

NEWS & VIEWS



221 SPRING 2020



SALLY DYER
SWIMS
THE CHANNEL

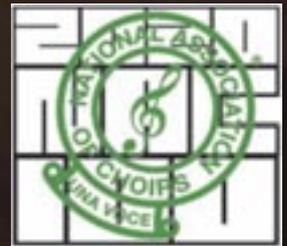
Local Vocals

MATERNA REQUIEM
SCOTTISH PREMIERE
Dunfermline Choral Union

WARRINGTON MVC
FESTIVAL WINNERS

MD Russell Paterson with the trophy
FRONT COVER IMAGE

NAC is
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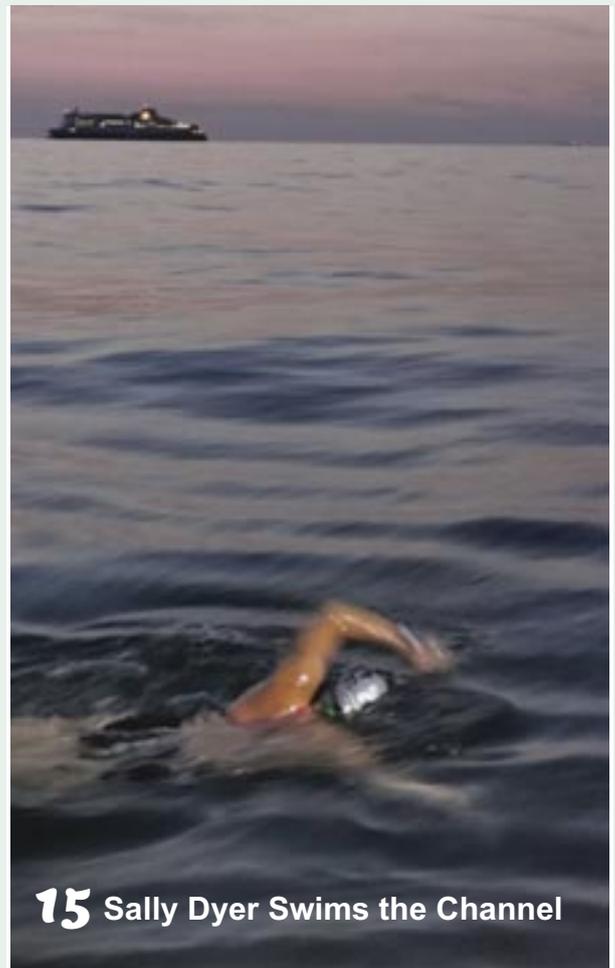
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Crawford's Corner

Publications Officer - Bob Swallow



It is far too late to wish you a Happy New Year. By the time you read this it will be somewhere around the beginning of February, So, I have put in a quotation that I hope will point you in the right direction for how you treat this year ,which begins another decade and celebrates the 100th Anniversary of The National Association of Choirs.

We don't generally like to make mistakes (there you go). Yet it is by making mistakes and correcting them that we learn. We must try new things. A hundred years ago twelve choirs got together to try a new thing and it worked for them.

Six years ago Warrington Male Voice Choir tried a new thing for them and they are

still doing it, working at it and improving it. See what they are up to on pages 28 and 29.

"I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes.

Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're Doing Something.

— Neil Gaiman

Try something amazing. Perhaps not quite as amazing as Sally Dyer of The Kentwood

Show Choir (see page 15) but try something.

If you have computer skills and you are less than 70, you might like to do what I am doing here in editing this magazine. The years creep on and at some point soon I might not be able to do it.

I know that Celia Johns, our Webmaster, is looking for someone to ease her workload by taking her place as Webmaster.

John Croft has two other roles besides being our Chairman and I am sure he would love to hear from someone who could help him, and our century-old association, to do the very best for our members.

End of rant. Start reading further and enjoy what other choirs are doing.

Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman - John Croft



Welcome to 2020, our centenary year, which promises some exciting events and innovations, some of which are detailed elsewhere in this magazine. The introduction of free advertising for member choirs in our publications is proving successful and in this issue we are launching a loans and grants scheme. This scheme is a new service to promote sustainable joint activities and collaboration among choirs, ideally on a regional basis.

Our first activity is the conference in Blackburn in March, which we hope as many as possible of you will attend. Full details can be found in the centre pages

together with a booking form. Bookings are quite healthy already but there is always room for more so why not give it a try this centenary year for what will be an informative, friendly and very enjoyable event. I hope to meet as many as possible of you in Blackburn.

We will culminate our year with a Centenary Concert to be held on 21 November (the anniversary of the founding of the NAC) at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. Full details will appear in subsequent editions of News & Views.

I always enjoy reading the achievements and experiences of our member choirs, they are so varied and memorable for the participants and audiences. All choirs need a strong and vibrant group of volun-

teers to organise events and ensure things run smoothly, if they are to succeed and prosper. The NAC is no exception. Your officers have put in a lot of additional work for the centenary year, but the NAC needs more volunteers to help with the running and organisation of this association. Your current group of officers is doing a fantastic job, but new blood is needed if we are to continue to grow and provide the necessary services into the future. Please give this some thought and discuss with any officer if you think you, or someone you know, can provide assistance in the future.

I hope you all had an enjoyable festive season and that this year will lead to more successful concerts and tours for all our choirs.



Loans and Grants

NAC Committee

NAC finances are stronger than ever before, and it is in a position to support initiatives taken by member choirs to further its charitable objectives: to promote, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of the art and science of music and in particular choral music. The history and traditions of the association are built on the belief that choirs working together can achieve what would not be possible if they acted alone, so a proposal from an individual choir that does not include others is unlikely to be considered. Proposals that aim to initiate or develop sustainable collaboration among choirs will be particularly welcome.

While a full grant might be appropriate in

exceptional cases, proposers will be encouraged to find additional funding from other sources, and in any case no project will receive support indefinitely. Proposals that aim to initiate or develop an ongoing collaboration will need to show how it will be able to sustain itself financially, and an application for a grant rather than a loan will have to be justified.

As a charity the NAC must ensure that its funds are spent responsibly, and only properly constituted bodies can be supported. The model constitution for Groups (available on the Members Only area of the associations website) might be suitable if a long-term project is proposed. If a project is planned to have

a fixed lifetime then it could be sufficient to have three (or more) individuals who accept the responsibility for it. Officials of participating choirs would be obvious choices. In all cases full accounts must be submitted to the National Officers.

The Group structure of the NAC is intended to facilitate collaborative choir activities but other arrangements could be more appropriate in certain circumstances.

Applications should be made to the Secretary of the NAC. They will be considered by a sub-committee of Officers, who might provide further guidance, and whose decision will be final.

The NAC is 100 years old.

NAC General Secretary - Celia Johns



Yes, The National Association Of Choirs is 100 years old. It doesn't seem possible, does it? But it's true. Representatives from twelve Male Voice Choirs – six from Yorkshire and six from Lancashire – met on 21 November 1920 in Todmorden 'to discuss the financial aspect of competitive festivals.' During the discussion, a proposal was put by a Mr A Stansfield of the Manchester CWS Male Voice Choir and seconded by a Mr Hopkinson of the Hebden Bridge Male Voice Choir 'that the choirs represented form themselves into an Association to be named the Association of Competitive Choirs'. This was carried unanimously, and so the Association which later became the National Association of Choirs was formed'. (My quote above is taken from 'The National Association of Choirs – its Past, Present and Future' by W L Tyson, dated 1968, at which time Mr Tyson was an Officer of NAC.)

At that time, the Association existed to support its choirs in their applications to and dealings with the British Choral Festivals, of which there were many. One hundred years later, there are far fewer competitive festivals in the UK, so the support offered by the NAC consists mainly of helping choirs to run themselves as business organisations, and by the efficient running, to enable singers and the general public to enjoy choral music. The overall objectives have not

changed, though: to promote choral music throughout the UK – 'Joining the Nation in Choral Singing'.

During 2020, then, there will be commemorative publications and other items to collect for your choir. There will be legacy initiatives launched, to ensure that the Association will be remembered for the future. There will be events taking place, the first of which will be our annual Conference, to be held during the weekend of 27-29 March, in Blackburn – further information and a booking form will be found on pages 16-19 of this issue of News & Views.

On the Saturday evening at Conference there is a superb concert for all delegates to attend, which will feature (among other wonderful choirs) the only two choirs who were present at that first meeting on 21 November 1920, and who are still paid-up members one hundred years later – Colne Orpheus Glee Union and Nelson Arion Glee Union Male Voice Choirs, both from Lancashire North.

