

NEWS & VIEWS

210

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHOIRS

SUMMER 2016

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Someone wrote in

AT LAST A CARTOON

Well done MITCH

CONFERENCE REPORT

And Crawford didn't write it



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National Association of Choirs

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Contents

- 4 Crawford's Corner
Chairman's Chat**
- 6 Conference Coordinator**
- 7 Rolls-Royce Ladies' Choir**
Report on the NAC Conference, Newcastle
- 8 Highcliffe Community Choir**
David Martin relaxes with a glass and thinks of Conference
Sonara Singers
Joint concert between Sonara and Eastwood Collieries Male Voice Choir, in aid of the Newlife Foundation Charity
- 9 Worcester Male Voice Choir**
Worcester Welcomed friends from Vernon, France
K Shoes Male Voice Choir
Second Music For Heroes Concert in two years raised total for Help for Heroes to more than £20,000
- 10 Cancer Research**
The Festival of Brass & Voices over several years; raised over half a million pounds for life-saving research
- 11 Cor Meibion Colwyn/
Colwyn Male Voice Choir**
Ellen Williams (soprano) 'sang with heart piercing sweetness'
- 12 Cotswold Male Voice Choir**
GE Aviation challenged to form a Male Voice Choir for a one-off performance
- 15 Chesterfield Male Voice Choir**
Festival of Brass and Voices at The Royal Albert Hall.
Dorset Police Male Voice Choir
Hope for arresting performance at 21st Anniversary

- 16 Decibellas**
The Amalfi sunshine came to the Cheshire countryside on Friday 1 April
- 17 Puzzle Page**
- 18 Dee-Sign
British Sign Language Choir**
Jersey Eisteddfod Success in St Helier.
- 20 Mansfield & District Male Voice Choir**
Through the mist of an early March morning the pale sun brought promise of a 'Spring Sensation'
- 21 Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir**
10 years old - what an exciting anniversary
- 23 Letters to the Editor
WOW! CARTOON by MITCH**
- 24 The Glasgow Phoenix Choir**
Orkney The Italian Chapel CD will raise funds for its upkeep
- 25 The Musicality Singers**
Performing at a British Legion commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme
- 26 Gwalia Singers Swansea**
Golden Anniversary at the Brangwyn Hall
- 27 New Members Directory
Puzzle Solutions**
- 28 Officer Information
How To Send Stuff In**

Advertising Index

14 Barbershop	2 Jelf Insurance Partnership	23 Lyn Oakes	8 Rayburn Tours
26 Duncan James	22 John Trent Wallace	19 Majestic Publications	12 Slaters

**Last date for submissions for Issue 211
AUTUMN 2016 - 31 August**

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Crawford's Corner



Welcome to our Summer Issue. I have always thought of May as being a spring month but this year we have had some rather summer-like

days. let us hope that these days are not all we see this summer. This issue will be on the streets a little late this time but I hope you will find it has been worth waiting for.

Well, what do we have for you?

This issue follows conference so we always have a conference report, usually written by 'yours truly' but this year, I am pleased to say, two of our members have contributed their own report on their impressions of conference. This saves me time but also allows you to get a view of conference that does not come from any official of the NAC, which is great.

What do you think of our front cover picture? Three lovely young ladies at the Jersey Eisteddfod. They are members of Dee-Sign British Sign Language Choir who competed successfully at the Eisteddfod. I love it when I am able to showcase the work of young choristers. They are our future and we need to cherish them.

It's great when choirs send me a selection of photographic images that allow me to choose the best to surround the text they

send. Dee-Sign sent me several pictures. They made life easy for me. If you feel that sending a number of images might overload the email, then why not use something like Dropbox. It's free and I have an account and can readily pick up what you send.

When I was at conference Tony Moore came to me and mentioned that he had read my thoughts about wanting to have the occasional cartoon in *News & Views*. He told me that he had a chap who sang with his choir and had given him my contact details. When I got home there was a message on the answerphone and I was able to speak to Mitch whose has worked with Tony's choir to illustrate one of their publications. Mitch has provided me with a cartoon for this issue and very nice it is too. My grateful thanks to Mitch for allowing me to use it and to Tony for putting me in touch.

I have often rabbited on about not being able to have a 'Letters Page' as people don't often send 'letters' as such. This time I had a letter with some criticisms of *News & Views*. I use the word 'criticism' in its best sense. I am grateful to Maurice for his helpful suggestions and have answered his points after his letter. One of his suggestions was labelling images and I have tried to do this in this issue. It takes extra time but I hope it is helpful in identifying choirs, especially when there is more than one choir report on a page. So, come on everyone, send me letters so I can keep a page for them. Tell me what you like about

News & Views. Tell me what you don't like. Send me helpful suggestions, all are welcome.

While we are on the subject of 'Letters', I used to use the submission that came from 'Down Under' as a letter. Peter Marshall, one of our Vice Presidents would send me an epistle for each issue. Sadly, Peter feels that he is no longer able send me regular submissions. I'm sure we will all miss his 'Letters From Oz' but perhaps he may feel occasionally that something inspires him to get in touch. I'm sure all wish him well.

Well, enough of me twittering on, off you go and read the rest of Summer 2016 I hope you enjoy.

Crawford



The Low Fell Singers are getting a free advert for a new MD by offering it as a page filler See their ad on page 17

Chairman's Chat



They say pride is a sin, but on this occasion I am going to differ. My pride comes from reading two independent reports on our conference this year which came from new attendees, who thoroughly enjoyed their new experience. It is lovely to see our regular friends at this event, which is a great endorsement, but to have so many new faces this time was wonderful. I hope you a come again next time. It's a satisfying feeling that we seem to be on the right track in giving food for thought, encouraging

less confident choirs and giving support where needed.

The enthusiasm of choirs throughout the year never ceases to amaze me. Is it just the choral world who gives their all to support charities, both locally and nationally? In every issue somebody, somewhere is benefitting from our musical performances. I applaud this wonderful generosity.

I don't normally use this platform for personal messaging, but since the conference I have been out of touch with the NAC having been hospitalised, but I am now on the very long road to recovery. I have missed it all, but must take this opportunity to thank everyone for all their good

wishes, through all sorts of media, for my wellbeing and speedy recovery.

Brenda Wilkinson





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Conference Coordinator Conference 2016 Newcastle.



It seems like only yesterday we were enjoying being in the Jury's Inn hotel in Newcastle on Tyne. Time flies by it seems. From all the messages received from the delegates attending our conference the over-

whelming consensus was that it was an enjoyable and worthwhile weekend away. The conference serves many purposes but one of the main benefits is that it gives one time to converse with people from different parts of the country, time to share hints and bits of information which others can use to the benefit of their choirs. Time to renew friendships, some quite new others spanning perhaps decades. The opportunity to hear speakers experienced in their field of expertise, and to have trade stand personnel to bring the very latest equipment, musical manuscripts, uniforms and much more for us to peruse. The hotel management were excellent which makes my job so much easier and therefore able to offer a well organised event.

The concert at The Sage Arena was quite something with twenty-one choirs from the North East coming together to perform a varied and entertaining choice of music. Our thanks must go to Doris Williams for undertaking the organisation of a wonderful concert.

Conference 2017 Gloucester

We now move on to conference 2017 where we are the guests of choirs in the South West. I have booked the Cheltenham Chase Hotel which I am sure will be an excellent venue for next year's conference. The concert on Saturday evening is scheduled to take place in Gloucester Cathedral which, I am certain we all look forward to. I have received several offers for seminars next year which will be different and address areas where clarification is required. I refer to the Performing Rights Legislation which can be a problem to choirs of knowing just what can and can't be done in this area. David Goodwin of Banks Music Publications will be giving expert direction on the subject.

Composing music is an interesting area for investigation and enjoyment. Dr Douglas Coombes has offered to present a seminar on the art of composition in which he intends to involve all the delegates in actually composing a new piece of music at conference. All will be revealed next year but I think it will be fascinating to

hear his presentation. The choice of our main speaker is not nailed down as yet but we have several possibilities. More on this next time.

I have been approached with some ideas about the overall make up of conference including running more than one seminar at the same time and having delegates choose which subject they feel they would like to attend. We tried this in the past



and found that it didn't work that well. Some areas covered were deemed more interesting than others which produced many delegates attending one seminar whilst the other seminar was poorly attended. Another suggestion which I am interested in and will hope to implement next year is to have several trade stand personnel present their product to a seated audience. I intend to allow twenty minute slots in which new items and products can be presented. Depending on the time frame I would like to implement this idea using at least three different companies to present their products. I have other offers and ideas which I will use at future conferences. Conference 2017 is from Friday 21 April to Sunday 23 April.

Conference 2018 Norwich?

The May Day weekend found me in Norfolk and in particular Norwich. I would like to bring the conference to this area in 2018 using Norwich Cathedral as the venue for the concert. I have made approaches to the cathedral Dean and have quite a bit of information about what can be achieved within the building, costings and general set up. I visited several hotels within the area but one stood out above the rest. This hotel is the Maids Head Hotel which is

about 100 yards from the entrance arch to the Cathedral Close and about 300 yards from the west door of the same. The hotel has a history spanning almost a thousand years, some of the original building dating to pre Norman Conquest. Its other claim to fame being the site of the Edith Cavell nursing school for district nurses. Edith helped English airmen to escape the German occupation of Belgium during the second world war and was executed by firing squad at the age of 49 years. The Members' Open Forum will be held at the hotel on Saturday 24 September between 11.00 and 15.00. I hope choirs' representatives from the area will come along to talk to me about the conference being held in their area.

