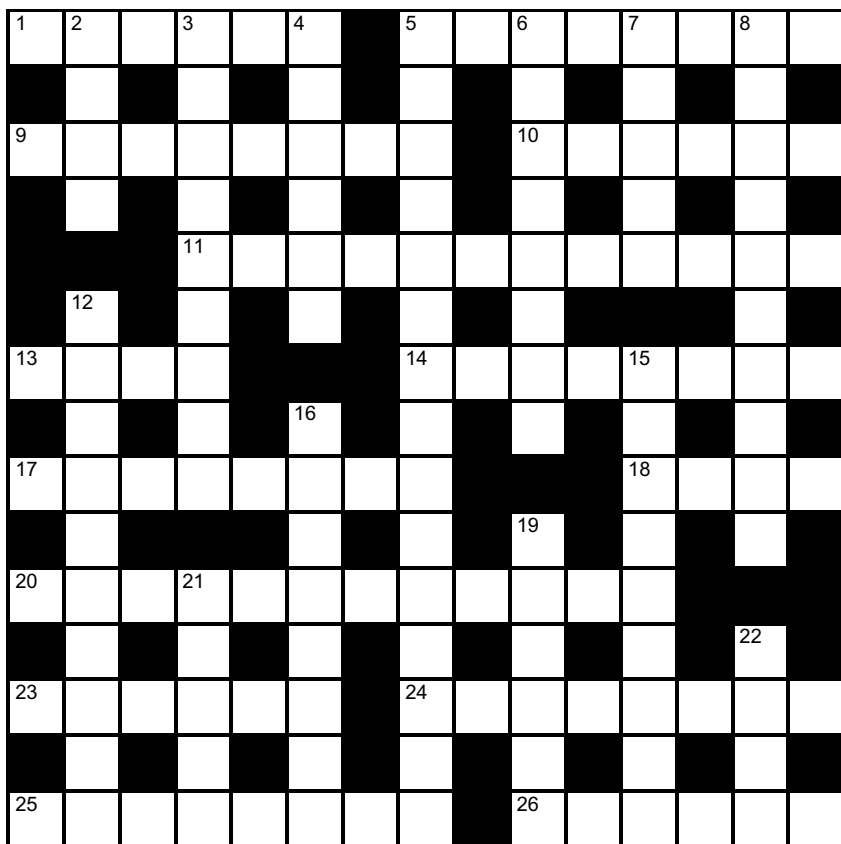
7.00am	Access to trade stands to set up
7.30 - 9.30am	Breakfast - Buffet Bar or,
8.00 - 9.30am	A la carte - Main Restaurant
9.30 - 10.30am	First Seminar Dr Douglas Coombes
10.30 - 11.00am	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.00am -12.00pm	Second Seminar Tim Knight
12.00 - 2.00pm	Lunch
2.00 -3.00pm	Presentations by our trade stands
3.00 - 4.00pm	Members Open Forum
4.00 - 6.30pm	Downtime to relax and explore the ship
6.30-7.00pm	Pre dinner reception by Fred.Olsen (Nibbles and drinks)
7.00 - 9.00pm	5 course A la carte Dinner - Main Restaurant
9.00 - 9.45pm	Fred.Olsen Cabaret Production Show
10.00 - 11.00pm	Kentwood Show Choir
11.00 - Onwards	Full programme of entertainment around the ship

Friday 19 April 2024 -

7.00 - 8.00am	Breakfast - Buffet Bar
8.30am	Disembark ship

Coaches for Southampton depart when all passengers on board

PUZZLE PAGE



Across

- 1 Let a mixed up cop try to find a secret (6)
- 5 About my ebook (8)
- 9 Scepticism (8)
- 10 Admit as a member (6)
- 11 Mince a children's scarecrow to get beet (6-6)
- 13 Popular unknown writer and poet (4)
- 14 Horribly woke hard to think (8)
- 17 I live surrounded by extreme damp (8)
- 18 Catastrophic lino turned and bit me (4)
- 20 Helps with your diet (12)
- 23 Vein in the centre of a leaf (6)
- 24 Looks like it's similar (8)
- 25 Offend or sadden (8)
- 26 Wet dig becomes a useful device (6)

