

NEWS & VIEWS



237 Autumn 2025



Eastwood Collieries' MVC raise the roof in Cardiff



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A business of Marsh McLennan

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Rob's Ramblings

Publications Officer — Rob Edwards



Phew — first issue published with just one slight pictorial blemish— lesson learned.

Again some interesting

articles have been received for this issue. Please keep them coming — this is your magazine. Keeping with that thought, if any of you would like to contribute questions for the quiz (and the answers please) and jokes or cartoons (suitable for work!) all contributions greatly received.

I have a bank of both to keep me going for a good few issues but it's good to ring the changes. Published contributors will be acknowledged (you can be anonymous) and will receive the grand prize of a year's free subscription to News & Views.‡

It is always heartwarming to hear that our rehearsals and concerts not only bring joy to ourselves and our audiences but that we can also support good works — be they local or national — by our efforts. Rock 'n' Soul Singers have been boosting Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes, the Imerys Singers support the Mount Edgcombe Hospice, and Southport Lyric Singers have generously donated funds from the sale of music to Queenscourt Hospice. Well done everyone and keep up the good work.

Another popular subject for articles is choirs on tour — who doesn't enjoy a few days away with like minded spirits.

Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir takes an innovative approach to storytelling in this issue — what do you think? This technique might require some forethought and planning— and a creative photographer — but as they say a picture is worth a thousand words. There were a good few hymns and arias sung, and pints drunk in the rugby club — I know 'cos I was there (Max Boyce in-jokes for my fellow countrymen/women/people).

Some of our choirs like to dust off their passports and venture even further afield than Cardiff. The Fairburn Singers headed to the world-renowned capital of classical music, Vienna, having been home to influential composers like Mozart, Beethoven, and Strauss, who developed the classical style and the waltz. These types of tours are made so much easier and more enjoyable if there is a host choir to help with organisation and social activities for the guest choir — something we all need to be aware of if we are hosting guest choirs.

The award for our most adventurous travellers this time goes to West Bridgford Social Singers who went 'To Trondheim and Beyond'. The breakfasts sound magnificent as does the trip to the microbrewery but enough of my foodie habits. It sounds like a wonderful adventure and when you have decided on your next destination — don't forget to send us a postcard.

Now, I'm not sure if that character in the article is the choir's mascot — every choir should have a mascot — especially when you go on tour. Let's see those pictures of your choir's mascot in all the exotic destinations you visit.

We also have the choir celebrations. The Imerys Singers celebrated 55 years since they were formed. A big celebration was planned in 2020 for their 50 but had to be cancelled due to Covid. Well done ladies — here's to the next 55.

Pendle Ladies Choir have appointed a new musical director. Good luck Julie — keep those ladies in order. John, you can now put your feet up and relax.

Dunfermline Junior Chorus celebrated its 20 year anniversary. What a wonderful sight — seeing all those young singers, nurtured in a supportive environment. It must give us hope for the future of choirs in the country. Keep up the great work and spread the word.

And speaking of giving us hope — how about Thomas Brogan — 'Still Singing at 100' with Parkside Colliery Male Voice Choir. But Thomas is not our oldest singer - that honour goes to Harold Jones BEM who sings with Birmingham MVC . Do we have any challengers for this record?

Rob Edwards

‡ Please see your local choir representative for your free copy of News & Views.

Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman — Brenda Wilkinson



weather to enjoy, didn't we?

Well, that seems to have gone now because the dark nights are certainly drawing in. I feel quite dizzy reading about all your travels around our countryside and across Europe with all your concert trips.

Last time I 'chatted' I was telling you to enjoy the rest of the summer and, oh boy, we certainly had some fabulous

You sound as if you had a wonderful time and all your contributions have a positive 'feel' about them and I take it that we have now finally put the past behind us.

Singing has been around for millennia and a while ago we had lots of anniversaries for choirs which were still singing in celebration of their centenary and more. We now have the honour of choristers who are 100 and 102 (Parkside Colliery MVC and Birmingham MVC) and show no signs of easing, which proves how good singing is for you.

We knew this all the time, or else we wouldn't be doing it, but it's only relatively recently that it is being recognised and used as a medicine.

Now it's September all the Christmas music will be surfacing to be re-learned ready for the many concerts which are already filling our diaries. Although it's always a very busy time, it is a joyous period which we all enjoy. I know it's early but, as this is the last publication of the year, I send Season's Greetings to you all.

Brenda Wilkinson

Conference 2026 Chester

NAC Conference Co Ordinator — Clive Lawton



Our conference next year is located at the Double Tree by Hilton Hoole Hall Hotel and Spa. Warrington Road Hoole, Chester CH2 3PD. 01244 408800.

Our accommodation and conference suit are excellent and what you would expect from a 4/5 star hotel.

The conference is being held on 20-22 March 2026. You will find a booking form on pages 31. The hotel is situated in extensive parkland just off the A55. There is plenty of parking which is free to resident guests. You need to give your car reg. in at reception on arrival to avail yourselves of the facility. Portering is available via reception also.

Last year we decided to break with tradition and have two speakers covering two seminars each. At this point we have one speaker for the morning seminars on Saturday.

Amy Bebbington will be covering these spots. Amy is a choral specialist, conductor, teacher, mentor, adjudicator and Director of training for the Association of British Choral Directors.

The second speaker is to be confirmed and will cover Saturday afternoon and Sunday Morning seminars.

I am in the process of inviting trade stands to our event. I try to provide new and interesting businesses having a wide range of products relevant to choirs within our association.

We have a Members Open Forum meeting at the hotel on Saturday 20th September between 11am and 3 pm. Any member of a choir registered with the association is welcome to attend.

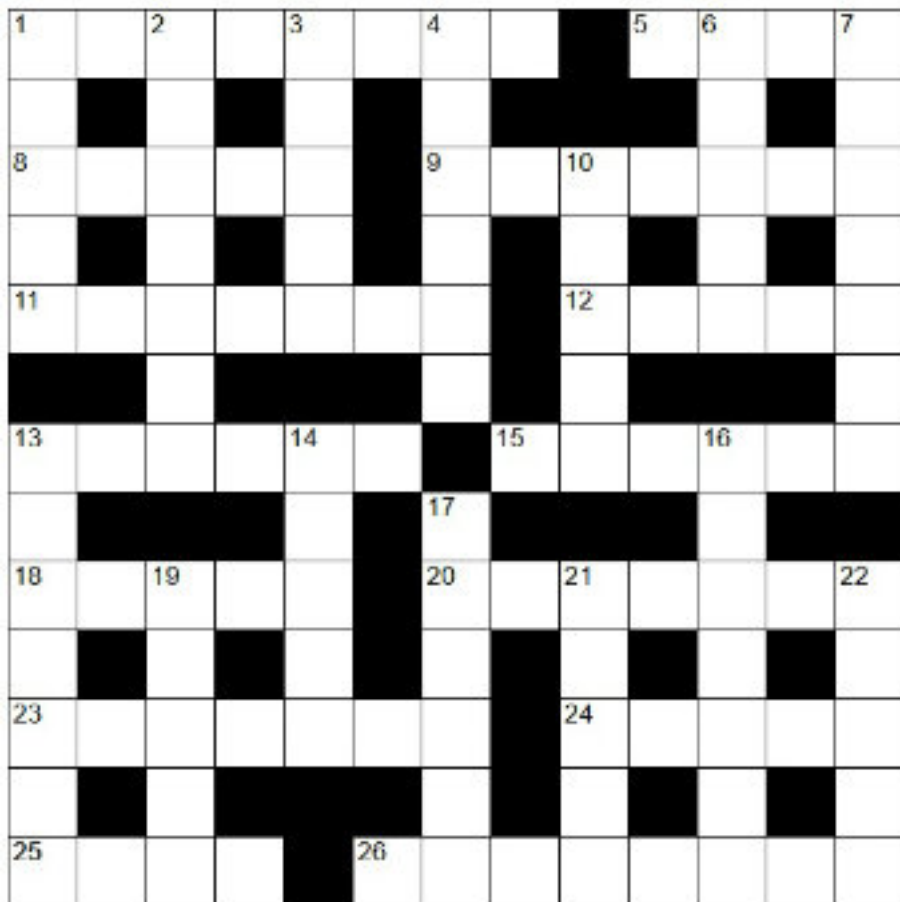
If wishing to attend, please call Clive Lawton Conference Coordinator on 07939 012458 to confirm attendance for catering purposes. It will be a working lunch served at 12.30pm. Please state any dietary needs.

