

NEWS & VIEWS

230 SUMMER 2023



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Crawford's Corner

Publications Officer - Bob Swallow



Sing a song of Spring. It's Maytime and the weather seems to be improving, if only a little.

I must start Crawford's Corner this issue with an apology. In the last issue of News & Views we had a lovely article from 'Chordiality', but I messed it up for this choir by putting a picture of a different choir with the article. I have included an updated version of that article in this issue with the correct picture of the choir. I don't think I've made such a mistake before and I hope not to in the future, but then I am getting older, as are we all.

This issue contains articles from nineteen choirs, so it is clear that we are getting back to some semblance of normality with choirs working hard and singing strongly.

Many choirs are now celebrating their an-

niversaries of thirty, forty, fifty, seventy and even a Quasquicentennial (that's 125 years, not seen that word before).

Sadly one choir has told us they have had to call it a day after thirty-six years. Many choirs are soldiering on and some are growing.

We have a first article from our new Music Review Officer, Liz Moulder. I hope she enjoys her work with us and sends me many articles that are useful to our readers.

We record our thanks with presentations and plaques for those who have served so long with our choirs. Our front page shows on of these.

Sadly, we lose people who have been such valued choir workers. While we remember them with great respect we also need to look for replacements, and they are often hard to find. Without them we struggle to keep going.

We have a report on this year's conference which was very enjoyable once we got there through the traffic and the rain. Our main speaker, Edward-Rhys Harry was most enjoyable and Douglas Combes was his usual brilliant self.

There is news and booking information for next year conference which will be afloat.

Olivier Sparkhall has provided an article on 'A Young Person's Guide To Vocal Health' which I'm sure is worth a read whether you are young or old.

Now that the weather is improving and the choirs are getting out and about, please don't get so involved in singing that you forget to send me all the news of your activities, complete with high res images so that I can show the Choir World what you are all up to.

Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman - Brenda Wilkinson



Looking out of the window and seeing everyone getting on with their day's work and life in general it is very easy to forget what we went through only a few

years ago. It is really heartening to see the enthusiasm and joy of choirs getting out and about singing their socks off, especially when so many concerts are in aid of charities who have also suffered. Well done!

We have had a dearth of music information for some time now, but I am pleased to see that Liz has begun her life on the team in full throttle with very useful information on searching out new music.

Our conference weekend was a great success and attendance is picking up again. This is a great event to meet lots of people from many areas of the UK, plus singing in workshops headed by superb musicians. Arrangements for 2024 are well in hand with many bookings already received and everyone is

excited by the fact that we are holding the event on a ship – a very beautiful ship I might add. We were given the opportunity of taking advantage of a repositioning cruise along the coast of Britain and couldn't resist. Why don't you join us? It would be lovely to see you. Details and booking forms are in the centre of the magazine.

Happy summer of singing and music making.

Brenda

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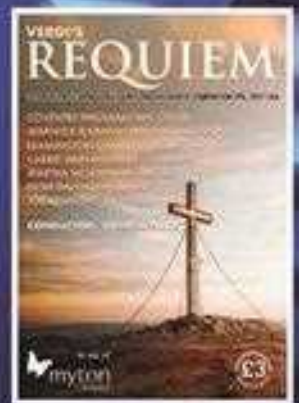
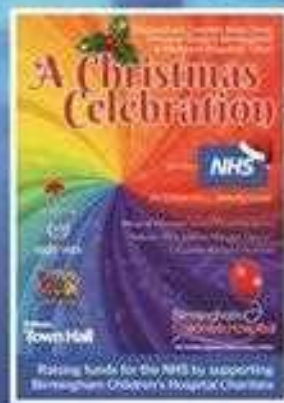
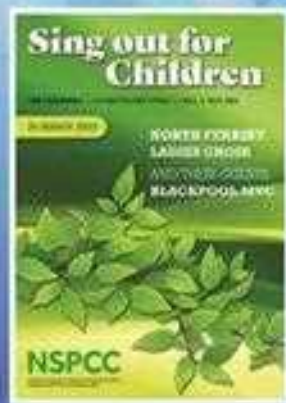
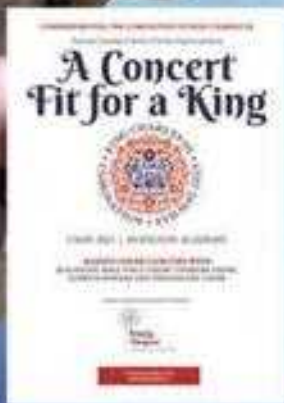
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96th Annual General Meeting 34th Annual Conference Weekend 24-26 March 2023

This year's annual conference was held at the Holiday Inn Hotel Taunton.

For many people the journey down to Somerset was long and eventful. I went through roadworks, traffic queues, and heavy rain but when I arrived the sun was shining.

As usual, the officers met at 3.00 to discuss who was going to do what during the weekend. Then Celia went to do 'Come and Sing' with the help of Liz Moulder.

Around 7.30 the delegates began to meet for the gala dinner. As usual, we had a very enjoyable meal made even more enjoyable by the after-dinner entertainment, with Celia and Brenda, our Secretary and Chairman singing solos and duets including recorder solos, accompanied by Liz Moulder on piano. On Saturday morning, after an early breakfast and a morning walk I went to the conference room to have a look at our wonderful trade stands. It is always good to meet friends I haven't seen for a year and to look at the wonderful products they're offering to us.



Edward-Rhys Harry,

Our first speaker this year was Edward-Rhys Harry, who comes from Penclawdd, on the North Coast of the Gower peninsula. At the age of 14 he was employed as an organist and also began conducting rehearsals for choirs in local chapels and churches. The list of letters after his name is about three

times as long as his name. Suffice it to say Edward works across the UK and internationally as a voice coach, adjudicator, composer, arranger and conductor.

Dr Harry began his first session by mentioning his childhood on the Gower Peninsula when he went twice each week to the main hall where he listened to radio programmes dealing with music, called 'Time And Tune' and 'Singing Together'. Two words were important to him 'Douglas' and 'Combes' and to find his name on the same programme as Douglas Combes meant an awful lot to him, he was his hero and one of the things that inspired him to go forward into his life of music. I understand how he felt as I used both radio programmes in my early years teaching in Junior schools and meeting Douglas each year at conference means a lot to me as well.

Dr Harry went on to tell us what he is doing at the moment in Sweden with a Male Voice Choir and in England with a Welsh Male Voice Choir in London. They do a concert called 'A Thousand Voices' in the Albert Hall but they haven't been able to do it in the last few years for obvious reasons. Next year he will be working with choirs to celebrate the 80th birthday of Karl Jenkins who is a member of his family and was also born and grew up on the Gower Peninsula.

He seemed so busy I asked how he managed to eat, and he turned sideways and said that he was managing. He went on to tell us more about where and when he built up this impressive list of letters after his name. He told us the story of when he was organising a concert in Bristol with his chamber choir and had included one of his compositions and the choir seemed to enjoy it. After the rehearsal the chairman of the choir asked if he could give him a lift to the station. After he got into the car the chairman said, 'I want you to listen to a piece of music.' I want you to listen because I think the way you write

is not dissimilar to this composer. He played *A Boy And A Girl* by Eric Whitacre. At this point he had never heard of him, American composer, long hair, thinks he's really cool. He listened and he was amazed that he wrote in the same way that Whitacre did. He thanked the chairman and went to catch the train in Bristol Parkway. He sat down at the table on the train and opened his laptop and began to research Eric Whitacre and found a picture of him, then looked up at the chap sitting opposite and realised it was Eric Whitacre, who it turned out was on his way to Wales to work with a choir who was performing his music at a concert. Later, when he told the chairman, he nearly fell through the floor.

He went on to tell us a number of amusing stories of things that had happened to him, including the evening he hit the King of Sweden while he was conducting a piece at a very large house in London. He told us about his book 'The Listening Conductor' published last year which he hoped to say more about later.

He loves seeing music put smiles on people's faces. Coming to the end of the problems of the pandemic he spoke with his choral ensemble about their feelings and asked them to write them down. Then he put them together with Psalm 91 and created a cantata which lasted about 35 minutes called *The Cloak Of Darkness*. The premiere in a church in Epping went very well, lovely performance. At the end there was complete silence. He waited for the applause to begin but it did not. He turned round and found a room full of people crying. He assumed the audience would just say 'O that was nice.' They were clearly moved and inspired by the music.

After coffee, biscuits and trade stand viewing Edward-Rhys Harry took a second session with some practical work beginning with a warmup session, starting with a release of breath, then a longer one and then one a little too long for the tenors.

The warmup, including arpeggios, lasted about twelve minutes, including occasional digs at male voice choirs.

We then sang his arrangement of *Kyrie Eleison* from the Latin Book of Common Prayer which is sung in order but also has, within it, an operatic piece about a refugee who breaks into a church to shelter from the cold and is discovered by a couple who enter the church to clean.

We then moved to *Because You Have Made The Lord, Who Is My Refuge* beginning at a Soprano solo which he sang to begin with. Then the ladies joined him and I think some of the men too. When they reached the end of the solo the music split into four parts SATB.

Then we moved onto *The Nazarene* which at this time had not been performed in public but was due to be recorded with another piece but has been cancelled because of costs. This is a dramatic piece which begins with the story of the crucifixion from John's gospel and a poem by Constance Naden. The poem has been set to music in four parts. Edward-Rhys let the delegates sing the first four lines of the poem then practised each part in turn beginning with the sopranos and put four parts together. He then asked us to sing it as if we had known it all our lives.

On, to *Five Christmas Poems* by Christina Rossetti, of which we looked at the fourth, *Christmas Eve*. This piece had a soprano and two alto parts. *3 Love Came Down At Christmas* was set for children's voices, sopranos and altos. We just sang straight through.

The next piece was *O Sacrum Convivium* which Liz Moulder, our accompanist played through so that we could hear it. We then sang the soprano line.

We then looked at the TTBB section of the music booklet that Edward-Rhys had provide. The first piece was called *Don't Go Chasing Shadows*. It is a piece commemorating the Aberfan disaster. At its first performance when the piece finished the whole audience got to their feet. He sang it for us. We all applauded. There were more pieces left but we ran out of time.

We then moved to what has become known as The Speed Dating Session where members of the Trade Stands have ten minutes to sell their wares to us. This is always an interesting session, and it is good to hear from those we have known

for a long time and some new voices.

After lunch we settled down to have Edward-Rhys Harry's third session. In this session he wanted to dip into his book 'The Listening Conductor'. It covers a whole range of things about listening and music. The next book he is working on is 'The Listening Choir', which approaches listening from the opposite direction.

He then ran through some of the exercises that are in the book. He said that when he would be at the concert in the evening, he would be sitting making notes about the three choirs that would be singing because he can't just sit and enjoy a concert without getting involved in analysing it.

After the third session we had a two-course evening meal so that we could be ready to take a bus to the Tacchi-Morris Centre in Taunton for our evening concert presented by three choirs. First up was the Glastonbury Male Voice Choir who are celebrating their centenary this year, which is the main reason conference was where it was. They opened with *Anthem* from 'Chess'. My wife hates sitting next to me at concerts because I want to sing along. I do it silently, but she doesn't like it. I have sung four of the six items from the male voice choir.

Next came The Cantabile Choir so I was less likely to be able to join in. They began with *Viva La Vida* and finished with *This Is Me*. Very nice.

After the interval The Kentwood Show Choir took over. They filled the second half with ten items, including *There's No Business Like Showbusiness*, *Send In The Clowns*, *Rhythm Of Life* and *You'll Never Walk Alone*. Their performance was all movement and their costumes all sparkle and no-one more sparkling and all movement than Sheila Harrod their MD.

As a finale the choirs and the audience sang with gusto (who often turns up at these occasions) *Land Of Hope And Glory* and *You'll Never Walk Alone*. All together and enjoyable evening. So, back to the hotel for bacon butties.

Early rising after clocks went forward, early breakfast, early walk and off for a last look around the trade stands and a session with our dear friend Douglas Combes. Douglas began by saying if we didn't like what was done in this session, to blame Celia, who over breakfast had said to him that if what he did was not

earth shattering, she would fall asleep. He then said, 'Would you all stand up please,' and away we went. He got us to stand close together and did some shoulder massage and sorted out a good posture for singing and got us to repeat a number of wonderful phrases. We had lots of active stuff which certainly kept Celia awake. We then played a game he called 'Frustration' where we had to repeat back phrases after a certain pause. If you came in too early or raggedly, he won a point. He won quite a few points from us.