Down

- 2 Germanic alphabet letter (4)
- 3 Lung infection (9)
- 4 We three kings are from here (6)
- 5 Helps review and update (9,6)
- 6 Sweaters and such (8)
- 7 Drain becomes low water mark (5)
- 8 In the workplace for a change (6-4)
- 12 Modest (10)
- 15 3/4 or 4/4 might be good (4-5)
- 16 You could change this (8)
- 19 Sometimes hard to put together, if you get the picture (6)
- 21 No so common (5)
- 22 Can soften the skin when with Brenda Blethyn character (4)

SOLUTIONS PAGES 26/27

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

Coded Puzzle

	12	20	23	11	10	13		8	17	10	11	21	13	
	21		4		19			19		16		3		
10	17	19	18	19	26	15		5	11	25	25	3	16	7
	9		11		1		10		14		3		7	
8	24	25	3	21	24	6	24	7	15		24	23	12	8
			12		24		18				23		3	
	12	10	19	4	8		13	3	16	7	12	3	22	19
	13				19		26		11				19	
9	3	12	2	23	14	7	19		11	18	21	19	14	
	2		11				16		16		24			
2	23	6	15		13	3	21	13	26	24	25	3	16	7
	9		10		23		17		18		21		3	
23	4	10	11	18	14	12		18	19	8	24	23	21	17
	19		6		24			11		9			17	
	18	11	13	3	12	17		19	14	3	26	6	19	

1	2	3	I	4	5	6	7	G	8	9	10	11	12	13	K
14	15	16	N	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		

Double Anniversaries

Kentwood Show Choir - South-West - Rickie Leyton



What a good year 2023 was for us. Our first engagement was with the NAC in Taunton as guests alongside two incredible choirs, the Glastonbury Male Voice and the Cantabile Ladies Choir at the Tacchi-Morris Centre. The height of the evening being when all three choirs joined together for a couple of massed songs.

During the year we performed at a several local venues. Our two main shows - 'The Magic of Kentwood' at the Swindon Arts Centre and our 'Christmas Cracker' at the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon were very successful. Sadly, we had to say goodbye to one of our long-standing members Nicola Carpenter, and Catherine Forty became Mrs Pursey. We were honoured to sing for both.

Our Charity of the year was 'Wiltshire Search and Rescue', and during our 'Christmas Cracker' we all brought food items in support of the 'Swindon Food Collective'.

2024 is a big year for us as we will be celebrating 60 years of music making and our Founder and Musical Director, Sheila Harrod, will be celebrating her 80th Birthday. Our June Show will be taking place at the Wyvern Theatre on Sunday 23 June, so put this date into your diary – it would be great to see you. We are very excited to be doing a special 'St George's Day Concert' for the Mayor of Swindon. During 2024, our 'Charity of the Year' will be the 'Ridgeway Breast Care Support Group', which, we are very proud to be supporting.

We are very much looking forward to joining the NAC Conference Cruise in April.

Choral Workshop

Midlands East Group

Presented by Edward-Rhys Harry

During the weekend of 24-26 March 2023, I attended the NAC conference in Taunton where the key-note speaker was a chap called Edward-Rhys Harry. 'Who?' I hear you ask. Yes, that was my reaction too. Not a name with which I was familiar. Nevertheless, happy to listen to what he had to say. I was not disappointed. His easy presentation together with dry sense of humour ensured a pleasurable and informative day's seminar.

So, when I received an email from Midland East secretary, Brenda Wilkinson, inviting folk to a choral workshop to be held at Stretton, Derbyshire on Sunday 3 September this year where the presenter was the said Mr Harry, I immediately put my name down! This promised to be another musical insight. He was definitely worth another listen. Also, it turns out, this guy has friends in very high places such that him slapping a monarch did not result in an international incident.

On 3 September, a gloriously warm and sunny day when many probably enjoyed the great outdoors, the village hall in Stretton was almost full of choristers and musical directors, mainly from the East Midlands. However, such was the reputation of the presenter, one soprano did set off from Wales that morning at 07.30 to drive up solely to hear what Edward had to say. OK, she was a member of his choral society, nevertheless he inspired her to attend.

The day was divided into 4 sessions. Initially, this affable gentleman with his soft Welsh accent, assisted by accompanist Liz Moulder for the day, took us through warm-ups. Who would have thought making the sound of Macbeth witches, coupled with Boris Johnson would be an excellent way to stretch the vocal folds? (True story). No, neither did I.