- Every delegate who attends Conference will receive a commemorative mug.
- As soon as possible, we will be issuing a new Song Book to all member choirs – new compositions for all genres.
- Member choirs are now able to place

half-page advertisements in News & Views without charge.

- Loans and grants may be available for groups and choirs for specific projects – see further details on this page.

The main event this year will be a special concert at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, to be held on the Centenary Day of 21 November 2020. Organisation is now well under way, and we can say that there will be seven choirs taking part, drawn from the area in which NAC was founded. Each choir will showcase some of their best pieces, our great friend, Conference seminar presenter David Lawrence, will conduct the choirs in massed items, and a new song to commemorate our Centenary has been commissioned from our President, Ronald Corp OBE. Ron will be conducting the first performance that evening, but we are hoping that at the same time our member choirs will be able to hold their own concerts and feature a performance of the new song.

We would like choirs to let us know if they are proposing to hold any events to celebrate our Centenary – I will put a dedicated page on the website with all the details so that they can have extra publicity. This is a very special year for us, and we want you to help us celebrate!

The Song of Norway

Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir – South Wales – Phillip Tolley

Following 18 months of planning members of the Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir together with the Abertillery Ladies Orpheus Choir welcomed Kor på Randen, a mixed choir from Stavanger Norway, to the South Wales Valleys for a weekend of culture, singing and hospitality.

Initially the contact was made between the choirs following the discovery of a link between a member of the Norwegian Choir and his grandparents, who met as members of the Abertillery Orpheus Choirs when it was first formed. Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir was formed in 1908 closely followed by the Abertillery Ladies Orpheus Choir in 1911.



Kor på Randen was founded in 2007 and hails from the coastal community of Randaberg, close to Stavanger on the west coast of Norway. Their name can be translated as Choir on the Edge, or Choir on the Coast. With 41 members across 4 voices, they are a mixed choir, open to all. They sing a broad repertoire of songs in Norwegian and English, and occasionally other languages.

The aim of the visit was in part to visit the cultural sites of South Wales, so the visit included trips to Big Pit, The Chartist Museum in Blaina and the Guardian Memorial to the mining tragedy Six Bell Pit. Another reason for their visit, particularly this year, was to mark the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the Norwegian Seamens' Church in Cardiff. This building is now an Arts Centre maintained by the Welsh Norwegian Society.

The ladies committee of the Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir, called Eurydice, laid on a fine buffet lunch for the visiting choir when they first arrived and they



were also entertained by a small ensemble of young Welsh harpists, which went down particularly well. Following this meet and greet and a quick rehearsal Kor på Randen returned to their hotel for a well-earned rest.

On the Saturday the three choirs met up again at St Michael's Church, Abertillery, for a very well-received concert in the presence of supporters of all choirs, and the High Sheriff of Gwent. The concert featured a mixed of Welsh, English and Norwegian pieces by each choir and a joint rendition of *Calon Lân*. The Director of Kor på Randen, Tuva Ystad Gedorø, also gave a winning rendition of Grieg's *Spring Song*.

Much bling and colour was added by the ladies of the Norwegian choir wearing regional costumes.

Following the successful concert, the choir retired to a local hostelry for the traditional 'afterglow'.

The following day Kor på Randen performed at the Norwegian Seamens' Church as part of their celebrations, and then the three choirs reconvened at the Millennium Centre, Cardiff for a free abridged version of the previous evening's concert. In the evening members of the choir's musical team and committee attended an end of tour dinner. Tables were thumped, tears were shed and there was an agreement that the Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir would visit Stavanger in the next couple of years, finances allowing.

I have to say that their Welsh was better than our Norwegian so there is plenty of work still to do.



Sheila Harrod - force majeure

Kentwood Show Choir - South West - Penrose Shackel



2020 is going to be a really big year for both the National Association of Choirs and The Kentwood Show Choir. Both have been going strong for a very long time and growing in strength and stature. Whilst the NAC commemorates its Centenary during 2020, Kentwood will be celebrating raising over two million pounds for charity. Wow! £2,000,000. As you can imagine, that is a lot of concerts and literally hundreds – maybe thousands - of songs learned. It is an enormous credit to all the volunteers who help run Kentwood and its many shows and most especially to the wonderful audiences who come to take part in the magic of Kentwood. And, if all that were not enough, this pecuniary feat is made all the more remarkable because of the inspirational leadership of Kentwood's founder, Sheila Harrod.

It is difficult to put into words just how amazing Sheila Harrod is but I hope a few stories will give you some idea. Born in 1944, Sheila showed her first musical prowess at the age of 3 by playing the piano at Bristol's Colston Hall. By the age of fifteen, Sheila had passed all her examinations with the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music in both singing and pianoforte and went on to gain her Diploma as a Licentiate of Trinity College, London specialising in Class Music Teaching.

At twenty, alongside teaching music at school, she started Kentwood (the name of her dog!) with five girls in her parents' front room. If anything clearly shows Sheila's charisma, it is that 3 of those girls are still involved with Kentwood. Fifty-six years later there are 32 singers in the choir with more than half of them holding more than 25 years service. You could say that Kentwood is a way of life rather than a hobby.

Creating an accomplished choir would have been easier if admittance was based on ability or if the group had, at any time, been closed to new singers. But Sheila enjoys the challenge of bringing everyone up to her high standards. Most of the choristers have no exam board certificates and many do not read music but every established member has performed as a soloist or in a group. How about that?



Sheila has a long list of accolades including the British Empire Medal awarded by the Queen for meritorious service to the Community. It was Dorcan Silvethreads who put Sheila forward for the BEM, Mrs Bellingier saying that they wanted Sheila recognised for both raising money for charity and the joy she and her choir brought to the people of Swindon.

Under Sheila's guiding hand, Kentwood has performed at numerous prestigious

venues including Prince Philip's Birthday; The Royal Albert Hall with Dame Cleo Lane and Johnny Dankworth; The Royal Variety Performance and the revival of TV's Opportunity Knocks; with Bob Monkhouse. Kentwood has also toured many European countries as well as the USA and produced eight albums, but Sheila is as happy playing piano at a Care Home as standing in the limelight and many of our most memorable concerts have been sing-a-longs with Alzheimer's sufferers, singing in a hospital ward or carol singing on the parky streets of Swindon at Christmas.

Sheila Harrod is 76 this year but I think she has more, much more, to give. Some of you will know her from the NAC Annual Conferences where she used to be a permanent fixture on the piano, entertaining delegates while they were enjoying their dinner. Some may know her personally as she sometimes shares her knowledge of music and performance by giving workshops to choral groups. If you have met her you will remember her. Sheila is unique. A force majeure - not the legal definition but the other definition - an irresistible compulsion.

If you have not met Sheila and the Kentwood Show Choir, book in for one of our shows in 2020.

<http://kentwoodshowchoir.org>

One final word from our newest fan and photographer extraordinaire Ron Milsom who posted this lovely comment on Facebook following our 2019 Christmas Cracker, 'Choirs don't get more exciting, more dynamic and more enthusiastic than this one. If you get the opportunity, go and see these guys. Believe me, you won't be disappointed.' Thanks Ron. You say the nicest things.

And so it began....again!

The Fairburn Singers - Yorkshire North and East - Sally Whittingham



On Friday 23 August, 25 members of the Fairburn Singers and 42 friends and family (FAFFS) set off at 8.00 headed to Dover. It was a beautiful sunny day with blue skies and was the start of another five-night adventure, our third with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, this time aboard the very traditional MV Boudicca sailing down the River Seine to Rouen and Honfleur. The drive to Dover was long but uneventful and we arrived in time to embark at around 3.00. By 4.00 our cases had arrived at our cabins and after getting settled, we headed up on deck to explore our home for the next five nights and take part in the inevitable safety evacuation presentations and meet our fellow passengers.

We sailed from Dover at 4.00 after the Captain had performed a very smart three-point turn in the harbour and set off in calm seas across the English Channel, passing the white cliffs and headed for the entrance to the Seine near Le Havre. At dinner that night we met our table-mates, unusually split across two restaurants, and ate our first meal on board, beautifully served and presented as ever, by the perpetually attendant waiters. After dinner, most of us headed for the Neptune Lounge to watch the show put on by the Boudicca show team. This was the usual very professional performance and closed

with a medley from Les Miserables, which coincidentally would also form part of our own concerts on board, scheduled for later in the cruise. We joked with the singers that we would give them a run for their money with our rendition. Following the show, another cruise tradition was to take part in the nightly general knowledge quiz, so we headed up to the Lido Lounge to arrange our tables and make up teams of six (or thereabouts). Fifteen questions later and one of the Fairburn teams had claimed the winning prize of a bottle of Cava, and so ended our first evening on board and as we sailed off into the sunset, we were all looking forward to the delights of Rouen and the prospect of a few very sunny and warm days in Normandy.

