

# NEWS & VIEWS



229 SPRING 2023



## A Hundred Years Of Song Haydock Male Voice Choir



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<b>4</b>	<b>Crawford's Corner</b>	<b>Chairman's Chat</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Conference 2023</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>The Centenary Concert</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>A Century Of Song</b>
	<i>Peter Carlyon - Webmaster</i>			<i>The Malvern Male Voice Choir</i>
<b>7</b>	<b>100 Years ...</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>New Members Say Hello</b>
	<i>Polperro Fishermen's Choir</i>			<i>The Capricorn Singers Ladies Choir</i>
<b>10</b>	<b>Quintessential Policeman Dies At 90</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>A Hundred Years Of Song</b>
	<i>Exeter Police and Community Choir</i>			<i>Haydock Male Voice Choir</i>
<b>11</b>	<b>A 'Normal' Year On The Horizon!</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>Mrs Irene Hill 1938 - 2022</b>
	<i>Dunfermline Choral Union</i>			<i>The Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir</i>
<b>12</b>	<b>Return To Much-Loved Haunts</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>From Little Acorns...</b>
	<i>The Glasgow Phoenix Choir</i>			<i>Carole Lindsay-Douglas – Lindsay Music</i>
<b>13</b>	<b>Choirs Raise Money For RNLI</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>Glorious Sound After 2 Year Covid Delay</b>
	<i>Alfreton Male Voice Choir</i>			<i>Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir</i>
<b>14</b>	<b>Puzzle Page</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>Puzzle Solutions</b>
				<b>How to send articles</b>
	<b>Beyond The Call Of Duty!</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>The Officers</b>
	<i>Bestwood Male Voice Choir</i>			<b>Meeting Dates</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Platinum Gala Concert</b>		<b>ADVERTISERS</b>	
	<i>Bestwood Male Voice Choir</i>		<b>2</b>	<b>Marsh Commercial</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>A Two And Half Year Wait</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>Majestic</b>
	<i>Côr Meibion Taf</i>		<b>11</b>	<b>Trybooking</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Entering Year 30</b>		<b>29</b>	<b>Lindsay Music</b>
	<i>Chordiality</i>		<b>30</b>	<b>Lynn Oakes</b>

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# Crawford's Corner

## Publications Officer - Bob Swallow



Here we are at the first issue of News & Views for 2023. I tried to make an early start in putting this issue together, inserting articles as choirs sent them to me, and choirs were very good at getting their submissions in.

Yet 'The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men gang aft agley', as Robert Burns said in the poem 'To A Mouse'. On Saturday 7 January, after I had sent a copy of my progress for the Chairman to deliver her Chairman's Chat, I opened my computer to the 'blue screen of death'. The lovely chap who helps me with computers had only just returned from a Caribbean cruise and collected my computer on Monday evening to see what he could do.

On Thursday morning he rang to say he had fixed it by replacing the hard drive and he would bring it round so we could spend about three hours putting programs back on it.

I spent quite a while the following morning struggling to reactivate the program I use to produce this publication and here I am writing Crawford's Corner and recovering from being without a computer for six days. Those who know me will understand how traumatic that has been.

Right, what do we have for you in this issue. We have a number of choirs who are celebrating or have celebrated centenaries or thirty years of choral singing with their choirs. We have a lovely article where a choir, new to the NAC, have introduced themselves.

Sadly, there are those we have lost from choral work after many years of loyal service. I am sure their choirs will miss them.

There is a lovely article from Carole Lyndsay-Douglas which tells the story of how a cantata composed by her husband Douglas Coombes came into being.

Very important, of course is the informa-

tion you need for this year's conference at Taunton. You need to get your act together if you are to be there to enjoy the input from Douglas Coombes and Edward Rhys-Harry.

As I finish this Crawford's Corner for our Spring issue the sun has just returned to shine in my eyes after half an hour of light snow. 'Spring issue'? Let's hope by the time this reaches you it will be really Spring and the weather will be warmer as you sit with a cup of tea or coffee and relax reading News & Views.



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# Chairman's Chat

## NAC Chairman - Brenda Wilkinson



I think the photograph on the front cover epitomises how we all feel now that we are all back in our familiar surroundings – choir practice rooms and concert venues.

There seems to be an overwhelming 'feel good' factor everywhere.

The challenges we have faced these past three years have certainly not dampened our spirits. In fact, they have been regarded as challenges to be overcome, the pandemic isolated us but we took to the telephone and email to keep in touch with

our friends in our choirs, we created Zoom communities to keep in touch with the music we weren't able to rehearse together, and we can now go about our singing like we did before. There is a saying – you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone – and I think we all now appreciate what choral singing and its community means to us. Unfortunately, for some choirs the joy of recommencing hasn't happened because on top of the dwindling number of choir members, the cost of living crisis was the final death knell for them and they have had to disband.

In various ways over the years we have highlighted the need for forward think-

ing. It has been discussed at length at conference and at MOF meetings, and because of the effects of the pandemic we sent out a copy of Tim Knight's latest book and he also wrote an article in the previous issue of News & Views. Without being accused of teaching grandma to suck eggs, choirs need to look at every aspect of themselves in order to secure their future and the contributions from the choirs in this issue attest to that.

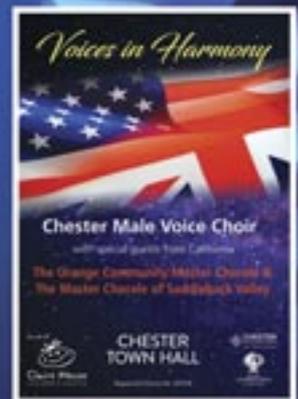
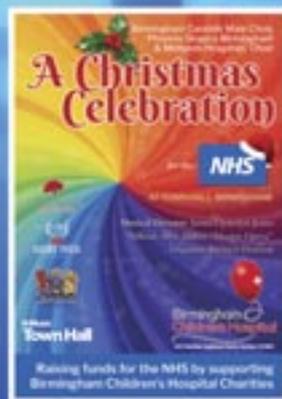
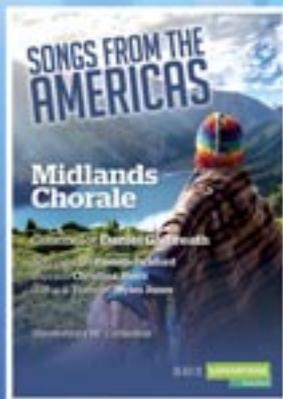
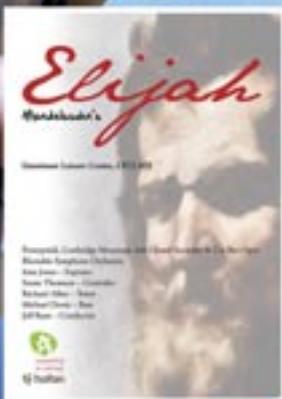
Our choral future is in our hands, and thanks to your membership and friendship these past 100 years, we are in a good position moving into our second century.

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# The Centenary Concert

Peter Carlyon - Webmaster



Performing Ron Corp's pieces

The National Association of Choirs was formed on 21 November 1920 and through various developments it became the nearly 700 strong choir support organisation that it is today. We had planned to celebrate the hundred-year milestone with a special concert in November 2020 but that idea was destroyed by the Covid pandemic. In November 2022, with choirs beginning to build themselves again to their former glories, we were able to finally celebrate the 100 years with a Centenary Concert.

The concert took place on Saturday 19 November 2022 in Blackburn Cathedral with five choirs, all members of the Association. Two of the choirs were founder members of the Association and they were Colne Orpheus Male Voice Choir and Nelson Arion Glee Union Male Voice Choir. Joining them for the concert were the Saddleworth Singers Ladies Choir, the Windermere and Bowness Community Choir and the Greater Manchester Police Male Voice Choir. The original idea had been to showcase all genres of choir at the concert but the reorganised timing of the event left us without any youth choirs.

The delay meant less chance to arrange general advertising and so the concert did suffer from a smaller than ideal number of audience members. Nevertheless, each choir took the opportunity to showcase their own sound and for the audience, it was an ideal chance to contrast and compare the different genres of choral singing. What was most noticeable

were the smiles on the faces of choir members. It was so obvious that they enjoyed what they were doing and were sharing that moment with good friends.

The five choirs surpassed themselves and presented a truly eclectic selection of songs that included some well-known favourites and some I had not heard before.

## Collaboration

The Covid pandemic made a major shift to many aspects of everyone's lives. Choirs were impacted by the lack of rehearsal time together and by the loss of choristers for many reasons. Sadly, many choirs no longer exist. Two of the NAC original choirs have fought strongly against ending their activities and I was heartened by the

collaboration that they developed to maintain their own identities.

The Nelson Arion MVC and the Colne Orpheus MVC are based in a close geographical area. Both choirs were suffering from falling numbers. Some choristers from each choir decided to attend each other's rehearsals and, where possible, to sing with the opposite choir at concerts. This collaboration went even further. The Nelson Arion MVC found themselves without an accompanist and so the MD of Colne Orpheus MVC became the temporary accompanist to Nelson Arion to help out. What a superb demonstration of what can be achieved by our choirs and the wonderful people within them.

## Commissioned Music

Ronald Corp OBE is the president of the NAC. He works all around the country in so many musically based activities that it is difficult to comprehend how he manages to fit so many of them into a normal working life. Indeed, because of his need to be in Bath on the night before our concert and because of strikes by the railways, he was unable to attend this occasion. He had been commissioned to write some music for the Centenary Concert and the simple but very intertwined *Since Singing is So Good a Thing* was the massed choir piece that closed the first half of the concert. The choirs were divided into three parts and so the song twisted and turned upon itself as it devel-



A mug for David Lawrence from Chairman Brenda Wilkinson

oped with the final outcome being a very full and satisfying sound.

The whole concert ended with the premier performance of Ron's *Music*, a song based upon a poem by Walter de la Mare. Beautiful harmonies made this a superb piece to close a night of wonderful music that made clear why people still enjoy the excitement, the friendship, the warmth and contentment that comes from singing together in choirs.

David Lawrence was able to conduct both pieces of Ron's music and also the combined Male Voice Choir's music. David is a major musical figure and conductor within the UK and abroad and we are often delighted that he can lead some sessions at our annual conferences.