Douglas Combes.

We sang some scales and Douglas asked why choirs when warming up with scales always do major scales. So we did a minor scale. We responded to his hand actions. He explained that pentatonic scales are a round and had us sing *Amazing Grace* to *Ooo* as a round with two and then four parts.

We then had a reprise of *You'll Never Walk Alone* from the previous evening. We worked on colouring and texture.

We sang *Rock-a-My Soul* working it into four parts with everyone trying each part then putting it together using a book he is selling. I think when we finished Celia hadn't fallen asleep once.

After coffee we had the Annual General Meeting, which is what conference is really for. I'm not going to say much of the meeting here as you will all have access to the minutes and read for yourselves what happened. Though I will say that all the officers were re-elected apart from Karl Harper who stood down as Music Review Officer. His place has been taken by Liz Moulder.

The AGM is followed by the Members Open Forum, where those present could comment on what had happened this weekend and then we closed conference and said our farewells to all.

A Life Filled With Music

Howard Taylor (1925 - 2023)

Prudhoe Gleemen - North East - Pete Barrett

There will be few, if indeed any, men in the northeast who have given longer service to the promotion of music than Howard Taylor. Edward Howard Taylor was an active member of Prudhoe Gleemen male-voice choir for seventy-nine years, joining as its youngest member at the age of 18 and becoming the choir's most senior member, aged 97, before his death in early March. Whilst male-voice choirs often refer to their choristers as 'brothers', Howard became well respected as the 'father of the choir'. He was well known to audiences for his excellent baritone solos of local songs, of which 'Cullercoats Bay' was a favourite of many.

Having entered and won baritone classes in Ryton & District Music Festival in the 1950s, Howard sat on the festival committee for 64 years and served as secretary for 40 years. He was made a Vice President a few years ago. He was also much involved in the Festival movement nationally and within the Northern Region. He was honoured in



2018, by being awarded a Fellowship of the British and International Federation of Festivals.

He taught Geography at Heaton Boys' Grammar School, Lord Lawson School in Birtley and was deputy head at Breckenbeds Junior High School in Low

Fell. He played for Ryton Cricket Club, was a supporter of Durham CC and was a member of Prudhoe Bowling Club.

Howard met his first wife, Doris, when he augmented the choir at Barmoor Congregational Church for their performance of Messiah. Doris was a member of the alto line. A few years after her death in 1999, he married his second wife Muriel who died in 2010. Howard's daughter Alison is the accompanist at Prudhoe Gleemen and husband Graeme is a member of the bass line. Howard's son Brian met his wife-to-be Janet when they were working as colleagues at the Barclays Bank branch in Prudhoe. Howard was grandfather to Fiona, Christopher and Andrew, and great-grandfather to Joe and Zac. Fiona sings in 'Beati', who have been guests on two occasions at the Prudhoe Gleemen's annual concerts.

Howard Taylor will be sadly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him, for his extensive repertoire of local songs and his dry sense of humour.

Entering Year 30

Chordiality - Yorkshire North and East - John Ramsdin



The singers of Bradford-based choir Chordiality will celebrate their 30th year in 2023 in grand style with a gala concert in the beautiful acoustic of Bradford Cathedral. During the evening concert, taking place on Saturday 8 July at 7.30, the choir will be accompanied by a specially-formed,

14-string ensemble under the direction of the National Festival Orchestra leader Sally Robinson. Proceeds from the concert will be donated to the choir's current adopted charity, the Bradford Baby Bank, which supports vulnerable families by helping the frontline services that witness

the ever-present difficulties faced by new parents who are struggling at the current time. On the day, the choir and orchestra will be conducted by Chordiality's founder and music director, Peter Sherlock.

Thirty years ago, it was Peter's involvement as an accompanist and arranger for a number of local singing groups that inspired his interest in choral music and gave him the idea of starting his own choir. He approached a number of local singers that he knew, and the small choir found its voice. One of those original members, Barbara Peace, suggested the name and Chordiality were up and running. Barbara is one of a number of founder members that still sing with the choir today.

With just 14 singers, Chordiality took to the stage at the Chapel on the Hill, known locally as Daisy Hill Chapel, in Gillington,

Bradford. The performance was part of an evening church service that followed the format of a popular Sunday evening TV religious programme and the choir, as guests, was given small slots within the service. To prepare for their debut and with no rehearsal venue, the newly-formed group met for rehearsals in a choir member's small flat to practice their three chosen pieces for the night. That choir member is still performing with the choir today as are nine others from the original

line-up and all 10 will be singing at the gala concert.

Today, Chordiality fields a mixed choir of 40 strong and the Bradford Cathedral Anniversary Concert is eagerly anticipated as the choir continues to go from strength to strength. The choir's programme on the evening will include pieces from Mozart's Requiem Mass, Schubert's Mass in G, Vivaldi's Magnificat and the composition for strings by Karl Jenkins, Palladio. The per-

formance will also be complemented with popular choral favourites from the choir's repertoire over the years.

To hear Chordiality in Bradford Cathedral, order tickets via

www.ticketsource.co.uk/chordiality

or by phone at 07949 696064 or email

chordiality.choir@hotmail.com.

36 Years Of Singing Ends

The Lena Snowden Singers - Yorkshire South - Judy Kewarth



Lena Snowden Singers

It was after Lena retired from teaching music at Tuxford Comprehensive School that she decided to fulfil a long held ambition to form a ladies choir. At that time she was accompanist to The Retford Male Voice Choir and at one rehearsal night she handed out notes to all the men inviting their wives to meet at her house in order to sing. Twelve choir wives turned up and that was how The Lena Snowden Singers began. The date was October 1986.

Lena found a very talented accompanist for her choir in Lynn Kirk and she remained with the choir until she left Retford and retired to the coast. She was a lovely person and very much missed. She has since died. After Lynn left it was Lena again who found another talented accompanist in Stephen Bilton who has remained with the choir since then. Since

lockdown Stephen has also taken on the position of Musical Director.

The choir started by doing concerts when invited at mainly churches and chapels but a time came when more ambitious concerts were given, some organised by the choir themselves. Two visits to Germany followed, concerts at Newark Palace Theatre and Leicester Cathedral, plus the other more local events.

The event which we are most proud of was when at our suggestion a weekend of events was organised for the 50th anniversary of VJ Day. This involved many Retford organisations and included a sell out concert with The Retford Male Voice Choir and RJB Brass Band, a tea dance and a fly past. We also had a Church Service and a military band. It was a huge success which we called 'Retford Remembers.'

So special to us was Lena that in January 2000 we organised a surprise 80th birthday party/concert for her. We hired Retford Town Hall and invited all her family and friends to the concert and supper. Somehow we managed to keep it all a secret and she was truly surprised and delighted.

As Lena moved further into her 80s she found conducting increasingly difficult and so reluctantly retired, though she remained a singing member for a few years.

Lena died in September 2007 but the choir vowed to keep her name going in perpetuity as a mark of affection for her. We are very grateful to the several talented people who have led us since Lena.

Now, sadly, as our ages increase and our numbers decrease we feel the time has come to end 36 wonderful years of singing.

We give thanks to the many ex-members of the choir for making it the success it has been and particularly to our ever loyal audiences who have turned up to our concerts regularly. You have been truly appreciated, allowing us on many occasions to support charities, especially the Royal British Legion and the Retford Hospice. We have done special concerts commemorating special wartime anniversaries. These have always been sell-outs.

The choir has been fortunate is having non-singing members who have helped us at concerts, taking tickets and doing the raffle and we extend grateful thanks to them.

Lena once said 'I have ways of making you sing' – and thank goodness she was right.

Keep it under their Hat!

Bella Canta Ladies Choir - North East - Jeanette Martin

At the end of the Summer 2022 I received a call, which was all very secretive. A small group from the choir were invited to take part in a show at our local theatre, The Globe, in Stockton on Tees. That show being Derren Brown's Showman Tour.

Due to the nature of the show we were to sign an NDA and given strict instructions not to disclose any information of what we were doing, when or with whom. We could not even share this with the rest of our choir.

And so, for a whole week in October 2022, we took part in the Finale of Derren Brown's show, on the most magnificent Globe stage, once trod by the likes of The Rolling Stones, and more famously The Beatles, who were performing on the stage the night J F Kennedy was shot.

It is only now that we can share our excit-



Bella Canta Ladies Choir

ing news, after the show was aired on Channel 4 at the end of April. It was an

amazing experience, that we will never forget.

FOLLOW ME DOWN TO CARLOW

Côr Meibion Colwyn - Wales North/Cheshire West - Charles Cooksley



Cor Meibion Colwyn

A busy year of concerts in 2022, including many for charities concluded with a series of Christmas church concerts as well as a welcome return to the RNLI lifeboat station at Llandudno. Further new members have joined us in 2023 and the choir led by Owain Gethin Davies MD and accompanied by Anne Leavitt is now one of 59 voices.

January 2023 saw us singing at the 16th

century Llanellian church, with its 16th century winter warmer, the neighbouring White Lion Inn. One of our new choristers, baritone Gareth Erlandson is the parish minister and he sang a solo (and also a Bach item at St Johns Old Colwyn in March).

St David's day 1 March was a great concert occasion at St Johns Llandudno raising £1000 for Ty Gobaith (Hope House)

Childrens Hospice, where four soloists joined us. Sian Wyn Gibson mezzo soprano is a national Eisteddfod winner, as is John Ieuan Jones, who is now taking up main operatic roles, following his training, teaching via zoom during lockdown. Dylan Cernyw harpist is one of the principal harpists, appearing regularly on S4C. They were joined by year 11 pupil Aron Wyn Jones as a guitar soloist.

Just before our tour to the Pan Celtic Festival in Carlow Ireland beginning on 13 April, we held an open rehearsal at St John's Church Old Colwyn which became a public concert for the local community. A number of our soloists sang as well: tenors Hywel Roberts, D Owen, Alf Gladman and Stuart Davies, with solos also being taken up with baritones Gwyn Jones, Gareth Erlandson and Richard Thomas. The retiring collection was to St David's Hospice Llandudno.

CALM WAS THE SEA when gentle breezes wafted Cor Meibion Colwyn and guests to the Pan Celtic Festival on 13 to 16 April. (The titles in capitals refer to songs in the

choir's earlier repertoire and CDs.) The international festival features competitors and performers from Brittany, Wales, Scotland, Isle of Man and Ireland each year and is held alternately in north and south Ireland. Our 42 choir members sang and competed and together with their supporters travelled in two coaches. We stayed in Kilkenny near the river Dore and the castle, where in the 18th century, Lady Eleanor Butler eloped with companion Sarah Ponsonby to become the Ladies of Llangollen. Sarah, if I am allowed to say it, was the younger, prettier one and more importantly the one that escaped from Woodstock house (near Kilkenny) by

climbing through a window carrying a loaded pistol. (Amazed that this has not been made into a feature film).

In Carlow and at the festival itself, Cor Meibion Colwyn sang at the cathedral, followed in the evening with a Noson Lawen (Welsh entertainment evening) which featured our choir, along with all the other choirs due to compete on the Saturday and many guest performers and dancers that appear on S4C. S4C broadcast from the festival. A big feature of the festival was the street performers in Carlow town square from all Celtic nations. Saturday was given over to the

main competitions and Colwyn repeated its success in Derry by winning the Male Voice Trophy and prize in Carlow. The presentation ceremony in the evening, with a vigorous Scottish evening rounding off a warm, friendly Pan Celtic experience.

Later on Saturday 27 May and 3 June, Cor Meibion Colwyn become the hosts for Charity concerts at St John's Church Llandudno with respectively the Werneth Concert band from Manchester and the Porthcawl Male Voice Choir.

For further information contact

charles@colwyn.plus.com

A Golden Record

Churchdown Male Voice Choir - South West – John Friend

Set high on a hillside above the River Frome and Stroud to Cirencester Road sit a number of properties. They have amazing views across the valley to Rodborough and Minchinhampton Commons. This is where Phil Gardiner has pursued his trio of healthy pastimes of steep slope gardening, Cotswold countryside walking, and choral activity for many years. He claims all have kept him fit and well in mind and body, but singles out singing as the most beneficial.