Conference 2019 & 2020

Conference 2019 venue is in the melting pot at the moment and 2020 which is the year of the NAC's centenary will find us going back to our roots. Suggestions of including Todmorden where the first meeting took place is high on possibility. Much has been done already by the National Executive in investigating possibilities in many areas and I will leave our chair and secretary to enlarge on these matters. What is certain is that we will not pass our centenary without many people knowing about this major achievement.

The Members' Open Forum in June this year is in Hanley, Stoke on Trent. My roots are in Newcastle Under Lyme which borders the potteries so I have a good working knowledge of the area and before I moved to Burton Upon Trent I was a member of Audley and District Male Voice Choir from which I have fond memories. The Quality Hotel is in the city centre so I ask choirs in the Midlands North sector to send a representative to talk to us. I would very much like to consider bringing conference your way one year.

I am working on the conference time line for 2017 at the moment but don't have all aspects confirmed at this time I will include the draft timeline in the next News and Views so you can look forward to the event layout for next year.

That's all for now but I would like to emphasize the point that anyone can call me to make offers and discuss issues. I would like to have your input. Call me on 07939 012458.

Clive Lawton

Rolls-Royce Ladies Choir Midlands East

Report on the NAC Conference, Newcastle

Sue Oldfield (the Chair of Rolls-Royce ladies) and I attended the 2016 NAC Conference in Newcastle in April. On our return we shared the following report with our own choir members.

It was a great opportunity for us to meet choristers from all over the UK and to meet up with the NAC Committee. We received a warm welcome from the Chair, Brenda Wilkinson and Clive Lawton, who organised the Conference. We stayed at the Juries Inn Hotel and everything from rooms, breakfast, endless coffee and meals were provided on time and to a high standard.

On Friday night we met with other delegates for dinner. After dinner we were entertained by the North East Brass Ensemble who presented a varied programme of music from 'Skyfall' and 'Live and Let Die' to Rodrigo's Concierto de Aranjuez or Orange Juice as it's also known.

During the conference we attended various informative and entertaining seminars

The first seminar was held by the Conference's main speaker, David Lawrence. David is a well-known conductor and a popular workshop leader with Britain's choirs. He used three volunteers from the group to highlight the pitfalls made when conducting. It was a difficult exercise for practised and experienced conductors, but we all learned some valuable ways to conduct more effectively and for those of us singing, to respond to conducting more effectively.

His second seminar encouraged us to develop the choral sound for better performance. The third seminar was held by Tracey de



Vere White who highlighted the benefits of social media. We were lucky enough to be offered help to set up a Twitter account for the choir and we are now on Twitter (RollsRoyceLC). We already have 20 followers! Seminar four was held by Karl Harper who spoke about sound technology and gave us some valuable information on which software we could use to enhance and improve recording techniques.

On Saturday evening, we attended The Sage Concert Hall, Gateshead which overlooks the Tyne. Alwyn Humphreys, conductor of the Murrison Orpheus Choir, was a very entertaining Master of Ceremonies introducing a total of 21 choirs performing together. Alwyn conducted the massed choir to his own American Trilogy and it was truly spectacular. The choirs performed I believe/Ave Maria and a piece from Les Miserables as well as old favourites like Bridge over Troubled Water. The concert ended with Love Divine and, with audience participation, Jerusalem. It was a fabulous concert in an equally fantastic venue.

There were numerous Trade Stands. We visited BaBa Music Publishers and met with Peter Barratt who provided us with some sample scores for Christine (our MD) to consider. It was also good to meet David and Rosemary Goodwin from Banks Music Publications. They offered their help to source any sheet music that we may

need. We also talked to representatives from JELF, our insurance provider and confirmed that we have the right level of cover for our choir.

We attended the AGM and Open Forum - all officers were re-elected and David Goodwin voted in as the new Music and Festivals Officer. He will share this role with Karl Harper, following the resignation of Tim Knight. Subscription to the NAC has been raised from £52 per year to £53 - an increase of one pound.

Next year's conference has been arranged for 21-23 April 2017 at The Cheltenham Chase Hotel in Gloucester. There followed a discussion on which speakers and trade stands could be invited to the event.

The Centenary of the NAC in 2020 was also discussed. John Forsyth has expressed an interest in composing the Centenary Anthem, which we have already contributed to by sending in words which spring to mind when thinking about singing and the choir. We were delighted when David Lawrence offered there and then to conduct the Anthem for us and quickly accepted! We also discussed performing the Anthem simultaneously with choirs throughout Britain.

The date for Centenary Event is 21 November 2020 and the venue may be a concert hall in Manchester. For 2018 and 2019 Conferences Glasgow, Thames and East Anglia were mooted as possible venues. The Chair closed the conference at 12.45.

So, what have we gained from the event? We have our own Twitter account: we have made new contacts in the music publishing world and other choirs who were represented: we have assurance that our choir is fully covered by insurance: we have some new music for the choir to consider and an offer to perform in a joint concert with Gresley MVC in 2017. It was a really interesting and enjoyable weekend and we felt very privileged to attend and have come back more enthusiastic than ever. We highly recommend that you attend the 2017 conference if you can.

The choir is currently rehearsing for two concerts in May, one for the British Legion and the second is the NAC Midlands East annual concert in Alfreton. Our members have increased over the past year due to a recruitment campaign and we currently have 31 singers.



The lovely Ladies of Rolls Royce Ladies Choir

Catherine Mears
Secretary

Highcliffe Community Choir Southern Counties

Conference Thoughts.

Having just sat back and relaxed with the mandatory glass of fermented grape juice, I just cannot help but wonder why so many choirs no longer seem to tap in to that wonderful resource that is the NAC Conference.

I take back to my choir ideas for new songs, ideas for new recruitment, even ideas in new conducting techniques all of which will help in its growth and development. I have information on sound technology that could prove useful for rehearsals and practising and on use of up to date social media to communicate with members and even more importantly potential members.

The most important thing is that it enables you to review where you are at and plan for improvement or implementation of new methods in the future. Can you afford to stay still? Can you afford to do nothing? Do you want to remain as you are or do you want to move with the times and

grow? Whatever you may decide, conference at least enables you to assess the opportunities available and decide whether or not they are right for you and your choir. It gives you the opportunity to discuss with experts and most valuable to 'chew the fat' and learn the experiences of our peers in other choral groups. It lets you meet other choral leaders face to face and set up possible future joint concerts, projects and workshops.

Nothing is cheap in this day and age and acceptance of that is sometimes difficult and a natural reluctance, but it is my considered opinion that every choir in the NAC should budget to send the secretary and or MD along each year.

I have been conducting for 40 years, I learnt with one of the best, Sir Adrian Boult, but after this year's conference I realise that I need to at the very least review my methods if I am to maximise the learning experience for my choir members.

Conference is time and money well spent. I cannot recommend it enough.

Dave Martin

Sonara Singers Midlands East

On the evening of 16 October 2015, Derby Cathedral was the venue for a joint concert between Sonara (formerly Alfreton Ladies Choir) and Eastwood Collieries Male Voice Choir, in aid of the Newlife Foundation Charity. Derby Cathedral's interior had, during the summer, been restored with new heating, lighting, wiring and decoration. Having had the privilege to sing in some beautiful buildings, it must be said that Derby Cathedral features high, if not top of the list of my favourite venues.

The two choirs are able to boast of an unusual connection, in that we share both conductor and accompanist, although thankfully not on the same rehearsal evening.

Liz Moulder, our conductor, joined Sonara in 1989, at a time when the choir was suffering dwindling numbers. Since then, we have continued to grow, not just in numbers but also in confidence and vocal skills. We now have around fifty-five regular members who meet for the pleasure of singing, friendship and social outings. After retiring from school teaching, Liz took

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over Eastwood CMVC in 2009. Conducting male voices was a new challenge for her and one she has risen to with some acclaim, having since conducted massed choirs of three hundred and fifty members from ten male voice choirs at the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham.

Teresa Mills has been accompanist of Sonara since 1981, only taking time off for a short period in 1989 when her daughter was born. Her daughter Natalie now sings with our choir. In 2013 Teresa joined Eastwood CMVC as their accompanist.

This connection between the two choirs has resulted in joint concerts, one being an annual carol concert at the beautifully decorated St Wystan's Church, Repton in early December. Repton Primary School Choir joins us too for a wonderful evening of carols, mulled wine and mince pies, all in aid of the Rainbows Hospice, one of our chosen charities. We also joined together for a Flash Mob at the Intu Centre, Derby last May to raise money for Polio Eradication which was sponsored by Amber Valley Rotary Club. An annual Christmas dinner, where we enjoyed not only fine dining but also some surprising in-house entertainment, has also become part of the regular activities shared between both choirs. It is perhaps worth mentioning that some of our members have taken the bonding to extremes, having married, albeit many years ago.

The joint concert in October at Derby Cathedral was very well attended by an appreciative audience. Richard Moulder did a sterling job as MC smoothing transitions between choirs. The programme was a balance of classical and modern, my favourites from the Eastwood men being their hilarious version of The Little Brown Jug and the emotive What Would I Do Without My Music, which always brings a lump to my throat. As for Sonara, my favourites were the classic oldie Fly Me To The Moon and a new piece to our repertoire, Firefly, which was enhanced by the fantastic acoustic qualities of the cathedral. Joint items consisted of One Voice, Swing Low Sweet Chariot and to round the concert off Jerusalem.

This wonderful concert has raised £5251 for the Newlife Charity. Founded in 1991, it helps UK children with disabilities and terminal illness, and their families, through the provision of equipment, nurse led support services, medical research and awareness campaigns. All money raised goes in full towards these services. There are many ways in which funds can be and are raised,

including runs and walks, fun events, sales, donations, coffee mornings and memorial gifts to name just a few. On behalf of the Newlife Foundation Charity, may I request that any other choirs who would be willing to provide an evening's entertainment to raise money for such a worthy cause, get in touch with Dave Reeves at newlifecharity.co.uk/fundraise.