The conference concert will be discussed at the meeting, and we would encourage members from choirs performing to be present. We have five choirs interested in performing and a proposed venue of the Bryn Coch School, Mold. Coach transport will be provided. The cost of the coach and admission to the concert is included in the delegate price of £299 per person.

We hope to see as many of you as possible. The hotel and facilities this year are exceptional. The negotiated price of the accommodation and facilities was arrived at after much negotiation between the hotel team and your officer team. We hope you enjoy the result.

Clive Lawton

PUZZLE PAGE



6		4	8			9		
2		3	6		1	4		
9				5	2			
5						6		
		2	7		8	5		
		1						4
			3	8				2
		8	1		6	7		5
		6			4	3		9

Across

- 1 Mean lass confused one taking orders (8)
- 5 Bear coming back as child's plaything (4)
- 8 Corrupt in very backward way (5)
- 9 A thousand flowers for teachers (7)
- 11 Engineers gave up and retreated (7)
- 12 Weight revealed with no uncertainty? Not entirely (5)
- 13 Lure first of tourists in Eastern Mediterranean resort (6)
- 15 Church members? They may be lucky (6)
- 18 Girl from outskirts of Liverpool grabbed by US agency (5)
- 20 Ate well — but ate nothing around end of June (7)
- 23 Cheese used in apricot tart (7)
- 24 Silly Billy — name in case of necessity (5)
- 25 Skirt for opponent of apartheid (4)
- 26 Adored by fans, one did lose out (8)

Down

- 1 Squadron leader always cut off (5)
- 2 Print that's left one with no share (7))
- 3 Is involved with old firm (5)
- 4 A drama involved the fleet (6)
- 6 A lot of water? Enough at first in old container (5)
- 7 Have sheriff's helpers emptied saloons? (7)
- 10 Opening hours for slow-moving mammal (5)
- 13 Selected passage right in bar (7)
- 14 Conversation about right map (5)
- 16 Sailors staring wildly (7)
- 17 Help to follow a French chicken (6)
- 19 Legal centre for solicitor (5)
- 21 Cancel regular publication when article is omitted (5)
- 22 Nymph not serving alcohol, extremely awkward (5)

[SOLUTIONS PAGE 21](#)

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!

Music Review Autumn 2025

Music Review Officer — Liz Moulder



From following many of our choirs on Facebook, it appears that you have been extremely busy on tour, or performing concerts locally.

Some of you are also now taking a brief break before meeting up in early September, so I thought this would be an opportune time to remind you of the many publications available to support vocal warm ups.

I am sure you are all now aware of the importance of starting a rehearsal with a warm up which can focus on many differing aspects of preparing us for our rehearsal session. Like athletes, who would never start a training session with a sprint or marathon, we should not be asking our singers to start singing without a gentle, focused warm up session.

If you are still unsure of the types of warm ups you could do, the two leaflets, *Warm Ups & Workouts*, by Emily Crocker are a straight forward starting point. A simple opening page of suggestions for physical warm ups on relaxation, posture and breathing lead to vocal exercises clearly identified with piano accompaniment. The second volume follows on from the first and they are written for any combination of choirs. Currently priced at £2.85 they are published by Hal Leonard and available from most music outlets.

Hal Leonard have also published *Warm-ups for Pop, Jazz and Show Choirs*. Written in a variety of genres and styles complete with piano accompaniment this is available from Musicroom at £2.50.

Many community choirs might find *I Wanna Make You Sing* by Em Whitfield Brooks a useful tool especially if you are an experienced MD. There are explanations at the start of the book which then leads to a variety of songs, mostly in parts. There are also accompanying CDs. Published by Banks Music Publications, it is priced around £25

Choral Warm-Up Collection by Sally Albrecht is a collection of 167 warm-ups contributed by 51 choral directors! Contents include breathing, vowels, phrasing, dynamics etc This would be suitable for conductors who are developing the vocal skills of their choir and looking for a wide variety of activities to keep the choir focused. So often, I see choirs going through the motion of doing warm ups where they appear not to be listening to the sound they are producing individually or building on the skills which would enable them to produce and blend their voices together. Currently priced at £19.50 it is also available from Banks Music Publications.

Although the next two books were written to support those involved in children's choirs, or teaching children to sing in the school environment after the introduction of singing into the National Curriculum, they might prove very useful to someone new to conducting.

Chorus For Everyone by Bette Gray-Fowes, priced £9.95 looks at her approach to singing with groups of all ages. She suggests ways which should enable singers to improve what they are doing and hopefully gain a greater sense of achievement. I particularly like the section on Scat singing and improvisation.

Sound Singing, by Guildhall School Of Music examiner Gordon Pearce, provides a variety of warm-ups whilst identifying common faults and important 'do's and don'ts'! This is priced at £6.95. Both are available from Lindsay Music and are very useful as 'a set'.

In past reviews, I mentioned *The Listening Conductor* by Dr Edward-Rhys Harry, published by Llyfrau Cambria Books, and *How To make Your Choir Sound Awesome* by Lucy Hollins and Suzzie Vango, published by Banks Music Publications. They are a must for the more experienced conductors who want to develop their own knowledge of how the voice works and I make no excuse for mentioning them again.

I hope that once again you have found something useful, whether you have a youth or more senior choir, or whether you are a relatively new or experienced conductor. So please, continue to support your singers with well-informed warm up sessions, many of which I also use to end the rehearsal with, as we gently cool down the voice bringing it back into a comfortable, middle range, relaxing the vocal folds and of course then finishing by thanking them for their hard work and focus throughout the rehearsal.

What do you get if you drop a piano down a mine shaft?



Problems Faced by Small Choirs

General Secretary — Pete Carlyon



We love choirs in the UK. Some have been around for a hundred years or more and they still satisfy a human need to join together to make music. Not everyone can be a talented musician but most of us enjoy the beat, the harmony, the happiness that music brings and being part of a choir allows us to share the feeling with others.

There is no doubt that 2020 was a turning point for choirs. We were not allowed to get together and once the pandemic had passed, the recovery has taken a long time, especially for choirs that exist in rural areas. Choirs emerged from the closedown of normal routines finding that they had fewer members, a need to catch up on rehearsing, fewer concerts to perform and smaller audiences when they could perform again.

With costs rising for everything a choir needs, from music to rehearsal space, from uniforms to paying professionals, small choirs have been badly hit. Some have had to give up while many are still struggling to get by.

I gathered information from various sources to try to suggest ways in which a small choir might move forward with a more positive chance of success. Thank you to those who helped in this.

Professionals



We need people with genuine musical skills and knowledge to help us lesser mortals make the most of our voices. There is no standard or average to advise choirs on what they should or could expect to pay for professional help. I found that there are choirs that have the joy of free help from a superb MD who just loves to be involved. Sometimes that MD even plays the piano for the learning process at rehearsals and the choir will then pay for an accompanist for a couple of rehearsals and the following concert. That's not because the choir are taking advantage of that wonderful MD but because they don't have the funds for anything more. The choir provide the MD (or similar accompanist) with vouchers at times during the year to try to show their genuine gratitude but often the professional shrugs off any attempt at payment.

MD's and accompanists certainly earn their payments in most choirs. The amount they are paid varies enormously and typical sums mentioned across the smaller choirs range from £35 to £85 per rehearsal with concerts attracting a little more.