Saturday 24 August dawned warm and sunny and one hour on from UK time, and we were navigating our way serenely up the River Seine towards Rouen. The passing scenery was very pretty and typically French, accompanied in places by the rising mist making it very atmospheric. As we approached Rouen at around 9.30, we could see the mooring and assumed we would be docking within minutes. However, we were very surprised to find that about half a mile from the mooring, the ship slowed, and then very, very slowly started to turn round, and we ended up reversing into

Rouen, which I think went unnoticed by many people, but for those of us out on deck, a strange phenomenon.

With temperatures reaching 28°C, Rouen was shimmering just a short distance from the mooring and shuttle buses were provided for us to go ashore. With two nights and two and a half days ahead of us in Rouen, there was no need to rush, so for me, a relaxing morning sunbathing on deck followed by lunch on the ship. The journey into Rouen city centre took just ten minutes and we were deposited very close to the ancient and very famous Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Rouen. The city was very busy, it was very hot, so we decided to take a tour of the city courtesy of the little train/bus. This proved an interesting way to see the sights of Rouen as it passed through the very narrow lanes and alleyways of the city, and disturbingly close to diners and drinkers.

A visit to the cathedral which in daylight is spectacular was next on the agenda, but the highlight of the visit was definitely the free Cathedral Light Show which takes place every summer evening, between June and September, with dazzling illuminations projected on the building's façade. The Cathedral of Notre Dame is highlighted each year thanks to an incredible show of sound and light. When night falls,

the Place de la Cathédrale is full of people watching this fully emotive show. After a first show on the theme of Impressionism in 2015, this year the cathedral is dressed for a new show, based on two themes: Joan of Arc and the Vikings. Established in 911 by the Scandinavian chief Rollo, Normandy experienced some dark hours with the Viking invasions of the ninth century. Joan of Arc, a legendary character in France, tells her story on the façade of the tallest cathedral in France.

Back at MV Boudicca, a number of tours were available whilst we were at Rouen, one of which was a visit to Claude Monet's garden at Giverny, approximately one hour's coach drive from the port. It was another very hot day and the gardens were very busy with tourists, but our guide was the most informative lady I have ever known, and we all benefitted from her extensive knowledge of Monet: his life, his works and his house. We all took photos of the famous water-lily ponds, which positively glistened in the heat. We marvelled at the height of the bamboo, within the gardens, which was a mere 3 feet in height in Monet's time, and now towered over us at 30 feet. The famous bridge over the ponds was groaning with the weight of the visitors and somewhat lost its appeal because of it and did not prove to be the photo vantage point we were looking forward to.

Life on board continued whilst we were moored at Rouen, particularly so for the crew who were very busy maintaining and painting the ship, no doubt helped by the fantastic weather. The decks were full of passengers enjoying the sunshine



and relaxing in the pools and just chillin'. We chose the Lido deck for a spontaneous 'flash mob' of *One Voice* (a choir favourite) to the surprise of the sun-bathers, but we received rapturous applause for our impromptu performance, and it proved to be a good advert for our on-board concerts. We were accompanied throughout our flash mob by some of the FAFFS who executed some great moves in the Jacuzzis and definitely enhanced our performance. Other (professional) evening entertainment also continued with an entrancing show from an Edith Piaf tribute and a very funny comedian, billed as a 'wordsmith' and who definitely had a quirky way with words.

We finally departed from Rouen on Monday 26 August and began to meander our way back down the river Seine headed for the pretty port of Honfleur, passing again the lovely French countryside, still shimmering under the unusually hot skies. It was whilst we meandered that we gave our first concert on board that afternoon. We regaled a surprisingly full Neptune Lounge with our rendition of *Les Miserables*, which was very well received, and we finished with another choir favourite, *When the Saints go Marching In*. We were delighted by the reception we got and looked forward to our second concert scheduled to take place the following evening, whilst we were setting off across the English Channel.

Before that, we arrived in Honfleur around 6.00 on Monday evening and moored up on the frankly, very small, harbourside. Once again shuttle buses were available for us to use to get into Honfleur, and many people took advantage of this to see Honfleur at night, whilst the rest of us stayed on board, took part in the nightly quiz and generally enjoyed the warm evening and the company of our group and fellow passengers.

Tuesday 27 August dawned with the ship shrouded in sea mist, with no sign of the blue sky and sunshine we had become accustomed to, however, within a couple of hours this had lifted, and the sun broke through and the temperature rose again. Honfleur is a very pretty port on Seine's estuary. It has glorious historic houses which jostle for position on the quays alongside art galleries, boutique shops,

cafés and restaurants. Just up the hill is St Catherine's church, the largest church in France to be built entirely from wood by the shipwrights in the second half of the 15th century and is now listed as an historic monument. The town has many alleyways to explore, two beautiful gardens and a beach. The river is tidal and those of us whose cabins were on the lowest deck found ourselves creeping below the level of the quay and disappear into the depths of the river.



Tuesday evening also saw us perform our second concert, once again to a packed Neptune Lounge. The standing ovation we received and feedback from our own group and other passengers was fantastic and we were very proud of ourselves, and it proved to be a fitting end to yet another fabulous cruise. I think it is safe to say that our enjoyment of these cruises increases every time we go, and therefore, it won't be long before we are planning our fourth sojourn with Fred. Olsen and his wonderful cruise liners and fantastic staff and crew. In the meantime, we have made yet more memories this year, enjoyed some amazing weather and a slightly different cruise in that we were in port for the majority of the time, but it didn't detract from our enjoyment of the cruise and our delight at being able to entertain our fellow passengers at the same time as benefitting from the wonderful hospitality which Fred. Olsen provide.

We will be back!

Searching for a new conductor

Gippeswyk Singers - Anglia Group - Nancy Graham

Geoff Lavery, our current musical director, will be stepping down in May 2021 after his current tenure of 10 years. We are a chamber choir of approximately 40 singers originally founded by Geoff in 1972 with the aim of raising money for local charities with the profits from our concerts. Geoff has taken the choir from strength to strength with tireless energy and enthusiasm and finishes with a flourish - a final concert in May 2021 at Snape Maltings Concert Hall.

We enjoy singing a wide range of sacred and secular music, both a cappella and accompanied, and occasionally larger choral works with professional soloists and orchestral accompaniment.

The choir performs several local concerts each year and the occasional wedding as well as touring every second summer with



successful concert tours to Holland (2014), Yorkshire (2016), The West Country (2018) with a further tour planned to Elgar Country in Gloucestershire in 2020.

Gippeswyk Singers have successfully organised several concert tours themselves by choosing an area of interest and searching the internet for possible concert venues. Occasionally we find a church which is happy to host the event with the profits going to their church funds or local charities of their choice. We have found it to be extremely helpful to have a personal contact in the area we are visiting — someone who is enthusiastic about promoting the event. We then use a local coach company for transport and organise the accommodation and meals well in advance.

The choir tours have been hugely popular with the Singers. Travelling, sharing meals and sightseeing as well as the joy of sing-

"Sing together! Sing Well! Sing happy!"

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ing together has created warmth and lasting friendships amongst the group and helped to form a wonderfully friendly and cohesive choir. Performances just get better and better!

Gippeswyk Singers has also performed to sell-out audiences at Snape Maltings Concert Hall where they joined forces with two

other Suffolk choirs (Beccles Choral Society and Phoenix Singers) and Lambeth Orchestra from London for Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* (2017) and Verdi's *Requiem* (2019), both conducted by Geoff Lavery.