Jan Whysall

Worcester Male Voice Choir Midlands South West

The New Year started with the choir spending time on a number of new additions to our repertoire before preparing to make the short journey to the north of the county to join with the Kidderminster Valentines Choir in concert at Kidderminster Town Hall during February. The venue is excellent and we thoroughly enjoyed participating in a joint concert organized by that choir.

As with many male voice choirs we have been focusing on recruitment and having tried a number of approaches we believe that along with the new opportunities to promote the choir on social media and the website the most successful approach has been to sing in the Worcester Shopping Centre on a busy Saturday. Armed with all our posters, flyers, pop up banners and very helpful wives and friends of the choir the direct approach to passersby has been very effective. Our last effort in March led to four new choristers joining us. In addition to recruiting we always make a collection for a charity and on this occasion we hitch hiked on a campaign by Prostate Cancer UK. They have had a Men Utd campaign running and in addition to this they have promoted a sing along by formal and informal choirs or groups to raise awareness and funds. So, using their posters, T shirts and collection buckets we recruited new choristers but also raised several hundreds of pounds in barely two hours. We are now planning our Summer visit to the shopping centre to recruit more choristers and support another worthy charity.

In April we welcomed our friends from Vernon, France where we toured in April 2014. The Choeur d'Annebault a mixed choir and the Vernon Conservatoire de Musique spent a long weekend in Worcester and it turned out to be a great musical success, a strengthening of the ties between the local authorities of Vernon and Worcester and two excellent parties. The French visitors arrived on the Friday and

as well as the tourist visits they undertook they gave a free lunchtime concert in Malvern Priory, the link with Malvern being that a memorial in Vernon to those British soldiers who fought in France in the 2nd World War and helped the liberation of the area is made of Malvern stone. In the afternoon representatives of the visitors, The Worcester choir, the Worcester twinning association and the Worcestershire Regiment met at a civic reception with the Mayor of Worcester. In the evening it was party time as we as the hosts formally welcomed the visitors from Vernon. Sunday afternoon saw the main musical event of the weekend held in one of our favourite venues, St Martin's Church, Worcester. A Sunday afternoon concert is quite unusual but it proved to be an outstanding success. The Church was full and the contrasting contributions of the two choirs was effective. The joint singing in French of *Cantique de Jean Rancine* proved to be the icing on the cake. The audience were also treated to the music of the Vernon Conservatoire and to a guest pianist Lauren Zhang an outstanding 14-year-old we had met at a concert in Telford last year. All the concert participants and their friends then retired to the Church Parish Centre where the French visitors provided a party themselves. A great weekend masterminded by the Musical Director Nicholas Wright and Chairman Alan Simmonds. Not forgetting however, a great deal of help from choristers and friends of the choir because hosting overseas visitors needs a lot of help from a many people but we all do it because it brings great friendship and enjoyment.

The next quarter will see the choir performing at another favourite venue Pershore Abbey where they will be joined by the Australian Victoria Welsh choir and then we will host the Annual Concert of the English Association of Choirs in Worcester Cathedral. Look forward to sharing the details of these in the next report.

Terry Dillingham
Public Relations Officer

K Shoes Male Voice Choir Cumbria/IOM

Why K Shoes? Nearly fifty years ago the male voice choir grew out of K Shoes of Kendal workplace choir when membership was opened to non-employees. We now number fifty-one singers and we would love to make that sixty! Like most male voice choirs, we face the challenges of loss



K Shoes MVC and The Band Of King's Division

of members through age and ill health, although as we all know, singing keeps us healthy! Nevertheless, we are very active and in 2015 sang at home and away with several fellow MVCs including Beverley, Millhouse Green and Backworth.

Our greatest hour was in November when our second Music For Heroes Concert in two years brought our total raised for Help for Heroes to more than £20,000. We were joined by The Band of The King's Division, soloist Tracie Penwarden and over a hundred addi-

tional male voices from Blackpool, Dumfries, Whitehaven and Derbyshire Constabulary MVCs who combined with a fantastic audience of over 600 to create a real flag-waving 'Last Night of the Proms' atmosphere.

Unfortunately, soon afterwards there followed the terrible localised flooding that later spread throughout the country, but we reinforced our community ties by being the first local performers to donate to the flood appeal with the proceeds of our Christmas concert.

Our major push in 2016 is to diversify our repertoire to attract new audiences; by doing so we hope to recruit new members, but of course we know that it will increase our own enjoyment and also charities will continue to benefit.

There are an enormous number of choirs in the NAC within which exists knowledge of best practices in recruiting and use of social media (should that be anti-social media as it keeps you looking at screens?). We would welcome the opportunity to share these or any other common areas through our website or Facebook. Hoping to hear from you.

If any gents are in the beautiful Lake District on holiday or business and fancy meeting the choir please call in, we rehearse most Wednesday evenings at Kendal Town Hall and fellow singers will receive a warm welcome and possibly a pint. All details on our website kshoesmvc.org.

Doug Armitage



As you may know, we have worked very closely with the Festival of Brass & Voices for several years; with their support raising over half a million pounds for our life-saving research.

Cancer Research UK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. We don't receive government funding for our research, every step we make towards beating cancer relies on every pound donated.

Like your choir, our organisation, scientists and researchers are working in harmony. This enables us to shape our future by leading the world in developing newer, kinder treatments and get closer to cures.

From volunteers and supporters on the ground to our scientists, doctors and nurses in hospitals and labs, we're all working

together to save more lives by preventing, controlling, and curing all cancers.

Over the last forty years, our work has helped to double survival rates. With the continued help of our supporters we can accelerate our progress against this devastating disease.

We may be world leading our groundbreaking research, but the fact that every two minutes someone in the UK is diagnosed with cancer means our work is important to people in every UK community.

Ninety per-cent of the UK population live within thirty miles of one of our research sites, and our network of corporate and public fundraisers helps keep us close to the communities we serve. In fact, our research is taking place right now on your doorstep - wherever you are in the UK.

How your support could make a difference

Your dedication and passion for music could be partnered with our ambition to help beat cancer sooner. Your choir could support the next massed choir concert or even choose to support Cancer Research UK as your charity of the year.

Alternatively, you could perform a concert for Cancer Research UK and donate the funds to support our research. Whatever you do to support us this year, next year or at any other time, will be greatly appreciated. The volunteer committee would welcome any support in 2018 as it will be another special year with a performance at the Royal Albert Hall, which would enable your choir to prepare for a potential partnership for 2018.

Our work is serious business but helping us make it happen can be lots of fun. You can fundraise any way you like – within reason!

Current partners have used their voices to sing, their legs to dance, their hands to bake but all have used their hearts to think of others, all in the name of helping to beat cancer.

We'd love to hear from you

For more information on how our extraordinary relationship can help bring forward the day when all cancers are cured, please call Myles Godfrey on 01773 748308 or email Myles.Godfrey@cancer.org.uk. Thank you!

Cor Meibion Colwyn/ Colwyn Male Voice Choir

Wales North/Cheshire West

Our 2016 season began when we sang to coach holiday parties in Llandudno. About 120 people on each of 3 nights. Later in February we were joined by Hogia'r Ddwylan, harp soloist Dylan Cernyw and 16 year old violinist Charlie Lovell Jones to perform to an audience of 600 at the St David's day concert in Shrewsbury's Severn Theatre.

On 5 March we welcomed two young Welsh stars to our own St David's concert. Both were in stunning form in their concert with us. Robert Lewis (tenor) won the Under 25 Tenor solo and the Under 25 Blue Riband competitions against each of the different voice winners at the National Eisteddfod at Meifod in 2015. In doing so at the age of 19, he became one of the youngest ever Eisteddfod winners in this prestige competition. He appears frequently on S4C also in one by the Welsh National Opera also shown on S4C. Robert is in his second year of his B Mus degree in the Guildhall School of Music In September 2016 he will be singing as guest soloist at the Annual North American Welsh Association Festival in Calgary Alberta Canada, where Colwyn Male Voice choir will join him as the Guest Choir of the festival.

Ellen Williams (soprano) has excellent recent reviews in the UK national press: she 'sang with heart piercing sweetness' (The Times) and 'effortlessly renders the lyrical songs' (the Guardian). Like Robert she has a record of success at Eisteddfodau. After graduating in Modern Languages (she speaks five), her concerts have included



Ellen Williams - Soprano



Côr Meibion Colwyn at Conwy Castle

those with Rhidian, Catrin Finch and Wyn Evans and at many venues, including the Millennium Centre in Cardiff and Venue Cymru. She has released her Skylark EP on Sain. A special highlight of her career to date was singing the part of the Minstrel in the Welsh Premier of Karl Jenkins' Bards of Wales. She has sung recently on S4C. In her early 20s, Ellen is studying a course in opera with Suzanne Murphy in the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff. It's a shame we haven't got *Lady in Red* in our repertoire, see photo.

At the end of March, we travelled to Capel Soar Nercwys (near Mold, Flintshire) to sing at their annual Cyngerdd y Pasg (Easter concert) in this very active village community. We had a wonderful welcome, with an excellent buffet after the concert.

On 26 April we sang at Conwy Castle in the courtyard in bright sunshine to an international audience of castle visitors. This event celebrated Conwy's World Heritage Status and the walls of the castle echoed to the amens of the hymns and other songs. Our concert ranged from hymns *Gwahoddiad*, *Llanfair* and *Calon Lân* to show songs

Some enchanted evening, to Welsh and recently composed music *Hafan Gobaith*, *Bendigedig / Benedictus*, *For the Beauty of the Earth* and the standard *American Trilogy*. Also popular song *Unchained Melody* and *You Raise Me Up* (with solo verses from our 18 year old baritone Bradley Jones). A special highlight was the *Beatles Medley* arrangement by our Musical Director, Tudur Eames, where many of the tourists (notably the Spanish tour party) joined in. We sang at ground level in the main

courtyard, where many of the audience were as well as in the battlements high above.