A music stand for each performing choir

Celia Johns, the General Secretary of the NAC, was Compère for the concert and led us very adeptly through the programme. Each choir was presented with a music stand to mark the occasion and every person present was given a free commemorative mug.

Scientists have often declared that singing in groups really does do positive things for people's health and wellbeing. Many choirs expound that fact in their advertising and in their search for new members. There is no doubt in my mind that being there at the concert and happily joining in some of the songs certainly enriched my general wellbeing. The National Association of Choirs organisers are very grateful to all of those people who gave their time and skills to allow this event to happen.

## 100 Years ...

### Polperro Fishermen's Choir - Cornwell - David Lashbrooke



Fishermen's Choir in the 1920s

A lot happened in 1923. The future King George VI married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the future Queen Mother, in Westminster Abbey. The Postmaster General granted the BBC a licence to broadcast, Littlewoods football pools were started, and the first Le Mans 24 hour race was held in France. Time Magazine was launched, King Tutankhamun's burial chamber was opened, and the cricketer Jack Hobbs scored his 100<sup>th</sup> century. Warner Brothers established their film studio in Hollywood, and 'Yes, We Have No Bananas' was a hit song of the year. Meanwhile in Polperro, a quiet little village by the sea which might have just half a dozen visitors on a sunny afternoon, Pol-

perro Fishermen's Choir was formed.

One of the oldest male voice choirs in Cornwall, Polperro Fishermen's Choir was unusual because of its two founders: Eva Cloke and Tommy Mark. In the days before electronic navigation aids, the fishermen depended on their seamanship and their faith in God to keep them safe so they would often sing hymns as they worked. Eva Cloke was the wife of a fisherman and was influential in persuading the singers to form a choir to preserve the tradition, possibly inspired by the visits of the Holman Male Voice Choir from Redruth, raising money for the unemployed such as tin miners. Eva was the organist at the Methodist chapel and, be-

cause she had the musical ability to coach the men to sing in harmony, the newly formed Polperro Fishermen's Choir became the first to have a female conductor. In January 1930, a newspaper reported that Eva 'has 'remarkable control over these sturdy sons of the sea'.

The importance of Tommy Mark to the choir should also not be underestimated. He had been a Polperro fisherman before turning to lay preaching, when he became known as the Fishermen's Bishop. He blended religion and the sea in his homilies and the Cornish Guardian reported that he gave his evangelical addresses 'in his customary breezy but intensely sincere manner'. His sermons attracted large crowds, sometimes well over 1000 people, to the combined services and religious concerts given by the choir. Newspapers reported that a 1928 concert in the Devonport Central Hall had a congregation of about 1,500 with many more unable to get in. Such was the fame of the choir and Tommy Mark at the time that a report and photograph appeared in *The Sphere*, published in London as 'The Empire's Illustrated Weekly'. By contrast, the local press reported another well-attended sacred concert in Mevagissey below the far more important news that Mr Harry Tregaskes of Galowras Farm had a ewe which had given birth to four lambs. Despite the huge audiences, Tommy Mark

said that Polperro made no claim to be a select choir, just a company of fishermen who gathered together to sing and who were willing to give their services to help forward the cause of Christianity. Mr Mark died in 1941 but not before his nephew Dick Jolliff, a member of the choir, had followed in his footsteps as an effective lay preacher.

As Polperro Fishermen's Choir became the leading male voice choir in East Cornwall, others in the village were keen to join and it was not long before the choir included carpenters, blacksmiths, builders, shopkeepers and farmers in the membership. Often in demand to sing elsewhere, the choir would travel from Polperro by Pearce's horse buses. The company also had some motor buses which required a turntable to cope with the cramped space at their garage on what is now Polperro's quite small 'Big Green'. A founder member of the choir, Willy Oliver, started his working life as a fisherman but, eventually needing a better income, came ashore and worked for Pearce's Motors for 37 years. Travelling by coach did not always go as planned, however. After a choir trip to London in 1967 to make a recording for the BBC and give an evening concert, the coach driver was unable to start the vehicle for the long journey home. Two capable choir members discovered that the fuel tank contained almost as much water as it did fuel. Although they managed to get the vehicle started, it was only after the choir members had spent the night sleeping in chairs.

Murray Collings, who is still a member today after 70 years, remembers the incident well. The evening concert was at a City Road location, famous for its direct connection with Methodist John Wesley, called the Leysian Mission. On his eventual return home, Murray heard his mother proudly telling someone that the choir had been singing at the Lesbian Mission.

Memories of other trips to London have also prompted a smile. Willy Oliver was said to find it difficult to wake up in the morning. He was sharing a room with his friend Edmund Jolliff, another founder member, so Edmund woke up early, dressed fully and got back into bed, leaping out fully dressed just as the breakfast bell rang, leaving the still sleepy Willy struggling to catch up. On one occasion, some members were in a rather 'liquid' state and became stranded on a traffic is-

land as they felt unable to negotiate the second lane of traffic on the other side. They had to be rescued by other choir members, suffering some loss of dignity and a few light-hearted repercussions.

Edmund Joliffe and another founder member, Jack Libby Senior, worked as builders. Jack remembered the choir being involved with the Drake celebrations in Plymouth in 1932. They were all dressed as pirates and, on a blazing hot day, marched through the city for a service on the Hoe. Jack recalled the Minister saying "Jesus Christ sweated drops of blood" and then a member known as Puck calling out "So has Puck". All of Jack's four sons sang in the choir, including Roy, Doug, Ken (a second tenor for more than 60 years) and Jack Libby Junior (also known as Jackie), who became the choir's musical director in 1971. As a self-taught conductor, it was not always easy for Jackie to have father Jack making comments from the back of the choir. One member remembers Jackie becoming so exasperated with his dad that he suffered a loss of dignity – and false teeth. In recognition of his service to choral music in Cornwall, Jack Junior was received into the Gorsedd of Cornwall as a Bard in 1986. He is remembered every December when the Jack Libby cup is awarded to the choir member with the best attendance record.

Surprisingly for a fishermen's choir, its water-borne adventures have not always gone to plan. In August 1970, the members were due to embark on a trawler in Torpoint and sail across to the Mayflower Steps in Plymouth, with the choir singing on board as they ap-

proached. The trawler was nowhere to be seen so the choir hastily re-joined the coach, which was already on the Torpoint ferry ready to make the short trip to Devon. Arriving at the Mayflower Steps to take part in a Harvest of the Sea service, they discovered that the trawler, with the Lord Mayor and his party on board, had sailed to collect them – but to the completely wrong destination. Eventually the trawler returned and, after a quick rethink and a hasty embarkation, the choir was finally able to sing two of the songs while afloat.

The choir has sung in many grand locations but is always happy to sing in less sophisticated surroundings. Some have their dangers, however. It is not unknown for a section of the choir to disappear from view down the back of staging. Three members, including Willy Oliver, almost qualified for the Parachute Regiment's red beret when they made unplanned exits at both Looe Comprehensive School and Donderry Working Men's Club.

The condition of some of the pianos encountered has been known to cause unintended amusement too. The choir has experienced the distractingly squeaky keys of an organ and the 'honky tonk' tone of a piano, as well as one on which only half of the keys would emit a note, and even those were out of tune. On one occasion, the front fell off a piano mid-concert. Although the choir no longer has to rely on the condition of the instruments at their concert venues, the choir's own electronic piano sometimes harbours gremlins. At a concert in 1988, loose plugs and a blown fuse interrupted Mur-



Fishermen's Choir in the 1950s

ray Collings when singing a solo. Finally, in desperation, he carried on unaccompanied to great applause. As recently as 2018, the piano gave up mid-concert, requiring accompanist Lorraine Forsdick to dash home for a replacement. The choir now has a brand new one.

Now the choir vice-president, Murray Collings is the longest serving member of the choir. He joined the choir as a teenager in 1952, the year that Phil Carrigan, our present musical director, was born. It was a time when post-war rationing was still in force, when wind-up gramophones playing brittle 78 rpm records were used, and when there were still far more homes with a valve wireless (often rented) than a television. Fishing skipped a generation with Murray – he was a carpenter and builder – but both his sons are fishermen. In 1973, the choir's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Murray was a soloist on the first of a long list of the choir's best-selling long-playing records, cassette tapes and CDs. In 2017, at a concert with BBC TV present, the choir celebrated Murray's 65 years in the choir, a record he has now broken.

Often taken for granted but vitally important to the choir is the accompanist, especially when coping with dubious instruments. It was often a family affair, with the position filled by relatives of choir members, but 2012 saw the retirement of long-standing accompanist Maisie Hall, daughter of a choir founder member. This caused a certain amount of panic until, so the story goes, a choir member saw a piano being moved into a newly-purchased house in Polperro. As if by magic, the incredibly talented Lorraine Forsdick not only accepted the position, but also started writing and arranging music which is unique to the choir and among our most popular pieces.

Apart from a few relatively short periods with interim conductors, there have only been three main musical directors in the whole of the choir's 100-year history: Eva Cloke (more than 45 years), Jack Libby (over 28 years) and now Phil Carrigan, who took over in 1999 (so 24 years and counting). Phil is a very experienced musician, having served in the bands of Her Majesty's Royal Marines in concerts around the world, including the White House and Buckingham Palace. Phil was serving in HMS Ark Royal when Sir Rod Stewart recorded his hit 'Sailing'. Not so often told is the story of Phil chasing his

big bass drum as it rolled down the flight deck of the aircraft carrier, much to the amusement of everyone else. Fortunately for Phil's future career, he caught up with it when perilously close to falling overboard and disappearing forever in the Sargasso Sea. As a busy band member playing multiple instruments, Phil had



never conducted a Royal Marine Band until 2004 when the choir and the Plymouth-based Marines gave a joint concert and Phil had the great pleasure of conducting both together for the Cornish favourite 'Proper Job'.

As well as singing in Cornwall, the choir also performs further afield. In 1983, they took part in the first concert of the massed male voices of Cornwall in the Royal Albert Hall, with 1000 singers from the many Cornish choirs taking part. Similar concerts have taken place ever since in London, in Birmingham Symphony Hall and elsewhere. After a combined Cornish choir concert in Truro cathedral, most of the singers from other choirs found their way to various hostelries. Two long-standing members still in the choir today followed suit but, realising there was no-one else from Polperro there, suddenly remembered the choir's Methodist roots. They quickly downed their pints and went back to the coach where they were greeted with silence by the other members who had been sitting waiting.