The process of attracting a new professional to your choir will always be a problem. You will have to make difficult decisions about costs of course. You need to advertise and the free newspapers in your area might have disappeared in recent years. You can use the NAC website and Facebook pages for free of course. Always pay your professionals per attendance so that they are responsible for their own tax etc. You do not employ them.

Rehearsal Space

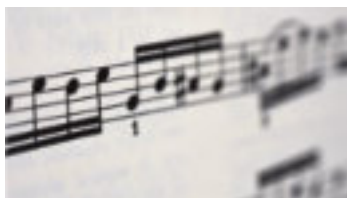


Unless you have a direct link to an organisation who can provide free rehearsal space, this expense can be a real problem. Any space will have a cost attached for electricity, heating, caretaking etc.

You might try an approach to any large organisation in your area, making the most of explaining the benefit of your choir to the local community.

You might make it clear of the benefit to that company of your mention of their sponsorship in any of your posters and advertising. Any amount of sponsorship might be better than none and will help pay the bills.

Music



Music copies are expensive. You need music! That seems like a problem with no solution. You MUST NOT photocopy music for your choir. Sometimes, a local library might have a loan service for copies of music – it's worth asking.

Choirs sometimes look through their libraries of music and decide to get rid of some titles. Rather than just throw away this valuable resource they often list it on the NAC website in the Members Area under Music Copies for Sale. Often, they only ask for postage and perhaps a modest contribution. If you find something you want, it's a great way to save money.

Some choirs might be willing to loan a set of music to another choir. Use our website to make your needs known.

Subscriptions



People understand that even a small choir has to pay for various things in order to operate. A choir member will accept that a subscription is needed to buy the music, have access to rehearsal space, purchase a piano or electronic keyboard.

If your choir is struggling to pay the bills, have an honest chat among yourselves to decide what members might be able to afford if the subscription has to be increased. It's a delicate balance but a little more to keep the fun and friendships going is worth it up to a certain point.

Remember to compare what people can get for similar payments for other activities that give an equal satisfaction to life. The cost of a night out in the pub -v- singing with the choir?

Other income



In most conversations with choirs, they often stress that they give concerts and then give the profits to local charities. Whilst honourable and generous, I would make the point that sometimes, a struggling choir should consider themselves more in need of the money. Charity begins at home sometimes.

A choir that has to fold is never going to contribute to a charity again and neither is it going to be a source of fun, comfort, friendship and support to the village or community. Perform fundraising concerts for your own choir and use any profits to keep your choir functioning. By all means allow people from a charity to make separate collections at the exit.

Membership



It is so important to keep attracting new members and that is difficult in a choir that exists in a small community. There are only so many people who will easily make that first visit to a rehearsal. You need to make people aware that you are there and can do so by using posters of your concerts/events. Place them on noticeboards in village halls, shops, supermarkets and public noticeboards (and get permission where needed).

Your local health professionals deal with many people who would benefit from local support of a friendly group like your choir. Prepare a leaflet and talk to the manager of your local surgery for example. Let them know that they can give the leaflets to people who might benefit from joining such a group.

Choirs are a valued part of this country. We need to keep them in place. Think

102 years Old and Still Singing

Birmingham MVC — Midlands West — Francis Beirne



This is a challenge to all choirs - does the Birmingham Male Voice Choir have the oldest active member in the Country? Harold Jones BEM reached aged 102 on Tuesday July 22 2025 and is still coming to rehearsals and singing at our concerts. He is an inspiration.

Birmingham Male Voice Choir came about from the merger of two long standing Birmingham Choirs in 2024. The Canoldir Male Voice Choir and the Birmingham Icknield Male Voice Choir. Harold was one of the strongest advocates for the merger, believing the future needed to be secured for the next generation.

In 2024, just shy of his 101 Birthday, Harold received the British Empire Medal in the King's Birthday Honours list. At that point he had raised £47,210 for Motor Neurone Disease (MND) research in honour of three of his close friends, who died from the disease.

In March 2020, inspired by the late Captain Sir Tom Moore, Harold started walking laps around his bungalow, with the intention of completing 1000. Since then, he has completed more than 45,000 laps, about 700 miles.

More recently, Harold has been telling us about his military service as a Lance Corporal in the Second World War. Having completed most of his active service in India, Harold was transferred to Rangoon in Burma following 'VJ' Day (Victory in Japan). He was part of the force managing the surrender.

As a choir we have been lucky enough to sing at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on three separate occasions. Always a humbling and thought-provoking experience. Hearing Harold discuss his service really brings those memories to life. He is a complete inspiration to all of us younger members.



To illustrate the span of ages, our youngest member is Jack Mockett, aged 26, who travels each week to rehearsals from Shrewsbury. Jack has been blind from birth, open about his autism and a huge asset to the choir. As well as having perfect pitch, recognising and naming any note played (alongside the key) Jack brings unlimited enthusiasm and a real love of singing.

We are lucky enough to have an exemplary Musical Director in Steve Roche and an excellent accompanist in Chris Walk. They've worked hard to bring us together as one choir assisted by our new emblem (designed by our own Richard Grundy) and the painstaking process of choosing new uniform. Our concert secretary Meirion Bowen, took on the role of gaining a consensus on our new jackets and ties (grey jackets, yellow ties). It was a mammoth task, producing

the most discussion of any topic, but we've never looked smarter.

As with every choir, recruitment is never far from our minds. Our Chair, Warren Woodcock comperes many of our concerts. When calling out for the male members of the audience to 'give us a try,' he has Harold as the inspiration to prove you're never too old to join a choir and that the joy of singing can bring both happiness and long life to those who engage with it.

Harold is one of the foundations of our choir moving forward. His dedication, passion for music and ever-present smile are an inspiration to us all. His voice is deep, but his spirit even deeper — full of warmth, wisdom and joy.

They say singing keeps you young and Harold is living proof. At 102, he still brings harmony, humour and heart to every rehearsal. His presence reminds us all that music isn't just about notes, it's about connection, community and vitality.



It's Stoating in Scotland

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir — Scotland West — Anne Kay

As I look out of my window, the weather is more sombre than when I wrote my last report. Has autumn arrived? Am I a bit sad as summer draws to a close? Do my windows need cleaned? Ah well, greetings anyway from central Scotland.

Towards the end of our last season, number 74, the choir joined with the Bangor Ladies Choir in St Andrew's Metropolitan Cathedral in Glasgow. While we had sung in the cathedral before, this concert was extra special with the participation of our new friends. Both choirs made the most of the opportunity and we especially enjoyed the items we sang together, notably Karl Jenkins' *Adiemus*.

The additional voices added real power to the performance. If anyone reading this is looking for a place of interest to visit in Glasgow, you could do worse than to call in at this beautiful cathedral on the banks of the Clyde. Not only is the church stunning, but it has a wonderful Italianate garden in its grounds. Fortunately, we were able to share this with our visitors after the concert as the evening was bright and balmy.

This was very much in contrast to our final singing venture of the season when we took part in the Glasgow 850 celebrations by joining in the Clyde Chorus in Govan. Apparently, it is actually a myth that the Inuit people have 47 words for snow (they have many more); I suspect that in Scotland and the wider UK we might be able to beat them in relation to the number of words we have for rain. Spitting, smirring, drizzling, pouring, bucketing, stair-rods, stoating (bouncing off the pavement), cats and dogs, and, the particularly pleasing cow-quaker which, apparently describes a rainstorm so heavy that the cows shake, specifically used to describe storms in May. Who knew?

Anyway, the weather on the day of the Clyde Chorus event might have been described by all of the previous synonyms, all at the same time. To say the choir ended up drenched would be an understatement as some people haven't dried out yet. Nevertheless, in

spite of the weather, a great time was had by all and it was a privilege to be able to take part in the celebrations.

The first event we have planned for the new season is an Open Rehearsal on September 8. Like all choirs, we lose members throughout the year and we're very keen to replace them to keep up our standards. In this last season, we said farewell to a quite a number of singing members whose service to the choir ranged from 12 years to seventy. Yes, seventy! I would like to thank all of them, on behalf of the choir, for their singing, their friendship and their hard work over the years. A special thank you must go to Maureen Moore, our veteran of 70 years as a first soprano.