However, our choir didn't get to know him until 15 May 1970 when he joined Churchdown as a second bass. He was made very welcome as our chorus was looking for experienced singers. Fifty-three years later Phil is still in this same section, and our current committee want to acknowledge that long service by awarding him a plaque. It should have happened three years ago, but a certain pandemic got in the way, and so a golden opportunity was missed.

How and where did Phil's musical marathon start? Like many people, school and church were influences. There was a very good music teacher at Marling Grammar in Stroud, and so Phil started out as a treble in two school choirs. However, family also played a huge part as he remembers performing with his relatives at local events, especially at Christmas time. If you have a grandfather, father and brother who all sing bass it is no surprise you follow suit when your voice breaks. Also, with Brimscombe church choir experience from the age of fourteen, for ten years, it is no wonder Phil claims to be able to read the notes on a score, although he



admits he hasn't been formally trained.

There was also a Brimscombe MVC for the Gardiner men to join, and it was active until 1961 when it disbanded. Even though this was the year of Phil's wedding he set about regenerating the group as Stroud MVC. These singers eventually merged with a ladies choir and sang mainly Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. That caused our man to have withdrawal symptoms as he craved more worthwhile bass lines. This restlessness led Phil in early 1970 to look around and spot a write-up for a certain male voice choir in a place he didn't know called Churchdown. He discovered a phone number for the Post Office in that previously unheard

of village, and by good fortune ended up talking to an existing choir member who gave him all the details and encouragement to join.

In more than a half century with our choir Phil has put in a lot of work for the chorus. He served on the committee for twenty years, and was chairman for two. His time with the military when called up, and subsequently as a director with a sports-wear supply firm gave him valuable experience, which he used to good effect when organising the administrative side of Churchdown MVC.

There is also a visual legacy in that he cleared the use of the Tewkesbury heraldic shield with the council for us to use as a colourful badge for clothing and publicity material. Most appropriate, as that town's historic Abbey is Phil's favourite place to sing, closely followed by Hereford Cathedral, where a concert at the end of the Falklands War, celebrating the return of the Task Force, led to an invitation to a nearby SAS camp for a lovely buffet.

It was hoped to make a presentation of a 50 Year commemorative plaque to Phil in front of a concert audience now the choir is back in action. However, as there was no suitable event for some time it was decided to gather a small group of his fellow singers together at Easter in order to hand over the much deserved, and long awaited, trophy.

The Dream Came True

Côr Meibion Taf - South Wales - Hywel Jones



Union flwyddyn yn ôl fe dderbyniodd y côr wahoddiad i ganu yng Nghlwb Rygbi Pentyrch ar y nos Wener cyn gêm yr Alban yn y 6 Gwlad. Mae aelodau Clwb Rygbi Ynys Bute wedi bod yn ymweld â Phentyrch ar yr achlysur hwn yn ddiffael ers deugain mlynedd a chafwyd dathliad arbennig i nodi'r garreg filltir nodedig hon llynedd. Yn ogystal â hynny, fodd bynnag, y noson honno plannwyd y syniad, efallai, y gallai Côr Meibion Taf ddychwelyd i'r ynys ryw ddydd. Ddeuddeg mis yn ddiweddarach gwiredwyd y freuddwyd ac yn gynnwys un bore o Chwefror ymadawodd deugain o gantorion, eu harweinydd a'u cyfeilydd ynghyd ag ambell gyfaill ar y daith i'r Hen Ogledd.

This time last year Côr Meibion Taf (CMT) received an invitation to sing at Pentyrch Rugby Club on the Friday night before the Wales v Scotland match in the 6 Nations. Members of the Isle of Bute Rugby Club have been visiting Pentyrch on this occasion for forty years and this was a special celebration to mark that notable milestone. In addition to this, however, that night it was suggested that, perhaps, CMT could travel to the island one day. A year later the dream came true and early on the morning of Thursday 9 February forty singers, their conductor and accompanist along with a few friends departed on the long journey to the Isle of Bute and Edinburgh.

Before long we had crossed the borders of

England and Wales and reached Scotland. It was a very smooth journey towards Glasgow and beyond along the banks of the River Clyde to the port of Wemyss Bay. There was about an hour to kill before we caught the ferry and we came across a very welcoming establishment at the railway station that serves the port. This was the first opportunity of the trip to practise some of the weekend's songs and entertain the local residents at the same time.

And so to the main aim of this visit to the Isle of Bute, which was the grand concert at Mount Stuart House on the Friday evening. The afternoon was spent being guided around this wonderful palace and being reminded by the names, the architecture and the history of the very close links that exist between the island and Cardiff and South Wales.

CMT had the privilege of sharing the stage in an evening of music with the Ballanlay Choir and the Bute Community Band. The Marble Hall was full and the very appreciative local audience were very generous in their praise. The wonderful acoustic resounded when the two choirs and the band joined together in thrilling performances of the anthems of the Celtic cousins: Hen Wlad fy Nhadau and Highland Cathedral.

After the great success of the concert at Mount Stuart House and the well-deserved celebration back in Rothesay, we continued on Saturday morning to Edin-

burgh. We were to give a second performance at lunchtime at Stewart's Melville rugby club before heading to Murrayfield and Wales' second match in the 6 Nations this year.

The invitation to sing at Stewart's Melville club was a special opportunity to establish more links in Scotland. We received a warm welcome once again, the club was packed and we had the privilege of performing to an audience including, among others, members of the Edinburgh Welsh Society.

Alas! Scotland 35 Wales 7

Despite the disappointment of the result the journey home proved to be as smooth as the one up to Scotland three days earlier. Our thanks as members of CMT go to everyone who contributed to the success of a memorable trip but especially to our conductor Steff, our accompanist Lowri, Dave our cheerful and highly skilled coach driver and of course our secretary and tour organiser Colin.

Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi i gyd.



Julian Savory - 40 Years Our MD

Hull Male Voice Choir - Yorkshire North & East - Terry Wallis

At the close of our annual 'Sounds of Christmas' Concert in Hull's Guildhall on 1 December, 2012, Julian Savory took his bow after almost 40 years as our Musical Director. Presentations were made from the Choir and, also, the Lord Mayor of Kingston upon Hull. Here is an abbreviated version of a very personal tribute to former choir member, Terry Wallis.

I've been associated with male voice choirs for over 40 years, and joined the Hull MVC sometime in 1986, retiring in December 2015 due to my ageing years and the travelling distance in all weathers, having had my banking career take me to work in North Yorkshire in 1994. For most of those 29 years, as a member of HMVC, I served as the Assistant Musical Director and PRO and the great thing is that we never had a cross word between us during that time!

There's never ever been any doubt in my mind that Julian – a 1955 product of Reading – is one of the most highly respected, extremely gifted and dedicated musicians that we've ever known and the Hull MVC has been extremely fortunate to have had Julian as its Musical Director since 1983 when, I believe, he became self employed as a free-lance musician, having initially come to Hull in 1973 to study for his Music Degree, initially taking up a teaching post after graduation in 1976 – this is rather like 'This is your life' Julian!



Hull Male Voice Choir

As well as having been this choir's MD for almost 40 years, during which Julian's delivered some fantastic entertainment that's been enjoyed by thousands of people, Julian also became MD of two other local leading amateur societies – The Hull Bach Society, the Arterian Choral Society and the Dagger Lane Operatic Society (now The Dagger Lane Singers, and



Julian Savory

our guest choir this evening) plus being an extremely accomplished church organist. I recall him at St Alban's Church, Hull, followed by organist for some five years at Holy Trinity Church (now Hull Minster) and currently at St Mary's in Cottingham, where he's been its Director of Music since December 2003.

It has to be said that each week, choir members learn from the wide range of experience of Julian – one skill in particular that Julian has is the ability to sing any part – and to pitch effortlessly the first note of each individual part before the choir commences singing – not an easy thing to do at all!

Julian Savory is a name completely synonymous with quality musicianship, not only in the field of performance and teaching - where he achieves considerable success - but also as an entertainer.

Preparing a HMVC programme for print was always a challenge when Julian was concerned – and any concert contribution from Julian had to be left in vague terms like 'From the repertoire of Julian Savory' because he could never tell us in advance what he was going to perform – did he know himself, we wondered? His piano playing, singing performances and organ recitals were always first class and extremely entertaining!

Perhaps one uniqueness of Julian has been his ability to escape having to attend

Committee Meetings – I just don't know how he ever managed to get away with that! Although on one occasion we did take a meeting to his home in Cottingham to ensure that he was involved in some what seemed at that time to be 'major decision making with proposals of radical changes' and we were welcomed with his generous hospitality, so it soon became a diluted, informal meeting!

Under Julian's leadership, the choir has performed at some amazing concerts and brought sheer delight to thousands of audiences, including:

In May 1995 the Commemoration of VE Day Charity Concert at the Methodist Central Hall.

In 1998 a joint concert with The Dutch National MVC at The Middleton Hall, Hull University.

In February 2000 the choir took part in a joint concert with Gennep Vocall Ensemble plus two German choirs in a post WW2 celebration of friendship and reconciliation in Holland.

In November 2011, Sounds of Celebration to a capacity audience in the City Hall when the choir celebrated its Centenary – a concert comprising a combined male voice choir of voices from Hull, Beverley and Driffield MVCs plus the fabulous Brig-house and Rastrick Band - and on that night we raised £15,500 for charity despite initial opposition to my idea from the Committee and concerns that I would bankrupt the choir!

Various major charity concerts that I've organized in Malton, Scarborough and various other places including Darling and Mansfield.

And, of course, a visit to sing at the Menin Gate in Belgium, just days ahead of the 100th Anniversary of the ending of WW1.

During his nearly 40 years as MD of Hull MVC, Julian will have seen many faces come and go for one reason or another – mostly called by that Great Shepherd in the Sky - a tremendous turnover of voices. He has worked with some very talented accompanists – Vera Crawforth, Dorcas

Leather and currently Tony Fountain.

But now again the choir needs new chorister talent desperately – it cannot be allowed to fail after all the success of Julian’s long period of commitment of hard work and the pleasure the choir’s given to audiences locally, nationally and internationally.

For its Centenary concert in 2011, the choir had some 48 members – now its membership is less than 50% of those numbers – and the cry has already gone out for new members, especially youngsters.

Julian and myself are both of small stature – they say that size does not matter! But for choirs it **does** matter, because fewer members mean less subscriptions, fewer concerts mean lower revenue and lost

marketing opportunities but with fixed financial overheads the choir becomes financially vulnerable!

And so, as we thank Julian Savory, for all the wonderful musical experiences he’s delivered to us and all the fun we’ve enjoyed with him and all the audiences he’s delighted and charmed, but now a new era is about to begin:

The Choir needs to recruit urgently a new Musical Director

there is an urgent choir membership campaign

Julian – we wish you all the best for the future!



Hagley Hall enjoyed at last

Viva Musica - Midlands South West - Lorraine Newman



Viva Musica enjoyed performing at the Hagley Music Festival in May 2022. The venue was the beautiful setting of St John’s the Baptist in the grounds of Hagley Hall. The concert had been delayed due to the covid pandemic, so it was a great joy to finally be able to be a part of the Music Festival. The choir was also invited to perform at St Peter’s Church in Kinver. During the concerts the choir celebrated the Queen’s Jubilee, along with Haydn’s *The Heavens are Telling*, *Blue Skies* by Irving Berlin and *Guardian Angel* by Robert

Arwyn. There were also lovely solos and readings by members of the choir.

During the summer break choir members met for walks and picnics. Members have enjoyed holding more social events following the return to normality after the last two difficult years and more events are planned for the future. Also, during the summer break, Viva Musica member Lorraine Newman, took part in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

Lorraine was proud to be one of the Bull Chain Ladies who brought the iconic bull into the stadium. Lorraine was honoured to take part in such an amazing event and is extremely grateful to Viva Musica choir for giving her the confidence to perform at such an incredible event.

On Saturday 15 October the choir performed favourite songs as well as celebrating and reflecting on the life of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The concert was held at Holy Trinity Church, Wordsley, Stourbridge.

It was with great joy that the popular Christmas Concert was able to take place on Saturday 10 December at St James’ Church, Wollaston, Stourbridge with a full audience and special guests, the Choir of Cookley Sebright Primary School. The concert included popular and traditional Christmas music and carols from around the world.

The choir is looking forward to its 2023 concert programme starting with a Come and Sing on Saturday 18th March. Rehearsals start at 2.00, with a break for tea and cakes followed by a short concert. This is a great opportunity to meet and sing with the choir members.