Other venues have included the Channel



Islands, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, Wales, and Quiberon in Brittany for memorable International Festivals. On the first visit to France, the generous hosts supplied vast supplies of wine, leading to lots of after-glow singing and some dancing on the tables. Having been invited to a nearby wedding where it was the custom for everyone to kiss the bride, some of the members went round twice. Although the alcohol was less plentiful at the next festival, it was only because the youngsters in a German school band and choir became bored with the overrunning concert and decided to help themselves to the large jugs of wine on the tables for the buffet in the room next door. A trip to Steeton, near Keighley in Yorkshire, coincided with a real ale beer festival being held, quite by chance, in the very hotel where the choir was staying. After a concert in Guernsey, the choir decided to have an after-glow sing-song back in the hotel. They were joined by some other hotel guests who had incredible voices and added excellent harmonies. It was only afterwards that they revealed themselves to be a group of opera singers on tour.

Being prepared to sing in many different locations can present challenges too. On a dark evening late in 1969, the choir members in the coach felt that they were on a mystery tour, and sent out an accompanying car to find the unfamiliar church in a little village north of Launceston. After a careful search, the church was found - about 100 yards away from where they had declared themselves lost.

In 2015 the choir used a company specialising in choir tours to organise a trip to Ireland. A packed programme of coach tours and visits to museums, castles, and a distillery was organised very efficiently, but the concerts by the choir had not been well promoted. Our last concert of the

tour was in a chapel in the centre of a famous cemetery in Dublin. Probably beautiful in daylight, the cemetery was dark as shadowy figures carried our electronic piano in its coffin-like box between the eerie graves to the chapel. It was just before Halloween, so it was perhaps not surprising that the only new members of the audience were two representatives of the tour company. Fortunately, we had taken our own, in the shape of our wives and friends, and our compère, Adrian Wilton, soon had them all in stitches with an improvised riff on the quality of the audience and our various visits during the tour. Adrian is very much in demand as a compère and comedian all over Cornwall but we are very fortunate that he chooses to be a member of our choir.

Two years later, we were invited to sing in the elegant Assembly Rooms in Devizes. Nervous of another small audience, we advised that a fairly modest entrance fee should be charged. However, the organisers insisted that they knew their public, charged three times as much, had a waiting list for tickets, and raised over £1700 for the RNLI.

In August 2009 five members of the choir met in a Polperro pub to form an informal group with the idea of enjoying a beer and an after-glow sing-along following the hard work of the choir's Wednesday evening practice sessions. Fifteen members of the choir attended the first pub practice session and the group quickly adopted the name 'Polperro Wreckers' with the first gig being held just prior to Christmas 2009.

The pub sessions have themselves become performances enjoyed by both visitors and locals alike, singing along to a mixture of Cornish, Shanty, Folk, and Sixties numbers, and laughing at Adrian Wilton's jokes. The Wreckers now contribute considerably to the charitable activities of the choir, often performing in a nearby pub after a choir concert, and have released their own CDs. These days we are often confused with the Fishermen's Friends from Port Isaac, not far away. We have a similar name, both come from a small Cornish fishing village where we give free concerts, we sometimes sing in the same location at the same event, and the Fishermen's Friends have a similar repertoire to the Wreckers. We allow that they have the fame but insist that we have the pedigree.

The choir has a surprising connection with Radcliffe Male Voice Choir, based not far from Manchester, which celebrated its own centenary in 2021. For their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1980, Peter Skellern arranged a piece for Radcliffe and rehearsed it with them. By 2015, Peter had been settled in Cornwall for many years and agreed to be our president. He attended concerts and annual dinners, and allowed us to arrange and sing some of his songs, including his 1970s hit 'You're a Lady'. Sadly, Peter died in 2017 at the early age of 69, while still holding his choir post. Our current president is the writer and broadcaster Richard Madeley, who has a house near Polperro. Although constantly busy, Richard gives his active support to our publicity and charity fund-raising, and comes to visit us when he can.

The choir has a long tradition of giving free concerts while raising many thousands for charities and good causes through the very generous donations of the audiences. On selected Wednesday evenings in the summer each year the choir can be seen 'at home' on the fish quay in Polperro. Describing the concerts as one of Cornwall's ten best 'free secrets' in her book *Cornwall for Free*, author Rachael Rowe says the singing 'is a delight to hear as the sun goes down over the sea'.

There are now few fishermen, or people born and bred in Polperro, in the choir but our love of the sea, our memories of the days of old, and our connection to the chapel where we have rehearsed since 1923, remain as strong as ever. Our famous free Christmas concert in Polperro Methodist Chapel on 23 December is always popular and attracts an audience from many parts of the country, and overseas. Quite often, people contact us to make sure that their holiday will definitely coincide with one of our performances even though they are all listed on our website

[www.polperrofisheimenschoir.co.uk](http://www.polperrofisheimenschoir.co.uk)

Both Polperro and nearby Looe are delightful places for a holiday so we look forward to seeing you at one of our concerts soon!

From the archives of Polperro Fishermen's Choir and its members, with valuable input from the Polperro Family History Society, plus information from other local sources and the British Newspaper Archive

# Quintessential Policeman Dies At 90

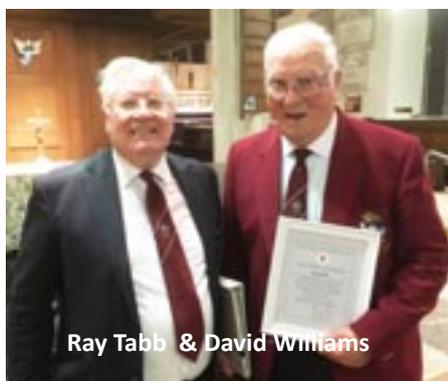
## Exeter Police and Community Choir - Devon – Bruce Pell

Ray Tabb was lost to the Exeter Police and Community Choir at the age of 90,

Ray was honoured in 2020 for his outstanding contribution to the Exeter Police and Community Choir (of which he was a founder member) and the former Exeter Police Choir. He had served the choirs for 56 years.

He was known to thousands of local people through his role as concert organiser for more than 20 years, and for his fine tenor voice which he lent to solo parts and duets. The concerts raised thousands of pounds for local charities.

'Ray was a huge presence in the choir and



Ray Tabb & David Williams

retained a keen sense of humour despite failing health in recent years. He will be sorely missed by everyone', said Exeter Police and Community Choir Chairman, Bruce Pell.

Proud of his Brixham roots, Ray joined as a county policeman, later moving to Exeter on amalgamation of the Exeter City and county forces.

Colleagues regarded him as the 'quintessential policeman.'

Ray Tabb is pictured alongside Musical Director David Williams in 2020 with a certificate marking his outstanding contribution to the success of the Exeter Police and Community Choir.

# A 'normal' year on the horizon!

## Dunfermline Choral Union - Scotland - Alison Baxter

Our Christmas Concerts opened in exhilarating style with Dan Forrest's arrangement of *O Come All Ye Faithful*, for choir, string quartet & two pianos. This is a firm favourite with our choir and audiences and set the scene beautifully. Many say that they don't feel Christmas has started until they have been to Dunfermline Choral Union's Christmas concert! This year no one was disappointed.

After the socially distanced Concert of last Christmas, it was thrilling for all involved to be experiencing the return of performance normality. In addition to some of our favourites in our programme we introduced the beautiful *Celtic Silent Night* with violin obbligato arranged by Patrick Tierney, *We Wait* with cello obbligato by Ruth Elaine Schram and the exquisite *I Will Light Candles This Christmas* by Kim Andre Arnesen.

We are very optimistic that after two

years with no Spring concert that we will deliver this year. The programme is Karl Jenkins – *The Armed Man* and John Rutter – *Magnificat* with soloist Elizabeth McCormack. The concert takes place on Saturday 4 March 2023 at 7.30 in The Vine Conference Centre, Dunfermline.

After two seasons which were disrupted by Covid restrictions, Dunfermline Choral Union is hoping for a 'normal' season, and we definitely made a good start.

We reflect on 2020 when we were extremely fortunate to be able to have our Spring concert before the first lockdown. Our summer season was cancelled, but, like many other choirs, we planned for the 2020-21 season.

As September 2020 drew near, we realised we could not sing together as a choir due to the Covid restrictions in place. Thanks to the determination and hard

work of our Musical Director, Mandy Miller, we embarked upon a season of 'Zoom' rehearsals. Members of the choir sang in their homes as Mandy and our accompanist Yvonne Ferguson delivered 34 virtual rehearsals. We had break out rooms in the middle of the rehearsal so that we could chat to other members of the choir. As well as rehearsals Mandy organised virtual coffee & cake mornings and Zoom quiz nights so that the choir family could stay together, and members could support each other.

No one anticipated that this would be 'the norm' for so long as our Christmas, Spring and Summer Concerts disappeared.

However, undeterred in early summer, when it was permissible to sing outside, our indefatigable Musical Director embarked on a series of car park rehearsals! A sizeable number of the choir came along and for those who couldn't manage, the

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rehearsals were also available on Zoom. This further strengthened our choir family spirit. We were truly fortunate to have reasonable weather and the experience of singing along with so many birds as the sun set was memorable. We did pause and laugh as the trains passed on the nearby railway. It was lovely to be able to meet up again – albeit outside and socially distanced. Then for the final two rehearsals we were able to move indoors – with extensive social distancing and mask wearing – but we were back as a choir. It surely was a rejoicing experience.

The start of the 2021-22 season brought with it a renewed optimism.

We were able to rehearse in person with social distancing, but still continued with

a Zoom option so that all members could participate. We did manage to hold our two Christmas concerts but it was a vastly different experience singing socially distanced to a socially distanced, masked audience but we did it and felt things were moving on.

Little did we know that restrictions would be increased in January 2022 when a new variant of Covid appeared. We had no option but take the decision to cancel our Spring concert as it would not have been musically or financially viable with restrictions in place. And once again we were back to hybrid rehearsals (Zoom along with socially distanced in person).

The joy of singing together kept us going and thankfully our summer season went

ahead as planned and we had a very enjoyable and successful Summer Concert.

And here we are now in 2023. Our 105+ singers have gone from strength to strength both musically and socially. This year's rehearsals for our Spring Concert are going very well, the orchestra and soloist are booked and two-metre distancing hopefully is a thing of the past.