During her time with the choir, Maureen travelled the length and breadth of the country, as well as travelling to the USA and Europe. She survived six conductors and took part in hundreds of concerts and recordings, including one in Abbey Road studios when she met members of a certain long-haired group. Always quick to make herself known to new members, Maureen was very supportive of all of us. The last few years have been difficult for Maureen and, while she will be missed, we are grateful that she is now happy and well-looked after.

The final farewell at the end of last season, took place during a most enjoyable social event — a delicious lunch in the Glynhill Hotel, Renfrew. As well as celebrating the end of the season, we took the opportunity to say farewell to our Business Manager, John Blue.



John worked with the choir for thirty years and made sure that we were very busy during most of that time. He undertook all sorts of things to help us out, including organising concert dates, supporting concert organisers in all sorts of ways and, generally, offering friendship and support to our conductors and to all choir members. He also masterminded some very mad events, such as having us climb a hill in the Highlands to take part in a tribute to the blind piper Ian Dall; ensuring our participation in 'Sound to Sea' an event in the graving dock in the Clyde in central Glasgow, which involved the Royal Navy and a soprano who had to pretend she'd been shot; having us sing a concert in the empty pool at the Western Baths in Glasgow. Yes, John, you will be missed.

We are looking forward to a busy season and have six concerts lined up before the end of December, which we'll be busy preparing for from the start of rehearsals. We're hoping to run a 'Sing with the Phoenix' event early in 2026 and we'll also be putting on our thinking caps to come up with some lovely ways of celebrating our 75 years of singing, with our official anniversary in September 2026. I'm sure we're all looking forward to all of this.

Boosting Notts Blood Bikes

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



One of the most rewarding aspects of being part of the Rock 'n' Soul Singers isn't just the joy of making music together — it's the opportunity to support worthy causes through our public performances.

Since our humble beginnings as a small community choir in 2012, we've raised funds for a wide range of charities, including Alzheimer's Society, Lincs and Notts Air Ambulance, the MND Association, Clic Sargent (now Young Lives v Cancer), Maggie's Centre at Nottingham City Hospital, Youth Music, Young Minds, and various local churches.

Our performances have taken us to some fascinating venues too, from churches, community centres and care homes to Nottingham's Albert Hall, from singing on the back of a lorry to Nottingham's CAMRA Beer Festival.

Currently, we are focusing our fundraising efforts on Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes, and we are thrilled to share that, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we have raised over £4,500 so far. With more concerts on the horizon, we're confident we'll exceed £5,000 soon.

For those unfamiliar with this incredible charity, Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes is made up entirely of unpaid volunteers who provide out-of-hours transport for critical NHS supplies, including blood products, medication, patient samples, and medical equipment. These volunteers are highly trained and dedicated, ready to transport life-saving items at a moment's notice.

The Blood Bikes volunteers have become great fans of the Rock 'n' Soul Singers. In fact, their enthusiasm often leads to

friendly debates about who gets to attend our concerts. It's always exciting when their team arrives in full motorbike leathers, sometimes bringing both full-size and mini motorbikes with them.

Many of our concertgoers have enjoyed the opportunity to snap a photo while sitting astride one of the bikes. Thanks to our fundraising, the charity has been able to ensure half of their fleet of full-time blood bikes — a remarkable achievement that speaks to the power of our community's support.

Our choir continues to thrive, with membership now capped at 50 singers (SATB) and a waiting list in place. Under the guidance of our Musical Director Rachel Cropley, Assistant MD Alan Shepherd, and accompanist Teresa Mills, we're constantly challenged to expand our musical horizons.

We perform a mix of songs spanning from the 1950s to today, with iconic tracks by The Beatles, ABBA, and Queen sitting alongside contemporary hits by Rag'n'Bone Man, Coldplay, and Adele. Rachel's infectious energy and imaginative warm-ups push us to explore not just vocal technique and breathing, but also movement, listening skills, and sometimes—just for fun—being a little bit silly!

Looking ahead, we're preparing for a special Christmas concert with the Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir, which may feature a stunning (and rhythmically challenging) rendition of Joni Mitchell's *River*.

If you'd like to learn more about the Rock 'n' Soul Singers or join us at one of our performances, please visit our website at www.rocknsoul.org.uk or follow us on Facebook. To support Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes, visit nottsbb.org.



Sell-out Concert

Mendip Male Voice Choir — South West — John Kendall



Mendip Male Voice Choir closed a successful summer season performing to a packed Midsomer Norton Methodist Church, at its annual summer concert on Monday 14 July. It was the final concert in its 'Songs from Stage and Screen' season, giving the Mendip Men an opportunity to introduce some new songs, mixed with some old favourites.

For the second concert in a row, musical director Kate Courage had to reach for her contacts book when the scheduled soloist had to withdraw from the concert at the last minute. It meant some late night practice for accompanist Dominic

Irving, who had to rapidly learn some fairly complex music by Oleg Miroshnikov, Gabriel Grovlez and Gustav Schreck to accompany Royal Conservatoire of Scotland bassoon student Bethan Cheshire. Bethan grew up in a musical family locally and has performed with the National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain and been invited to play with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. Her performance won enthusiastic applause from the audience.

The Mendip Men opened the concert marching onto the stage to the introduction to Gilbert and Sullivan's *Entrance and March of Peers* from *Iolanthe*. The concert included old favourites such as *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Blue Moon* and *Some Enchanted Evening*. *Chattanooga Choo Choo*, complete with guard and train whistles and *Flash, Bang Wallop!* were among the audience favourites of the evening. The concert culminated with a piratical Gilbert and Sullivan classic *With Cat-Like Tread*, complete with eye patches for all the men. 'The singers were in fine voice and it was good preparation for our forthcoming Welsh tour in September', said Musical Director Kate Courage.

The choir now takes a break over the summer before preparing for its autumn series.

About Mendip Male Voice Choir

Mendip Male Voice Choir was formed as the Timsbury Male Voice Choir in 1919, drawing in men from the Somerset coal-mining community centred on the village. The choir has continued to grow since then, even though coal mining ended over 50 years ago. The choir became a registered charity some years ago to help raise thousands of pounds for charities and good causes with a series of concerts throughout the year.

The choir currently has 62 members arranged in four sections. Kate Courage re-joined as Musical Director in 2024. Kate has the distinction of being the only musical director to have directed the choir twice. Kate studied Music and English Literature at University and has taught, directed, conducted and composed for many choirs, groups and schools, including twice conducting the Royal Albert Hall Schools Proms with a massed choir of 500 children singing two of her compositions.

For further information about Mendip Male Voice Choir please contact:

PR officer John Kendall:

PR@mendipmen.co.uk,

07941 782956.

Choral Humour

What do you call singers with no fingers?

All-toes!

What do you get when you sing dramatically in the shower?

A soap opera!

Why do baseball players make great singers?

They strike the right notes, and they're always on pitch!

What's a Jedi's favourite kind of singing?

Yoda-ling!

Second Time Lucky

Imerys Singers — South West — Margaret Jane

The Imerys Singers initially the John Keay House Ladies Choir, followed by the ECC (Cornwall) Ladies Choir celebrated 55 years since they were formed. A big celebration was planned in 2020 for their 50 but had to be cancelled due to Covid.

On 28 May 2025 at the White Pyramid, Trewoon a get together took place for all current members and as many former members as we were able to contact to meet for a buffet and celebration cake.



The afternoon was a great success and enjoyed by all. Three of our four conductors were able to be present with the very first, Joan Richards, cutting the cake.

The choir was formed in 1970 after requests that as the company had several male voice choirs 'why couldn't there be a ladies choir' and the rest as they say is history.

In the past the choir has won just about every trophy and contest including the Cheltenham Gold Cup (not the horse race), the Blackpool Choral Cup just to name a couple plus all the local festivals. They even travelled to Llangollen where although they did not win came a very acceptable fourth.