After the break, Edward introduced us to his own composition, *Missa Brevis in F*, including movements entitled *Sanctus*, *Gloria*, and *Amen* through which we steadily worked in 4 vocal parts – not rushed, enabling everyone to apparently grasp what he was trying to achieve with us in the time we had.



Following the lunch break, and further vocal exercises to clear our throats of the remnants of the butties, we had the MD's Challenge. Two volunteer musical directors, namely Terry Clay from Alfreton Male Voice Choir and Nicola Hunt from Sonara Singers, were separately put through their paces and positively critiqued by Edward. Each MD in turn took the gathered throngs through part of Edward's composition and he gave them tips on how to encourage the choristers to perform better – let them loose again, and the assembled choir improved.

Afternoon tea and cakes was followed by further tips and guidance from Edward to the choristers to take what we learn in rehearsals through to the performance of a lifetime – well almost.

All told this was a most enjoyable, informative workshop, excellently presented. The mutterings and murmurings of the assembled throng as they dispersed from the village hall were of pleasant surprise and many saying, 'that was good, wasn't it' 'I really enjoyed that' and, best of all 'those who didn't come have missed a treat.'

Thank you to Edward, to Liz and to the NAC for offering this opportunity.

Be sure to look out for any further workshops presented by Edward-Rhys Harry.

Christine Middleton, Sonara Singers

'Edward-Rees Harry generously shared with us a treasure trove of wise words, amazing experience and knowledge. I was invited to conduct the group in rehearsal. Nervous though I was, it was just wonderful to receive such valuable advice on beat, gesture, expression and interpretation and from such an esteemed instructor.'

Nicola Hunt MD Sonara Singers

'Edward-Rees Harry running a workshop for Midlands East Group – a round trip of ninety miles for me, but this had to be done. I was so glad I had made the effort. He is an acknowledged expert in the field of choral music, composing, arranging, conducting, teaching - and all with a charming personality and a reprehensible sense of humour. The group attending worked hard throughout the day and the nine choral directors among the group learnt such a lot as well. I can wholeheartedly recommend Edward whether it be for singing or conducting!'

Celia Johns MD Gildenburgh Choir

Restarting Normal

East Fife Male Voice Choir – Scottish Region East – Paul Egan



After a Covid-affected 2020 to 2022, with its stuttering restart to normal activities, it was great that 2023 saw the full resumption of activities for the choir this year.

First up was the Fife Festival of Music which returned in February after a 2-year hiatus, this was quickly followed by our 4-day tour of South Yorkshire and the Peak District in March reciprocating a 2022 visit to Fife by the Chapel-en-le-Frith MVC.

A party of 48 choir members and partners travelled down from Fife to our base in Sheffield. Following a most convivial dinner, the next morning saw a short journey over to Buxton where John Goodchild, a member of the Chapel-en-le-Frith MVC generously gave up his time to take us on an 'insiders' tour of the lovely town and its amazing Opera House. Following a quick 'wash and brush up' back at the hotel we then jumped back on the bus to head over to Goldthorpe near Barnsley for our first joint concert as guests of the Thurnscoe Harmonic MVC at St John and St Mary Magdalene Church. A lovely concert ensued with both choirs delighting the audience, especially when we combined forces to sing the joint pieces *Gwahoddiad*, *Rachie* and *Morte Christe*. After a day recovering from the hospitality shown to us after the concert by the Thurnscoe MVC team, we then returned to Buxton the following evening for our joint concert with the Chapel-en-le Frith MVC. The venue

was the lovely St John's Church in Buxton and both choirs performed individually to the large audience gathered there before combining to sing the joint pieces *The Tallis Canon*, *The Rose* and our traditional concert finale *Morte Christe*. After the concert, another generous helping of amazing hospitality was laid on for us and, apart from an early departure back to Sheffield owing to the stretched tachograph of our coach driver, a very late night looked to be on the cards doubtless saving a few sore heads on the Coach back to Scotland the next day.