Singing together again

Pilkington Choir - North West - Jenny Southward



Pilkington Choir

Conductor and Director of Music
Anne O'Hara

Along with many other choirs we have had to find ways of returning to sing together again. During Covid a number of us managed to meet together online using Zoom, a strange but valuable experience. Prior to returning to our usual Tuesday rehearsals we were faced with several major issues including the need to find a new rehearsal venue, pianist and places to perform as, sadly, several of our venues had closed. To move on the committee met at my home where we decided to reach out to all members to assist in our search. We managed to find a temporary rehearsal venue in St Teresa of Avila Catholic church St Helens where we now hold concerts with particular emphasis on raising funds to support Ukraine. We now have a permanent rehearsal venue in Willowbrook Hospice -The Living Well -Alexander Suite, where we have been made very welcome and have been provided with excellent facilities.

A lot of hard work was completed by members to move venues as, over the years, we had acquired equipment, music and our good old faithful piano. The choir's origins go back to 1956 when it consisted of a group of men from Pilkington Glass Departments who assembled to rehearse. Eventually it became a mixed choir of company members. We still have some members with links to the old com-

pany and have had support from the Harry and Mavis Pilkington Trust fund.

Our next challenge was to find a new accompanist as sadly, although still a choir member, Dorothy Parr our then accompanist had had to retire from playing the piano. We managed, with our musical director, with MuseScore on a computer and Gemma Sykes. December 2021 we had our first performance at Holy Cross Church St Helens, a strange experience singing Christmas music without audience participation and with social distancing and masks being paramount.

Early 2022 we secured our talented permanent accompanist Danny Gerrard.

With the help of The St Helens Star promotion article we held our first summer performance on 28 June 2022 entitled 'Songs to lift our Spirits', and it certainly did. It was so good to be able to sing together in public again. The concert commenced with songs from the 27th St Helens Brownies.

Since that day we have been able to sing at old and new venues providing a varied programme of music from our repertoire. These performances have enabled us to raise funds for a variety of good causes including an organ restoration and Ukraine and also to support a Christmas concert for the MS society in St Helens.

March 2023 found our choir being asked to take part in the St Helens Borough of

Culture Launch Event in the World of Glass, the town's museum to the Glass Industry. This took us back to our glass roots, an absolute privilege.

We continue to work on new pieces and are planning for our spring and summer concerts, seeking new venues and audiences throughout the area. New members are always welcome.

More information can be found on our website

<http://pilkingtonchoir.org.uk/>



Music Review Summer 2023

Music Review Officer - Liz Moulder



I am delighted to become the music review officer and I hope that you find my ramblings informative and helpful. Please feel free to email me if you have any queries or even suggestions of new pieces that have been successful with your choir.

One of the more positive outcomes of the pandemic was that many of us became more IT proficient! So by carrying on using Zoom for some of our Members Open Forum meetings we have attracted a wider audience giving us more useful feedback on the state of our choirs after the past few years. One of the interesting points made on the back of discussing recruitment was the need for a wider selection of new music not only for the singers but also for their audiences. We all need to reconsider our choice of music and the venues we sing in. After a lifetime researching music genres as a music educator and MD here are some suggestions as requested by members. Apologies to those MDs who already use these websites but hopefully you will find them useful.

www.musicroom.com

Most of us are aware of this firm. Over the past few years their High Street shops have been closing so online browsing is necessary. They have a large stock but you need to know what you are looking for. Remember, they are not a publisher so they will not necessarily have the newest stock. However, if you know what type of pieces you are interested in then it is very easy to negotiate their website by choir type and genre. You may also qualify for the ten percent discount. I tend to order a selection of one of each piece I am interested in before suggesting to the choir that we purchase an item.

Oxford University Press

An excellent resource for a wide selection of both secular and sacred choral music. A range you might not be aware of if you are an adult choir is Voiceworks. First published in 2001 the original Voiceworks was a selection of pieces suited for young sec-

ondary aged voices written in unison and a variety of parts with a wide selection of genres from madrigals to popular music. The range now includes a Young Voice-works (Age 5-7) through to adult arrangements including specialist Christmas, Folk, Jamaican, Community and others. Prices range from £33 - £72 but include useful support for the rehearsing and performance of these pieces, often a CD accompaniment track and permission to photocopy the music as required. If you have a children's or community choir this could be worth looking at.

The next three are all independent publishers which means they know their stock, their composers, and their customers. You can browse their stock online, often getting a short recording of the music to give you some idea of the piece. As well as emailing your order through, you can also phone them direct. When dealing with all three, I have found their advice informative and extremely useful. You can also ask to be put on their mailing list.

www.banksmusicpublications.co.uk

An experienced, independent company. David Goodwin and his wife have developed their company to include a wide range of genres suitable for all choirs. Their website is easy to negotiate, and they support many new composers. Try browsing through Cypress Choral Music a Canadian firm supporting young composers. Within it you will find music suitable for all occasions and abilities and I would suggest looking at both this and the Kassian Choral Series which highlights women composers. You will often get a preview of the piece to study which helps enormously.

www.lindsaymusic.co.uk

A smaller firm publishing the works of Dr Douglas Coombes as well as other composers. A very useful resource with some interesting pieces including collections of rounds, which I often use for both warm up, cool down and a capella training. Douglas also composes children's pieces as well as those for adult choirs. Again, always excellent service often with follow up advice. Douglas is also willing

to run vocal workshops for groups and choirs and my own area Midlands East enjoyed an informative and fun afternoon in 2022.

www.timknightpublications.com

Again, a very easy website to negotiate. New releases are highlighted and as well as publishing his own music, Tim also supports many new composers. Many of you will have read his article in the autumn News and Views 2022 highlighting the need for us all to be braver and more adventurous in our choice of music. He practises what he preaches! He also runs vocal workshops and weekend courses which Midlands East can again vouch for.

www.rscm.org.uk

Royal School of Church Music publish a wide range of music suitable for use in many denominational services. They also publish educational and training material and they can be phoned directly for advice.

And finally, there is also have a website for aspiring arrangers.

www.arrangeme.co

This is a legitimate website coming under the auspices of Hal Leonard which allows you to check which pieces are out of copyright. You can then send in your own arrangements as well as purchase those that are on their site. However, there appears to be no quality control so you need to be musically savvy to ensure that you are purchasing a quality composition. Use with care and discretion is my advice. Remember, many of our tried and tested composers can be approached to compose pieces specifically for your choir at a very reasonable price. Michael Neaum, Alex Patterson, Gwyn Arch, Tim Knight and others have all provided my choirs with unique pieces in the past. Alan Bullard, Douglas Coombes and Edward Rees-Harry are also very approachable so you have nothing to lose by contacting them or your favourite composer.

So enjoy browsing and I hope you find some new and interesting pieces for your choirs. Please do get in touch if you need any further information re the above.

A Young Person's Guide To Vocal Health

Olivia Sparkhall



Olivia Sparkhall

It gives me great pleasure to tell you about my new book, *A Young Person's Guide to Vocal Health*, which I hope will be of interest. In full colour, with informative diagrams and illustrations, non-technical language makes it clear and easy to understand. The subject matter includes avoiding or dealing with problems like colds and sore throats, overuse, diet, hormones, anxiety, abuse, and bad habits. There's even simple anatomy, exercises, warm-up and cool-down routines, and further reading for those who want to delve into more detail.

Although written with young people in mind, it is suitable for all, and designed to dispel some of the myths which surround voice health. Drawing on the most recent, peer-reviewed research, I have ensured that the book is factual and scientific, while remaining as accessible as possible. The book is split into short chapters, making it easy to locate relevant information, and a comprehensive glossary is included.

One of the topics covered is 'what, and what not to eat and drink'. It is very easy to suffer from mild dehydration which can affect your general health and well-being as well as your singing voice. Those who

are dehydrated are more likely to become ill, more likely to develop voice problems, and will find phonation harder. Maintaining a drinking routine is a good way to achieve healthy hydration levels. A good way to introduce this is to establish a morning routine. If you can drink 500ml of water soon after waking, finish another 500ml before mid-morning, and drink another 500ml before lunchtime, then you will be well on the way to consuming the minimum of two litres that recent research says you should drink per day.

It is worth noting that those who speak, sing, or exercise will need to drink more than this minimum amount. Carrying a water bottle should be encouraged. In many schools, for example, it is now compulsory for children to have a water bottle on their desk.

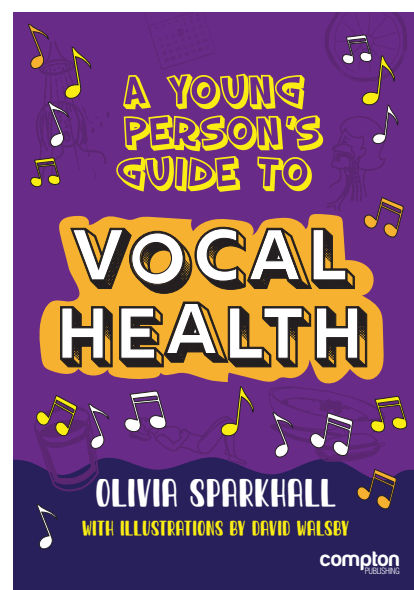


There are a lot of myths about what foods and drinks are bad for the voice. It is surprising how much 'fact' is not actually the case. For example, it is a myth that milk makes the body produce more mucus and should be avoided before singing. The claggy feeling of mucus hanging around in the nose and throat after eating certain foods is very short-lived and varies from person-to-person. There should be no blanket-ban on any foods. Despite popular belief, caffeinated drinks including coffee, tea, cola, and energy drinks are not 'dehydrating' and do not 'dry out the voice'. In fact, the caffeine is a muscle relaxant which makes your brain tell you to go to the toilet more often.

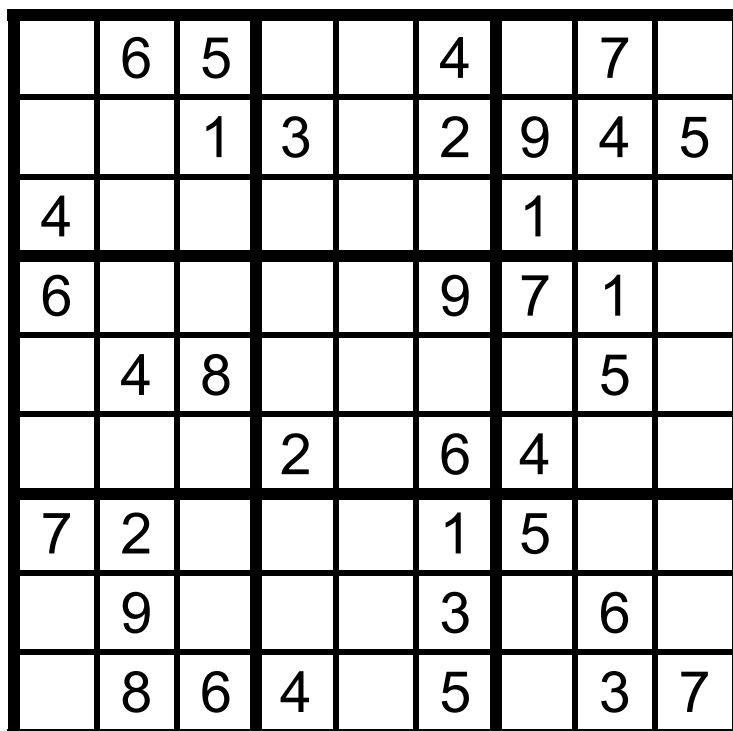
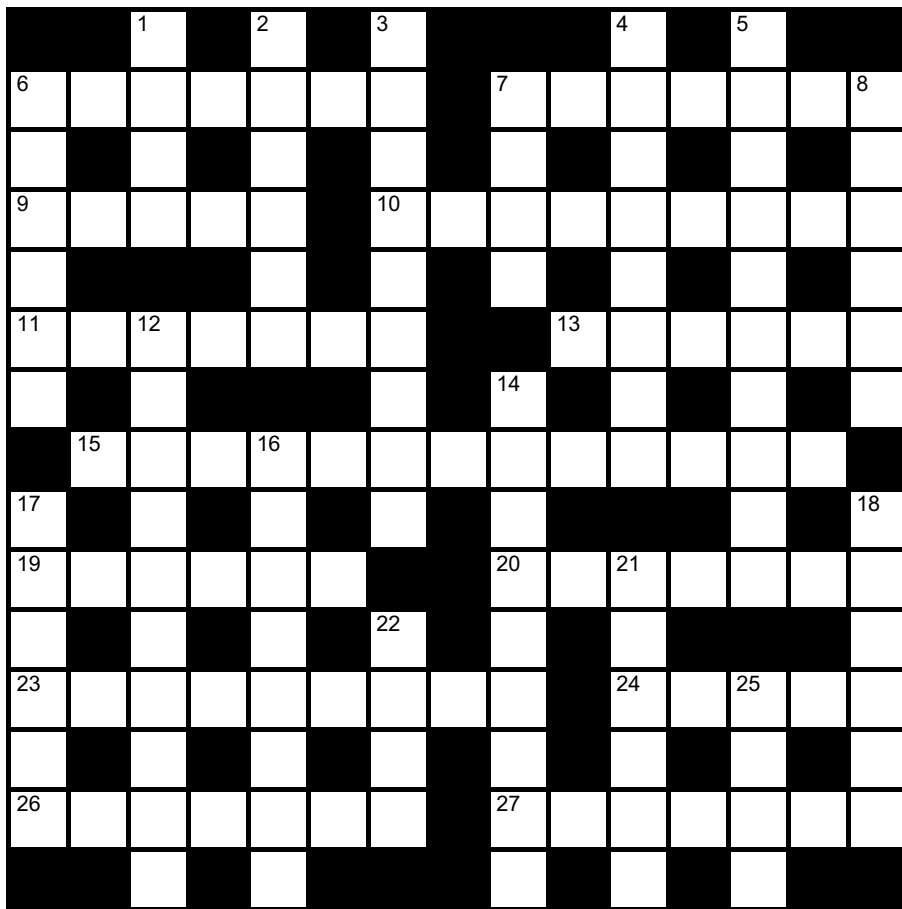
A Young Person's Guide to Vocal Health is published by Compton Publishing. It is widely available from high street book stores and online, or can be ordered directly from the publisher,