We're hoping to attract an experienced and enthusiastic new conductor to lead us into the future and many more years of

successful singing. Applications can be downloaded from our website – closing date 31.03.20.

www.gippeswyksingers.co.uk

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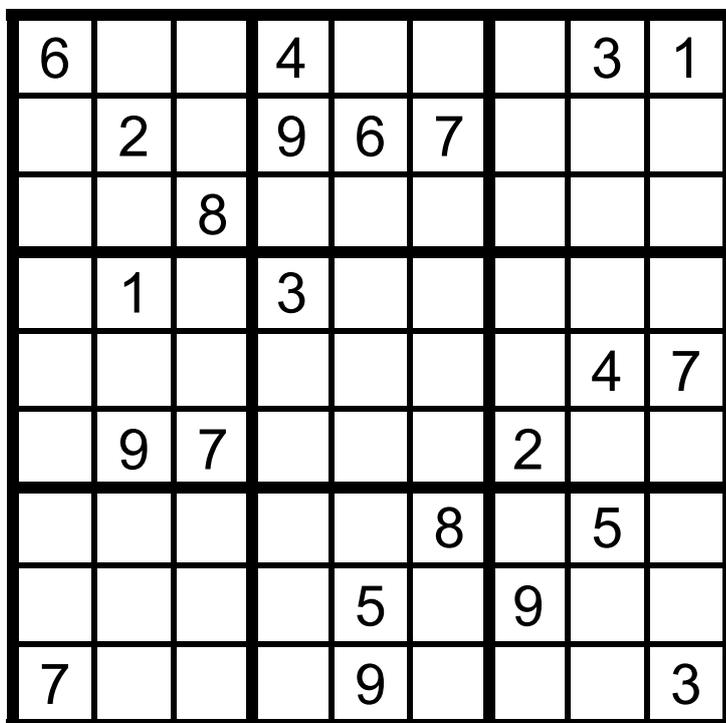
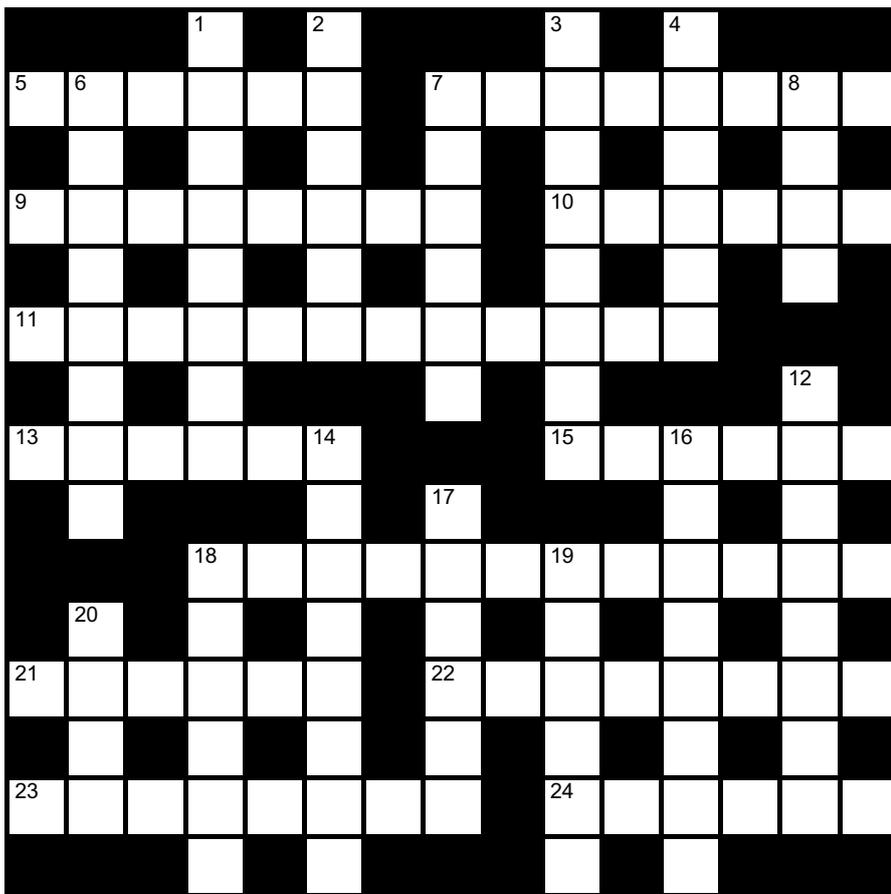
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PUZZLE PAGE



**SOLUTIONS
PAGE 31**

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Across

- 5 A trip into the wild? (6)
- 7 Sounds like the man was gunned down (8)
- 9 Running wild racyly at a brisk pace (8)
- 10 Squaddie takes a swift look around? (6)
- 11 Really quite cold (8,4)
- 13 Old fool (6)
- 15 Remove offensive limb (6)
- 18 Strong and untouchable (12)
- 21 Mad chaser in hunt (6)
- 22 molar (8)
- 23 Denizen at the end of evil lager (8)
- 24 Moroccan spiced stew (6)

Down

- 1 Be aware of the timepiece (5,3)
- 2 Semi lieutenant encloses social setting (6)
- 3 Velocity is reaped by accident (8)
- 4 Souped up fallacious imposter (6)
- 6 Rabid Rabbi led the off script speaker (2-6)
- 7 May he-men cause maiming in the beginning (6)
- 8 Profane commitment (4)
- 12 Very large girl's name as Hitchhiker (8)
- 14 Pigs all over the highway (8)
- 16 Celestial cancer (4,4)
- 17 Equal pressure (6)
- 18 Spread out fabric (6)
- 19 Sounds like an incentive for action is in view (6)
- 20 Peculiar looking pike like a peaked cap (4)

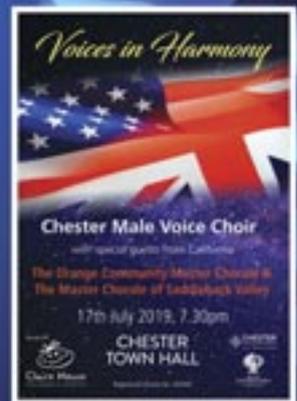
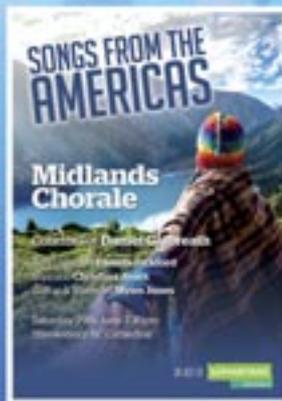
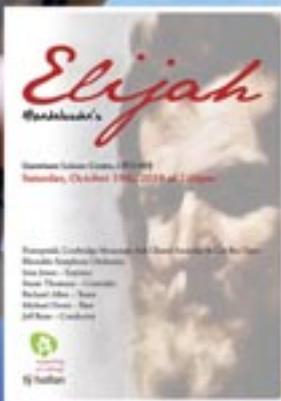


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October 2019 “Let the People Sing”

Viva Musica Choir - Midlands South West - Lorraine Newman



The choir celebrated its 30th Anniversary on Saturday 19th October at St Mary’s Church in Stourbridge. The concert, ‘Let the People Sing’, showcased the achievements of the choir since it was formed in 1989. Favourite pieces voted by members of the choir were performed, together with music from some of the many special concerts held throughout the last 30 years.

The choir is fortunate to have many wonderful soloists, many of whom performed during the evening. Soprano Sarah Fellows and baritone Matthew Terrado performed the duet from Mozart’s Magic Flute.

Matthew then joined sopranos Louise Sawalha and Laura Wright and tenor John Gripton in the choir’s performance of *One Day More* from *Les Miserables*. Soprano Elizabeth Haney and alto Jo Welch performed the solo roles in Jerome Kern’s *Can’t Help Loving that Man* and soprano Debbie Wright sang *Les Filles de Cadiz* by Delibes.

The choir performed *The Seal Lullaby* by Whitacre, Parry’s *I Was Glad* and a medley from *Fiddler on the Roof*, which were voted firm favourites by the members.

The choir also performed the *Toreadors’ Chorus* by Bizet in tribute to its perform-

ance of *Carmen* at Dudley Town Hall in 1994 and Elgar’s *As Torrents in Summer*, which was performed at the choir’s first ever concert. The audience was then invited to join the choir in singing *The Beatles Let it Be* and *Dancing Queen* by Abba.

A particular highlight of the evening was a performance by the choir’s accompanist, Andrew Biggs, of *Widor’s Toccata* from *Symphony No 5* on the church organ.

Throughout the concert there were readings by members of the choir and founder members reflected on the choir’s formation.

Coming to a screen near you?

Local Vocals - Midlands North - Sheila DeHaan

Our choir was first formed in August 2012 by Ruth Hickenbottom. In July 2018 Ruth was forced to give up leading the choir. She had become a ‘celebrant’, a person who is licenced to perform funeral services on a non-religious or semi-religious basis, and her services had become so popular she needed to devote more time to them. We thought that the choir would fold but two of us decided to call a meeting of the twenty-three members to gauge interest in keeping the choir going. The result was a unanimous vote to do exactly that. Our choir is all about having fun and companionship whilst singing and none of us wanted to lose that.

We have become a co-operative community choir. We have an elected committee to assist in keeping the choir going, but we believe our choir belongs to all of us, and so we try to involve everyone in decisions. We renamed ourselves Local Vocals as, although we are based in Wheaton Aston in Staffordshire, we draw in members from the surrounding villages and now have 30 members.