April saw the end of our 22/23 calendar culminate in our Traditional Annual Concert at the Old Kirk Kirkcaldy which was also the final performance by our long serving accompanist Robin Bell, who decided to move onto pastures new after another great show literally 'pulling out all the stops' for his final rendition of *Morte Christe* on the wonderful organ at the church. Thankfully we were most fortunate to find a successor in the form of another very experienced and accomplished local musician, Callum McLeod, who joined the choir in September to work alongside our Musical Director, Marilyn Boulton.

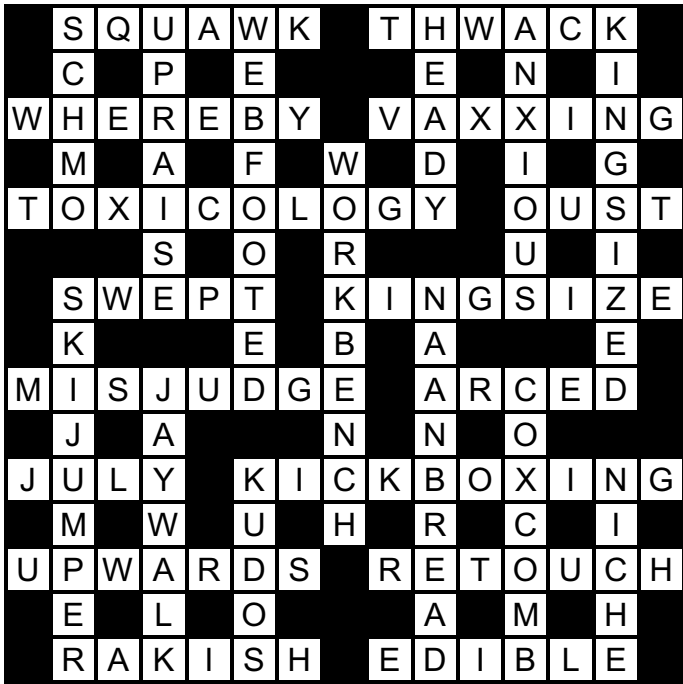
Callum didn't have long to settle in as in September the choir performed in Falkirk. In October the choir was asked to perform as part of the 900-year anniversary celebrations at the small, but very beautiful, St Fillan's Church in Aberdour, Fife, one of

the oldest churches in Scotland. Next up, in late November, a small section of the choir was asked to join the residents of Blair Castle in Culross where the Scottish Mining Welfare Trust help support ex-miners and their relatives and to provide the entertainment at their annual Christmas dinner. Traditional choir pieces, Burns recitals and a few Christmas carol singalongs were well received and the residents joined in with all the old favourites.

We were also fortunate to feature in our local Fife press in November when *The Courier* Newspaper ran an article about one of our members, Ian Duncan, who was diagnosed with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) 13 years ago and has found singing helps to keep his lungs working well. Featuring Ian's support from the charity Asthma and Lung UK, the article majored upon the health benefits of singing and the camaraderie of choir membership generally. Following the publication of this article we were contacted by Dr Zindzi Greenwood, a Dundee-based GP to come along to her health centre to sing for her patients and colleagues. Dr Greenwood is a great believer in the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of singing along with a more holistic approach to medicine. Again, this concert was covered by the local press and EFMVC made it onto the front page of the daily Dundee newspaper, *The Courier*, benefiting both the efforts of Dr Greenwood and our choir in raising awareness and hopefully helping us in our choir recruitment activities too?

2023 culminated in our Annual Winter/Christmas concert back at the Old Kirk in Kirkcaldy in December where a programme of choir pieces, many featuring the writing talents of John Rutter, was interlaced with a good old audience sing along of traditional carols to end the year.

2023 was certainly a busy year and we're hoping 2024 will be even busier!



Music Quiz from page 9

1. Johannes Brahms
2. A Choral Symphony
3. Israel in Egypt
4. Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller
5. Gioachino Rossini
6. William Walton

Sun and soul for choir groups!

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Explore the vibrant city of Barcelona and have your voice heard in venues like Sagrada Família and lively town promenades!

And make the most of Costa Brava's golden beaches, pine-edged coves, sacred churches and spectacular mountain scenery!

Fancy something a little different? Check out our diverse range of destinations, with tailor-made itineraries that cater to all kinds of ensembles and repertoires!