In May we are recording a new CD. From May onwards we resume our series of local concerts, notably in St John's Llandudno where we are booked for several concerts in the season. Maybe some of your readers will be able to hear us during their stay in North Wales.

On 25 August we fly to Vancouver for the first concert of our tour, a trip to Vancouver Island and then over the Rockies to Salmon Arm for a concert and then on to Calgary where we sing for the Annual North America Welsh Association Cymanfaganu, Concert and Festival.

If you are in North Wales, we would be pleased to meet you at one of our concerts or at our rehearsals on Wednesday and Sunday nights. For further details, please contact: Charles Cooksley, Choir Secretary.

01492 548670

charles@colwyn.plus.com

www.cormeibioncolwyn.co.uk

Charles Cooksley



Cotswold Male Voice Choir South West

We Sang for Heroes

In 2015 GE Aviation undertook a two-year programme of fundraising for the Help for Heroes Well-Being Centre in Catterick. GE Employees across the UK and Ireland were challenged to organise fund raising events. At the Cheltenham site these events were mostly physical challenges including the Cheltenham Half Marathon and the 'Heroes Ride' from Cheltenham to the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede.

As a member of the Cotswold Male Voice Choir I wanted to set my colleagues a non-physical challenge; Sing for Heroes. They were challenged to form a Male Voice Choir for a one-off performance at the Cheltenham Town Hall. The Concert was to raise money for the Help for Heroes Charity.

The concert was to be organised by the Cotswold Male Voice Choir and would include the Innsworth Military Wives Choir and the new GE Aviation Male Voice Choir. GE Aviation were a most generous sponsor and undertook to partly fund the training of the new choir and secure the Town Hall venue.



Cotswold Male Voice rehearsal

The challenge; titled 'Zero to Pavarotti in 3 months', was set in May 2015, started in June and the concert was set for 7 November.

After a site wide email invitation to the workforce and quite a few personal persuasions, we gathered just over thirty men who were committed to do something new for Help for Heroes. All but a few of these gentlemen had never sung before but I was confident that the Musical Director of the CMVC, Charmaine Worrall, could bring them together to make a good sound.

Rehearsals were set for the normal thirty-minute lunch break once a week. We borrowed a keyboard and a music stand and

cramped into any odd isolated space we could find.

The choice of music was key. It had to be entertaining, it had to be relevant to the theme of the concert and it had to be not too challenging or too easy.

The songs chosen for the new choir to sing with the Cotswold Male Voice Choir were *Stout Hearted Men*, *You Raise Me Up*, *Jerusalem* and *Do You Hear the People Sing*. They would have to learn *Green, Green Grass of Home* and *Tell My Father* to sing by themselves. This was quite a challenge for many of the brave volunteers.

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MENSWEAR AND FORMAL HIRE

Pressures of work, illnesses and personal reality checks whittled our original numbers down to just twenty-six, but we had a good balance of TTBB. All music and learning notes were supplied by Cotswold MVC and it wasn't long before the men could hear the results of their labours and after that they were asking for more rehearsal time and were clearly putting some extra time in at home.

Preparations for the concert were gathering pace too, we had by now attracted other major sponsorship from Spirax Sparco, Flightlink Executive Travel, Bond Aviation and Aerosuperbatics.

Nearer the time we challenged the GE Aviation Choir to sing in public, to their own workforce one lunchtime, to give them some practice of singing to an audience and to drum up more ticket sales.

They also had two practices with the Cotswold MVC, to sing their own songs and to practice the joint numbers. Our regular Cotswold Choir members were very impressed and just a little worried that they might steal the show!

News of the efforts by some GE employees to form a choir for a one-night performance had caught people's imaginations and we were lucky to be able to advertise the concert in the local paper and twice on Radio Gloucestershire.

On the 7 November we had amassed a wonderful audience of over 600 people at the Town Hall. This was testament to the public support for Help for Heroes and that many GE employees had turned out to support their choir. Many of the audience were attending their first ever choir concert.



Help for Heroes Concert

In keeping with the theme of the concert the first line was, 'You, who have dreams, if you act, they will come true', from *Stout Hearted Men* – this was a joint number for both men's choirs. CMVC then invited the audience sing through a medley of *Songs from World War One*.



GE Aviation Male Voice Choir

After the CMVC sang the quodlibet of *I Believe* and *Ave Maria*, the GE Aviation Male Voice Choir were to sing their first ever song to a paying audience. They sang, *Green, Green Grass of Home*, with great assuredness and richly deserved their first ever applause. It was hard to believe that these men had received only seven hours of formal tuition but, for the charity, had knuckled down and put the hard work in. I was extremely proud of them.

We were then joined on stage by the lovely Innsworth Military Wives Choir, directed by Ralph Barnes. They sang *Rule the World* by Take That and the wonderful *Wherever You Are* by Gareth Malone. The ladies sang beautifully bringing a lovely contrast to the concert.

In the second half the ladies sang, *Do You Hear My Voice* by Mary Bourne and *Sing* by Gary Barlow and Andrew Lloyd Weber.

This was followed by a most moving personal testimony by a serving officer in the RAF who was personally benefitting from

Choir sang *Tell My Father*, a song from the musical 'Civil War'. It is based on the message a young soldier wants to be given to his father and the message is passed as he is dying on a battlefield. This is a most beautiful song; very emotional. The new choir sang it with great sensitivity and moved the audience with their rendition.

Near the end of the concert CMVC sang *Bring Him Home* from *Les Miserables*. This was immediately followed by the finale. CMVC started *Do You Hear the People Sing* and were joined by the GE Aviation Male Voice Choir on the chorus while the ladies joined the stage. All three choirs then sang the chorus for the second and last time raising the audience to their feet for wonderful standing ovation.

As mentioned above, the first sung line of the concert was, 'You, who have dreams, if you act they will come true'. The last line sung was, 'It is the future that they bring when tomorrow comes'.

It was a most wonderful evening, truly a one-off. The GE Aviation Male Voice Choir had one more engagement for an internal GE event but has now disbanded. A few of the men have joined CMVC or are seeking other choirs in their local areas.

The main aim of the concert was to raise money for Help for Heroes and this was a fantastic success; raising over £8,000 from ticket sales and sponsorship. There have been other benefits too, bringing choral music to a new audience and encouraging more people to join choirs. My most precious memory though was the applause and the standing ovation the appreciation of the effort and performance of the GE Aviation Male Voice Choir and the other choirs. It was a great honour to be part of it.

Richard Gaul

We then reached the most moving part of the concert. The GE Aviation Male Voice

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Chesterfield Male Voice Choir Midlands East

Without a doubt the highlight of 2015 was participating in the Festival of Brass and Voices at The Royal Albert Hall. Although it was some time ago the memories are still fresh. Taking part was exciting and emotional, bearing in mind the reason for us all being there - to raise awareness and funds for Cancer Research UK. A lovely bonus from being there was that many new friendships developed with choristers from across the UK.

2016 looks like being another busy year with us having been invited to take part in two notable concerts as guests of other male voice choirs. The first was with Derbyshire Constabulary MVC as part of its 60th Anniversary Concert at Derby Cathedral on Saturday 16 April. Just over a month later - 21 May - we joined Scunthorpe MVC in their 'Men Of Steel' massed male voices concert where we will also be joined by the 'Doncaster Diva' herself - Leslie Garrett.

On Saturday 16 July we play host to Barnburgh Male Voice Choir at St John's Church in Walton, Chesterfield for the third year running, when we stage our Summer Concert. This has become a regular feature in our calendar and one which always attracts a sell-out audience of some 200 people of varying ages. Later in the year we will then make a return visit as guests of Barnburgh MVC's Autumn Concert. Whilst this is expected to be in November, the date has yet to be fixed.

St Thomas' Church in Brampton, Chesterfield will be the venue for our own Autumn Concert on 17 September. As well as including several new and exciting songs our intention is for us to be joined by at least one guest - possibly a local band - but arrangements are yet to be finalised.

Whilst we ended 2015 thinking that 2016 would be a little quieter, looking at our diary this is not going to be the case. In addition to the concerts mentioned, we will be presenting others locally, some for charity fund-raising, making several appearances in Chesterfield town centre and, so far, singing at three weddings. No doubt the diary will get even more full before we end the year again with various appearances when we will be singing Christmas Carols during December.

Although we all thoroughly enjoy our singing, we also have an excellent social life together, thanks to our Social Secretary. He arranges several social events at local

pubs but the highlight is our annual Tinsel & Turkey holiday, which is usually somewhere on the south coast and which is always great fun.

If you are in Chesterfield and have the time do give us a visit you will be made most welcome. We practice on Tuesday evenings between 7.00 and 9.00 at Whittington Moor Methodist Church, Chesterfield.

Ian Gerrard
Publicity Secretary

Dorset Police Male Voice Choir Southern Counties

The Dorset Police Male Voice Choir will be celebrating its 21st Anniversary on 4 July 2016 and will be holding a special concert to mark the occasion on Saturday 18 June 2016 at St Ambrose Church, West Cliff Road, Westbourne, Bournemouth

Given the significance of July 4 as American Independence Day, the choir has also arranged to sing at the American Embassy in London during July..

The choir was started by Doug Bloom in 1995 with just 6 members and saw it grow to over 50 members by the time he retired in 2009. During those 14 years the choir performed in places as far afield as San Francisco, Cherbourg, Jersey, Guernsey and Dublin as well as numerous locations throughout England.