We are very much looking forward to performing our Spring Programme and to welcoming audience members from near and far.

More details on our website

<https://dunfermlinechoralunion.co.uk>

# Return to much-loved haunts

## The Glasgow Phoenix Choir - Scotland West - Anne Kay

Conductor and Director of Music – Cameron Murdoch

Festive greetings to one and all from Glasgow Phoenix Choir. Here's hoping we all have a much better year in 2023.

In singing terms, the first half of our season has been very busy and most enjoyable. In October, we sang three concerts in Helensburgh, Killearn and Shawlands; then in November we returned to Cambuslang Parish Church where we have performed regularly over the years. December saw us travelling a bit further afield to undertake concerts in Lochgilphead, Argyll and - the other side of the world from Glasgow – Edinburgh. We also completed a 'mini-tour' of the local area including East Kilbride, the Merchants' House in Glasgow and, our final outing of the year, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. All of these concerts were well received by appreciative audiences. A special favourite for me was the Christmas concert in Glasgow. With us we had special guests, the multi-award winning Whitburn Band, who played magnificently. Sadly, Bryan Allen, the band's conductor, was stuck in a snowdrift in Perthshire but band manager Charlie Farren stepped into the breach in wonderful form. Congratulations to both Bryan and Charlie and to the band on their preparation for this concert.



Clarice Forrest

Our other guests were the Glasgow CREATE choirs under their conductor, Claire O'Reilly, and with our own Cameron Murdoch as accompanist. The junior, senior and chamber choirs involve schools from across Glasgow. It was very difficult to believe that these young people had only been performing together since February 2022. Their performances were a testament to their own hard work and to the excellence of their teachers.

Over the course of the last few months it has been great to be able to return to

some of our much-loved haunts and, in addition to both our audiences and our singers having a good time, we raised a fair bit of money along the way for a range of worthwhile causes. I'm sure all of us who sing in choirs appreciate all the benefits singing brings to us, but it would be amazing to calculate how much good we manage to do along the way for other people, both in terms of entertainment and fund-raising.

As well as concerts we managed, in November, to fit in a recording for release in April next year. The recording took place in our usual rehearsal venue, St John's-Renfield Church in the West End of Glasgow, and we were working with a new team, Colin Stephen Broadcast Services Ltd. The combination of Cameron's direction of the choir and the teamwork of Colin, Christine and Dave made the experience relaxed and enjoyable. We are all looking forward to hearing the result, especially as it includes our first recording of *Opening*, written by Bob Chilcott in commemoration of the choir's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our predecessors, the Glasgow Orpheus Choir.

At this time of year, it seems appropriate to be thinking about friends and family. The choir's motto is 'In Honour of all who Believe that Life was made for Friendship'.

This choir is the friendliest group and members often describe themselves as the Phoenix Family. We are always glad to welcome new members and this year has been no exception. Sadly, we've lost some members who, for a variety of reasons, have moved on, though most keep in touch by Facebook or by attending concerts. It is always great to see those faces in our audiences. There are, though, faces that we know we won't see again and that we will always miss. This year we lost one of our longest serving associate members, Clarice Forrest, wife to Bill, one of our tenors, who still sings solos at concerts. Clarice and Bill knew one another for over seventy years and had been married for most of those years. We knew that Clarice had been ill for a long time and that Bill

had been doing a splendid job in looking after her. Those of us who knew her were privileged to have such a lovely lady in our lives and it was with great sadness that we heard she had died. Last week, we also lost a former soprano, Ellen Purdie. Ellen joined the choir with her husband Lawson, the choir's first publicity officer, and was a member for over thirty years. As well as singing in the soprano section, Ellen graced the choir with her beautiful solo singing at concerts and on recordings. Beyond that, Ellen and Lawson were the warmest of couples, making sure new members were made welcome and, usually, encouraging them to join them in the choir's social life. On trips away, the echoes of laughter from the back of the bus created by the pair had the rest of us

jealous that the bus wasn't much wider at the rear. Thank you, Ellen, for all that you did for the choir over the years and thank you for giving us your daughter, Elizabeth, who, like you, has the most amazing voice.

Finally, some thanks to all the people who keep us going across the year – to our professional staff: Cameron, whose conducting is reinvigorating the choir; Matthew McIlree our accompanist on so many of this year's ventures and whose solos at concerts have been so appreciated; John Blue, business manager for all his hard work behind the scenes. Thanks also to everyone in the choir for their efforts in making the choir what it is and to all those people who support us to allow us to enjoy our singing.

# Choirs Raise Money For RNLI

## Alfreton Male Voice – Midlands East – John Stamp



The Sagalouts

Three locally based choirs recently performed a concert at David Nieper Academy to raise funds for the RNLI.

Alfreton Male Voice, Treble Clef Ladies and the DNA group of students from the Academy entertained over 200 people to raise £1065.

Organisers, Alfreton Male Voice Choir's songs included *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *What a Wonderful World* whilst Treble Clef songs included the beautiful 13<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury *Panis Angelicus* or 'bread of angels'. The audience was in raptures to discover Treble Clef conductor Charlotte Pell (now Harrison) was to be married five days later and the concert included songs Treble Clef were to sing during the wedding including *Never Enough for Me* from 'The Greatest Showman'.

The Academy students singing as 'DNA' wowed the audience with songs including *Hakuna Matata* from 'The Lion King' and *Welcome to the Rock* from 'Come From

Away', really showing the next generation of choirs is in very good hands! (Young people's safety precluded photography.)

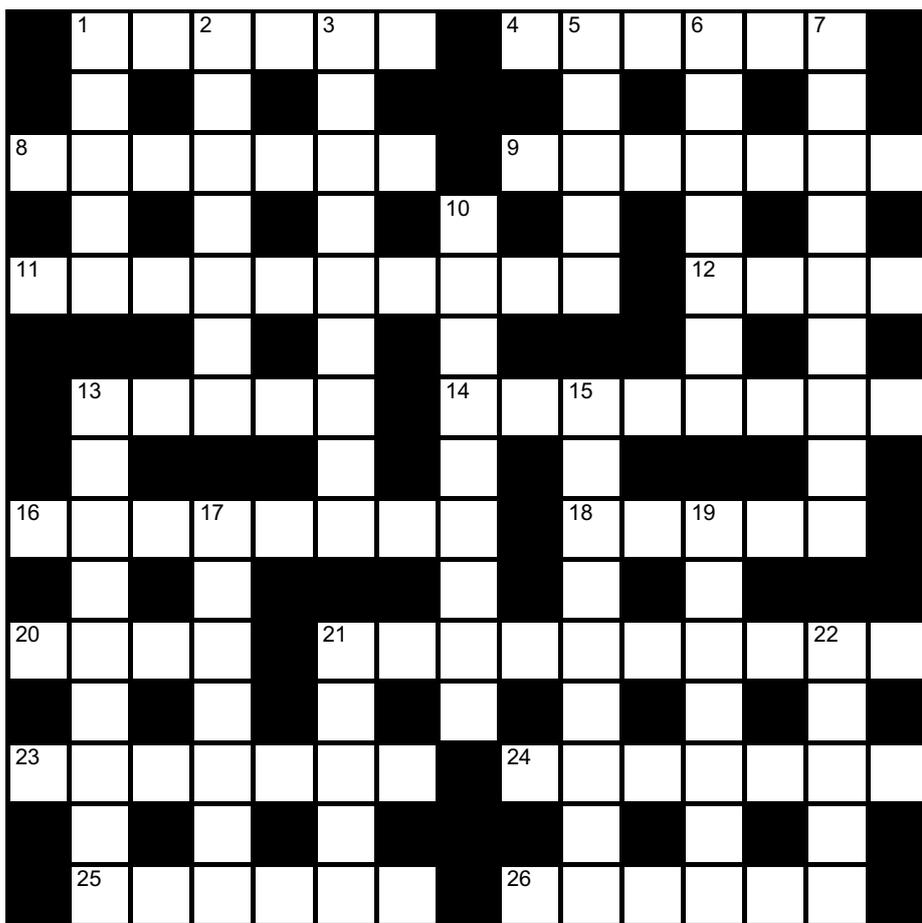
Chairman of Alfreton Male Voice Choir, Mick Mullarkey said, 'It was a very special and wonderful evening as three Alfreton choirs entertained and made music to raise money for an important charity, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.'

After the interval the choirs were joined by the Sagalouts (four Alfreton Choir Guys) dressed as sailors who performed two sea shanties including *Sloop John B* with the audience raising to the challenging participation with the repetitive 'HUH.'

The sea shanties were a fine introduction to the Chairman of the Derbyshire RNLI Fundraising Group, Will Stanier, who was present for the concert and spoke to the audience thanking all the choirs and audience for their generosity, noting the majority of lives saved by the RNLI are inlanders including residents of Amber Valley.

A rousing finale saw the three choirs joining together singing, *You Raise Me Up* and the final number *You'll Never Walk Alone* leaving everyone going home with a song in their hearts and the RNLI £1065 better off.