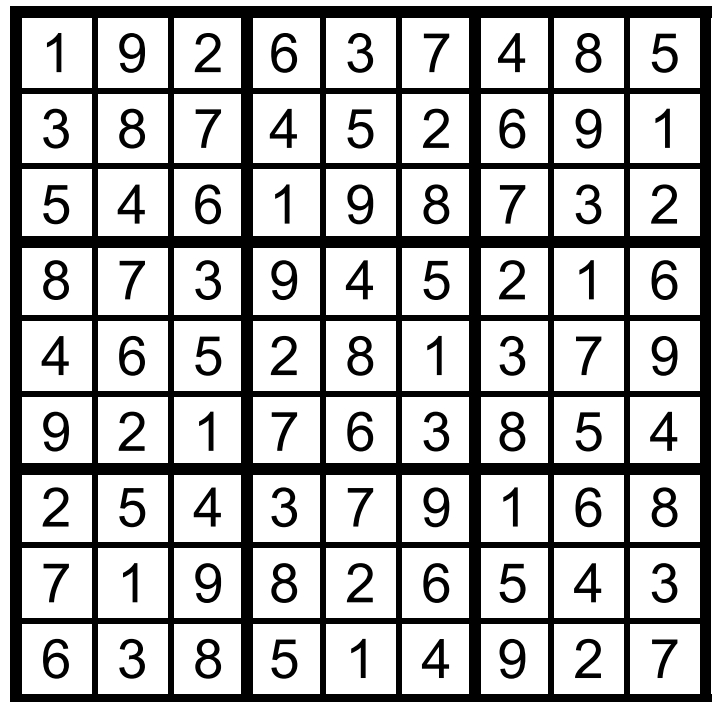
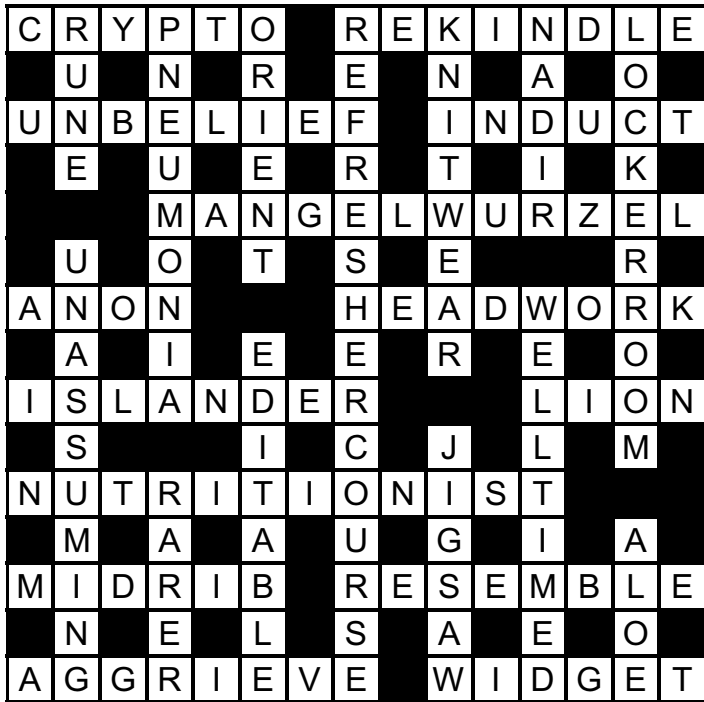
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The first thing is to send your article **attached** to
(not in the body of) an email to

publications.officer@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk

‘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
- Abbreviations do not have full stops.
- Song titles are shown in italics.
- Please do not put photos in the text.
- Don’t use am or pm in times.
- Unless the word ‘choir’ is part of a title it should NOT have a capital letter.
- Your choir is singular so ‘the choir is’ not ‘the choir are’

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Gerald Haigh - *ret Chairman*

Peter Marshall - *ret Services Officer*

Alan Simmons - *Music Publisher*

Doris Williams - *Music and Festivals Consultant*

Officers

17-19 April - Conference

4 June - Twin Oaks

3 September - Twin Oaks

12 November - Twin Oaks

14 January 2025 - Zoom

Members Open Forum

27 January - Zoom

17-19 April - Conference

29 June - Zoom or Leeds, TBC

21 September - Zoom

25 January 2025 - Zoom

Closing dates for submissions to News & Views

Spring Issue - 31 December

Summer Issue - 30 April

Autumn Issue - 31 August