One of our members, Sally Dyer, was persuaded to stand up front and conduct us on a temporary basis. Fourteen months later we still have not found a full-time replacement choir leader, and every time

we have advertised for one, we just get more bookings, (seven so far this year). However, we are currently trialling a partnership with a lovely gentleman who has vast experience with choirs. He is unable to become our full-time choir leader due to other commitments but is assisting us with arrangements and harmonies. Two weeks in it is looking promising.

This July Local Vocals Choir were thrilled to get an email from their founder and former choir leader. Two years ago Ruth had conducted a funeral service for a family member of an employee of the BBC and, fast forward two years, the BBC In-



also produced arrangements and harmonies for us.

The reason for Sally's reluctance is that she is a full time, very busy, paediatric consultant at a West Midlands Hospital. She specialises in treating children with Cystic Fibrosis. This is the most common genetic disease suffered by children in the UK. 1 in every 2,500 people are born with the condition. Internal organs, especially the lungs and digestive system, become clogged with a thick sticky mucus. This causes both breathing and digestive problems and children can be on up to 32 tablets a day to function. Although treatments are available life expectancy is, at present, shortened. Sally is totally devoted to her work and raising funds for research into beating Cystic Fibrosis. Last year she took part in a 24-hour swim around a lake. This year she announced to the choir that she would be swimming the Channel.

On 16 July 2019 Sally and three friends/colleagues, 'The Crazy Crawlers' set off from Dover at 11.00 and swam in relay for 12 hours until they hit the coast of France. They had a target of raising £5000 for the charity Cystic Fibrosis Care. The final total was a magnificent £7550.

The choir never doubted that Sally would achieve her aim. As well as raising two beautiful children under 9, she lives a very active family life, continues swimming, and yet still, regularly, gives up her free time to help out at our local pensioners' luncheon club. We think Sally is Superwoman and could not be more proud of her. She is already planning her next exploit.

side Out Programme had decided to do a feature about the growing rise in the use of celebrants for 'civil' weddings and funerals. Via her former contact, Ruth was asked if she would take part in the programme. The angle that the BBC wanted to take was that celebrants often come from some sort of performing background, and given this, Ruth had mentioned that she has appeared in musical theatre, as a solo singer and also ran two choirs, one at Wheaton Aston and the other at Albrighton. The BBC took up Ruth's idea that she could be filmed conducting the choir, so on 19 August 2019 a small film crew descended on the choir's practice night at St Mary's CofE School in Wheaton Aston.

We time-warped back to the old days when we used to perform joint concerts with the Albrighton choir as 'Village Voices', the choir that Ruth had first set up in August 2012, and ten members of the former Albrighton choir joined us for filming. We decided to perform *You To Me Are Everything*, a song first made famous by The Real Thing, because it is upbeat, and reflected what our choir is all about, enjoying ourselves. We sang the song through once in its entirety for recording and then did it several other times so that the choir and Ruth could be filmed from different angles to be edited in, or out, as the BBC sees fit.

The broadcast is due to air in late autumn, or possibly New Year. The BBC is going to let Ruth know when a date is set. We were told that it will appear on one of the regional West Midlands Inside Out programmes, not currently showing, but will be aired on Monday evenings, and can be picked up on BBC iPlayer any-

where in the country. We have been warned by other people that our slot may be drastically cut, or even end up on the cutting room floor, but we had an amazing, fun, soul-lifting experience making the recording, so we could live with that. The guys from the BBC were lovely and put us at totally at our ease, and it was wonderful to be with Ruth again... even if it was 'for one night only'.

Sally Dyer Swims the Channel

In August 2018 Local Vocal's choir leader Ruth Hickenbottom had to resign due to personal commitments. A member of our choir, Sally Dyer, reluctantly agreed to give up her comfy seat within the choir and stand out front to conduct us. She has



92nd Annual General Meeting 32nd Annual Conference Weekend 27-29 March 2020

Time seems to race along as it is now the publication where I give you a more detailed timeline for the weekend and information on the hotel facilities and directions. I like to give you some detail about the speakers and proposed content of their seminars together with the location and content of the conference concert.

I am very aware that 2020 is a special year for the association as it is its centenary year. To that end I have made every effort to ensure we have the best hotel for our conference base and a superb venue for our concert in Blackburn. In coming to a decision to recommend Blackburn as our base to the executive I have been mindful that there are two choirs in the area which were founder members of the Association in 1920. These two choirs are the Nelson Arion Glee Union and the Colne Orpheus Glee Union, both of which are very much alive and successful choirs.



After visiting and considering hotels in the area and taking local advice there is no doubt that the Dunkenhalgh Hotel, Blackburn is by far my best choice. Well-appointed a short distance from town and on a bus route, access is easy for those wishing to tour the area. It is a spacious hotel having ample four star accommodation, free car parking for 250 vehicles on site and a flat park-like campus surrounding the building. Formerly a manor house, it has several annex extensions. One of these will be our accommodation wing having lifts to all three floors and easy access to the breakfast and conference areas. We are fortunate in having David Lawrence as our guest

speaker for the two seminars. We have asked him to include a resume of his work and aspirations for the future particularly his involvement with Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Young Voices. He will include conducting techniques and knowing David there will be a great deal of singing and laughter. He is particularly interested in introducing European music styles into his presentations.

We have Tim Knight filling the second seminar on Saturday concentrating on Performing Rights. Tim is an interesting speaker who is well versed in copyright law and Performing Rights and will be sure to be entertaining in his presentation.

We are pleased to welcome Dr Douglas Coombes to our list of esteemed speakers to conference. He will be taking us on a Singing Trip Around the World looking at different styles of music and the way different cultures experience the joy of singing. Douglas is also holding a session from 10.00-4.00. on the Friday of conference offering a class on conducting techniques and a vocal workshop. We are opening this to the schools in the area and we invite both teachers and pupils to come along. The Music Hub in Bolton who include Blackburn in their area of operation have agreed to advertise the day which is free to all. The session is open to all delegates who wish to attend.

Our concert will be held at the King George's Hall Blackburn and coach transport is arranged to transfer from our hotel and later return. The mandatory bacon rolls will be patiently awaiting our arrival back at base. The hall is a 1500 seat auditorium in the centre of Blackburn and ideal for our centenary concert. The two choirs already mentioned will be joined by Nelson Civic Ladies Choir, Blackburn Peoples Choir, Rossendale Ladies Choir, Rossendale Male Voice Choir and Vocalise Youth Choir. The Second Rossendale Scout Band will also be in attendance to complete the line-up. The beneficiary of the concert will be the East

Lancashire Hospice who have been so enthusiastic about the concert and are helping with advertising.

I have reduced the number of seminars this year to four to give a little breathing space for delegates. It will give you all more chance to view the trade stands which will be present on Saturday. It seems we are quite popular with companies who wish to be included. To date I have 14 interested covering many aspects of choral singing, touring and equipment.



Friends, this is Centenary year and one not to be missed at conference. It would be so good to see as many as possible take the opportunity to be involved in this special year. It is an achievement for any organisation to survive for a decade. To have one celebrating its centenary of which you are a member of is remarkable. Please take the plunge and come and join us. I have been able to freeze the price of the weekend at £230 which is the third year at this costing. This includes your ticket to the concert on Saturday evening and coach transfers. Two nights bed breakfast and evening meal and Saturday lunch. Full use of the hotel's swimming pool is also included on your package.

You are assured of a great time and wonderful experiences with like-minded people who enjoy the art of singing.

Clive Lawton



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference Booking Form 1 27-29 March 2020

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

Conference Costs

Full Conference Stay

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

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

Payment is due by early February 2020

Reminders will be sent

Room Type - single double twin

Day Delegate (Saturday)

Please circle requirements

Refreshments and lunch included £40.00
Evening meal Saturday add £25.00
Concert ticket Saturday add £10.00
Friday Gala Dinner add £35.00

Day Delegates

Payment in full when booking (non-refundable)

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

You must inform us in writing of any cancellation by 1 March 2019
(Cancellations after this date will incur a charge of 50% of the total fee payable)
Substitute guests will be welcome

Amount submitted £ _____

Please return your completed forms and deposits to the address below

Cheques should be made payable to
The National Association of Choirs
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to the address below

You may pay by BACS
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Sort Code 40-52-40
Account no. 00012575
Reference. Conference.