These days they concentrate more on singing for enjoyment rather than competitions but would be happy to sing for any event if asked. Their chosen charity is Mount Edgcumbe Hospice and has been for many years. They have raised around £30,000 so far and are justly proud of this.

As with any organisation new members would always be welcome. Anyone interested in joining us can make contact via the choir's website or the secretary's email:

marg.jane48@gmail.com



MUSICAL QUIZ

What is the missing city in each of the following song titles?

1. _____ Fair
2. First we take _____
3. _____ Lassie
4. Nightboat to _____
5. _____ Lineman
6. The Boy from _____
7. Viva _____
8. Werewolves of _____
9. Englishman in _____
10. Witch Queen of _____

Answers on page 18

MidsEast Vocal Health Workshop

Vauxhall Luton MVC — Thames North — David Raeside



I had no idea what to expect when I signed up for the NAC's Vocal Health session in June at Stretton near Burton upon Trent. And I spent a couple of hours on the ride up there wondering if it was a colossal waste of time... I can sing, can't I? Quiet at the back, there...

The short answer is... It was not (a waste of time). In fact, it was a delightful way to spend a Sunday afternoon, in what turned out to be three hours jam-packed with really thoroughly well researched advice mixed in with some clinical tips on how to keep your 'pipes' in tip-top condition... fun and laughs, all delivered by Nicki and Michaela.



Oh, and there was singing too. Of course there was.

As one of the newer members of the Vauxhall Luton MVC I am always looking at how I can learn how to improve. We all are! But shortly into this session I realised this could benefit all performers and help us look after our voices and choir members in general.

After explaining the importance of warming up, vocal coach and professional opera singer Nicki introduced us to some simple exercise. But before singing, some physiology.



'It's a muscle you know', said our coach for the afternoon. 'You warm up your muscles before sport, and this is exactly the same thing.'

After some facial and physical stretching, we warmed up, then sang. This served to show each of us how easy it is to strain your voice, how we each have a range which is our comfort zone, and how stretching this zone can enhance our range, as well as performance.

I even discovered some techniques to help me hit some of the notes which can be a stretch for this baritone.

Did I enjoy it? Yes. I hope that's apparent from these few words but I would like to arrange a similar session for our choir and maybe rope in a few choirs who are local to us?



Everyone who sings could benefit from a vocal health session. If you would like to organise a vocal health workshop in your area, contact Liz Moulder — there may be some subsidy available via the Legacy Fund.

We Finally Made It!

Eastwood Collieries' MVC - Midlands East - Text: Ian Baxter



'Didn't we have a lovely time, the day we went to Cardiff?' It's Saturday, 3 May 2025 and Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir, are on tour.



28 choristers, together with our loyal fan base of wives, partners and friends arrive at the Future Inn, Cardiff for a weekend of quality music and fun.



Touring is not just about 'boozing and snoozing' of course...we have a job to do. Here, 'suited and booted', for our first concert with Cardiff Male Choir.



Didn't they do well? Smiles all round – what a relief! The two chairs take time to pose for the customary post-concert commemorative photo.



And speaking of posing for photos, both choirs get in on the act with their supporters. What a picture. Now it's off for the welcome afterglow.



Wonderful Wales! Cracking Cardiff! Sunday morning is a chance to enjoy some 'downtime' to see the sites – the spectacular Millennium Centre perhaps?



Or may be Marco's Café? A must for Gavin and Stacey fans who have gone to Barry Island. I wonder whether Nessa was there guarding the slots?



A quick change then we're ready and we're off to our second concert: if it's Sunday night, it must be music night - here are our hosts, Llantrisant Male Voice Choir.

Eastwood Collieries' MVC - Midlands East - Photos: Ian Webster



A rousing rendition of *I Get Around* from Eastwood's version of The Beach Boys, gets the audience rocking and rolling in the aisles.



Our joint item with Llantrisant brings a fabulous evening of music making to an end. New friendships forged through the joy of song.



The inevitable joint photo of the choirs captures the moment for posterity; our visit to 'The Land of Song' will live long in the memory.



...as will the afterglow with wonderful food and a glass or two of whatever you fancy, it provides the perfect preparation for an impromptu 'singsong'.



Our audience can't get enough of it (and I don't mean the buffet). They all welcome the opportunity for some fun-filled active participation.



There's the final chance to record a few personal memories of a wonderful weekend - oh it was so worth all the effort for everyone involved.



Our trip to Wales confirms what we already know: singing is a wonderful way to bring people together. We're already asking, 'Where to next?'

This photo summary of a fabulous weekend of singing and laughter clearly demonstrates the joy of singing together. Covid forced us to postpone our planned centenary trip to Wales in 2020 but it was worth the five year wait to get there!

We are incredibly grateful to our new found friends, Cardiff Male Choir and Llantrisant Male Voice Choir for their amazing hospitality.

Loss of President Lorna Brooks

Sonara Singers — Midlands East — Helen Beresford

It is with great sadness that I have to announce the passing of our President and longest serving member of Sonara Singers (formally Alfreton Ladies Choir). She died peacefully in her sleep on 08.06.2025 at the grand age of 90.

She joined the choir in 1956 at the age of 18 and went on to sing many solos. Later on (when I joined the choir) she was secretary and then chair which she held for many years. Lorna led the choir with an iron fist but also with a twinkle in her eyes. Her great love for singing ensured the success of the choir.

The partnership of Lorna secretary/chair and our musical director Liz Moulder lasted for 30 years, and she sent this message to the choir on hearing the news.

'The 30 years I spent with you all was with Lorna by my side, most of the time as chair. She lived and breathed Sonara Singers always endeavouring to do her best at all times. I was always supported as MD and along with many of you, was welcomed into her family celebrating many family occasions. I remember the laughter, the giggles and the occasional 'look' especially over uniform misdemeanours, but at the heart of it was her love for singing. She had a beautiful sweet voice that she maintained into her later years.'



The choir sang to her and the rest of her care home residents, including her husband Ray a couple of weeks before she passed and she still, even though very poorly, tried to join in.

Here are some more quotes from choir members of their memories of Lorna.

'She was devoted to the choir and loved being the President and Chair for many years.'

'She was my back row mentor, and buddy on the back row when I joined the choir.'

'We did have so much fun on the back row often given 'the eye' from our MD for our laughter.'

'Lorna was often the root of mischievous behaviour.'

'Lovely lady made me feel so welcome. So much laughter on the back row but we really knew who was the boss.'

'Such a kind generous lady. I can hear her singing *This is my lovely day* so many memories.'

'Your enthusiasm and commitment to choir was there for all to see, so generous with your time and such fun.'

She was a lovely lady who loved to sing.

Sonara Singers sang *All The Way Home* by Sarah Quantel at her funeral some of the lyrics were so apt for the occasion.

'All the way home with a song in my heart

All the way home

Brighten my path and carry me on

All the way home'

God bless Lorna

MUSICAL QUIZ — ANSWERS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Scarborough Fair (Simon and Garfunkel) | 6 The Boy from New York City (Manhattan Transfer) |
| 2 First we take Manhattan (Leonard Cohen) | 7 Viva Las Vegas (Elvis) |
| 3 Tallahassee Lassie (Freddy Cannon) | 8 Werewolves of London (Warren Zevon) |
| 4 Nightboat to Cairo (Madness) | 9 Englishman in New York (Sting) |
| 5 Witchita Lineman (Glen Campbell) | 10 Witch Queen of New Orleans (Redbone) |

Still Singing at 100

Parkside Colliery MVC — North West — Brian Barclay

One of our choristers Thomas Brogan is 100 years old on 8 August 2025. Yes — he has got his card from the King.



Tom drove buses in Wigan for Wigan Council. Latterly he drove coach tours for Smiths Tours to Switzerland and Austria.

In 1968 Tom purchased Flint Post Office/ Grocery store and moved to Flint to live. There Tom founded the Flint Male Voice Choir many years ago.



The family moved back to Wigan in 1988 and, not liking retirement, Tom joined Asda and worked for them until he was 95.