Doug was previously the Musical Director of Gloucestershire Police Male Voice Choir for many years and on moving to the Bournemouth area approached the Dorset Chief Constable of the day, to seek permission to form a male voice choir associated with the Dorset Police.

From small beginnings, the choir has grown not only in numbers but also in reputation with the quality of its singing and breadth of repertoire. Since 2009 Dr Jane Oakland has been the choir's Musical Director following her return to the UK from the Netherlands where she sang primarily with De Nederlandse Opera, but also with Nationale Reis Opera, Groot Omroep Koor and Vlaamse Opera in Antwerp. Since then, Jane has completed a PhD researching career stress for professional musicians.

During the past 21 years the choir has helped to raise in excess of £275,000 for local, national and international charities and through its concerts, given numerous young local musicians the opportunity to perform, sometimes for the first time, in public.

At the concert on 18 June, the choir will be joined by the Mill Singers, a male voice choir from Childe Okeford, Dorset who celebrated their 21 anniversary last year.

Whilst the choir has a number of retired police officers in its ranks, there are unfortunately no longer any serving police officers. Notwithstanding this situation, the choir is proud to represent Dorset Police both within and outside of the county.

The choir, based in Bournemouth, currently has 52 members but is looking to increase this number with a strong recruitment plan currently being considered for the autumn'. Our doors are never shut for new talent!

Howard Patch
Publicity Officer



Dorset Police Male Voice Choir

Decibellas North West

Decibellas Women's Choir of Tarporley, brought the Amalfi sunshine to the Cheshire countryside on Friday 1 April as they launched their Italian Tour Programme to a packed venue. St Boniface Church in the village of Bunbury, dressed with lemon yellow flowers and adorned in green, white and red bunting, hosted the concert.

The choir, departing on a five-day tour of the Amalfi Coast in Italy on 11 April, was joined by Italian Tenor Tommaso Castello who hails from Praiano, one of the stops on the tour. Mandolinist Tom Bonikowski and guitarist Tim Leedham added to the Neopolitan flavour of the evening, accompanying Castello and the choir on Italian favourites such as *Torna a Surriento*, and *O' Sole Mio*. Castello brought the house down with a moving performance of the aria, *Catari*.

Also joining Decibellas on the tour is PazzEMENTe, a group of husbands and partners of the choir members. The group was formed by Musical Director, Katie Ryan, who suggested that as the men were coming to Italy, perhaps they would also like to perform. They entertained the audience with *Santa Lucia*, singing with Castello, as well as pop pieces, *He Ain't Heavy* and *Imagine*.

The programme was designed by Katie Ryan, to evoke impressions of the sea and



Mandolinist Tom Bonikowski and guitarist Tim Leedham

a longing for home. In addition to the Italian favourites, she included some sacred pieces, songs from the British Isles and, of course, a Beatles set. The evening concluded with a prosecco reception and a retiring bucket collection in aid of the charity CRY Cardiac Risk in the Young

<http://www.c-r-y.org.uk/>

Decibellas would like to thank their sponsors for the evening, Illingworth Seddon of Tattenhall, Gymophobics of Nantwich, RLH Printers and Forever Living Products as well as The Rotary Club of Tarporley and the 41 Club without whose generosity and support the choir would not have been able to host such a professional and enjoyable community concert.

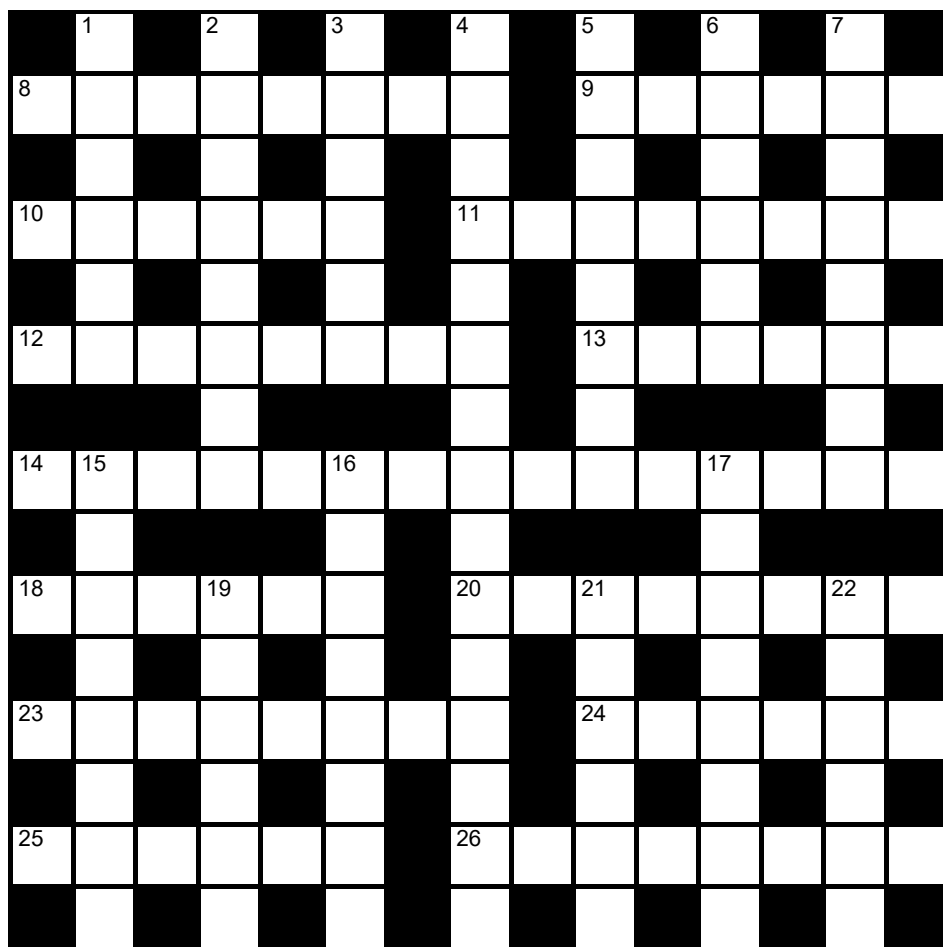
Hazel Rowlands, Chair of Decibellas, said, 'What a wonderful evening! There are so many people who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes, a real team effort, to create such an entertaining event for the local community. It has been a fantastic experience singing with our surprise guest, Tommaso and such a joy to hear him sing. We're looking forward to taking the programme on tour next week and then on our return, planning for our winter concert. Great things are afoot... watch this space.'

Debbie Jowett



Tommaso Castellklo and the Decibellas

PUZZLE PAGES



Across

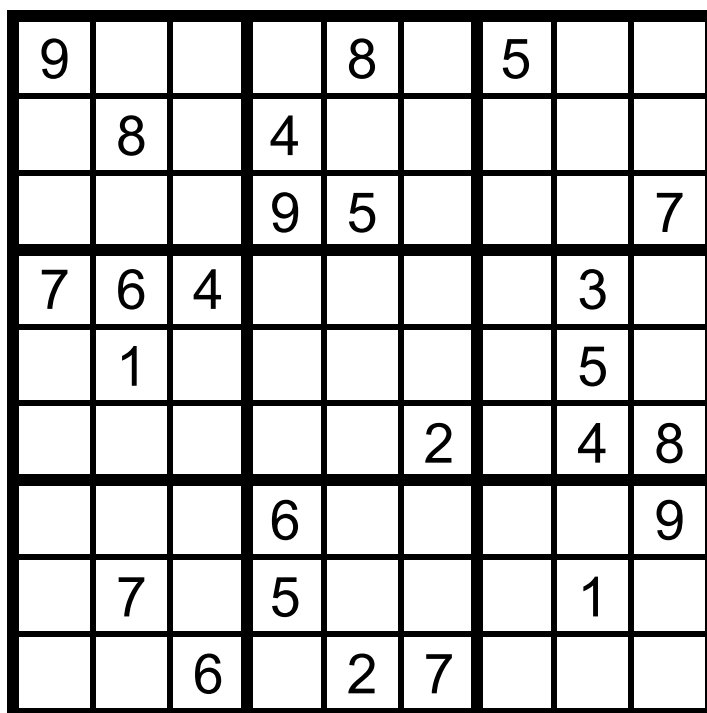
- 8 Italian pick me up with coffee and cake (8)
- 9 populating persons (6)
- 10 suede ankle boot (6)
- 11 Pardon? (6,2)
- 12 Pre-eclampsia perhaps (8)
- 13 My pal, a nerd if confused (6)
- 14 learning in the stratosphere (6,9)
- 18 Starting suddenly (6)
- 20 Resistance may vary (8)
- 23 No one demarcation may be tragic (8)
- 24 insubstantial document (6)
- 25 Mix us in it to be in place (2,4)
- 26 A kiss is kind of cute also (8)

Down

- 1 Agreement in Brighton (6)
- 2 Shaw back at sea splashed by the oars (8)
- 3 Make limbless? (6)
- 4 Undertaker rewrote conferred ritual (7,8)
- 5 Precise medical remedy (8)
- 6 Growing small trees in Bosnia (6)
- 7 Bizarre glam info is pretty in pink says Manfred (8)
- 15 The inner modification exists as some thing permanent (8)
- 16 Proper when not left empty Noel (8)
- 17 One is only half a man (8)
- 19 Type of foot (6)
- 21 obliterate to be insignificant (6)
- 22 Mule headed valuable things (6)

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SOLUTIONS ON PAGE 27

**The Low Fell Singers
North East**

Musical Director required.

The Low Fell Singers, based in Low Fell, Gateshead wish to invite a musical director to succeed our retiring M D, Jean Stevenson who has been a member of the choir for 61 years and will leave in January 2017.