# PUZZLE PAGES

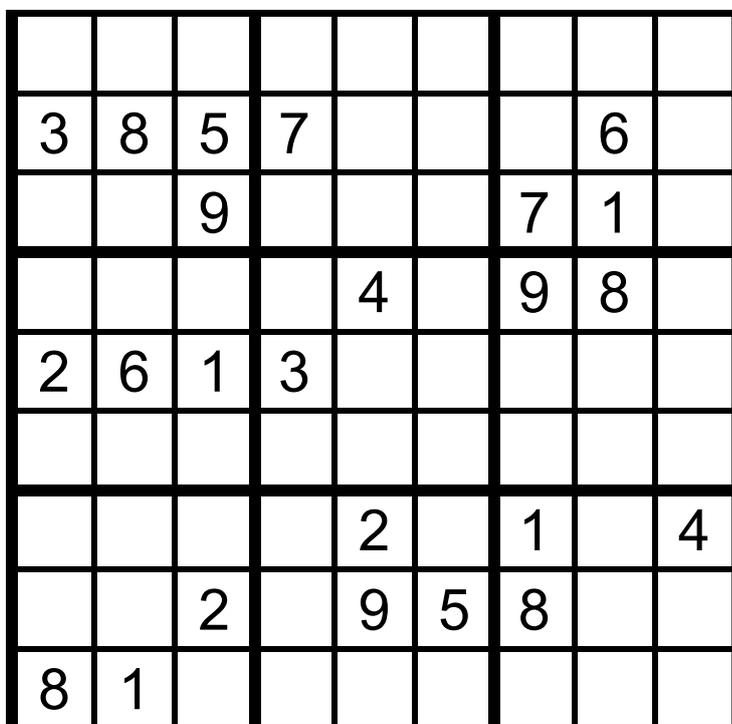


## Across

- 1 Befuddled BBC woe over old and dusty spider (6)
- 4 Formal chat (6)
- 8 Collectively aged (7)
- 9 Certainly not disorderly (7)
- 11 Perhaps a tad generic curiously hot and cold measure (10)
- 12 Crazy gala or aquatic organism? (4)
- 13 Broken earth might stop the beat (5)
- 14 listen, listen (4,4)
- 16 A VIP ends unwonted swelling of the hock joint (8)
- 18 Birth in South Africa (5)
- 20 Bring together (4)
- 21 Sturm und drang (10)
- 23 Boisterous play of a brown speckled bird (7)
- 24 Fan shaped edible muscle (7)
- 25 Cheap and tasteless (6)
- 26 Put another way Peter's is planned earlier (6)

## Down

- 1 Icebergs do it, evidently (5)
- 2 Good cuppa when you're ill (4,3)
- 3 Illuminate with shiny split em (9)
- 5 Holds a coin between the lips? (5)
- 6 Look at a whip (7)
- 7 Girly halo source of Christ's cup (4,5)
- 10 Nellie, or perhaps the one in glorious mud (9)
- 13 Trendy cash holder (3,6)
- 15 News reading girl with an old weight right (9)
- 17 Nice ice with strawberry (7)
- 19 Climbing plant support (7)
- 21 Burn maliciously or use to see your way safely (5)
- 22 My not be cast until the end of the month (5)



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**SOLUTIONS PAGE 30/1**

# Beyond The Call Of Duty!

**Bestwood Male Voice Choir – Midlands East - Peter Fletcher**

This photo was taken on Tuesday 20 December 2022 at the choir's last concert of the year, a Christmas Concert at Farley's Road, URC, Hucknall. The choir's Minute Secretary and unofficial Welfare Officer, Bryce Clare (on the right), a lifelong Notts.County fan, was presented with a signed Notts County away shirt by the choir Chair, Colin Pursglove. It was in recognition and heartfelt appreciation of Bryce's continued and constant checking of member's welfare during and since the covid pandemic, phoning and sending cards when appropriate and reporting back to the choir at regular intervals. This continued even during Bryce's own period of illness and was thoroughly appreciated by everyone in the choir, including wives, widows and partners and was well and truly above and beyond the call of duty!



Colin Pursglove & Bryce Clare



# Platinum Gala Concert

**Bestwood Male Voice Choir – Midlands East – Peter Fletcher**

The choir was busy fine tuning their repertoire for its forthcoming Platinum Gala Concert at the Nottingham Albert Hall on Sunday 9 October, starting at 3.00. The choir was founded back in 1952 by the late Len Hogg, the then new manager of Bestwood Colliery. When he arrived he found a thriving social scene for the 2,000 miners – with one exception – there was no choir! He canvassed interest and more than 30 men attended the first gathering, both from the colliery and from the local area.

Within three months, the choir was 50 strong. Sadly, Len Hogg passed away in January 2005 but the choir continues to draw inspiration from his passion for music and works hard in promoting the enjoyment and art of choral singing.

The choir now rehearses weekly on a Tuesday evening at Bestwood Village Community Centre under its Musical Director, Mirek Rus with new members always most welcome. It has undertaken overseas travel and hosted visiting choirs, which has resulted in visits to Malta, Canada, USA, France, Poland, Holland and



Germany. In 1964, the choir travelled to Germany and was the first British choir to perform in Cologne Cathedral since the end of World War II. In 2012 Bestwood Male Voice Choir had the honour of sharing its Diamond Jubilee with the Queen. On 13 June 2012. The choir also had the

privilege of singing in front of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, when they accompanied the Queen on the Royal Visit to Vernon Park in Old Basford, which was being granted QE11 Field Status.

The choir was delighted to be welcoming the world renowned Jeneba Kanneh-Mason as their special guest for the occasion. Nineteen year old Jeneba holds the Victoria Robey Scholarship to the Royal College of Music, studying piano with Vanessa Latache. She was a Keyboard Category Finalist in BBC Young Musician 2018, winner of the Murs du Son Prize at the Lagny-Sur-Marne International Piano Competition in France in 2014 and The Nottingham Young Musician 2013. Jeneba has played numerous concerts in England, Wales, Paris and the Caribbean as a recital and concerto soloist and as a chamber musician. This year Jeneba will also undertake tours of Australia, New Zealand, USA, Antigua and Barbuda with the rest of the famous and extremely talented Kanneh-Mason family.

# Joy To All

## Newchurch Male Voice Choir - Southern Counties – Bob Cooper

As the early evening summer sun shone brightly through the church windows, a capacity audience congregated in St Paul's Church, Shanklin on Saturday to enjoy a Summer Concert performed by Mynyddislwyn Male Choir, visiting from South Wales, and the local Newchurch Male Voice Choir.

The choirs joined together to start the concert with the Welsh song of welcome *Gwahoddiad* (sung in Welsh) and the popular hymn *Morte Christe*. The separate choirs then presented songs from their own repertoires, interspersed by a performance by members of First Act 2011 who gave a heart tugging rendition of songs, showing the incredible work undertaken by the staff and the determination of the performers of the group. There was hardly a dry eye to be seen after.

In the second half, Richard Bourton, accompanist to the visiting choir, played two solo pieces on the piano and the



combined choirs ended the concert the Welsh song *Rachie* (in Welsh) and the rousing *Stout Hearted Men* from Romberg and Hammerstein's 'New Moon'.

A retiring collection raised a fantastic £833 which will be shared between island good causes and charities. Bob Cooper, for the Newchurch MVC said, 'What a lovely evening we all had performing to such a generous, receptive and warm audience who so obviously appreciated in particular

the work by the staff of First Act in bringing their members to come and perform in front of so many people.

Our appreciation also goes to our visiting friends from Mynyddislwyn who produced such a characteristic, rich, Welsh male voice choir sound. It is moments like this that makes you realise the 'goodness and strength of singing and music.'

# A Two And A Half Year Wait

## Côr Meibion Taf - Wales South - Rhodri Jones

Dim ond hanes byr o weithgareddau Côr Meibion Taf ers diwedd y pandemic, yn enwedig y gyngerdd ar y Dachwedd 4 gyda Chôr Meibion y Brythoniaid Chôr Merched Plastaf.

On Friday night, 4 November, at last, Côr Meibion Taf held the concert that was originally organised for 13 March 2020. That was the date that the pandemic arrived in Cardiff. Côr Meibion y Brythoniaid were on their way to sing at the Millenium Stadium before the international rugby match against Scotland on the Saturday and a combined concert was set in place for the Friday night. The rugby was postponed, the concert was postponed and the Brythoniaid had to return home having already reached Llanidloes. An epic return trip by all accounts!

But, at last the concert was held at the Church of St John the Evangelist, in



Canton, Cardiff. Three choirs in all, Meibion Taf under the baton of Steffan Jones, Y Brythoniaid conducted by John Eifion Jones and Merched Plastaf led by Caryl Ebenezer. The concert was a delightful mix of popular and classical items with each choir rendering its own repertoire before combining for the *American Trilogy*, *O Gymru* and the ever favourite *Gwahoddiad*. The church was packed, a testament to choristers, and

also the need to once again enjoy music in the company of others.

As a choir, Côr Meibion Taf is going from strength to strength since regathering after the struggles of the pandemic. During the lockdown we produced some Zoom pieces, notably Eric Jones' classic arrangement for Waldo Williams' poem *Y Tangnefeddwyr/ The Peacemakers* at the onset of the war in Ukraine. To be honest

before we started Zoom recording I thought that I could sing, just a bit like Pavarotti (in the shower). Imagine my horror on listening to myself on recording into the phone, I sounded more like Minnie Mouse. However, I digress, the Zoom pieces did keep us singing, of a sort, but it was with relief that we were eventually able to meet up at various venues for rehearsals.

Over the past few months the choir has gained a number of choristers whose contributions enabled us to fulfil a rather full programme including singing at the Royal College of Music in Cardiff and on the field before the international rugby match against Georgia. I think it was our rendering of the Georgian national

anthem that gave them the will to win. In the new year we travel to Scotland to perform on the Isle of Bute prior to singing in Edinburgh over the rugby international weekend.

We now meet on a regular basis on Sunday nights at the Llandaf Rugby Club, Western Avenue, Cardiff. Practice ends at 9.00 but the socialising continues in a convivial atmosphere after that. We are always open to new members and enquiries.

Cyswllt / Contact  
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Youtube:  
cor meibion taf

Facebook:  
[@cormeibiontaf](https://www.facebook.com/cormeibiontaf)



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# Entering Year 30

## Chordiality - Yorkshire North and East - John Ramsdin

The singers of Bradford-based choir Chordiality will celebrate their 30<sup>th</sup> year in 2023 in grand style with a gala concert in the beautiful acoustic of Bradford Cathedral. During the evening concert, taking place on Saturday 8 July at 7.30, the choir will be accompanied by a specially-formed, 14-string ensemble under the direction of the National Festival Orchestra leader, Sally Robinson.

Proceeds from the concert will be donated to the choir's current adopted charity, the Bradford Baby Bank, which supports vulnerable families by helping the frontline services that witness the ever-present difficulties faced by new parents who are struggling at the current time. On the day, the choir and orchestra will be conducted by Chordiality's founder and music director, Peter Sherlock.

Thirty years ago, it was Peter's involvement as an accompanist and arranger for a number of local singing groups that inspired his interest in choral music and gave him the idea of starting his own choir. He approached a number of local singers that he knew and Chordiality found its voice. No one is quite sure who suggested the name, but 'Chordiality' was unanimously embraced by all concerned and the name stuck.