comptonpublishing.co.uk

Author Olivia Sparkhall has drawn on over 20 years of experience as a singing specialist, choir trainer, and vocal pedagogy expert to write this guide. She read for a Masters in Voice Pedagogy and has since had articles published on vocal warm-ups for children, choral music written by women, and composing for the community. Olivia directs several choirs as well as being in demand as a vocal workshop leader, leading masterclasses to help groups improve their singing. An award-winning composer specialising in choral music, Olivia is published by Banks Music Publications, Chichester Music Press, Encore Publications, and Lindsay Music, as well as being part of the series research and editorial team for the *Multitude of Voices Sacred Music by Women Composers* set of anthologies.



PUZZLE PAGES



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!

Across

- 6 Windy North America (7)
- 7 Part of a saddle so I hear (7)
- 9 Love to run away? (5)
- 10 Purchase slide (5,4)
- 11 Solo near the end of the piece (7)
- 13 Gain through experience (6)
- 15 US aspiration (8,5)
- 19 Different air can treat bruises (6)
- 20 A position of authority (7)
- 23 Eurasian rose (9)
- 24 Fifth hour (5)
- 26 Balm (7)
- 27 Invigorate your imagination (7)

Down

- 1 An ogre mixed, therefore, is a goer (4)
- 2 Look at, cover or sieve (6)
- 3 Enduring, free from change (9)
- 4 Damaged dress I've split (8)
- 5 Actual lair Revolutionised but not Russian (4-6)
- 6 Something I said (6)
- 7 Ills set differently make the bottom of a frame (4)
- 8 Put your dog in the engine (6)
- 12 Treats of devils (10)
- 14 Trapped opponent needs rook surprisingly (9)
- 16 Formally disavowed a centred cocktail (8)
- 17 A better cake (6)
- 18 Reverent petition to a deity (6)
- 21 Stroke lightly (6)
- 22 Have a pie and a capacity unit (4)
- 25 Avon diverted is stellar (4)

SOLUTIONS PAGE 35

Seventy Years ...

Penzance Orpheus Ladies Choir - Cornwall - Ann Hopkins & Mary Smith

2023 is the 70 year anniversary of Penzance Orpheus Ladies Choir.

In February 1953, the choir, originally named the Penzance Girls' Choir was created under the leadership of Musical Director, Murgatroyd Farrar. The choir's second Musical Director, John J Matthews was then with the choir for the next thirty-four years. As the girls started to grow up, John decided that the choir needed to be renamed and so Penzance Orpheus Ladies Choir was born. Under his direction, the choir took part in many major music festivals, performing in Blackpool, Cheltenham, Llangollen and Malta. During this time, as part of the Burma Star celebrations, the choir took part twice at The Royal Albert Hall alongside another local choir, Marazion Apollo Male Voice Choir. An association was fostered between the two choirs and participation in the successful Two Choirs Festival Concerts lasted for twenty-five years.

Since 1987, there have been four Musical Directors, Sheila Farmer, Paul Triggs, Kevin Lane and our current leader, Stephen Lawry. Stephen joined the choir in 2008 bringing with him a wonderful wealth of experience, having sung in male voice and other choirs from a very young age. At present he is also the Musical Director of Mousehole Male Voice Choir and a bass singer in the Buccas Four quartet and Mounts Bay Singers. With his talent and incredible sense of humour, practice under Stephen's leadership is both fun and rewarding, and he certainly has the ability to bring out the best in everyone.

Bex Gibson, our lovely assistant Musical Director, only joined us last year. Bex studied music at Kingston University and is quickly becoming a real asset to the choir – not only with her enthusiastic conducting, but also with her ability to add flute and bongo drum accompaniment to certain pieces, she has even been known to step in to play the piano when necessary.

Rebecca Mayall, a Cornish girl, gained a MA in music from Bath University and has been our wonderful accompanist since 2014. Rebecca is such a support to the choir, being both patient and understanding of what is needed from her, particularly



Penzance Orpheus Ladies Choir

when helping the separate voice parts.

I think you will agree we have a top-quality team behind us. We certainly know how lucky we are to have them.

Drawing music from many sources, the choir's repertoire includes shows, musicals, popular music, sacred pieces and of course, some local folk songs – so there is always something for everyone in every concert. The choir prides itself on performing all of its pieces from memory. Although demanding, this helps to maintain focus and ensure a high standard of performance.

The musical year starts in January when the excitement of Christmas is over. This is when the hard work really begins January always brings several new pieces of music, with a view to performing these at the choir's annual summer concert. In September the choir starts practising carols and Christmas music alongside the regular pieces, to be ready to participate in its many festive commitments.

Over the years the ladies have sung with many well-known choirs both local and from other parts of the country. It is always good to sing with other neighbouring choirs, and over the years the choir have probably sung with most of the choirs in Cornwall. Further afield concerts with Male Voice Choirs have included Treorchy, Pontarddulais, Kenfig-Hill, Pontypridd, Steeton and Nelson Arion... to name but a few. These concerts have taken place during the many tours the choir has been on – thoroughly enjoyable times which are often talked about. Then of course, choirs

love to come to Cornwall, especially West Cornwall on return visits to sing with us and to enjoy our hospitality.

In 2015 and 2018 Penzance Orpheus Ladies Choir was lucky enough to be invited to sing at The Royal Albert Hall taking part in the Festival of Brass and Voice. Choirs from all over the country – male and female – performed a variety of music together with two well-known brass bands. These spectacular events were not only very moving concerts, but also raised much needed money for Cancer Research UK.

The year 2019 brought the pandemic and everything came to a standstill - no mixing therefore no practice, no concerts and definitely no socialising. Resourceful as ever choir members resorted to linking up over Zoom. This proved to be an invaluable way of keeping the choir members together and singing, albeit alone. Choir members were able to have a chat and catch up after the singing keeping them in touch and supporting each other during what was a very trying time. When Covid restrictions started to be lifted, the choir began rehearsing in the local rugby stadium, obviously outdoors and this meant that social distancing could be achieved. Another way of keeping choir members' interest was by way of a monthly magazine. The choir's brilliant publicity officer produced this with an input from the chairperson, a quiz, birthday wishes and in each edition a member of the choir would include an article on their life and involvement in music.

Over the years Penzance Orpheus Ladies

Choir has sung on many occasions to raise money for a wide variety of charities and the community, but what the choir stands for goes much further than that. Not only does it give great satisfaction when helping these organisations, it allows each member to have the opportunity to experience the joy of singing in a group of like-minded people, make new friends and be able to share a wonderful time with them and include their families too. It is now well known about the benefits that singing has on a person's mental health and wellbeing and as some of our ladies have been a part of the choir since its conception, it is likely that they would be the first to agree with this.

This 70 year anniversary year is proving to be an incredibly busy one.

A Pasty, Pud and Quiz Social Evening was held in February on the date the choir was inaugurated. The first concert of the year

was held in the village Church where the choir practices each week. 'Away' concerts with Torpoint Ladies and Mabe Ladies both took place in March and a 'home' concert with local St Stythians Male Voice Choir was held in April. In May Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir will be coming to Penzance for a concert with the ladies. At the beginning of June, the choir will be taking its first tour since the pandemic lockdown and is off to Bournemouth. Two very different concerts have been planned – the first one with the aid of Bournemouth Cornish Association taking place at Winton Methodist Church and the second one with Bournemouth Male Voice Choir will be held at Christchurch Priory.

Also planned is an Anniversary Gala Concert for later in June. The choir's guests will be the Marazion Apollo Male Voice Choir. This seemed very fitting since there had been such an association with them over the years. Compering and perform-

ing in this event will be Alistair Taylor, an amazingly talented local musician, whose mother was one of the founder members of the choir.

July sees the choir performing with St Stythians Male Voice Choir again, this time as their guests, and then in August, the summer concert when we will be joined by Mousehole Male Voice Choir – a night that will keep Steve, our Musical Director, well and truly busy. In September we're really looking forward to seeing our final visitors for the year – Pontypridd Male Voice Choir.

To complete the choir's social celebrations, an Anniversary Dinner is to take place in October, where there will be good food, music and no doubt some singing too. Then it will soon be on to Christmas and January 2024.

What a truly amazing year!



Making Life Easier For Choirs And Helping To Grow Audiences.

Advice for choirs after discussion with Brenda, Clive, Celia and John

You might be starting to plan your next concert?

There are a number of challenges choirs are facing now in this post pandemic world:

1. Diminishing number of members, including committee members who can do the organisation, management, ticket selling, accounts etc.
2. Smaller Audiences.
3. Continued awareness and impact of Covid – keeping a distance at concerts, handling programmes, tickets and cash.

However, for all of the above there are ways choirs can help their members and grow their audiences by changing small things to make a big difference.

Do you currently manage ticketing manually

and locally?

Relying on people turning up and paying cash on the door?

Audiences wanting confidence they will not be sitting right next to strangers?

Here are things you can do to make it easier and to also help grow your audience.

Don't rely on selling tickets manually – it is time consuming where committee members are thin on the ground or busy with other commitments.

There are many hidden costs – cost of printing tickets, petrol to deliver them and collect the money, the cost of managing cash and banking it (time, petrol, parking).

Also if you rely on manual ticket sales you are limiting your reach to those geographically

very close to the choir members and the venue.

This is why many choirs turned to online ticketing during the pandemic years and have seen the benefits:

Save lots of time for the committee – all you need do is email a link to all your members and any database you have. They can then easily email on to all friends, family, colleagues – so reaching more people easily.

Don't have a database of audience attendees – another benefit – you will have gone after selling your first concert online. You then build on this as each concert happens to have more people to communicate with easily.

Also add the booking link to your website

or social media pages means audiences can book easily no matter where they are – eg family members, visitors, holiday makers etc.

Set up simple and elegant seating plans no matter the size or shape of your venue – event if it is a church so guests can choose their own seats including disabled seats and aisle seats. This includes setting up social distanced seating plans so seats automatically block around each booking.

Guests do not need to print tickets, they can turn up with them on their phone, or if they don't have a phone and don't want to print tickets you will have a full Attendee List Report to check people in.

One company that does this very well and

easily is Trybooking.com

They are listed on The National Association of Choirs website and support the 2022 and 2023 annual conferences.