Our Headquarters is:

The Congregational Church
Hilton Street
Ashton-in-Makerfield
Wigan.
WN4 8PD

Where we meet on Monday evenings
from 7-30.

Visitors and prospective members
welcome. Contact our secretary
Kevin Grimshaw:

07922 132639

secretary@parksidecollierymvc.co.uk



Southport Lyric Singers

We would like to thank the various choirs who have contacted us with their kind thoughts and generous donations for our local hospice through the sale of our music.



Queenscourt Hospice, Southport

We now have £300 which we shall donate to Queenscourt Hospice, Southport in December when this amount will be doubled during Big Give week. It is worth waiting until then. This has happened the last few years.

Of course, if anyone takes up our offer on the remaining items, the donation will be added to.

Trip to Vienna: 19 — 23 May 2025

The Fairburn Singers — Yorkshire N & E — Sally Whittingham

The Fairburn Singers, a 40 strong mixed voice choir based in the tiny village of Fairburn, North Yorkshire, have been on our travels again, this time to the beautiful city of Vienna. Vienna is located in north eastern Austria, at the eastern most extension of the Alps in the Vienna Basin. The earliest settlement, at the location of today's inner city, was south of the meandering Danube while the city now spans both sides of the river.



Our party, consisting of 27 choir members (singers) and 20 friends and family, embarked on our journey to Manchester airport on Monday 19 May, arriving in plenty of time for our flight. Accompanied as usual by our amazing Musical Director, Andris Ugulis and our accompanist, Mandy Jones, we arrived in Vienna in the early evening and were in our hotel in Kaiserwasser by 9.30, where, travel weary, most of us retired to bed early.

Tuesday 20 May dawned sunny and warm, as we made our way via the U-Bahn subway just across the road from hotel, into the city centre to St Stephensplatz and St Stephen's Cathedral, Austria's most prominent national symbol, known for its intricately tiled roof and nearly 500-foot south tower. This was the venue for our 'flash mob' a capella recital of *If ye love me*. We then had some free time to explore more of the city and get some lunch, before getting back to the hotel to prepare for our first concert.

Later that day, we headed off by coach to Gumpoldskirchen, 26 km south east of the city of Vienna. Gumpoldskirchen is located on the so-called thermal line (ger. Thermenregion), which produces unique climatic conditions for viticulture. Our hosts, the Austrian Male Voice Choir (MACH4) had invited us to a joint concert in their church. We were met by the chair and other members of the choir and taken to the ancient building where the wine had originally been pressed and is now a wedding venue, where we learnt about the history of the village and the wine produced there.

After that, we headed down the hill into the small town (4000 inhabitants) and to the Town Hall where we were met by the Mayor who welcomed us to her town with a short speech followed by wine and an exchange of gifts, and the presentation of a plaque to be added to a list of all the other choirs who have visited the town since 1995.

We headed into the church for a short rehearsal, before our concert began, to a full audience, at 7.30. Introductions in English and German were made and both choirs sang a selection of their favourite songs, and the concert ended with a joint rendition of *Die Nacht*, which we had been learning back at home. Further exchanges of gifts took place after the concert and we were then escorted to the winery where we were provided with a traditional Austrian meal of different meats, potatoes and salads, and lots and lots of their local wine, the very lovely Konigswein, Spätrot Rotgipfler, a white wine endemic to the town. However, the highlight of the evening was the informal singing from both choirs and the general air of bonhomie in the room. MACH4 were the perfect hosts and kept us topped up with both food and wine, and entertained with their fabulous singing. We have taken some fantastic memories away from that evening.

Wednesday 21 May — another fairly early start and another trip on the U-Bahn subway back to the city centre to take part in a walking tour with two excellent and well-informed tour guides who took us through the streets of Vienna and told us about the history of the city, including the Habsburgs, Emperor Franz Joseph I and his wife, the Empress Elizabeth (known as Sisi), and prior to them, Empress Maria Theresa, the only woman to reign in her own right in Austria.

We toured all the wonderful buildings including the Schönbrunn Palace, Hofburg, State Opera House, Secession, the Haas-Haus, the Belvedere museum and saw many more statues and gardens, where we found Mozart, situated at the head of a beautiful treble clef of flowers. We were also walked through Hero Square and along Ring Road.

From the late-19 century to 1938, the city remained a centre of high culture and of modernism. A world capital of music, Vienna played host to composers such as Johannes Brahms, Anton Bruckner, Gustav Mahler, and Richard Strauss, as well as Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Franz Liszt.



The city's cultural contributions in the first half of the 20th century included, among many, the Vienna Secession movement in art, the Second Viennese School, the architecture of Adolf Loos, the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle.

The walking tours are certainly the best way to see the city, but after two hours of walking, everyone was exhausted, and I was not surprised to find that my step count for that day was over 13,000!

After all this culture, and another couple of hours of free time to grab some lunch, we made our way back to the hotel to prepare for our second concert. Back on the subway and then onto a tram, we arrived at the Anglican Christ Church located next to the British Embassy in Jauresgasse 17-19 and which has grown from a small embassy community to a thriving and diverse church in the heart of a great city.



Here we were welcomed by the Church Council to the Church Centre a few hundred yards from the church with tea (English Breakfast) and sandwiches and cake, before making our way into the church for a quick rehearsal. Our concert started at 7.30 and the church was almost full to capacity. Our repertoire included choir favourites, *One Voice*, *Let the River Run*, *Benedictus* (from the *Armed Man*), *Let the Earth Resound* and *When the Saints Go Marching In*. Afterwards, it was back to the Church Centre for wine and nibbles before we made our way back to the hotel via tram and subway (we were getting good at this by this time!).

Thursday 22 May — a free day. No plans had been made for our final full day in Vienna, so we all made our separate choices of places to visit. I joined a group who went on a boat trip on the Danubecanal where we sailed serenely up and then back again, slightly disappointed not to have actually touched the River Danube at all.

For our final evening, Andris had arranged a meal for us at a typical Austrian restaurant a ten-minute walk from the hotel. The staff were not fazed by 47 people arriving en masse and we were soon seated and presented with a menu all in German. Much googling took place to establish what was on offer and orders placed. We had a lovely final evening, the food was delicious and the bar was open, and we were back at the hotel by 10.00. Some final packing was done and an

early night ready for our homeward journey the next day.

We left Vienna to drive to Bratislava airport for our flight home, as this proved more convenient than flights from Vienna. Bratislava, located just over the Austrian border into Slovakia, is a modern airport with no-one in it. Ours was the only flight going out, but we still had to wait over an hour for the check-in to open and about the same for the duty free and café in departures to open their doors. A good flight home and arrival at Manchester airport all went to plan, although the massive queue to get through passport control was somewhat boggling. Eventually, after finding our coach, we were then on the road home to Fairburn, where we arrived nearly 2.5 hours later due to holiday and Friday traffic on the M62.

So, another very successful 'Fairburn Singers on Tour' completed for 2025. Our collective thanks go to Andris for his absolutely excellent arrangements and attention to detail which meant that everything was under control and went according to plan.