With just 14 singers, Chordiality took to the



stage at the Chapel on the Hill, known locally as Daisy Hill Chapel, in Girdlington, Bradford. The performance was part of an evening church service that followed the format of a popular Sunday evening TV religious programme and the choir, as guests, was given small slots within the service. To prepare for their debut and with no rehearsal venue, the newly formed group met for rehearsals in a choir member's small flat to practise their three chosen pieces for the night. That choir member is still performing with the choir today as are nine others from the original line-up and all ten will be singing at the gala concert.

Today, Chordiality fields a mixed choir of

40 strong and the Bradford Cathedral Anniversary Concert is eagerly anticipated as the choir continues to go from strength to strength. The choir's programme on the evening will include pieces from Mozart's *Requiem Mass*, Schubert's *Mass in G*, Vivaldi's *Magnificat* and the composition for strings by Karl Jenkins, *Palladio*. The performance will also be complemented with popular choral favourites from the choir's repertoire over the years. To hear Chordiality in Bradford Cathedral, order tickets via email at

[chordiality.choir@hotmail.com](mailto:chordiality.choir@hotmail.com)

# 96<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference Weekend 24-26 March 2023

Firstly, may I wish you all a Happy New Year full of music.

Many of our member choirs find Christmas a busy time of year with performances at carol concerts and many other festive activities. A good opportunity to showcase your choir in front of appreciative audiences. January is the time when our membership officer sends out reminders to choirs to renew their membership and pay their subscriptions. I feel sad that recently some of our member choirs have found it impossible to continue to function. Reasons include choristers not returning to rehearsal after Covid, difficulty in attracting new members, and low income due to smaller audience numbers. These are just a few reasons why we are losing choirs. I find it so sad the tradition of choral singing is suffering so much.

Attending conference in these difficult times is so important as members are afforded the opportunity of talking to colleagues from other choirs suffering the same or different problems. Sharing your thoughts and fears can often result in ideas which can turn the tide of despondency to something more positive with a chance to regenerate recovery.

Conference this year is based at the Holi-



day Inn Hotel on junction 25 of the M5 motorway at Taunton from Friday 24 to Sunday 26 March.

Our speakers will be Edward-Rhys Harry and Dr Douglas Coombes.

This year finds Glastonbury Male Voice Choir celebrating its centenary. I received a call last year from the choir inviting the National Association of Choirs to bring the conference to Taunton and offering to organise a concert on Saturday evening for our delegates. The concert will take place at the Tacci-Morris Arts Centre, Monkton Heathfield. Glastonbury will be joined in concert by Cantabile and the Kentwood Show Choir. I look forward to the concert which I am sure will be most entertaining. I will arrange coach transport to the concert as usual.

The costing for the conference remains the same as previous years at £230 inclusive. A £70 deposit with booking is re-

quested and the balance by the end of February.

The hotel is a comfortable 3+ star accommodation with access to all rooms by several lifts. Rooms are situated on the ground and 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The conference auditorium and trade stand area are on the ground floor. The quality of food is very good, and the restaurant is also situated on the ground floor as is reception. At the time I visited last year parking was free with plenty of spaces.

A note for drivers when leaving the motorway. The first building you pass is the Holiday Inn Express which is not the hotel. The Holiday Inn is the next building along and the one you need.

I look forward to renewing friendships and making new ones at conference.

*Clive Lawton*



**Edward-Rhys Harry**



**Douglas Coombes**



# National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

## National Conference Booking Form 1 24 - 26 March 2023

**Taunton Holiday Inn Hotel**  
Deane Gate Avenue, Taunton, TA1 2UA

### 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, evening meal, refreshments and free admission to Saturday evening concert  
per person **£230**

Cancellations after this date will incur a charge of 50% of the total fee payable  
Substitute guests will be welcome

#### Day Delegates

Payment in full when booking (non-refundable)

Please circle requirements

Day delegate fee including refreshments and lunch **£40**

Evening meal Saturday add £25.00

Concert ticket Saturday add £15.00

Friday Gala Dinner add £35.00

Deposit of £70 with booking form Balance by 1 February 2023

Reminders will be sent

#### Room Type - single double twin

Please circle your requirements

Amount submitted £\_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed forms and deposits to the address below

#### Payment method - tick the appropriate box

Paying by cheque

Cheques should be made payable to  
**The National Association of Choirs**

Please return your completed forms and deposits  
to the address below

Paying by BACS

You may pay by BACS (please indicate BACS on form)  
Pay to **National Association of Choirs**

Sort code 30 94 19 - Account no 30254060  
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

cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com



## National Conference Booking Form 2 24 - 26 March 2023

**Taunton Holiday Inn Hotel**  
Deane Gate Avenue, Taunton, TA1 2UA

### 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 cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com**



## National Conference Timetable 24 - 26 March 2023

### Taunton Holiday Inn Hotel

Deane Gate Avenue, Taunton, TA1 2UA

#### Friday 24 March 2023

2.00	Delegates arrive, register at reception and collect delegate pack
3.00	National officers meeting
3.30-5.00	Come and Sing with Celia Johns and Karl Harper
7.30	Reception National Officers and guests
7.30	Delegates and guests assemble for dinner
8.00	Dinner is served- 3 courses with wine
9.30	After dinner entertainment
12.00	Bar closes

#### Saturday 25 March 2023

7.00	Access to trade stands to set up
7.00 - 9.30	Breakfast in main dining room
9.30 - 10.45	Seminar 1 - Edward-Rhys Harry
10.45 - 11.15	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.15 - 12.30	Seminar 2 - Edward-Rhys Harry
12.30 - 1.30	Trade stand presentations 6 x 10 minute presentations from trade stands present at conference
1.30 - 2.45	Lunch and trade stand viewing (Lunch included in full delegate package)
2.45 - 4.00	Seminar 3 - Edward-Rhys Harry
5.15	Early evening meal 2 Courses
6.45	Coach Leaves hotel for concert
7.30	Concert
10.00 Approx	Following concert, light refreshments will be provided back at the hotel
12.00	Bar closes

#### Sunday 26 March 2023

7.00 to 9.30	Breakfast (For those delegates wishing to attend local churches, details will be available at hotel reception)
9.30 - 10.30	Seminar 4 - Dr Douglas Coombes
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)

#### Extra night's stay.

The Holiday Inn Group offer reduced rates on a regular basis. For our delegates to obtain the best rates I advise you to book and pay for extra night's stay directly with the hotel. Telephone number 03333209354 The conference fee of £230 includes the Friday 24 and Saturday 25 March within the package.

# A Century Of Song

## The Malvern Male Voice Choir – Midlands South West - Don Sumner

The choir began as a Quartet in Malvern Wells in 1922. The original members were Messrs F Holbrook (baritone), B Hirons (2<sup>nd</sup> tenor). AF Evans (bass) and L Woodward (1<sup>st</sup> tenor). Mr H Gauntlett was their conductor.

Within a year the Quartet expanded to become the Malvern Wells Male Voice Choir with the Quartet continuing to sing at concerts and in competitions. The choir won the Ainsworth Cup at Leamington in 1924 and Mr Gauntlett won the Conductor's Challenge Cup. At the same festival in 1926 they won the Grason Challenge Cup. The Quartet also had successes in the same events winning the Bennett Challenge Cup in the Open Competition in 1923 as well as 1924 and 1926. The choir at that time had a strict rule regarding attendance at practices. The Minutes for 1934 include a motion 'Any member absent from practice for two consecutive weeks without reasonable excuse shall be dealt with by the committee'. A probationary period of three months before a new member could take part in concerts came in force in 1934.

In 1936 Mr Gauntlett, who had been conductor since 1922, resigned and a Mr Stockall took charge, to be paid £10 per annum. It is on the record that he returned £5 saying he thought the funds could not stand the full £10!

A crisis hit the choir that year since a Special Meeting was held in April to discuss 'the lack of interest shown by the small numbers present at the last few rehearsals and to give members an opportunity to express their views'. It appears that the members had no confidence in the new conductor and resignation followed. His place was taken by Mr J A Davison.

For a couple of years, the choir, now known as the Malvern Male Voice Choir, continued to give many concerts but the members became divided over the amount of time devoted to choral singing as opposed to the normal male voice repertoire. A compromise was reached, and arrangements were being made to participate in a festival at Cheltenham when the outbreak of war brought the activities of the Choir to an end, although it is possible that members did keep in touch. The choir



was re-started in 1944 with some American servicemen from the near-by establishments taking part. The conductor was Dorothy Bayman LRAM who was known professionally as Dorothy Leatherdale.

A programme of a concert given for the Duke of Gloucester's Penny-a-Week Fund shows that the American trio sang some Negro spirituals. A photo of the choir at the time is held.

When Mrs Leatherdale returned to Essex in 1945, Mr Harold Broadbent took charge. The Minutes of the AGM welcomed back members returning from the forces - Messrs Barber, Tompkins and Hinton.

In 1946 the choir commenced its long association with the Baptist Church. As had been the procedure pre-war, the AGMs were always preceded by a meal. On 1 December 1947 this was held at the Promenade Restaurant presided over by Leonard Blake who had taken over the conductorship in 1946 when the Boys' College returned to Malvern from Harrow on the Hill. He was the Musical Director at the college and this began a long association between the college and the choir. At the AGM the use of lounge suits as uniform was adopted due to the evening suits becoming somewhat well-worn and replacements not available. A BBC broadcast was made on 29 December from the Baptist Church, but no details are available (further broadcasts were to be made in '48 and '49). The contents of the latter are in the archives.

During the next few years entries were made, with some success, in competitions at Cheltenham, Leamington and Bristol. The Treasurer's Reports of the time make interesting reading. The 1952 balance was £6.11.7d 'thus continuing the solvency which has been a feature of the Choir from its beginning.' The annual subscription was fifteen shillings and the music bill for the year was £8.16.4d (Today one piece of music for 25 members could cost over £50.)

After nine years Mr Blake resigned as the conductor to be replaced by Mr Hindmarsh. However, Mr Blake became the choir's President, a post he held until his death in 1989. In 1955 the choir joined the National Federation of Music Societies and had a success at the Bournville Competition. It was also the year the choir commenced its long association with Lawnside School.

One of the principal concerts in 1957 was a joint concert at Malvern College with the Malvern Scots Club, Malvern Swordsmen and Folk Dancers from Provence.