"I want to sing the praises of Trybooking. It was with some trepidation that our choir moved from cardboard tickets to online booking last year (2021). I was in charge of tickets so took on the role of organising the 'new tickets'. Nothing could have been easier! The staff at Trybooking are available for solving any of my problems, either answering the phone or ringing me back over a query. The 'Dashboard' is user friendly and as I say any dilemma is readily solved. Also people buying tickets from trybooking found it very straightforward. Many thanks to all

at trybooking. I would highly recommend them for your online ticketing". Geraldine Newlyn, Lytham St Annes Choral Society

Trybooking works with Music Services, Schools and musical organisations.

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Rock 'n' Soul Revival

Rock 'n' Soul Singers - Midlands East - Helen Asbury

The Rock 'n' Soul Singers of Underwood, Nottinghamshire, are thrilled to introduce their new Musical Director, Rachel Cropley. Our choir is going from strength to strength as we get back on our feet, following a difficult period. Like all choirs, we suffered during Covid restrictions, and membership was dwindling. Our long-serving MD, Dave Gibbon, decided to step down from his role to focus on other projects, leaving Assistant MD, Alan Shepherd to take the reins on a temporary basis. We are extremely grateful for their hard work in keeping us singing through lockdown and beyond. Special thanks go to Alan for leading rehearsals with such enthusiasm until Rachel was appointed in July, 2022.

Rachel has been 'doing music for ever', but this is her first time taking the lead with a mixed adult community choir. Although she has previous experience of conducting, as well as running children's choirs and teaching music in school, she describes the experience of auditioning and interviewing for the current post as 'terrifying'. 'I still have so much to learn,' she admits, 'but I am really enjoying it and growing in confidence as I realise that - actually - I do know my stuff. I love meeting new people, and I often go home buzzing after rehearsals, thinking about those 'hairs on the back of your neck' moments when things have gone well.'

Growing up in a musical family, Rachel was an enthusiastic participant in Nottingham Music School's Saturday workshops, where she performed solo and ensemble singing parts from a young age. She has been a member of Nottingham Harmonic Society for over 15 years, singing soprano along with her mum, Julie. Currently taking a break from her teaching career, Rachel juggles bringing up her two young children, Zac and Izzy, with projects ranging from running children's parties to toddler music groups and even editing a local community magazine. 'I couldn't do it without the support of my husband, Ben,' she admitted.

So - what next for Rock 'n' Soul Singers? With the help of committee members and taking feedback from choir members, Rachel has been getting to know a large back catalogue of song arrangements from the



1960s to the present day. Some have been archived, some given a new lease of life. Old favourites, including the Beatles, Queen and Fleetwood Mac will continue to be part of our repertoire. We are fortunate in being able to draw on the talents of Dave Gibbon and Alan Shepherd, who have written their own arrangements of songs by Adele, Elton John and Take That, among others. Our wonderful accompanist, Teresa Mills, continues to support us all in everything we do. With her help, Rachel has been gradually introducing new material, and encouraging us to learn more songs from memory. Perhaps it takes us all out of our comfort zone, but it's certainly helped the sound we make. Our latest concert theme has a Eurovision flavour, reflecting the UK's hosting of this year's contest in Liverpool. We're loving singing a bit of ABBA, Katrina and the Waves and last year's UK entry by Sam Ryder, 'Spaceman' (which came a close second to Ukraine's performance).

Rock 'n' Soul Singers have continued to grow in number since Rachel took over, with the choir now at full capacity for sopranos and altos, and just a few spaces for tenors and basses. When asked if there had been any challenges in stepping into a well-established community choir, she admitted that it could sometimes be tricky to achieve the balance between improving technique and making sure everyone is still having fun. 'I'm not aiming for absolute perfection' she says. 'I also need to make sure it feels 'grown up' enough, having worked so much with young children. I'm going on courses and constantly looking for new ideas, such as interesting

warm up activities.'

So, how are choir members enjoying rehearsing and performing? It's obvious, from the buzz of conversation on Wednesday evenings, that feelings are overwhelmingly positive about the way things are going. People talk about regaining their confidence and vocal range after a long period of Zoom rehearsals. The influx of new members has given the choir a new lease of life; several people described the choir as having been 'rejuvenated.' It was also pointed out that being able to perform again has highlighted the enjoyment we give to others; a recent concert for our local 'Elderberries' group gave us 'a real boost' and helped raise funds for our chosen charity (this year, Rock 'n' Soul members have been able to donate the proceeds from appearances to 'Maggie's' at Nottingham City Hospital - a charity providing free cancer support and information).

Looking ahead, the future seems bright for Rock 'n' Soul Singers, as one tenor commented, with Rachel's input and our new members, we are 'getting stronger ever week.' In the words of one of our sopranos, 'Rachel's enthusiasm and energy is definitely catching I think! I am enjoying choir once again'.

If you would like to know more about Rock'n'Soul Singers please visit

www.rocknsoul.org.uk

or find us on Facebook:rocknsoulsingers.

£2,500 to Prostate Cancer UK

Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir - Midlands East - Ian Webster



September 2019 and Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir launched its centenary celebrations with a concert at Nottingham's Albert Hall. Joining us were our great friends from Mansfield and District MVC, Pye Hill and District MVC and Newstead Brass and the 530 audience members enjoyed an excellent evening of music with local BBC TV presenter Dominic Heale on compering duties. Many readers will know very well the feelings of euphoria that follow a great event like this and ECMVC had the prospect of embarking on a full 12-month period of centenary events to look forward to. Indeed, just a week later, the choir performed in the wonderful Painted Hall at Chatsworth House to a capacity audience. It seemed that we were well set up to enjoy our year, especially as the launch concert itself had generated enough funds to allow us to set on one side the wonderful sum of £2,500 for the choir's nominated charity, Prostate Cancer UK. What could possibly go wrong?

Our Facebook post from the evening of Monday 16 March said, 'Following the news from earlier today (Monday 16 March 2020 - 5pm) regarding the latest advice from government and health advisers, we are sorry to announce the suspension of choir activities for the time being. This includes choir practice sessions and the concert scheduled for Friday 20 March in Eastwood, with our trip to Wales and sub-

sequent engagements under review. We will monitor the Coronavirus situation on a daily basis and look forward to resuming normal activities in due course.'

The rest, as they say, is history.

After what became over two years of enforced suspension of normal activities, ECMVC, like so many others, took to Zoom, learned several new songs without hearing each other sing and produced six virtual choir videos, two of which were joint efforts with our good friends, Sonara Singers – again without hearing anyone else sing.

Eventually, of course, we began singing together again, initially outdoors and then, when allowed, indoors with a very comprehensive risk assessment governing our activities. But how on earth do you pick up the pieces after a lay-off like that? Voices suffered, confidence in our performing capabilities dropped significantly and the choir lost several members – indeed, thirteen of those appearing on the Chatsworth House staircase are no longer with us, with some sadly passing away and others having to resign their membership through ill-health.

But this is really a story of a collective determination to get back performing again and it's been so heartening to see so many choirs singing their way back in front of audiences again. ECMVC is no exception but we took several small steps to

getting there. We performed a number of pop-up events to make sure our local area knew we were still around; we maintained a strong online presence with our YouTube channel (YouTube.com/@ecmvc) and social media presence; we kept appearing in our local press. And we had a call from the Humberston Singers to ask if we were interested in hosting them in a joint concert.

It would be over three years since we had performed in our home town, so the stakes for us were pretty high. However, a joint concert, as many other choirs have found, is a great way to gently ease back into performing in concert – apart from anything else, there are only half the number of items to learn and perform than in a full concert. MD Liz Moulder had worked hard introducing us to a number of new songs and members had worked hard trying these out in our informal events in the months leading up to this March joint concert. (No less than six new songs were introduced to our audience on the night.) It would be wrong to say that we were brimming with confidence at the start of the night but we were heartened to hear that our guests from Grimsby were in pretty much the same boat. In the end, we sang to a packed church venue and ended up with smiles on our faces and a renewed confidence that we were back. So - thanks to Richard Bradley and his Humberston Singers, for giving us the opportunity to plan what was a significant event in ECMVC's 103 year history.

To cap it all, three of our six new recruits took to the stage with us and we were finally able to formally hand over the £2,500 to Prostate Cancer UK.

A local report summed up the evening, thus: 'Both music and song were expertly delivered by the group, along with performances from special guest choir, The Humberston Singers. The venue, St Mary's Church Eastwood, provided the perfect setting and was full to capacity. It was, quite simply, a beautiful evening with a whole realm of musical delights, very much enjoyed by all.' Just the ticket!

Joy Amman Davies BEM

Morrison Orpheus Choir - Wales South - Aaron Todd



Joy Amman Davies receives BEM

Joy was born in Glanamman, Dyfed. Whilst still at school, she won a scholarship to have piano tuition at the Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff, before entering the University of North Wales, Bangor, where she studied with the Czech pianist, Jana Frenklova.

After graduating with an honours degree in music, she took a post-graduate course at Trinity College of Music, London, where her tutor was the distinguished Hungarian pianist, Joseph Weingarten.

She was appointed Accompanist to the Morrison Orpheus Choir in 1991 and her expertise in that role has been widely recognised. Beyond the United Kingdom, she accompanied the Choir and its guest soloists in Australia, Canada, Eire, New Zealand, Oman, Poland, Spain, Taiwan, the United Arab Republics and the USA, including performances at the Sydney Opera House and Carnegie Hall, New York.

In 2004, Joy was made a Life Member of the Morrison Orpheus Choir in recognition of her outstanding contribution and commitment. After 16 years as Accompanist, she was appointed Musical Director in June 2007. Joy conducted the choir at many prestigious events, including the Somme Centenary Commemoration Service in France in 2016, in front of 10,000 people including the now King. Over the covid lockdown, Joy spearheaded an ambitious project to record the choristers singing solo at home, and then stitch the

resulting sound and video together to bring back the choir sound. This was a raging successes, and the resultant videos were viewed over 250,000 times online! Joy retired from the MD role in 2021 after 30 years of devoted service to the Choir. For the Queen's Birthday Honours 2022, Joy was awarded a BEM for services to music, recognising not only her commitment to the longevity and quality of the Morrison Orpheus Choir, but also music and Welsh culture in general - Joy has arranged many songs for male voice choir, and is a judge for the Eisteddfod to boot!

This internationally acclaimed Welsh male choir enjoys a reputation as a leading exponent of male choral singing. Formed in 1935, it now draws its members from across south Wales.

Under its Musical Director Conal Bembridge-Sayers, the choir performs a wide variety of music in English, Welsh and other languages. Conal, who was appointed in September 2021, is building on the Choir's enviable reputation, with a vast repertoire that includes gospel music, West End favourites, operatic pieces, religious material, and of course the Welsh classics. The Choir can sing in English, Welsh, German, Swahili, Irish, Dutch, Latin, French, Ukrainian, and German to name just a few.

Several of the choir's CDs have won prestigious awards, including the Music Retailers' Award for Best Choral Record of The Year (three times!). Our website has

an online shop for the purchase of CDs and MP3s, and is kept up-to-date with the choir's activities.

The choir is ably supported by MOCSA, its supporters' association. MOCSA also runs the annual 'MOCSA Young Welsh Singer of the Year' competition, now in its 46th year, to encourage the development of young Welsh vocal talents. The winners and the choir then gain the mutual pleasure in performing together at subsequent concerts, with past winners including Sir Bryn Terfel and Rebecca Evans CBE.

In 2019 we sang onboard HMS Prince of Wales, the largest ship ever to serve in the Royal Navy, for her commissioning, as well as performing in Tralee and Macroom in Ireland. 2020 was the first time the Choir had to stop rehearsals in its history, but remarkably this didn't stop performances. Quickly reconvening on Zoom, we released four singles over 12 months, viewed by over 400,000 people online, and drawing praise on BBC One, and BBC Radios Wales, Cymru, and 5 Live. Not only did this keep the choristers singing and practising, but also provided pleasure to our audiences unable to hear live music.



As restrictions lifted in 2021 our calendar once more gained concerts, and our first in 18 months was a sell out. In 2022 we were filmed singing in Llandaff Cathedral for the Songs of Praise New Years Day broadcast on BBC One. With normality returned we are rehearsing twice a week and planning the next few years of concerts large and small, including our renowned Annual Gala Concert in Swansea on the 17th June, with Wynne Evans and the Cory Band.