Formed in 1941 this ladies choir currently has 44 members rehearsing each Monday evening @ 7.15 in The Hardman Centre, Dryden Road, Low Fell. We are supported by two excellent pianists and an enthusiastic committee.

Throughout the year the choir is invited to sing at a variety of local venues, The Sage, schools, churches, museums and galleries as well as singing at weddings and funerals. We also organise exchanges with other choirs for weekend concerts which have taken us to London R A H, Harrogate, Chester and Lincoln.

To apply, please send a cover letter and C V via email to Carol Brooks, (Chair)

carolbrooks9943@btinternet.com

by August 30 2016.

Dee-Sign British Sign Language Choir

Wales North & Cheshire West

Awarded the 'Queens Award for Voluntary Groups' MBE in 2012)

In November 2015 the choir competed in the Jersey Eisteddfod at the Opera House in St. Helier. Jersey is the only Eisteddfod that has a Class for British Sign Language Choirs. The section is judged by Dr. Paul Whittaker OBE who is an accomplished musician despite his deafness. BSL is a language in its own right and facial expressions, lip pattern, correct handshapes, eye gaze, direction are all very important parts of it.

The competition has sections for soloists, duets, small ensembles and large choirs including school choirs. Dee-Sign entered 4 sections in this year's competition. One of our choir members performed a solo, a deaf man who performed the song *Rise Like a Phoenix* by Conchita Wurst, was awarded Silver with 86 marks. Our junior choir Dee-Sign Dynamix (age range 8-16) entered two trios performing *Who You Are* and *Do You Wanna Build a Snowman* from the Disney film *Frozen* and were awarded a silver and a gold award. They also performed two songs in the ensemble section *You Give a Little Love* from the Buggy Malone film, and *Never Forget* by Take That. They were awarded Gold and presented with the 'Paul Whittaker Trophy'. The competition was stiff, but they had worked hard and performed it to perfection with the judge commenting, 'You were amazing, you have set a new standard, I have never seen a BSL choir with a lip pattern that matches the signs they are using'.



The Senior Choir were up against 6 other choirs 4 from the UK and 2 from Jersey. Their programme position was last, so they had the opportunity to watch all the other amazing choirs and performers, and went on feeling very nervous.

The competition only had 2 trophies available, which everyone was wanting to win - one had already been won by Dee-Sign Dynamix in the Junior Class, so the seniors, having won the Billy Dorkins Memorial trophy in 2011, were hoping they would be successful once again. When they won it in 2011 they won it with a Gold Award, but the top award is Platinum, which no choir had achieved since the competition was set up in 2010. They performed two songs *Something I Need* by Ben Haenow, and *Aint No Mountain High Enough* from Sister Act. I am delighted to report that we won The Billy Dorkins Memorial Tro-

phy and scored 90 marks with a Platinum Award. As you can imagine we were absolutely delighted, especially as we had been very busy during the year raising money for our charity Chester & District Committee for Deaf People, completing 33 practices and 46 bookings, and decided very last minute what songs we would do.

We are so grateful to the National Association of Choirs for allowing us to join them, and as a result of this we are often invited to join fundraising choral concerts, which creates awareness of the language and the beauty of BSL when performed to music.

Anne Hesketh
Director



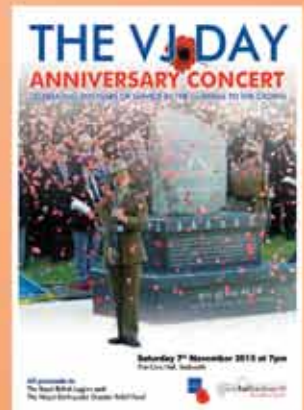
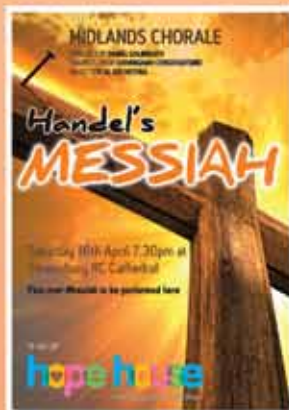
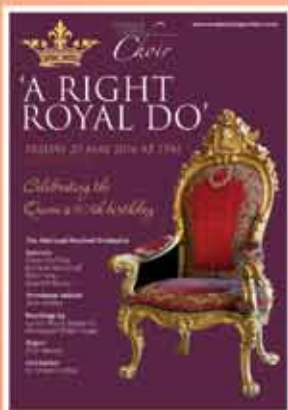
DEE-SIGN CHOIR

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Mansfield & District Male Voice Choir Midlands East

Well, your faith was strong but you needed proof – 'Hallelujah' (Leonard Cohen)

Through the mist of an early March morning the pale sun made its appearance with the promise of a 'Spring Sensation'. I had arrived in ample time but most of my fellow choristers had already assembled in the District Council car park before me, waiting for the bus to arrive. This was a massive gig for us in a massive venue - The Albert Hall, Nottingham. There was an air of anticipation that we wanted to perform well on the big stage with our guests, The Singers and the Nottinghamshire Police Band.

One of the prominent features of our choir is the professionalism and discipline of our presentation and the effort put into stage management. We always arrive early to gigs, in this case just after 10 o'clock, to make sure we have plenty of time to go through the stage presentation drills. Credit, once again to Paddy Crabtree in that department and to Peter Rogers who worked with the Singers. For most of us, this was our first experience of The Albert Hall. And what an amazing building it is; I got the impression that we were all going to enjoy the experience of singing in such a wonderful venue.

The original Albert Hall was built in 1873 and it opened as the Nottingham Temperance Hall. Watson Fothergill was a local architect born in Mansfield. His original name was Fothergill Watson and why he changed his names around like that I'm not sure but perhaps he just wanted to freshen things up a bit. Like Geoff Mansfield used to be Mansfield Geoff and Meryl Chambers used to be Chambers Meryl. Anyway Watson (we'll call him that) had won the commission to design the building which cost around £15,000 (£1,187,040 in today's money). After operating as a Methodist mission for many years Nottingham City Council purchased the building in 1987 and a major refurbishment was undertaken. The Great Hall is now used as a conference and performance venue. We were following in the footsteps of such illustrious performers as Yehudi Menuhin, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Benjamin Britten and T.Rex (who performed there back in October 1970).

Somebody did tell me that they had personally sold over 100 tickets for the Spring Sensation. I can't remember who that person was - but what a terrific effort on the part of everyone involved, and espe-



Mansfield & District Male Voice Choir

cially the Committee, in making sure we had such a great turn out. As show time approached we could see that there was a good crowd in.

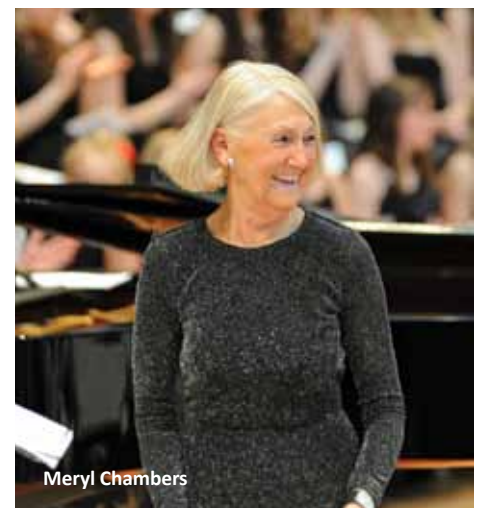
As a new chorister I am starting to develop more confidence now and really enjoyed the show after my debut in Llandudno and the series of events at Christmas, so changing in the Balmoral Gallery and waiting to go on stage I was ready and eager. Someone made the comment to me after the show that they couldn't believe that we practised only once a week. It has to be said though, that someone like me, a novice, has to work hard in their own time to learn the repertoire. The hard work and the commitment though, was worth it.

As far as the visual stage presence of the show is concerned the girls looked stunning and the guys looked very, very impressive 'nuff' said - the pictures speak for themselves.

It will be for members of the audience to say how they feel about the music itself. I have spoken to a number of people who were in the audience; all of them thoroughly enjoyed it and were obviously entertained by it. As a chorister you can only do your part and hope that your voice blends in with the other voices in the choir and that you offer support to the soloists who were terrific by the way- every single one of them - girls, men and instrumentalists. Speaking for myself I felt that the choir benefitted from the recent experience in Llandudno (North Wales Choral Festival). It was good to prepare for an event where you knew you would be judged critically and I think that the discipline of that experience stood us all in good stead.

Of course not many people in our audience judge performances critically. The au-

dience wants to be entertained and they have paid good money for the privilege which, in my humble opinion, was good value on the day. In a world where you can increase your anxiety levels at the drop of a hat, not that you'd want to of course but you know what I mean, by just turning on the television news for five minutes we should not underestimate the beneficial effect of music on people's mental health and especially choral music in helping to bring those anxiety levels down. Colleagues and fellow choristers, we are not just entertainers we are therapists to our communities.



Meryl Chambers

I would also just like also to mention some words of appreciation regarding Meryl and the way that she has facilitated, as Musical Director of both choirs, the coming together of the two. Two sets of voices, two very different sets of singers but blending, when we come together, in a unique and wonderful way. Amazing! It would be remiss of me, also not to mention, the musical contribution of the Notts Police Band. I really enjoyed their music and especially the mix of traditional and modern. Terrific stuff.

Credits go to Paul Bennett, compère; Eric Bexon, organ; Paddy Crabtree, stage manager; Margaret Ball, M&DMVC accompanist; Kim Denman, The Singers accompanist; Ian Grice, M&DMVC Deputy MD.

Also a special mention for Tom Dillon and Roy Crabtree (singing his swan song) who, between them, won, hands down, the best-looking chorister award. I know that Keith Turner thought he was in with a shout but, like we've said, the pictures speak for themselves.