In 1958 the Choir again won the Grayson Cup at Leamington, as it had done in 1926 and 1951. A concert was arranged in October 1962 for the British and Foreign Bible Society. 650 tickets were sold and a sum of £92 was raised. Also in that year the choir won the Bournville Shield. A photograph of the choir with the shield appeared in the Malvern Gazette. At the end of the year the choir lost the services of Mr Hindmarsh when he left the college to become Director of Music at Brighton

College. Once again the college provided a replacement in Mr Gordon Lawson.

A new venue for the Choir in 1963 was the Llangollen Eisteddfod where they joined choirs from many countries including Germany, Italy, Norway, Yugoslavia, Greece, Canada, USA and of course Wales. No prizes resulted but the Minutes state 'it had been well worthwhile and a most interesting experience'.

In 1965 the choir competed at Cheltenham and for the third time also obtained the Bournville Shield. A joint concert was held in aid of the British Empire Cancer Campaign. The other organisations being the Malvern Light Opera Society and Malvern Opera and Ballet Club. There was a full symphony orchestra conducted by Albert Webb.

1966 saw the choir win the Taylor Cup at Cheltenham but this success was tempered by unexpectedly coming last at Bournville. That this should happen to the choir just before Mr Lawson left was a cause of regret for the choir. As did his predecessor, he took up the post of MD at Brighton College. Mr Blake stepped in to conduct until Mr David Hart, from the Chase School, took over. He arranged the first of two Christmas concerts with the Malvern Junior Music Makers conducted by Raymond Mills. Soloists were Shirley Lewis and Carol Hart. The following year the choir was successful in gaining the Trophy in the Open Class at Bristol Eisteddfod.

Early in 1972 Mr Hart tendered his resignation after a period of six years to become conductor of the Worcester Operatic Society. The choir's accompanist, Mr Robert Smith (again from the College), stepped into the breach in what was the choir's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year and so a busy one. Celebrations included a concert in the Priory with a 'get together' afterwards at the Abbey Hotel attended by serving and ex-members, local dignitaries and others who had helped the Choir in the past. Early in the year the miners' strike caused the postponement of a concert due to heat and light problems. It is worth noting that two of the original Quartet were still members - Basil Hirons (78) and Fred Holbrook (86), the latter having been Secretary and Treasurer throughout the fifty years! During the year a success was achieved at Hereford. September saw the departure of the conductor to a post in Wales. The year ended with what was probably the first joint concert with the Chase High School Brass band (conductor John Harris).

Once again the College provided a new conductor – Mr Robin Wedderburn who was to stay for five years. Mr Holbrook's service with the choir came to an end in 1974 when he died aged 88. Another long-serving member, Arthur Hinton, took over the dual role of Secretary/Treasurer. The next five years saw the choir continuing to give many concerts, most of them for charities and church funds.

1979 saw the end of the long association with the College when Robin Wedderburn was succeeded by Nigel Edwards as conductor.

The Diamond Jubilee of the choir came in 1982. The year commenced with a success in the preliminary round of the 'Severn Sound' Male Voice Competition. Following on from this the choir joined with others in forming a Regional Association of Male Voice Choirs with a mass concert following in Cheltenham. A later concert in Hereford Cathedral, where a record was made, had an audience of 2,500. The eight choirs were joined by the Band of the Royal Marines, Flag Officer Plymouth (proceeds were for the 22 SAS Regt. and HMS Antelope Fund).

In October the choir competed against the Hereford Police Choir in the 'Severn Sound' final, winning the Challenge Shield. The year was rounded off with a dinner at the Worcestershire Golf Club preceded by a concert in St Peter's Church, Malvern Wells.

The last remaining member of the Quartet, Mr Basil Hirons, died aged 89 after a short spell in hospital. On the same day, 5 March, the choir was in a massed concert at Tewkesbury Abbey. The year ended

with a Festival of Remembrance Concert at the Festival Theatre with members of other choirs, totalling about 300 voices. This was the first of such concerts which have continued to this day although the number of voices is now less.

The next five years contained the usual concerts but no competition work. In February 1988 the choir was shocked by the sudden death of Arthur Hinton bringing to an end a period of 66 years during which they had had only two Secretaries and Treasurers. The posts of Secretary and Treasurer were taken by Stan Hayman and Jim Holt respectively. Arrangements had to be made to transfer the music library from Mr Hinton's house to the Baptist Church Room. A new departure that year was a joint production by some of the men with the Lawnside School to sing parts of Handel's *Messiah*. A second innovation was to hold a 'master class' at the Adult College in an attempt to obtain new members. Two Association concerts were held - one in Worcester Cathedral and another in Bristol - the latter causing some disquiet for a number of reasons. Two more events were taking part in the Elgar Festival and the now traditional concert at Lawnside.

After 44 years association with the choir, Mr Leonard Blake passed away in the summer of 1989. At the following AGM Carol Holt, who had been associated with the choir as soloist, accompanist and 'stand-in' conductor was elected President. For a number of reasons outlined in the Minutes, the choir resigned from the association.

Stephen Shorthouse staged the first of a series of 'themed' concerts in 1990, the title being 'Swing low', tracing the devel-





Malvern MVC 2022

opment of the Negro Spiritual. It was a financial success raising £232. A cheque for £120 was sent to St Richard's Hospice.

Due to pressure of work at BBC Hereford and Worcester, Nigel Edwards was reluctantly forced to give up the baton after a spell of 11 years. His place was taken by Simon Holt. His first major jobs were the Remembrance Concert and a Memorial Concert to Leonard Blake, when the choir was joined at the College by the Festival Chorus. Mr Blake had been the conductor of the Malvern Musical Society, the fore-runner of the Chorus.

After a long time without a permanent accompanist, Mr Philip Holland now filled that post, and a great rapport was struck between him and Simon. Their piano duets were memorable. Stephen's second production 'A-Roving' used the sea as its theme. Again, it was a success and a cheque for £200 was handed over to St Michael's Hospice. Regretfully, soon after, Simon informed the choir that he could no longer carry on as conductor after December due to lack of time to devote to choir work. Our President found a new conductor, Mr Anthony Digger, who took over in January 1992.

Despite shortage of members, the third 'themed' concert 'Just a Song at Twilight' was staged based on Kilvert's Diaries and with a Victorian setting. Philip Holland had to take over the conductorship at short notice due to Mr Diggers' absence overseas. At the Remembrance Concert the choir was joined by Colwall Ladies.

The following year at a concert in Leigh church, Alan Tonks, now aged 90 and still singing, was presented with a tankard, scroll and birthday cake. The major concert took the form of a 'Musical Tour of the British Isles'. During the year the choir was again without an accompanist and Cherry Gray was 'volunteered' by her husband John, to sit in on a temporary basis (this was to last until 1996 when Sue Jones joined as accompanist).

In 1995 the devastating news came of the death of our President, Carol Holt aged 55. Her association with the choir went back over 20 years, but the choir was fortunate to have her son, Simon, agree to take on the Presidency. Another sad blow was the death of Bert Rodway after 57 years membership as a valuable first tenor. On the concert scene another co-operative effort was with the Colwall Ladies Choir when Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine* was jointly sung. The increase in membership, commenced in 1994, continued with more new members - including welcome tenors.

At the Remembrance Concert we were joined by the 'Minor Chords', a ladies' group who sing a mixture of comedy, close harmony, classical and folk music. A concert in aid of the Association for the Blind was given following the earlier death of Ken Longmire who had close links with the Association, due to his mother's blindness. Two new venues for Christmas music were Worcester City Street Fair and Madresfield Garden Centre.

During 1996, the membership stood around 25 with, for the first time, the number of tenors equal to basses, giving a much better balance. The now much younger average age was very welcome and augured well for the future.

In 1997 we had an Anniversary Concert on 21 March, a concert at the Priory for the Malvern Lions, followed by a concert with the pupils of Tewkesbury Church of England School. The annual Festival of remembrance was led by ourselves and the Malvern Hills and District Brass band on Saturday 1 November and we organised a dinner and group photo. On 12 April, members joined the Cradley Singers and others in the Priory in a concert to commemorate the life and work of Carol Holt.

Encore. A quote attributed to the formidable Mr Gauntlett when he first heard the Quartet in 1922: 'If they stuck to it for another 10 years they might be half as good as they thought they were.'

Malvern Male Voice Choir celebrate 'A Century of Song' with the release of their first ever multimedia music video - 'My Lord What a Morning' - shot on location on and around the stunning beauty of the Malverns.

# New Members Say Hello

## The Capricorn Singers Ladies Choir - Lancashire North - Chrissie Mason

Having just received our welcome pack to the National Association of Choirs, I read the line 'As a new member why not submit a write-up of your choir to introduce yourselves to everyone'. So, this is it, our introduction.

The Capricorn Singers Ladies Choir is based at St Andrew's Church in Cleveleys near Blackpool and comprise three separate voice parts: First Soprano, Second Soprano, and Alto. We are led by our Musical Director, Chrissie Mason, and accompanied by the very talented Ian Whalley.

We were established by Musical Director Ray Buckley at Cleveleys Park Methodist Church in January 1984; hence the name 'Capricorn' the astrological sign at the time.

The aim of the choir was to gather together a group of ladies who were prepared to meet, to practise, and perfect a different kind of music. Songs from the shows, songs from films, songs of well-known groups... in fact to let the public be entertained by music which in most cases they would recognise.

Since 1984 we have raised thousands of pounds for charities, most recently Macmillan Cancer Support, Rosemere Cancer Foundation, Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Hug in a Bag Breast Cancer Charity, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), and Trinity Hospice our local palliative care provider.

We pride ourselves on the quality of our performances and, to this aim, commit



every song to memory so we can focus on our Musical Director and her direction. This sounds daunting to possible new members, but it's actually not, because Chrissie mouths every single word to us during performances.

In 2017 we were very proud winners of the Ladies Choir class of the Skipton Music Festival performing our version of Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Send in the Clowns* from the musical 'A Little Night Music'.

We repeated this success in 2019 by winning the Adult Choir class of the Fleetwood Music and Arts Festival performing *Here On These Branches*, a bewitching a cappella piece by Sarah Quartel, and *Seal Lullaby* by Eric Whitacre.