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

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



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference Booking Form 2 27-29 March 2020

Mercure Blackburn Dunkenhalgh Hotel & Spa

Blackburn Road Clayton le Moors, Accrington, BB5 5JP

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

Guest 1

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

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

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

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

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

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

Guest 2

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

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

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

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

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

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

PLEASE PHOTOCOPY THIS FORM FOR MORE GUESTS IF REQUIRED

Please return your completed forms and deposits to

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

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



National Conference Provisional Timetable 27-29 March 2020

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

Friday 27 March

On Arrival enter your car registration number into the pad at reception to gain free car parking for your stay.

2.00	Delegates arrive, register and collect delegate pack
4.00	National Officers' meeting
4.30-6.00	Come and Sing with Celia Johns and Karl Harper
7.30	Delegates and guests assemble for dinner
7.30	Reception National Officers and guests
8.00	Dinner is served - 3 course Gala Dinner with wine
9.30	After dinner entertainment
12.00	Bar closes
10.00-4.00	Dr Douglas Coombes conducting and vocal workshop

Saturday 28 March

7.00	Access to trade stands to set up
7.30-11.00	Breakfast in main dining room
9.30-10.30	Seminar 1 David Lawrence talking about his current projects and commissioning music
10.30-11.00	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.00-12.00	Seminar 2 Tim Knight Performing Rights and general running of choirs
12.00-1.00	Trade stand presentations (six 10 minute presentations from trade stands present at conference)
1.30	Lunch and trade stand viewing (lunch included in full delegate package)
2.30-3.00	Annual General Meeting
3.00-4.00	Seminar 3 Dr Douglas Coombes Singing around the world
5.00	Early evening two course meal
6.45	Coaches leave for the concert
7.30	Concert at the King George's Hall Blackburn
10.00 approx	Following concert, light refreshments will be provided back at the hotel
12.00	Bar closes

Sunday 29 March

7.00-11.00	Breakfast
	For those delegates wishing to attend local churches, details will be available at hotel reception
9.30-10.30	Seminar 4 David Lawrence Practical singing session with an emphasis on European music
10.30-11.00	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.00-11.30	Annual General Meeting
11.30-1.00	Members Open Forum
1.00	Conference closes (lunch available in dining room at members' own expense)
1.00	National Officers' debrief meeting (guillotined after one hour)

£1,016 raised for 'Dementia Choir'

Pye Hill & District Male Voice Choir – Midlands East – Malcolm Hill

On Saturday 9 November a very special concert took place at St Wilfrid's Church, Kirkby in Ashfield, by the Pye Hill & District Male Voice Choir and special guests which raised the staggering amount of £1,016 for the Alzheimer's Society 'Dementia Choir', to support its work within the local community and beyond.

On a very wet and cold evening the public turned out in great numbers to enjoy a wonderful evening of choral music and talented guest soloists, the highlight being at the end of the concert the 'Dementia Choir' singing its signature tune by the Beatles, *In My Life*, featuring Anita Butler as soloist with everyone present joining in.

In May of this year, Vicky McClure presented the 'Dementia Choir' on BBC TV



East Midlands dating from 1903, were keen to support the 'Dementia Choir' for the inspiration it brings to so many people living with dementia. It is now well known that singing stimulates memory and brings an associated sense of happiness and physical and emotional well-being.

Guest soloists included Vivien Easom, Tia Rose Green, Issac Green, Anita and Joe Butler, all being accompanied by Luke Green on piano.

The feedback from the audience was overwhelming and the concert was considered a great success by everyone involved.

Why not come and join the Pye Hill and District Male Voice Choir and enjoy the benefits gained from singing yourself and

who appeared in concert at the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham, to great acclaim. The Pye Hill & District Male Voice Choir, which is the oldest choir of its nature in the



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Contact: Bruce Pell, Chairman, Exeter Police and Community Choir

at the same time help to raise money for a wide variety of charities and good causes. We have recruited three new members in recent months, and they are loving it: 'like having a new family'. It could not be easier; it's fun, inexpensive and you will quickly make new friends.

Whether you are an experienced or a non-experienced singer of any age, you will be made equally welcome and given every assistance. We particularly need bass singers (low voices) and tenors (high voices), but all voices are needed and welcomed. The choir practises at the Dale Club, Jacksdale, every Monday evening at 7.30, other than Bank Holidays and an open invitation is extended to you.

If you require any further information on joining the choir, offers of sponsorship, concert bookings and arrangements please ring Malcolm Hill on 07706036946 or 01773 602743.



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60 years of singing

Nelson Civic Ladies Choir - Lancashire North - Caroline Greaves



The Nelson Civic choir is actually 70 years old. The Civic Choirs organisation was formed in 1949 as the Nelson Municipal Children's Choir and in 1953, under its conductor, Edward Parr, was split into two groups - a primary group for children from 5-11 years and a junior group for boys and girls from 11-16 years.

The Nelson Civic Ladies' Choir was formed in 1959 from a small number of sixteen year old girls in the Junior Choir who were anxious to continue singing with young people of their own age group. This small band of ladies went from strength to strength and over the years has gained recognition as an outstanding choral group. We still have over 50 active members some of whom have been with the choir for many years. Our longest serving member, Betty Willoughby has sung with us for over 65 years.

There have, of course, been pinnacles of achievement which stand out - particularly first prize in the Ladies Choir competition at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, and the 1st prize winners in the BBC Television 'Grand Sing'. The choir also

appeared on the hit BBC TV Series, 'Last Choir Standing', reaching the final 28 out hundreds of choirs that applied.

It has broadcast on radio and television on numerous occasions and whilst concert engagements will always be a major part of the choir's calendar, both here and abroad, competing against other choirs on festival platforms throughout the length and breadth of the country helps to keep the choir on top form.

This year to celebrate our 60th Anniversary we held a charity concert at the Pendle Hippodrome Theatre in Colne, where we sang a programme of songs selected from our repertoire over the past 60 years. The concert raised £800 for a local dementia support charity. We also held a social evening for current and past members of the choir which was a great success. We finished the year with our annual Christmas concert at the Colne Municipal Hall where we were supported by a local ukelele group and a final concert at the beautiful Towneley Hall in Burnley.

In 1999, after over 40 years as Musical Director, Ted moved to Cornwall with his

wife Kath to live nearer to his family. Sadly Ted passed away earlier this year, he now holds the honorary title of 'Conductor Emeritus' deceased.

When Ted retired, the position of Musical Director was filled by acclaimed local musician, Nigel Wilkinson, who continued to develop the choir and achieved further success. Our current Musical Director, John Garrett, took up the baton in January 2003 and the ladies choir is flourishing under his direction.

We rehearse every Wednesday at St John's Methodist Church in Colne and are always looking for new members.

2020 is looking like another busy year for us as we prepare for the NAC Centenary Concert at the King George's Hall in Blackburn, where we will join many local choirs for what we expect to be a fantastic night of music, and our own summer concert at the Hippodrome Theatre in Colne when we will be celebrating the life of Ted Parr, singing some of his favourite pieces.

<http://www.nelsoncivicladieschoir.btck.co.uk>

The ORPHEUS Male Voice Choir

Grimsby / Cleethorpes

Musical Director

Our current Musical Director is retiring after many years at the helm. The Orpheus Male Voice Choir is looking to appoint a new Musical Director. Candidates should, ideally, be musically qualified with experience of varied choral music ranging from traditional male voice choir through to light classical and modern popular music. Candidates with proven experience would also be considered. We are looking for a candidate who is enthusiastic, innovative and inspirational to the singers. He/she should have a modern outlook to attract younger singers while maintaining the high standard of singing for which the OMVC has been recognised over its 70 years history, both at home and abroad.

Interested persons should contact the choir through the Secretary

01472 502833

alan.jacklin@orpheus-online.org



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bobandcarol1@talktalk.net



East Fife goes to Holyrood

East Fife Male Voice Choir - Scottish Region East – George Paterson

As another year begins, we look back on 2019 with good memories. One of the choir's highlights was an invitation for ten of our members and their partners to attend the Royal Garden Party, Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh in July. Names were put into the hat and the ten names selected were soon looking forward to the day. The wives/partners dressed in their finest whilst the choristers donned their uniforms and looked most impressive.

Liz Taylor, wife of one of the members attending, penned the following poem to commemorate the day.