I felt proud and privileged to be associated with the Mansfield & District Male Voice Choir and, in particular, with 2 very special friends of ours; Meryl Chambers, whose vision it was to take us to The Albert Hall and Geoff Mansfield, whose leadership enabled that dream to be fulfilled. In those two people, if you're looking for it; there's your faith and there's your proof.

Here are a few of the audience comments:

David Marriott, President - What a show! Well done to the choir, girls and band and you cracked Lullaby as well! I was proud to be sat there. Pity for 'those' who didn't turn up. Regards to everyone.

Graham Lawrence - rang specially to say that the Albert Hall concert was the best M&DMVC concert he has ever been to - and there have been quite a lot since Howard's first in 1997.

Colin Pursglove, the Chairman of Bestwood MVC - stated that, in his opinion, nothing could have been improved!

Stuart Crosskill - Ex General Secretary, Dalesmen MVC - I would just like to put in writing how much I enjoyed yesterday's



concert. It was one of the best that I've been to for a long time. I thought your choir was in magnificent voice and The Singers were absolutely fantastic. How Meryl manages to get two choirs to such a high standard I really don't know. You all must have been working your socks off for the last year and more, but it paid off and gave the audience such a treat. Well done to you all - long may it continue. Very best wishes.

The Albert Hall Duty Manager said - This is the biggest audience we've had this year and there has been a lovely atmosphere. Will you be back next year?

Eileen Lawrence - The audience around me thoroughly enjoyed Paul's repartee. I personally really enjoyed the singing and I loved the fact that the acoustics were such that you were able to give a greater variation in volume. At times you gave me goose bumps and I hear you every week.

Meryl Chambers - I have been inundated with cards, phone call and visitors at the door saying how much people enjoyed the concert.

Anne Shelley, Photographer and wife of Nick - It wasn't a concert - it was an occasion.

Nicholas Shelley
1st Tenor

Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir Cornwall

Ten years old - what an exciting anniversary for Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir! The choir was inaugurated on St George's Day 2006 with just nine founder members. Two months later it gave its first concert at Chillington, South Devon with fourteen members and one family friend down on holiday. Today, approaching 40 singers, the choir comprises an extraordinary range of talent from diverse backgrounds, from academia, business and rural occupations including former mayors, and has raised in excess of £120,000 for local charities. Membership is drawn from both sides of the River Tamar, from South Devon to North and East Cornwall.

In ten years the choir has become well-known locally, regionally, nationally, even internationally. In addition to its own concerts TVMVC has performed with many other choirs including the children's choir Jerabinka in the Czech Republic, the Military Wives and Britannia Royal Naval College Volunteer Band. Celebrity singers have been their guests and the choir itself has been the guest of choirs throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

Director of Music, Rosemary Cole, who composes and arranges music for the choir, and principal accompanist David Crocker have been instrumental in the choir's success since its formation. Repertoire ranges from folk to opera, classical to contemporary, as well as through different languages, Cornish, German, African, Welsh and Maori.



Members' wives and partners also play a large part in the choir's success, supporting concerts in many different ways and contributing to special social events.

TVMVC is celebrating its milestone anniversary with concerts all over the south west and beyond these shores to the Irish Republic. Wowed by the choir's special guest, Welsh tenor Aled Wyn Davies, last year, Tamar Valley MVC's Gala Concert audience 2016 can look forward to an evening to remember on Saturday 18

June when Aled returns to St Eustachius Church, Tavistock, Devon as guest, bringing with him his two colleagues in the trio known nationally and internationally as 'The Three Welsh Tenors'. Tickets are available from Bookstop, Tavistock, Devon or from Terry Pearce, 01822 810648. The compère for the evening will be Justin Leigh of BBC Spotlight and President of the choir. This year's gala concert revenues will be in support of Children's Hospice South West which does such wonderful work in the region. The choir's tenth anniversary

year is also a special year for CHSW as it celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary.

New members are always welcome. Practices take place at Callington Methodist Church Hall on Tuesday evenings from 7.30. For further information and the full concert programme please visit our website www.tamarvalleymvc.co.uk

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Dear Editor,

I wrote to you, following an article in the Summer 2014 edition of News and Views regarding copyright, and in your reply to me you said that this was the first time you had received a letter commenting on an article.

Whilst I found this in itself surprising, in his farewell article Tim Knight said that he had received lots of emails about copyright. Again I found this surprising as he hasn't shared any of them with your members as to their content. Am I the only person who thinks that a seventy year tax is exorbitant and difficult to justify? Your choir committees and members no doubt spend a large amount of time and money purchasing music and justifying the cost to their members.

I see that Tim Knight does a large considerable amount of composing and arranging himself -which is perhaps why he was reluctant to publish, or discuss, the content of his mail box?

Might I suggest:

1. A 'Letters to the Editor' page in your publication, perhaps in a different font.
2. Perhaps a page, or part of, on humour. With such a large readership there must be a huge number of 'chorister' jokes which would be printable!
3. There are many photographs in News and Views but I think it would be much more readable if each photo had a small explanatory box as, when there are articles about more than one choir to a page, the photographs- and articles- can become confusing.

I have attempted to be positive and encouraging in this letter but I would like the National Association to be more combative in its support of its membership- which must be 99% ordinary choristers.

Yours faithfully,
Maurice Spalding
Chairman: Brize Singers

I have taken note of all Maurice's comments.

- I can't speak for Tim I'm afraid.
- Here is a 'Letters to the Editor' page which also has humour on it. I don't do a 'Jokes Page' as such because I use jokes as fillers for where there are spaces.
- I take the point about labelling the photographs and will do my best.

Crawford



I just wish you would practice a song that the dog doesn't know.



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The Glasgow Phoenix Choir Scotland West

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Conductor and Director of Music - Marilyn J Smith, MBE, LRAM

In terms of the number of concerts performed, this part of the year has been quieter for us than usual. However, it hasn't felt it, possibly because of other events and the amount of work we've done to prepare for our spring concert, which turned out to be a very special event. We started the second half of the choir's season with two fund raising concerts. The first of these took place in Cadzow Church, Hamilton in aid of MacMillan Cancer Support. A very lively and enjoyable concert raised £3,225 for the work of the local group, who were delighted with the total. A second, most enjoyable concert, followed in aid of Coatbridge, Airdrie and Monklands Rotary.

This year's spring concert in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall formed part of the celebration of the centenary of Erskine, which was founded in 1916 as the Princess Louise Scottish Hospital for Limbless Sailors and Soldiers to help treat the many hundreds of amputees returning from the First World War. Since then, Erskine has cared for 85,000 veterans and their families. Many people throughout Scotland have reason to be grateful to Erskine, so it came as no surprise to discover that the 2,475 seats of the concert hall had sold out in advance of the performance.

The concert started in a grand manner with a fanfare played by our guests The Royal Regiment of Scotland Symphonic Wind Band conducted by Warrant Officer Class One Oliver Jeans, which led to everyone present joining in the National Anthem in tribute to Erskine and to HM Queen Elizabeth II whose birthday had

taken place on the eve of the concert. A host of other guests took part in the celebration, including the National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland directed by Alisdair McLaren; The Military Wives' Choir - West of Scotland conducted by Miriam Walker with accompanist Andy Clark; Inverclyde Voices conducted by Palma Allan MBE; A Choired Taste conducted by Liam Baillie; Kilmarnock Aeolian Male Voice Choir conducted by Alex Ferguson. In addition, the Glasgow Phoenix Choir were accompanied by solo violinist Jane McKenzie in the songs *Pacem* and *Thankful*. Jane also played the beautiful and moving theme from *Schindler's List*, accompanied on piano by her brother, our own Depute Conductor and Accompanist, Cameron Murdoch.

The range of music played and sung was very varied and everything appeared to go down well with the audience. Particularly popular was the exuberant accompanying dance performed by the Military Wives to their rendition of *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*. Some of the older (and stiffer) members of Glasgow Phoenix Choir were a bit alarmed by this— not because there was anything wrong with the dancing – quite the contrary, rather because we're all terrified that our conductor will be inspired to make us do the same. I won't tell her if you don't!

Another special item in the programme was a world premiere of *In Flanders Fields*, the poem by John McRae, which had been set to music and arranged in four parts by the very talented Liam Baillie, a former member of our choir and now music teacher and founder of A Choired Taste.

The finale of the concert included two items, the second of which (*Battle Hymn of the Republic*) involved all participants and led to a spontaneous standing ovation. The first finale item, though, brought many of

Glasgow Phoenix Choir near to tears. The last time that we had sung Abba's *Thank you for the Music*, was at the funeral of our dear friend Effie Donaldson. Effie, a second alto, had been with the choir for 38 years and though she had been ill for a number of years she carried on with the choir and provided an inspiration to all of us in the way that she dealt with her illness. Effie's last performance with us was in our Christmas concert, also in Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall, but her voice was part of the recording played, at her request, at the end of her funeral – the choir's version of *Thank you for the Music*. All of us who were present found it impossible to resist joining in, just as Effie would have wished, I think. Effie's mischievous glint and pithy commentary will be much missed.

The Erskine concert allowed us the opportunity to release our two new CDs. Most appropriately the first of these has associations with events of the Second World War. *Orkney The Italian Chapel* (a 6 track postcard CD) will raise funds for the upkeep of the Italian Chapel, which was built and used as a place of worship by Italian prisoners of war on Orkney. A strong relationship still exists between the descendants of both the men who built the church and the islanders.

The second CD is *Orkney St Magnus Cathedral* recorded during a live performance on our last trip to Kirkwall.

Our website has recently been updated and revamped.

www.phoenixchoir.org

Anne Kay
Publicity Officer



The Musicality Singers Yorkshire South

As choirs go, The Musicality Singers is relatively new. In the course of our short existence, though, we've come a long way.