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For further details please contact: Grimsby and Cleethorpes Orpheus Male Voice Choir

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Tel No: 01472-581511

E-mail: t.jones19@ntlworld.com

Musical Quotes

No good opera plot can be sensible...
people do not sing when they are feeling sensible.
W H Auden, Time, 29 December 1961

Hell is full of musical amateurs.
George Bernard Shaw 1856 - 1950

Ah, music. A magic beyond all we do here!
J K Rowling, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, 1997

‘Parsifal is the kind of opera that starts at six o'clock
and after it has been going three hours,
you look at your watch and it says 6.20.’ - David Randolph



The Quasquicentennial Choir

Warrington Male Voice Choir - North West - Craig Bunting



In the Autumn of 1898 six men gathered in the front parlour of a small house in Eustace Street, Warrington, to practise glee singing. They could never have imagined that their simple initiative would grow into one of Great Britain's largest and most altruistic choirs and that under the banner of Warrington Male Voice Choir they would be celebrating their quasquicentennial anniversary some 125 years later.

At the time, Warrington (then in Lancashire but now the largest town in the county of Cheshire and located midway between Liverpool and Manchester) had a male population of approximately 20,000 and from that population the choir grew and by the turn of the twentieth century, Warrington was home to two rival male choirs, the Warrington Apollo Male Voice Choir formed in October 1898 by Thomas Brough, and Warrington Male Voice Choir formed in November 1900 by Samuel Hassall. The choirs were fiercely competitive, yet eventually amalgamated in December 1911 under the neutral title, Warrington Male Choral Union. This name remained for seventy years until in 1981 the decision was taken to rename the choir to Warrington Male Voice Choir.

Warrington MVC has a long and distinguished history, and its roots are deep within the Christian tradition. The choir is one of Great Britain's oldest choirs and during its history the choir has travelled widely, performing in a variety of venues

throughout the UK, Ireland, Europe, and Canada. Venues ranging from small churches, village halls and town squares to the grander venues of Notre Dame Cathedral, Pompidou Centre, and the Palace of Versailles in France. The choir have even sung in some rather unusual places such as His Majesty's Prison Styal and on the Toronto Underground in Canada. The choir see no barrier to location so long as the audience experience the joy that singing brings.

Over a century of musical excellence has brought over 120 festival honours. From 1919 to 1959, under the conductorship of the illustrious Alfred Higson OBE MA ARCM LRAM ARCO, the choir were prize winners at various North-West choir competitions, on numerous occasions at the Blackpool and Hawarden Music Festivals and at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod.

Although Alfred Higson OBE is better known as the founder of the Sale Choral Society, who were the overall winners of the inaugural Llangollen International Eisteddfod, he became the conductor of various local choirs, including Warrington MVC. He was a regular fixture on the local highways and by-ways where he would ride his bicycle to weekly rehearsals. He promoted himself as a 'Professor of Music' and in 1949 he received his OBE for 'services to choral music' and a portrait was commissioned which resides at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

Success did not cease when the 'Old Man'

(as Alfred liked to be known) retired from the choir. In the early 80s the choristers voted in a new chairman and secretary who were pivotal in driving the choir to new heights and new locations. Barrie Johnson (Chair) and Angus Thorburn (Sec) had big aspirations for the choir and in 1994, they secured the services of a similarly aspirational musical director in Russell Paterson. Under their stewardship the choir became the National Champions of Great Britain (1994), several times prize winners at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and Premier Male Voice Choir at both the Sligo (2002) and Bangor (2004) International Choral Festivals.

Similarly, the success of the choir did not wane when Barrie & Angus stepped down from their roles. Russell remained and with 29 years of service is still the choir's MD. Under his directorship the choir has garnered further success, taking the honours of Premier Male Voice Choir at the 2012 Majestic Male Voice Choirs Festival in Torquay and the 2019 North Wales Choir Festival in Llandudno.



Outside of the competition environment, Warrington Male Voice Choir have been a 'Choir for Peace'. Following the IRA bomb attacks on Warrington town centre in 1993, where tragically the young boys Johnathan Ball (3) and Tim Parry (12) lost their lives, the choir became involved in promoting peace and an end to violence in Northern Ireland.





Warrington MVC 2019
Llandudno

Links were forged with Irish peace groups and, for more than a decade, cross-community concerts for Peace and Reconciliation were performed throughout the island of Ireland, to help break down sectarian divisions. The fostering and financing of 'grass roots' reconciliation activities with young people in the interface areas of West Belfast contributed to the choir's initiatives being acknowledged at the highest level by the Irish, British and United States governments. In 1996 Terry Waite CBE became Patron, in tribute to the choir's humanitarian role, and he frequently supported the choir's performances in British and Irish prisons assisting in their rehabilitation programmes. The choir's impact at fostering peace in Northern Ireland was duly recognised in 2008 when it was nominated for the prestigious Tipperary International Peace Award, whose past winners include US President Bill Clinton, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, Pakistani President Benazir Bhutto, and South African President Nelson Mandela.

The concerts for peace have been one of many ways in which the Warrington MVC have promoted the benefits of choral singing. Along with various promotional tours in the 80s and 90s to the Netherlands, France, Canada, Ireland and Germany, the choir maintained its public presence even during the recent Corona virus pandemic. The choir stoically maintained rehearsals through remote working, and the choristers recorded their individual TTBB parts for inclusion in various choral pieces which were posted on the internet for public viewing. A simple YouTube search under the choir's name will bring up the Warrington MVC's own channel and other videos of our performances, remote recordings and, in some cases, even our rehearsals!

Over the years choir membership has fluctuated,

from its initial six members to 112 at its peak in 1996 where the choir was the largest in Great Britain with an age range from 14 to 96. At its centenary concert in 1998 the choir had 100 members on stage, a feat not since repeated. In 1991, the Warrington Boys Choir was created for choristers aged between 7 and 14, however, this was disbanded six years later as recruitment became increasingly difficult. However, in 2008, former members of the Boys' Choir formed the nucleus of 'Harmony in Blue' which was



Warrington MVC today

the young men's section of the choir who sang choral pieces by modern artists to attract both a younger audience and younger membership. After initial success again recruitment became difficult, and like the Boys' Choir, 'Harmony in Blue' was disbanded a few years later. Not unlike most choirs post the millennium, membership started to dwindle, however, a sustained recruitment drive has seen membership increase again. The choir is currently going through a resurgence tak-

ing on 10 new members in the last year and now has 42 members with a target of 50 by the end of 2023.

In celebration of our 125th Anniversary our Patron, Terry Waite CBE, penned the following, 'The North of England has always had a strong musical tradition. In the former industrial town of Warrington, once in Lancashire but now in Cheshire, the Warrington Male Voice Choir was formed 125 years ago. Before leaving the area and entering college I worked in the town and for the past 27 years I have been its Patron. Perhaps my most memorable experience was at the time of the Warrington bombings when I travelled with the choir to Ireland as they played their part in peace building and reconciliation. For this effort they were nominated for the Tipperary International Peace Award. Soon it will be time for me to retire but the choir will continue long after I have departed this life. Warrington can be duly proud of its musical tradition. I trust you will join me in thanking them for all that they have achieved in their long history and wish them continued success and a very happy birthday.'

Since the pandemic, the choir has resumed in-person concerts both locally and nationally and given its 125-year competitive history is looking to return to winning ways. The choir will be celebrating its 125th anniversary with a celebratory concert on Saturday 7 October in Warrington and we would welcome anybody wishing to attend. Please contact our secretary for details at:

SecretaryWMVC@hotmail.com.

JLS 50th Anniversary

The Jane Lilley Singers - South West - Jane Lilley

Jane's Grandfather, Jack Leonard, was an organist and choirmaster of St John's Church in Bath. This in the days when every church had a robed church choir.

When Jane was 16 he suddenly became ill and Jane took over the choir. She loved it so much that when he returned, she asked some of the upper voice choristers if they would like to meet on a different night to sing some different music. Twelve said yes and for four years they sang at many venues in the area known simply as Jane and friends. Four years later they sang the gallery choir of Benjamin Britten's St Nicholas. The local press was there and asked the name of the choir. After a short discussion JLS was born.

Now, 50 years on, they are still going strong with 24 members. For a good many of those years it was quite a family affair with Jane's mother in law, three sisters in law and three cousins making up nearly half of the choir.

As the years rolled on and Jane began teaching in schools in the area and running four community choirs the membership changed. Jane's daughter, Naomi (also a composer, arranger and solo Jazz singer) was with the choir until she went to University. To Jane's delight, a good number of pupils that she taught right up to sixth form, went to University, married, had families returning to the area, and

joining JLS. The age range is 22 to 70 something. All together you would be hard pressed to pick out the more mature voices.

Over the years JLS have sung on Radio 2 round midnight with Brian Matthew, regularly sung live for radio 4's morning service, had a TV programme on HTV, recorded over 20 albums and won countless competitions including beating 80 choirs to win the 6 counties choir of the year award.

These days the girls sing all over the place. The highlight of the year is their Christmas concert held in the Guildhall Banqueting Rooms in Bath. Their regulars tell them that Christmas doesn't begin until they have been to their concert.

Jane loves to write her own arrangements and if she loves a piece that is only scored for SATB then she re writes it for upper voices. Two memorable pieces that she has arranged are *Zadok the Priest* and *Hallelujah Chorus*. They are also huge fans of Pentatonix and Voces 8 and like to include their music in programmes wherever possible.

Although small in number the choir is used to singing in 8 parts and love the challenge of branching out into new genres of music. Already they sing classical, traditional sacred, gospel, folk, pop and jazz. Jane feels that being an upper voice choir brings with it the challenge to hold their audience's interest by giving a



Jane Lilley

varied programme in styles and presentation. The variety they offer is one of their trademarks.

There are singers who have been with Jane for 48, 40 and well over 30 years of the fifty that they are celebrating. In addition, there are those who have been with the choir for a relatively short time. We have a mother and daughter, four sisters (all one family) and cousins. At one time there were six mothers and daughters until careers and university took them away. They all love to come back and sing with us if they find themselves living the area again.

JLS sing everything from memory, Jane is very firm about this decision, believing that it is the only way to connect authentically with the audience and the only way Jane can guarantee to have all their eyes, all of the time.

JLS has a real family feel about it. All birthdays are celebrated, joys and sorrows are shared. An emergency will have them praying and thinking about the situation



The Jane Lilley Singers

in minutes, thanks to WhatsApp. Jane thanks God for her wonderful girls . They are selfless, supportive and encouraging when they see her in need of support. With three children and seven grandchildren there is always something going on. She has no plans to hang up her baton any time soon. Providing her health, mental and physical, is manageable she will keep going until someone tells her that it is time for her to stop.

Obviously, running and singing in JLS is very time consuming. Jane can only justify all that time because what matters most to her is making a difference. It is her heart's desire to enable anyone coming to a concert to leave feeling better than when they arrived. As a Christian, she

hopes that through some of the music, listeners will be touched and know that they are loved.

Not all the singers share Jane's faith but it makes no difference to their commitment to Jane's vision for the group. Songs of faith are nestled between Jazz, Pop , humorous and folk music. The program is never drenched with it because Jane believes that it would have the opposite effect and turn people away.

Many people have found comfort in CDs recorded by the choir, when they have been going through times of crisis. Many have come back to a member of the choir and told of fear being banished in a time of crisis and hope being given when there

seemed to be none.

All this makes every minute worth while.

Anyone interested in joining us should contact Heidi Warren (JLS's simply amazing secretary who deals with all their technology issues) email address

heidiwarren91@gmail.com

or google them for more info. We are on Facebook.

At the age of 70 this year, Jane says that if she could, she would have a rehearsal every night of the week. Even then she wouldn't be able to sing everything that is on her radar.



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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHOIRS CONFERENCE 2024

17th–19th April 2024 · Southampton to Liverpool · *Bolette* · T2407



NAC 2024 Conference Showcase announced

Firstly, it's not just a NAC Conference, it's also a Showcase Cruise on board Fred. Olsen's magnificent flagship *Bolette*.

The NAC Events Committee have been working closely with Fred. Olsen's Group team to put this very special package together, including:

- A stylish Ocean View twin cabin for twin or sole occupancy
- Morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner on Wednesday and Thursday
- Breakfast on Thursday and Friday
- Full programme of entertainment, activities & experiences
- Full use of the ship's facilities – including the spa & gym!

The NAC Conference Showcase Cruise 2024 will replace our usual Hotel Conference Weekend, so the programme will include time to meet with fellow members and Associates. There'll also be an on board Mini Showcase exhibition, and our AGM Conference & Seminars, along with evening choral performances and a complimentary group drinks party hosted by the Fred. Olsen team.