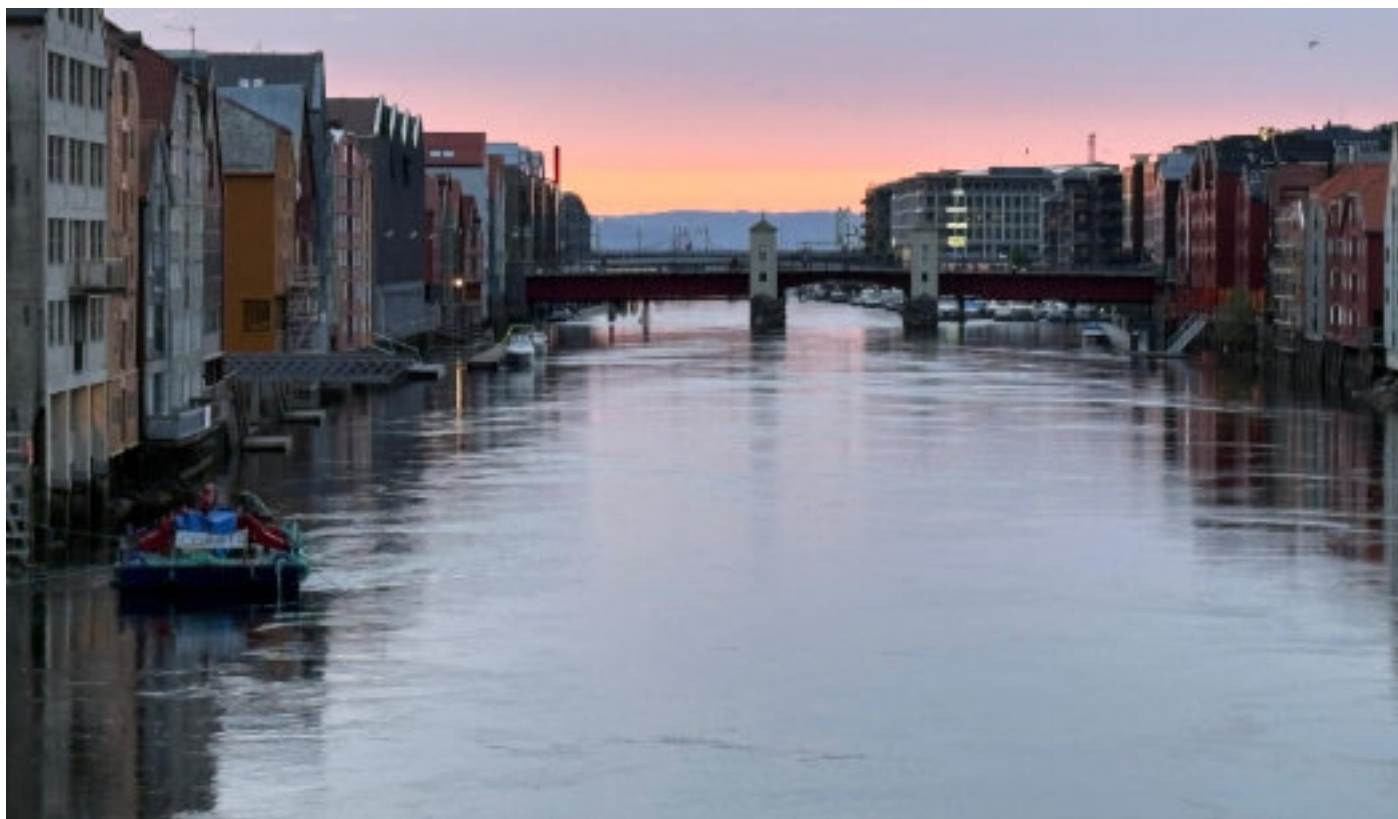
Vienna is a beautiful city and our concert with MACH4 was the undoubted highlight of our trip and we were delighted to welcome them to England and in particular to a joint concert at Selby Abbey on Saturday 31 May, followed by a reception hosted by the Fairburn Singers, which was enjoyed by everyone who attended both events.

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To Trondheim and Beyond

West Bridgford Social Singers — Midlands East — Jan Perrett



A motley crew of singers and partners gathered outside the Co-op in West Bridgford and then the Manor Surgery in Beeston to begin this year's choir trip — to Norway. We are seasoned travellers around the UK, but for many of us, this was the first chance to travel and sing together abroad. Some singers had been to Norway before and were very relaxed about the whole thing. Most of us hadn't. I mean — I only go as far as Whitby (or sometimes Tynemouth) on my infrequent trips and I was fairly sure that they wouldn't speak Yorkshire in Trondheim.

'Any road up' (that's Yorkshire!), we had a smooth journey down to Heathrow with plenty of time to check in and browse the delights of the airport. We all got through security and check-in without too many hiccups, once you worked out which way up the passport went. We were welcomed at the hotel by Bjorn and also Ragnhild and Tuula from Jonsvatnet Sangkor (JSK) which was a lovely start to our visit. And so, to bed — although quite a few drifted off to the microbrewery at the back of the hotel.

One of the highlights of our Norwegian trip was breakfast! It was a glorious buffet with every conceivable type of cold meat and cheese, fruit, salad, yoghurt, scrambled eggs, bacon plus a lovely variety of pancakes, croissants and crumpets, accompanied by jam made from berries I'd never heard of. You had to be careful with the juice though. One side of the breakfast bar had big bottles of juice and one had smaller bottles with smaller glasses. I guess this should have been a clue. The smaller bottles contained a lovely bright red juice with chilli — hence the smaller glasses. It certainly woke me up. The lovely bread and rolls tempted some of our party to make a packed lunch as well! Wish I'd thought of that.

The weather was not too bad the first morning in Trondheim and Simon offered a walking tour of the city — which was incredibly useful in terms of orientation. We visited Trondheim bridge over the Nidelven and obviously sang *Nidelven Stille* — well you have to, don't you. Simon nearly got mown down by an aggressive cyclist, but hey, that's all part of being a choir director.

Simon, having lived in Norway for quite a few years, was able to give us some insights into Norwegian culture, including the issue of shared land. Now, listen — this is 'extremely interesting'. Apparently, if your house is surrounded by communal grass or recreational areas, it is expected that you share the responsibility of tending it. And if you don't, I think you are beheaded, but I might have made that up — but you are certainly fined. Because we all looked rather dubious about this, Simon accosted a young Norwegian couple to confirm the rule. He also challenged



them to say whether this was 'mildly, very or extremely' interesting'. They were very accommodating and went for 'extremely'. So, encouraged by this, Simon used the technique repeatedly when he gave any information!

Exploring Trondheim and the surroundings was a real bonus of this trip. We did lots of singing and mingling with our Norwegian choir friends, but we also had plenty of time to do our own thing. There is definitely a cafe culture in the town and sometimes it

the trips together. It was lovely to spend time with others as well as singing together. Obviously the microbrewery helped in that.

In the afternoon we had a coach trip led by Thomas from JSK, to Steinvikholmen

of songs. There were cows in the field and, given our success last year with the Cambridge cows, we expected them to nod appreciatively. Instead, as soon as we started to sing, they rushed away to the top of the field. Ungrateful animals. Mind you, it might have been feeding time — let's tell ourselves that.

Back on the coach and onward to our dinner venue — the extremely impressive Egon Tower restaurant, to join Bjorn and singers from JSK. The views from the restaurant are impressive and the food was good, wonderfully organised by Ragnild. Not only is this a very tall tower, but the restaurant also revolves. This caused some of us — okay, mainly me — some brain trauma, because I could not work out why the bar kept moving! I would walk from my table to the bar and then when I had got a drink, I would turn around and my table had disappeared. My helpful fellow guests kept saying 'You're going the wrong way' but it made no sense. What was moving — the bar or the whole tower? After several attempts to get my bearings and multiple 'helpful' explanations from my choir friends, I just gave up and stayed where I was. To this day, I still don't know what was moving — the bar or the tower.

Anyway, the food was lovely, the company of our JSK friends was delightful and we sang a few songs to entertain ourselves and our fellow diners. Then back to the coach for the drive to the hotel. I believe some people disappeared to the microbrewery again.

Friday was our 'singing around Trondheim' day, led by Bjorn and Simon. We gathered with JSK singers at Torget under the marketplace 'bandstand', where, apparently, photos had been taken on the last trip 10 years ago. It was a little bit rainy that morning, so we



was hard to find a space to sit; but in true cosmopolitan style, many of the cafes had pavement tables and the weather was kind enough for us to enjoy these.



Carol and I decided to visit Kristiansen Fortress — a 17c fort which was central to the defence of Trondheim against Sweden in the 18c and also was occupied by the Nazis in WWII. A steep climb but worth it for the history and the views.