Based on the edge of north Nottinghamshire, close to the Derbyshire and South Yorkshire borders, it all began when a group of people from the local U3A got together in November 2011 just to sing. My own involvement started a few weeks later. My wife had gone along with a friend and really enjoyed it. She kept insisting that I'd enjoy it, too. In the end, I went along just so that I could say that I'd tried it and it wasn't for me. Second time around, I was hooked. Who knew that singing with a group of other people could be so enjoyable. (Well, most of the readers of NAC magazine, I suppose.)

We were led initially by John Fletcher, a local writer, an expert on the history of nearby Clumber Park and an amateur musician. We were - and are - a mixed bunch. Some of us hadn't sung as part of a choir before; some had quite a bit of experience in other choirs. Somehow, though, it started to come together. With John's help, we began to evolve into a choir rather than a group of people who just got together to have a sing-song. So much so, that we eventually reached the point where John said he had taken us as far as he could and that now, to develop further, we needed to make use of the services of someone with more professional musical skills.

Fortunately, with John's help, we found the person we needed, in the form of Greg Watson, an accomplished and versatile musician and musical director who has a talent for making learning fun. He has since said, 'I knew from the moment I first heard the choir that it had the potential to be something quite special.'

Gradually, with Greg's help and the help of Peter Colby, our accompanist and assistant musical director, we've evolved from a unison choir into one that takes six part harmonies (almost) in our stride. Over time we've developed and broadened our repertoire so that it covers pieces that range from *Greensleeves* to *Mr Blue Sky*, taking in spirituals, Christmas numbers, Gershwin, Lloyd Webber, Cohen, Abba and the Beatles along the way.

So, we've learned a lot and come a long way. Crucially, we get to have fun too. Greg has gone on record as saying: 'There is a continuous enthusiasm and sense of fun



from the members that makes the choir a pleasure both to listen to and to be part of.'

Of course, as with any choir, it hasn't all been plain sailing. There have been times when we've struggled, when things haven't turned out quite right. There have been times when Greg, I suspect many musical directors will recognise this, has wanted to tear his hair out because we've had trouble with something that should have been straightforward. But equally, there has been the joy of us suddenly mastering something, out of the blue it seems, that we could have been expected to find difficult. Greg again: 'Sometimes the people in the choir seem to surprise themselves. They will be working on something quite complex and suddenly it all slots into place and there's a beautiful sound.'

The sense of fun, though, does seem to show through to our audiences. After one performance, a surprised audience member was overheard to say: 'They're like a proper choir, but more fun.' I don't know what her expectations of us or her experience of other choirs had been, but it feels like we should wear the comment as a badge of pride.

We are a community choir that performs for local charities and community events. Last year, for instance, we performed at our local Royal British Legion's Festival of Remembrance and at a local 'Light a Candle' memorial service. We also gave a one off performance for a Sheffield based charity called 'TASTE'.

Both the Royal British Legion and the people who organise the candle service have asked us to take part in their events again this year, so they must have liked what we did. In fact, at the beginning of July we'll be performing at a British Legion com-

memoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

To subsidise these sorts of events and to raise funds for the running of the choir, we normally mount two paying performances a year; one in the summer and one just before Christmas, with music that is quite wide ranging.

Last year, for instance, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the publication of the children's classic, 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' by working with another Nottinghamshire choir (from Sutton in Ashfield). The two choirs performed together to premiere works specially written for the occasion, some by our own Greg Watson and some by the internationally known composer, Robert Steadman. For the Christmas concert, as well as including works from earlier in the year, we also featured carols and Christmas songs from around the world.

This year, our summer concert in August will be a mix of classic pop and folk songs. To date, we know the programme will include songs like *All Around My Hat* and *All Through the Night* as well as Billy Joel and David Bowie numbers and a medley of Abba songs specially arranged for us by Greg. It's a broad range of material and it's going to be quite a challenge. There will be ups and downs along the way, I know.

But we'll get there.

After all, we have a reputation to live up to. We have to be 'like a proper choir but more fun'. And that's a tall order.

Malcolm Fritchley

Gwalia Singers Swansea Wales South

The Gwalia Singers are a Welsh Male Voice Choir from Swansea. The singers come from all over the Swansea area and have a wide range of backgrounds. They have a large and varied repertoire, singing in Welsh and a few other languages, but mostly in English. Their simple philosophy is 'something for everyone' and their aim is 'to enjoy success when they are performing'.

They were formed in 1966 and this means that 2016 is their Golden Anniversary. To celebrate this, they are holding a celebration concert in the Brangwyn Hall on the 18 June 2016 at 7:00.

Their guest performers are Shân Cothi and Trystan Llŷr Griffiths. Shân, a Welsh personality, is a versatile performer in both classical and music theatre and is an experienced actress, television and radio presenter in Wales. She began her career as a music teacher, but winning the Blue Riband for the best classical soloist at the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 1995 prompted her to become a professional singer. Shân currently presents a daily morning programme on Radio Cymru.



Trystan Llŷr Griffiths is an up and coming Welsh Tenor. He was named the 'Voice of Wales' in 2012 by Decca Records and is also one of the first recipients of a Study Award from the Bryn Terfel Foundation.

The concert will be compered by Roy Noble OBE. Roy's move to broadcasting, after being a primary head teacher, was gradual and he eventually joined the BBC full

time and his daily radio programme has been very popular in Wales, culminating in a national Sony Award. Roy has had a successful television career as presenter of many popular series, gaining him Regional Presenter of the Year in The Royal Television Society Awards. He is constantly in demand as an after-dinner speaker or conference host and these have included engagements in many countries overseas.

Tickets are £18 or £15 for the more restricted view seats. They are available from:

1. Any Choir member or the choir ticket office 01792 402080.
2. Ticketsource 01792 637300
www.ticketsource.co.uk/brangwynhall.
3. Swansea Tourist Information Centre 01792 468321.

<http://gwalia-swanea.co.uk>

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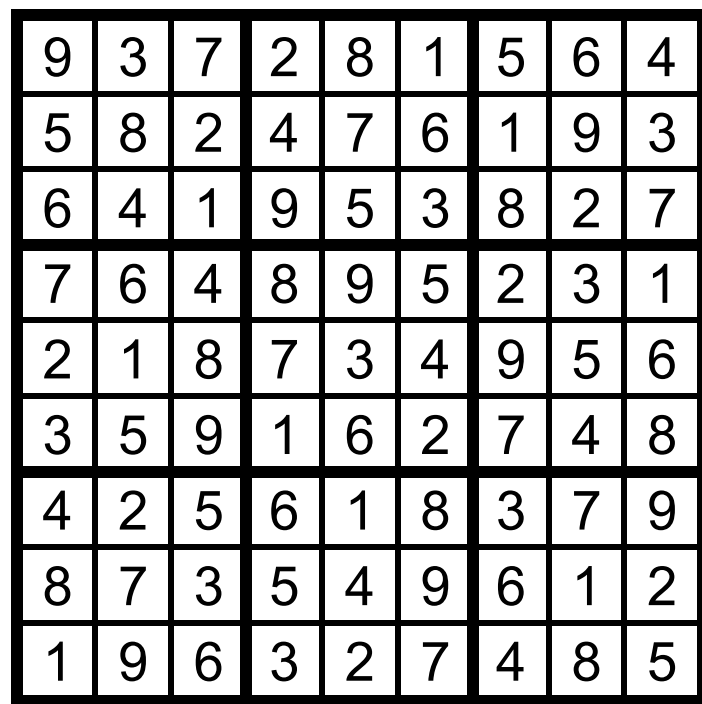
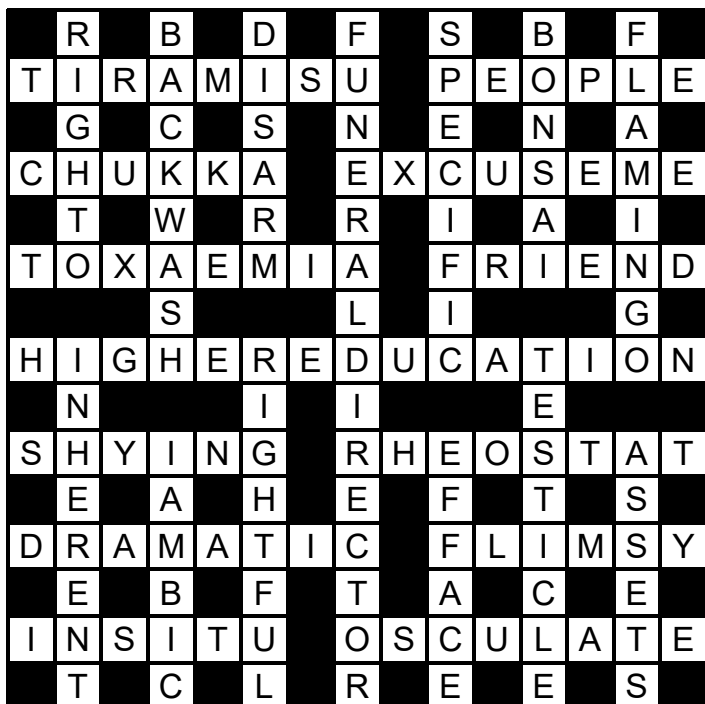
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The first thing is to send your article **attached** to (not in the body of) an email to

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. **KEEP IT SIMPLE!**

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 say the NAC group your choir is in.

Write your article.

Say who has written it.

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*.

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'.

Send me pictures as high res .jpegs of between 1 and 5Mb or more, minimum 300 dpi.

Attach them to an email.

If this is hard to understand then ring me and I'll talk you through it.

01472 500130

PLEASE DO WRITE IN

Crawford