East Fife Male Voice Choir visits Holyrood (3 July 2019)

By Lord Chamberlain's invitation, with
ER11 and gilded crest
We made our way to Holyrood, each one
dressed in their best
Our uniforms looked smart and neat, our
ladies at our side
Their fancy hats and fascinators dusted

down with pride
With IDs checked, the brass band played,
the atmosphere was jolly
The sun shone bright the sky was clear -
no need to use a brolly
To left and right, the Tea Tents stood, my
goodness, quite a spread
Cucumber sandwiches of course - no
crusts around the bread.
A choice of soft drinks and the cakes, all
lined up to delight
The chocolate cake with coat of arms
was such a shame to bite
At 4 o'clock the Queen and Royals came
to have their tea
And mingle with expectant crowds who
craned their necks to see
The Royal Archers lined the way, their
longbows at the ready
While snipers on the palace roof stood
guard with rifles steady
But all too soon the moment came for
Queen and us to part
The bands played on, thus making sure
we all left in good heart

To sum it up on a nutshell would be
difficult to say
Except that altogether, 'twas a memorable
day.

Our usual summer break was interspersed
with a few additional practice days as we
have many new songs added to our reper-
toire. These extra practice evenings were
not mandatory but happily they were well
attended which is a tribute to our
members willingness to learn new songs.

The choir had several concerts in autumn,
the first being a lunch time concert in St
Paul's Cathedral, Dundee. This was fol-
lowed by a joint concert with Colwyn
Male Voice Choir in aid of Haiti Help. Con-
certs were then held in Leven, Kinross,
and Culross Abbey which were also very
successful. Jim Broadley our past musical
director and honorary president recently
spent some time in hospital and I'm sure
all who know him will be wishing him a
speedy recovery.





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Fairburn Singers

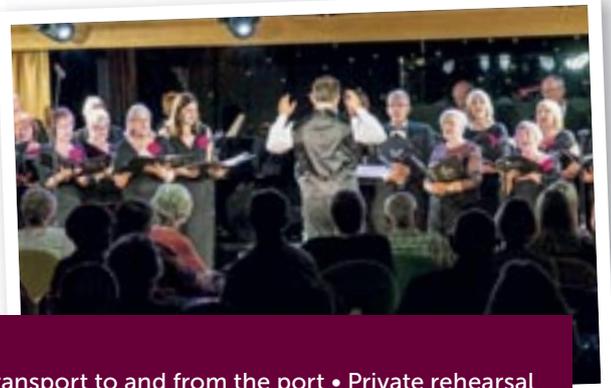
"The decks were full of passengers enjoying the sunshine and relaxing in the pools. We chose the Lido deck for a spontaneous 'flash mob' of 'One Voice' (a choir favourite) to the surprise of the sunbathers, and received rapturous applause in return for our impromptu performance. This proved to be a good advert for our on-board concerts. The standing ovation at the end of each performance and the feedback we received was fantastic. I think it is safe to say that our enjoyment of these cruises increases every time we go and therefore, it will not be long before we are planning our fourth sojourn with Fred Olsen and his wonderful cruise liners and fantastic staff and crew."

Amici Singers

"As a tour leader it could not have been easier to organise. Friendly, helpful staff made the process very easy. The cruise was a terrific experience and exceeded everyone's expectations. The choir performance rehearsals and shows were pre-arranged, additional equipment provided and were a huge success with guests on-board. We received such positive feedback and interaction from other guests. Truly great service, excellent on board facilities and fabulous food. A tremendous experience."

The South Wales Male Choir

"We experienced full capacity audiences as we delighted fellow passengers during two formal concerts (in addition to many sporadic outburst of song!) whilst on board and received standing ovations at the end of each concert. The whole tour party was most impressed, not only by the standards of service that they received but also the polite efficient and cheerful manner of the friendly staff."



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Materna Requiem - Scottish Premiere

Dunfermline Choral Union - Scotland East - Ruth McIntyre

For over 140 years Dunfermline Choral Union has entertained Fife audiences with a varied and eclectic range of music ranging from *The Messiah* to *Bohemian Rhapsody*. While the choir loves performing the well-loved classical favourites our inspirational and innovative MD, Mandy Miller, always likes to mix things up a little and this year's annual spring showcase concert was no exception.

We are thrilled and excited to be performing the Scottish premiere of *Materna Requie'*, a new work by award winning young composer Rebecca Dale. This beautiful and moving work, a tribute to the composer's late mother, was first performed in September 2018 at St Asaph's Cathedral in North Wales and Rebecca's debut album 'Requiem For My Mother'

stormed straight into the UK specialist Classical album charts at number one.

A name perhaps unfamiliar to some, Rebecca Dale has been composing from an early age and has worked extensively in film and TV music, having been involved in projects for Disney, 20th Century Fox, Sky and the BBC amongst others. Classic FM called Rebecca Dale 'one of today's most exciting young composers' and 'a household name in years to come' and she made history in 2018 by being the first female composer to sign to Universal Music's Decca Classics label, and the first woman to sign to Decca Publishing. Frequently featured on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM, Rebecca has written extensively for choir and orchestra and has many nominations and awards for her work.

We hope you can join us on Saturday 7 March 2020 at the Vine Conference Centre in Dunfermline. Our programme will include Faure's *Requiem* as well as Rebecca Dale's *Materna Requiem* with soloists Emily Mitchell, Seumas Begg and Jerome Knox. With a choir of over one hundred and a full orchestra it promises to be a musical treat.

For more information we have a website

www.dunfermlinechoralunion.co.uk



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Making a good start

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir - Scotland West - Anne Kay



Greetings from Glasgow where we've had a busy season so far. We started off by working hard in preparation for our tour of Argyll and Lochaber, when we performed four concerts over three days. Two of the programmes in Lochgilhead and St Conan's Kirk lasted for one hour only and the others, in Oban itself and in Fort William, were full concerts.

There was great determination amongst the choir to make the weekend a success as this was Cameron's first official tour as conductor. And what an excellent time we had. Beautiful venues with good acoustics, warm and welcoming audiences, great food, shockingly good weather and the choir feeling very comfortable under Cameron's guidance.

We were also fortunate that Matthew McIlree, son of one of our first sopranos, was able to join us as accompanist for the weekend. Matthew is a 2nd year student at the University of St Andrews, where he has taken up both piano and organ scholarships alongside his degree in mathematics and computer science. He began learning piano and violin in 2005 and achieved a place at the Music School of

Douglas Academy in 2012. There, he took up organ and studied with David Hamilton from 2013, having been introduced to the instrument at his local church. He has been a multiple prize winner at both the Glasgow and Inverclyde music festivals, including twice winning the Glasgow Society of Organists' Trophy at the Glasgow open organ class, and three times winning the top piano award, as well the 2016 overall prize, in Inverclyde. He now regularly accompanies St Salvator's Chapel Choir, including on tours to France and the Netherlands. Matthew's presence added to the very special weekend during which we also raised money for Carers Trust, Oban's Hope Kitchen and funds for the restoration of St Conan's Kirk and Duncansburgh Church.

Following our successful trip, we had a couple of most enjoyable concerts in Linlithgow and Shawlands, Glasgow – again, raising funds for Rotary Charities and Lepra. For these concerts we were accompanied by Neil Shaw, who has worked with the choir on a number of occasions and is very popular with our choristers. Neil studied piano at the Royal Northern College of Music. He is an extremely ex-

perienced performer and accompanist across a variety of genres. During the last 10 years, Neil has worked extensively in London's West End on a variety of shows. Much in demand as an accompanist, he is now based in Glasgow and working freelance with prestigious organisations and venues including the Royal Scottish Conservatoire, Scottish Ballet and the Glasgow Phoenix Choir.

The choir's main work of this part of the season, though, was to learn a host of new Christmas music for our series of four December concerts. The programmes included a favourite of Cameron's - *Nazareth* by Charles Gounod, which was new to most of the choir and which, I think, we all came to love. John Rutter's arrangement of *O Holy Night* replaced our traditional version; Philip Ledger's *Still, Still, Still* challenged the choir's ability to sing in German, though a Scottish accent is a definite advantage for this; and for speed and awkward words, we faced Philip Ledger's *On Christmas Night* and the ultimate wording challenge of *Masters in this Hall*, arranged by David Willcocks. Wisely, Cameron retained many of the choir's favourites and maintained the traditions that the audience look forward to as part of a Phoenix Christmas.

Our guests at our main concert in Glasgow Royal Concert Hall were the Inverclyde Junior and Senior Schools' Choirs, Inverclyde Voices and the Whitburn Band. It is often difficult to gauge, from the platform, how well a concert is going, but it appeared that the audience was having a most enjoyable time and messages from family and friends old and new, confirmed that Cameron's first Concert Hall outing as conductor was a great success.

As the choir enjoys a break from rehearsals, we all look forward to more exciting musical challenges in 2020. On behalf of the Glasgow Phoenix Choir, I would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy and musical Christmas and New Year.

Past, Present and...

Warrington Male Voice Choir - North West – Bob Williams



Past... I have no doubt that many choirs are planning to be involved, one way or another, in VE Day 75 the three day (8-10 May) international celebration to mark 75 years since the guns fell silent at the end of the war in Europe.