This was typical of the community feel of the trip — people found things of interest — museums, underground churches, monuments, music museums — and shared the information with others, often forming small groups to do

Slott. Thomas was very informative about the places we passed and the development and industry of the area. And the countryside was beautiful. We stopped at an extremely bizarre and fascinating American Diner called Vuddu Valley. In addition to amazing snacks, ice cream and drinks, it had a shop of American memorabilia and a museum, stuffed with all things 50/60s. There was even a separate building with American vintage cars.

So strange to come across this in the middle of nowhere. Apparently, as Thomas told us, the diner's survival is under threat, due to the creation of a new highway, which will bypass the site. That would be a great loss.

After parking the bus, we walked (a short walk — Yeah, right) down to Steinvikholmen Castle. Here we stood in a beautiful meadow and sang a couple



were happy to be sheltered. Our songs were well received by the passing shoppers, many of whom stayed to listen. This was also our introduction to a special vocal flourish at the end of *Brudemarsj* — a kind of ‘whoop’ which our Norwegian friends did with gusto. And so shall we, from now on. Bjorn then decided that we should sing in the centre of Trondheim where there were more people, so we did, and our audiences were both curious and appreciative. It was great singing with JSK and actually, our Norwegian pronunciation was not bad at all.

Free time in the afternoon. Time to visit attractions, museums, cafes and generally have a stroll around and do some shopping — or, in some cases a crafty snooze. I expect the microbrewery was visited by a few.

Our evening meal with our friends from JSK was at a UNA pizza restaurant, which caused some confusion for those going by taxi as UNA is a chain of restaurants and they didn’t know which one to go to. All arrived eventually and we had another joyous evening eating and singing with our friends.

Our last day in Trondheim. After a leisurely morning, we walked to the Cathedral, Nidarosdomen, to see if we could sing a couple of songs. Bjorn used his magic touch and contacts to get us in for two songs before the organ recital. The cathedral is very beautiful and, of

course, the acoustics are amazing. We sang *Baloo, Balilli* with Sally’s solo soaring up to the vaults of the cathedral. It was truly magical. Followed by *Down to the River to Pray* with solos from Jenny and Fiona. I think we all came away slightly awed by the occasion. We then had the chance to sit and listen to the organ recital, which was very impressive. We had been told before we arrived that there was to be a wedding after the recital and whilst we were gathered outside the Cathedral, the bride and her bridesmaids arrived. Simon hurried us all round the corner, so we could sing *Brudemarsj* for her. That was magical too — the bride and her attendants danced to our singing before having to get into the Cathedral for the ceremony. Well done, Simon.

Our last evening in Trondheim was especially enjoyable. We drove out to JSK’s clubhouse in the countryside beyond Trondheim where we were joined by singers from 2 other choirs — Hedda and Reppe Blandakor. We all had a warm up with Bjorn and Simon before refreshments and a chance to wander around the beautiful surroundings down to the fjord. By this stage of our trip, we knew our JSK friends well and it was lovely to meet the other singers. I suspect we were all quite envious of their clubhouse and its tranquil setting.

The evening concert gave the chance for each choir to sing a selection of songs and for us all to sing together. It was joyous and standing with Norwegian singers helped us enormously to listen to the pronunciation and nuances of the songs. The songs were so good — we loved Reppe’s Eurovision mash-up and the Bumblebee song from Hedda. After the concert, we had a meal prepared by JSK. The main dish was Sodd — which is meatballs in a broth. Despite its name, it was delicious. Then, one of our JSK friends stood up to start a drinking song *Drykkes visa fran Grundsund* which was very rowdy and wrapped us all in a joint feeling of bonhomie.

As the evening went on, we drifted outside onto the balcony and down to the fjord bank with a sense of friendship and love of music.

And so back to the hotel and to bed. Or for some people, to the microbrewery.

The following following morning, we said goodbye to Bjorn, Thomas and Ragnild and set off on our home journey. We did have a bit of singalong on the coach back from Heathrow and after a very smooth ride, we were back in Beeston and West Bridgford by 9pm. How many of us were still humming *Brudemarsj* the next morning? Me — well, actually, for several days afterwards.

Where next, I wonder?



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New MD for Pendle Ladies Choir

Pendle Ladies Choir — Lancashire North — Caroline Greaves



Pendle Ladies Choir has appointed a new musical director.

After 23 years as musical director of Pendle Ladies Choir (formerly Nelson Civic Ladies Choir), local musician John Garrett has decided to retire and was pleased to announce the current deputy MD, Julie Townson as his successor.

During his 23 years with the choir, John has led the Colne-based choir to much success, both on the concert platform locally and at competitive festivals all over the UK including the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, the Isle of Man festival of choirs, and the Mrs Sunderland music festival in Huddersfield. The choir achieved first places at many of these, including Colne, Ilkley, Huddersfield, Burnley, Skipton, Lancaster and Whitby.



Sadly, many of these festivals no longer exist, but the choir still really enjoys the experience of competing with other choirs; it is a way of keeping on top form. Most recently the choir came away with first prize in the Ladies Choir class at the Eskdale Festival in Whitby and was named Lancashire Choir of the Year for 2023. Which led to John being selected as a judge for the 2024 competition, a role he thoroughly enjoyed.

Possibly one of John's biggest achievements was during the Covid period when he managed to keep the choir singing on a weekly basis, albeit remotely, and when singing together was finally allowed, the choir hadn't lost a single member.

At his last concert in May, he expressed his thanks to the ladies of the choir, to accompanist Elizabeth Cockshott for her support and made a special mention of longstanding choir member Betty Willoughby who introduced him to the choir 23 years ago. John will continue to work on a freelance basis, so hopefully will continue to be involved with the choir in some way.

A social evening was held to celebrate John's years of service, and to present him with an engraved crystal tankard and a commemorative photo album.

On behalf of the choir, he passed over the baton to Julie Townson and wished her well. Julie has been a member of the choir for over 8 years and comes with a wealth of experience; she currently conducts the Pendle Youth



and Children's Choir and was formerly musical director of Colne Arion male voice choir.

Pendle Ladies Choir currently has around 50 active members, but is always open to new recruits. So, if you live in the Pendle area and have ever thought about joining a choir have a look at the website:

<https://e-voice.org.uk/pendleladieschoir/>

which has lots of information and contact details.

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20 Year Anniversary

Dunfermline Junior Chorus — Scotland East — Dianne Slaven



Dunfermline Junior Chorus has celebrated its 20 year anniversary in style, rounding the year off in fine voice with a spectacular concert.

It doesn't seem like two decades since the choir was founded by our Artistic Director, Mandy Miller. Now comprising 4 choirs, and around 100 singers aged 6 to 18, DJC has gone from strength to strength. Over the years, it has not only fostered a love of music but has also developed friendships and teamwork within the groups, encouraged self-expression and built self-confidence in the youngsters who have been part of the DJC family. Throughout the 20 years our singers have always shown great commitment and have given their best — we are incredibly proud of them all.

To mark this special anniversary year all our singers received a commemorative badge, some ordered colourful hoodies with DJC logo, we had a fun pizza party and a fantastic birthday cake!

We also had a special souvenir programme printed for our anniversary concert and every choir member received a copy.

One highlight of the anniversary concert was the Alumni Choir. Nearly 40 former members, including many founder members, came along to perform in the concert. They travelled from all over the UK to be part of this memorable event and come home to their choir family. From the smallest wee music maker to the most senior singers, all choirs gave us a celebration of music making.

The programme started with *We Are Free*, which was performed in our first concert all those years ago. The capacity audience was treated to a wonderful selection of music from all the choirs led by Mandy Miller and Alison Baxter. There were many emotional moments.

The concert finished with a wonderful performance of *Uma Familia*. That's what Dunfermline Junior Chorus is — one big family.

Miss Miller was presented with a photo book covering the first 20 years. It is full of pictures of the choirs and beautiful quotes from graduating seniors over the years.

We now look to the next decade. Dunfermline Junior Chorus continues to provide a safe, fun and welcoming environment where children and young people can experience musical and personal excellence as they make music together.

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