This is a unique opportunity for you and your choir's future group travel plans. If you've never cruised before, this will be a wonderful opportunity to discover not only why cruising is so popular, but also why cruising the Olsen Way is so special.



NAC Group Fares per person

Twin Ocean-View Cabin £250 | Single Occupancy Ocean-view Twin Cabin £250

Itinerary

Wednesday 17th April 2024

Delegates travel to Southampton Cruise Terminal for afternoon check-in

Buffet Lunch and afternoon tea on arrival

Welcome on board & AGM from the NAC. All guests on board are required to attend a compulsory Muster drill before the ship sets sail

Complimentary Group Drinks Party on board hosted by the FOCL team

Followed by Dinner & the Evening show & entertainment throughout the ship

Thursday 18th April 2024

Breakfast is served.

Followed by NAC Conference & Seminars

Lunch is served

Followed by NAC Conference & Seminars

After the Conference ends, the FOCL Groups Team will be available for one to one meetings

Early evening Choral Concerts in the Neptune Show Lounge

Followed by Dinner & the Evening show and entertainment throughout the ship

Friday 19th April 2024

07:30-08:30 Disembarkation from the ship after breakfast

Itinerary is subject to change, a final itinerary will be issued in your cabin on board.

Travelling to/from the ship

One way coach transfers from Liverpool to Southampton are pre bookable for £25pp one way, at the beginning and end of the cruise. Please advise Fred. Olsen if you wish to book the coach transfer at the time of booking your cabin.

Car parking is available for a charge at Southampton and Liverpool Cruise Terminals. For car parking discount codes, & contact details please call Clive Lawton at the NAC on 07939012458



For more information or to book please contact Clive Lawton at the NAC on 07939 012 458 or email cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com

Fares are per person, based on twin or sole occupancy of the lead-in twin cabin, subject to availability. Cabin upgrades available at the time of booking for an additional cost, subject to availability. Offers may be amended or withdrawn at any time without prior notice, are subject to availability & cannot be applied retrospectively. All bookings are subject to Fred. Olsen's standard terms & conditions, available on our/their website & on request. Some ports may be at anchor, intermediate days are at sea. FOCL reserve the right to amend itineraries for operational reasons. The free group drinks party on board includes house wines, sherry, soft drinks & cold canapés, subject to minimum numbers. To be hosted by the group leader. Please note the NAC group cruise fares are only valid to book direct via Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines under group account code GRP0301. The group account code cannot be combined with any other offers including NAC affinity discounts. E&OE.



ABTA
Travel with confidence

Accompanist Wanted

East Fife Male Voice Choir - Scotland East - John Kilgou

The choir has been singing for nearly seventy years. We have an extensive library of music covering almost all genre and add new material regularly. The choir sings regularly in support of local charities and takes part in the Fife Music Festival. Our current MD is Marilyn Boulton who has led us for several years and is only our third MD.

Our current accompanist has decided to retire, and we are seeking a replacement. We rehearse in Kirkcaldy in Fife on a Monday from 5.30 to 8.00. Our season runs from September to May, although we very occasionally have concerts out of

season. The successful candidate will have experience as an accompanist and a strong musical background, preferably with a professional qualification in music. The ability to play the organ is desirable but not essential.

We invite applicants to submit their CV to:

secretary@efmvc.org.uk

who can be contacted for any additional information. Fees will be negotiated with the Choir Committee.

We look forward to hearing from you.



2022 Was A Big Year

The Kentwood Show Choir – South West - Rickie Leyton



As with many Choirs, 2022 was a big year for us. Following the Covid Pandemic, we were back in the public eye and on stage.

Firstly, for our sold-out Showcase – ‘Musicals Unmasked’ featuring music of over 21 Musicals including ‘Gypsy’, ‘South Pacific’, ‘Les Misérables’, ‘We Will Rock You’ right through to the most recent, ‘Back to The Future’. As well as our own musicians the Aldbourne Band were our special guests. Our bucket collection at this show raised over £700 for Ukraine.

During the Summer, we took part in a fundraising event ‘Community Choral Festival’ in support of Swindon’s Open Door Charity. This is a charity who supports and help local people with all kinds of disabilities. The event included many local

groups and societies providing a day of all types of Choral Music. The event ended with a Celebration of the late Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

Once the Summer was over, it was time for the choir to begin rehearsing for our Christmas Cracker - once again with our friends, the Aldbourne Band. We also had guest Soloists, a Piper and the Open Door Choir. The bucket collection for the Open Door Charity raised over £2,100.

One ‘highlight’ for the choir is taking part in ‘Christmas at Steam’. Our local Railway Steam Museum holds this event every year over a weekend which includes a Craft Fair and an Entertainment Venue with many different local groups and societies performing throughout the day.

Unfortunately, 2023 started off on a sad note for us. One of our members, Nicola, passed away after going through a long illness. It’s always sad losing a member of our Kentwood Family. Nicola sang with us for over 40 years and was a huge asset to the choir and helped with the choreography for many years, always keeping the girls in line. Nicola will be sadly missed.

Kentwood was excited to be invited to perform at the recent NAC Concert held at the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre in Taunton with the Glastonbury Male Voice Choir and the Cantabile Ladies Choir. It’s always a great pleasure to sing alongside other choirs and the highlight of this concert for us was when all three choirs come together at the end of the concert as one to sing *You’ll Never Walk Alone* and *Land of Hope and Glory*.

Recently, we were very proud to support the Community Centre where we hold our rehearsals. The Des Moffatt Western Community Centre needed funds to install a Defibrillator. We were very happy to donate over £1,200 towards this.

Moving forward, we are now rehearsing for our Showcase – ‘The Magic of Kentwood’ which takes place on 11 June at the Swindon Arts Centre. This is going to be an evening of music with Kentwood at its best!

On A Bit Of A High

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir - Scotland West - Anne Kay



The Glasgow Phoenix Choir

Conductor and Director of Music
Cameron Murdoch

Very warm greetings from Glasgow on a somewhat dreich day. The choir is on a bit of a high as I write, having taken part in an excellent concert 29 April. In spite of a very busy start to the 2022-23 season, we have had a fairly quiet few months since December. On the plus side, that allowed us to recover from our hard work before Christmas, but we've been keen to be 'out there' singing.

One item did bring us great joy and that was the preparation for the production of another postcard CD. On this occasion it involved a trip to the other side of the world, or as it's known in Glasgow - Edinburgh! Every year we sing a Christmas concert in the Freemasons' Hall in Edinburgh, a concert we enjoy very much as the Edinburgh audience is always eager to let its collective hair down. On this trip, though, we had no audience just the wonderful acoustic of the hall. In addition, we had the great privilege of being accompanied by the hall's recently refurbished, and very excellent, organ. Our accompanist, Matthew McIlree, a former organ scholar at St Andrews University, had a most enjoyable time getting his hands on all those keys. Amongst the items recorded was *Zadok the Priest*, a special re-

quest from our hosts as a tribute to the new king. We're now waiting to hear the end result. Mention of *Zadok* brings to mind a celebration of the Harlandic Male Voice Choir in Belfast, many years ago. The memory is of two of the gents of that choir indicating their dislike of what they referred to as '...that Zodiac the Beast'.

Just in time for yesterday's concert, we had the pleasure of launching our latest postcard CD recorded in November of last year in St John's - Renfield Church, Glasgow. It contains an eclectic mix of choral music ranging from the song most associated with Sir Hugh Roberton and, our predecessors, the Glasgow Orpheus Choir, *All in the April Evening*, to the newest piece in our repertoire, *Opening* by Bob Chilcott, commissioned as a celebration of our own platinum anniversary. *Opening* is the most joyful song and one that is greatly appreciated by audiences; it certainly always lifts the spirits of the choir when we sing it.

And so, to yesterday's concert, which combined a celebration of our beautiful country along with a wide selection of choral treats, classic and modern. We've been preparing several items that were new to many of the choir though familiar to some of the longer serving members. In case anyone is wondering, *Alleluia* by Randall Thompson, requires repetition of

the title word some 64 times, if you are an alto, and you don't even get to sing the Amen at the end. Still, the beauty and excitement of singing it makes up for the repetition and, indeed, the words were very easy to learn. Unlike, *Johnnie Cope*. Oh, the joy of getting to the end of all six verses and realising that you had managed to fit in most of the words and still had your teeth in place.

We were joined in the concert by the Balianlay Choir from the Isle of Bute. We first met them last year when we performed a concert in Rothesay and it was a pleasure to renew the acquaintance. Their hard work for, and contribution to, the concert was greatly appreciated by ourselves and the audience, many of whom had travelled from the island to support them (and us). We're looking forward to a return match next summer.

We have a few more concerts before the end of the season and are looking forward to a return to the beautiful Paisley Abbey in aid of ACCORD Hospice, a concert for Christian Aid in Wellington Church, Glasgow and a final summer concert in one of our favourite venues, Moncreiff Church, East Kilbride. I will look forward to sharing details in my next report.

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For SATB Chorus, tenor & baritone soloists, two narrators
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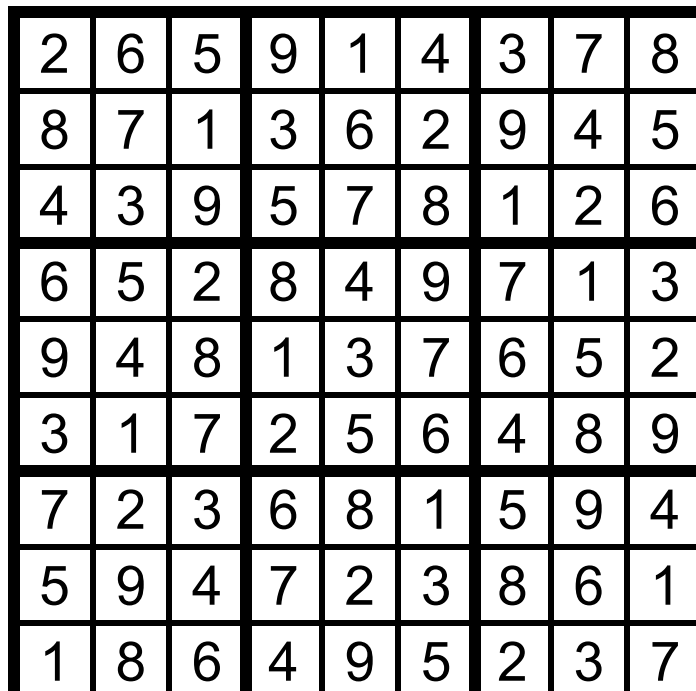
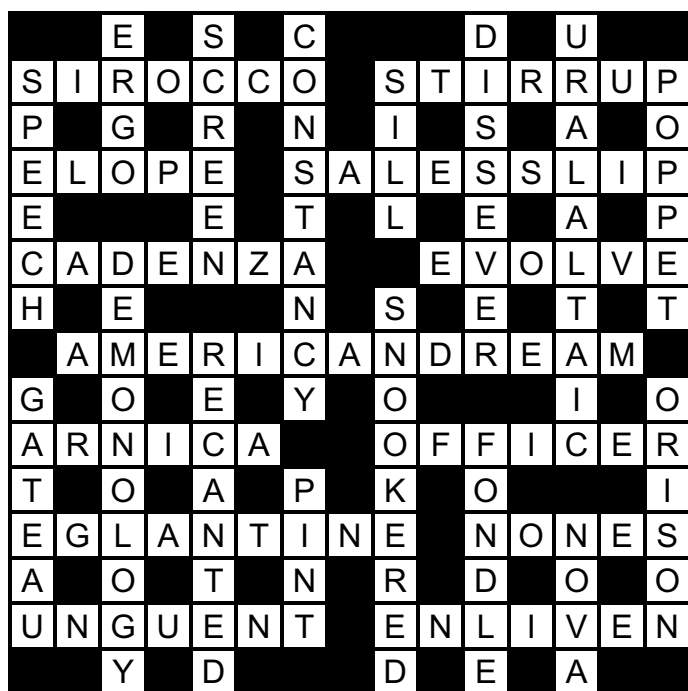


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HOW I LIKE TO RECEIVE ARTICLES

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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6 June - Twin Oaks Palterton
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14 November - Twin Oak Paterton
9 January - Zoom

Members Open Forum

7 June - TBA
30 September - TBA
27 January - Zoom

Closing dates for submissions to News & Views

Spring Issue - 31 December

Summer Issue - 30 April

Autumn Issue - 31 August