Planning to mark such an event with music, takes me back some six years when Warrington Male Voice Choir first talked about doing something to mark the centenary of World War 1. As a choir, it had a number of members who went off to fight in the First World War and paid the ultimate sacrifice. It therefore felt as a tribute to them that it should mark the centenary in the only way it knows, with music and song.

For many years, the choir has taken part in Warrington's Remembrance Sunday service, held at the Cenotaph at Bridgefoot in the town centre. However, to mark one hundred years since the start of World War 1, the choir decided to do something more, something never before held in the town. So it was that in early November 2014 Warrington Male Voice Choir, in association with The Royal British Legion, staged the borough's first ever Festival of Remembrance at the Parr Hall, to remember and honour those who lost their lives in the Great War and in other conflicts since.

Following the format of the annual event of the same name, held at the Royal Albert Hall in London, the evening featured music from the choir and The Combined Bands of The Lancashire Artillery & The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, a Service of Remembrance, (including a cascade of

poppy petals and two minutes silence) led by Warrington Council of Faiths, Service Cadet contingents, a reading from the choir's Patron, Terry Waite CBE, and an audience sing-along of wartime songs. Proceeds from the evening went to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and the choir's charity Fisher House a 'home away from home' for military patients and their families, on the site of The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham.



After an emotional and enjoyable evening, enjoyed by an audience of around 500, including the Lord Lieutenant, Mayor and High Sheriff, and very positive feedback, it soon became clear that what was planned as a one off event would have to be staged again the following year. In reality, the choir went on to stage the event, and do the vast majority of the organising, in 2015, 2016 and 2017, to mark the centenary of each year of World War 1, with the same format and with the involvement of the Combined Bands.

The 2018 event, while still remembering the fallen, also recognised and celebrated the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1 and the peace that followed. As a result the format was changed and perfectly reflected in the title Festival of Remembrance, Celebration and Peace 2018. Highlighting the role of young people as custodians of future peace, the evening attracted the largest ever number of cadets and The Choir of Great Sankey High School & Barrow Hall College took part for the first time. Choir Patron, Terry Waite CBE, again attended and read one of his own poems, appropriately entitled Peace. The evening also welcomed some very special VIP guests, in the form of ten seated acrylic silhouettes, four of which were seated amongst the choir, to represent each of the four sections of the choir from which members were lost during World War 1. They formed a commemorative installation to the fallen of the First World War, as part of a project by the charity Remembered called "There But Not There". They were obtained thanks to an award from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, made under the Armistice and Armed Forces Communities programme, which makes awards to bring communities together to remember; and to think about the Armed Forces today.

While the festivals took a lot of organising each year, they provided a fitting tribute to the fallen and enhanced the reputation the choir has for staging well organised events. Year on year, the event grew and SSAFA and Combat Stress also benefitted from the fundraising. For the five years the event ran, over £5,000 was raised for charities.

Despite all the hard work over the years, in 2016, half way through the project, the choir took it to another level with a tour to the Belgian battlefields. The Voices Across The Water tour (4-8 April), saw the choir based in Ypres, and included a performance and wreath laying as part of the daily Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate, an evening concert in Langemark, a visit to the World War 1 battlefields and a sightseeing tour of Bruges.

The terrorist attacks in Belgium, less than two weeks before the choir's tour, provided even more reason for the choir to travel there. In March 1993, in response to the terrorist bombings in Warrington town centre, the choir adopted a special role using music to promote peace and reconciliation across the island of Ireland. Back in those dark days, people across the world showed their support for and solidarity with the Warrington community. In 2016, we were determined to show our solidarity with the people of Belgium and the citizens of Brussels, in particular those affected by the terrible events, by performing and ensuring that our voices were heard loud and clear across the water. Whether the fallen of 100 years ago, or those who died in Brussels, the choir was determined to remember them and went on to open its concert in Langemark with a minutes silence – a moment which moved the audience to tears.

The day before (Tuesday) while on its way to an informal evening meal, the choir visited the Welsh Memorial, at Pilckem Ridge. Unveiled just two years earlier in 2014, it is 'dedicated to all persons of Welsh descent who took part in the First World War'. Some 4,000 daffodils - one for every ten Welsh soldiers killed - have been planted around the memorial. During a short, impromptu, but still extremely moving ceremony, a small group, including two of the choir's Welsh members, laid a wreath while the choir sang *Deep Harmony*.

The choir laid further wreaths at the Langemark war memorial and at Tyne Cot (where it also sang); with nearly 12,000 graves it is now the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world in terms of burials. Our final wreath laying provided the most moving moments of the entire week with the choir honoured to sing and myself honoured to lay a wreath, under the Menin Gate, as part of the Last Post Ceremony. As I'm sure it has done with

other choirs who have sung there, it will live long in the memory of everyone connected with the choir who were there that evening, as will the entire tour.

Back in 2013, little did the choir realise at the time that a germ of an idea would develop, over the next five years, into such a successful project – successful in terms of appreciation from the military and veterans, money raised for charities, the large audiences it attracted, the strengthening of bonds within the choir and the new friends made – on both sides of the Channel. It also clearly showed that if, as a choir, you have an idea, work to develop it to the best of your choir's ability – you might just be surprised by the skills your choir possesses in-house in addition to singing.

Present... Despite the cold and wet weather during most of the day, Warrington Male Voice Choir's visit to the seaside, in early November last year (2019), saw them coming home - with a trophy!

In the adjudicators' notes, the choir's performance was described as 'vital and very engaging', with the individual pieces receiving comments such as 'lovely harmony', 'delightfully light singing', 'really well delivered' and 'lovely gentle singing'.

Commenting immediately after the win, Russell Paterson said: 'I'm so proud of what the choir has achieved. Over the last twelve months it has put a tremendous amount of hard work and commitment into rehearsing the pieces, on top of working on its wider concert programme and it's brilliant when, competing against some excellent choirs, that effort is rewarded with a win. We also got an extra buzz as an English choir winning in Wales - the land of song. This was its first competition since we won in Torquay back in 2012 and speaking to the Chairman and Secretary, we all agree we won't be leaving it another seven years before competing in another competition.'

The choir's winning day came to a fitting end when, in the evening and by pure coincidence, it opened the Festival Celebration



Llandudno's Venue Cymru was the venue for the prestigious North Wales Choral Festival, taking place from 8-10 November 2019. However, the morning was the focus for Warrington Male Voice Choir, competing against four other choirs for the coveted Male Voice category. Performing last, their three competition pieces, including one *Locus Iste* written by the choir's own Musical Director, Russell Paterson, were well received by the audience and, more importantly, by the three competition adjudicators. When Warrington was announced as the winner – receiving a glass trophy and cash prize – it's possible the cheers could be heard back home.

Concert where, once again, its performance was well received by all.

In December the choir 'showed off' the trophy at its annual Christmas Voices Christmas Brass concert; the trophy being carried on stage to the cheers of an almost sell-out audience of 800 at Warrington's Parr Hall, by Roy Findlay, its oldest member at ninety-three, and, at thirty-three, its youngest member, Mike Park – a fitting end to a great 'trophy winning' year for the choir.

Future? ...

All change at Snowdown

Snowdown Colliery Male Voice Choir – Thames South – Peter Hare



The new musical directors have distinguished careers in Kent. Chris Price is the Acting Director of Music at Christ Church College University, Canterbury, and is a lay clerk at Canterbury Cathedral.

He was previously the director of Lees Court Music and remains involved with many university music groups. Richard Ansell teaches music at Tonbridge Grammar School, is a choirmaster and organist at St John's Church, Barham, gives private piano lessons and is the keyboard player in a number of bands including the JB's Zootz swing party band that plays all over Kent.

Snowdown MVC stages about 20 concerts a year and already has many bookings for 2020 and some in 2021. The choir was founded in 1929 by the Welsh coal miners who came to open up the Kent coalfield.

It is particularly fitting therefore that the choir's first event of the coming season is a joint concert with Abertillery MVC. This well-known Welsh choir will be on tour and will appear with Snowdown MVC at St Mary's Church, Walmer, on Saturday 7 March at 7.30. Further details about this concert and other events are available on

mvc@snowdown-choir.co.uk



'Snowdown', one of Kent's leading male voice choirs, is entering a new era in 2020. The choir's musical director, Michael Lewis, has retired after 22 years outstanding service and the post is now shared by Chris Price and Richard Ansell. At the same time Chairman Gerry Tighe has stood down after 7 years service and the post is now filled by David Rance.

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