So, what's in the future for The Capricorn Singers? In 2024 we will celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we are planning a large

community celebration concert on Saturday 13 July 2024 at our local theatre, Marine Hall Fleetwood. The concert will feature other community music groups and friends who the choir have collaborated with over the years to not just celebrate the choir's anniversary, but to also recognise everything that community music brings to the lives of everyone involved. Over the past 40 years, the choir has played an important part in the lives of hundreds of women around Blackpool and The Fylde Coast. The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert is our chance to celebrate 40 years of The Capricorn Singers, everything it has been and continues to be to all our past and present members and the wider community.

You can find out more about us by visiting our website at

<https://www.thecapricornsingers.org>

## Composer Quiz

- 1 Which of his own compositions did Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky describe as being very loud and noisy?
- 2 Which famous composer played in bars that also acted as brothels to help support his family?
- 3 Bolero which was used in the movie '10' was composed by which famous person?
- 4 Which composer, virtuoso pianist and teacher was from Hungary?
- 5 Which famous composer was also known as the Red Priest?

Answers on page 31

# A Hundred Years Of Song

## Haydock Male Voice Choir – North West – Rob Matthews



Haydock Male Voice Choir

This year marks the 100-year anniversary of the formation of Haydock Male Voice Choir. To still be going strong after a hundred years is a remarkable achievement, especially in view of the fact that a number of male voice choirs have folded in that time, particularly in recent years. The longevity of Haydock Male Voice Choir perhaps becomes more apparent, and indeed seems all the more remarkable, when one considers the many important historic events that have taken place in its lifetime, from the General Strike of 1926 to the coronavirus pandemic.

In between, there was World War Two, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and the first man set foot on the moon; the Berlin Wall came down and apartheid ended in South Africa; and there were the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and, most recently, Brexit. The choir has lived through it all, a constant in a world that has seen enormous political, social and cultural change during the past 100 years.

The story of Haydock Male Voice Choir stretches back to the beginning of March 1923, when a letter was circulated round the mining village of Haydock. The letter proposed that a male voice choir be formed and urged men who were interested to attend a meeting the following Monday. On 5 March 1923, a total of 21 men assembled at Haydock Conservative Club, and Haydock Male Voice Choir was born. At that time, Haydock was a thriving mining village and so most of the choir's founder members were employed by

local colliery owners Richard Evans & Co, including the choir's first conductor, R A (Dickey) Foster.

For the next decade and a half or so the choir flourished, but then activities were disrupted by the outbreak of World War Two. Shortly before the end of the war, activities resumed and it was around this time - circa 1944 - that George Anderton, author of the book *A Brotherhood in Song*, which chronicles the history of Haydock Male Voice Choir, first joined the choir when working in the offices of Richard Evans & Co. Recalling his time in the choir in the 1940s, George, who sings first tenor, said: 'The choir was in limbo (because of the outbreak of war) when I joined. Dickey Foster, who was my first boss, was the conductor at the time. There was a big social side to the choir then. Very often we had tea dances and that sort of thing but rationing was in force so getting refreshments, like a hotpot, for instance, wasn't very easy.'

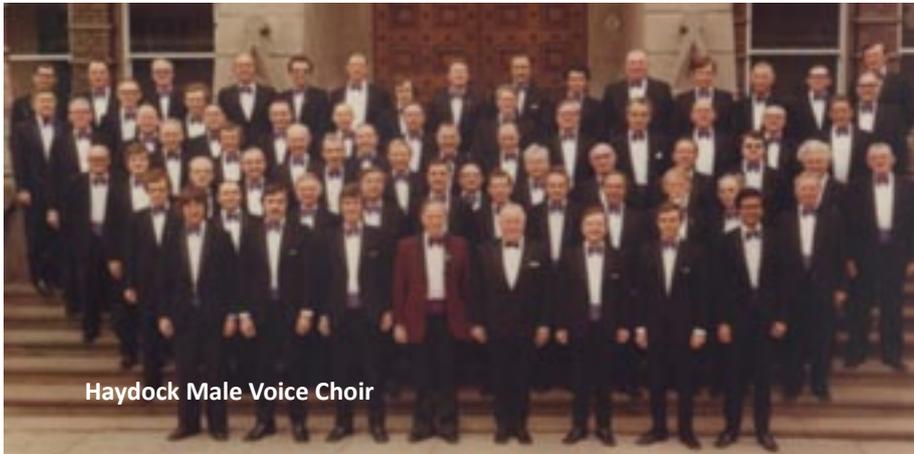
Emerging from the austerity of the 1940s and the war years, the choir entered the 1950s with renewed optimism. But by the mid-1950s the choir was in crisis and close to collapse due to dwindling membership and lack of interest. A gentleman called Albert Gleave, who had previously applied for the position of conductor but had been unsuccessful, was viewed as the choir's saviour. He had left the choir but was approached in 1955 and was asked if he would consider returning to take on the role of conductor. He agreed to do so, and would be instrumental in reviving the choir's fortunes.

The choir enjoyed something of a renaissance after Albert Gleave took the reins, recovering well and achieving a great deal of success, particularly in the 1960s. More success followed in the 1970s, and in 1973 the choir celebrated its 50-year anniversary, and held a gala concert at St Helens Town Hall to mark the occasion. It was the first time the choir had worn a uniform, the members appearing on stage sporting new wool baratheia dress suits. Two years later, in 1975, the choir embarked on its first overseas tour, to Stuttgart in Germany, and performed at the Liederhalle, Stuttgart's premier concert venue, and in the towns of Fellbach and Goppingen, receiving rave reviews in the German press.

Over the next few decades the choir went from strength to strength. In the 1980s, the choir won the Northern Male Voice Choir Championship (later to be known as the National Male Voice Choir Championship) on no less than three occasions. An action-packed 1990s saw the choir set off on several overseas tours, including two tours of California. And in 2000, the choir was victorious once again after claiming first prize in the male voice choir section at the Elgar Choral Festival, beating old rivals Nelson Arion Male Voice Choir.

The choir has won a great many competitions in its illustrious history, the first of which was the Ashton-in-Makerfield Music Festival in 1951. Years later, in 1966, the choir triumphed at the Chester Music Festival, winning three trophies, including 'Best in Festival'. The choir achieved further success at the Chester Music Festival, in 1968 and 1969, coming first in the male voice choir section in both years. In a period spanning almost thirty years, the choir enjoyed a huge amount of success, winning first place on numerous occasions in a variety of competitions, including the prestigious Morecambe Music Festival and the Freckleton Musical Festival. The choir tasted success again in recent times, winning the Isle of Man Festival of Choirs competition in 2019.

The past few years have seen the choir embrace change and move with the times, using social media to very good ef-



Haydock Male Voice Choir

fect, while also coming up with the innovative idea of a six-week singing workshop to try to attract new members. Phil Thornton, who sings second tenor, was involved

in developing the singing workshop. He said: 'We got the idea when we were brainstorming how to get more members once we came back after Covid. We de-

ecided on a singing workshop rather than just saying to people 'come and join us', so that people had something to aim at.' Phil is jointly responsible for managing the choir's Facebook page and he emphasised the important role that social media plays in the modern choir. 'What Facebook, in particular, does for us is allow us to get absolutely anything out there. It's about getting the word out a lot further, and that's what social media can do', he said.

As the choir celebrates its centenary year, it looks to be in good shape and the future looks rosy. If Messrs Foster, Gleave et al could see the choir now, they would no doubt be delighted.

# Mrs Irene Hill 1938 - 2022

## The Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir - Yorkshire South - John Keating

Regular readers of News & Views may recall my recent article on Irene Hill's platinum Jubilee (Issue 228-Autum 2022 page 7).

I am very sad to have to report that Irene has passed away shortly after her Jubilee anniversary presentation.



We travelled to Eastbourne for a week at the end of June and she accompanied us with her usual flair and enjoyed our few days off. In August she became poorly and was in and out of hospital. She passed to the great choir in the sky on 8th October 2022.

Rest in Peace Irene and thank you for your service.

### IRENE, REQUIESCE IN PACE ET AMORE - Ian Dowlman, - 11 October 2022

*In a solemn and reflective mood, after a roller coaster of a day, I wrote this as a tribute to Irene. We all had our experiences of Irene, some for a long time, others briefly. There is a lot to be remembered about that lovely lady.*

Irene was the heart of the choir,  
Even if, more than now and then,  
In a fit of viscerally directed ire  
She would declare "Oh Men!"

The ogre behind the keyboard?  
Or a beautiful soul, who'd hold  
No vitriol back, not ever stored,  
But her love for the choir was gold.

Difficult, irascible, critically severe,  
But ever present, always around  
In everything we did, year on year,  
Never wanting to let anyone down.

And was she proud of all her men  
As time changed the team about?  
Always. But only now and then  
Would she let her pride in us slip out.

Gone, how can we forget her?  
No, we'll not let her memory slip.  
Eric and Colin and Betty will be there  
Wherever be the end of her trip.

I expect the angels will be waiting,  
And they won't have to wait that long,  
Before Irene is snapping and baiting  
Their choirs into harmonious sweet song.

In beauty and peace she will now rest,  
But I bet she'll watch keenly from above.  
And if we do well she'll shout "Oh, Yes!"  
Dear Irene, rest in peace and love.

*Irene has gone, that stalwart of years,  
heart and soul of the Choir.  
The choir will go on without her, but I  
guess it will never quite be the same...*

# From Little Acorns...

## Carole Lindsay-Douglas – Lindsay Music

It is not too bold a claim to contend that many choirs throughout the UK are major supporters of new repertoire – either including the latest releases from the publishers in their programming, or in going out and commissioning a composer to create something especially for them. There is a third driver in the creation of a new work, and that is when the composer is filled with inspiration by a particular artist or organisation and is moved to write for them.

In the Autumn of 2018, Douglas Coombes was invited to lead a Sunday afternoon choral workshop in North Norfolk with a local choir and invited guests. It was received by the singers with tremendous enthusiasm and willingness to participate and Douglas had enjoyed the whole experience so much that he somewhat rashly floated the idea that he would love to write a piece for the group. He used the word 'piece' in an undefined way, but said:

'You will need to find the words.' (The selection of words can often be the most time-consuming part before even embarking upon the musical composition.) That is how it was left.



Douglas Coombes & Paul Rosier

Having departed the scene Douglas didn't have long to wait before correspondence began arriving to the effect that the group actually had a professional writer in its midst, Paul Rosier, a retired minister. Given the geographical location of the choir - just inland a couple miles from Cromer on the North Norfolk coast, Paul thought it might be an idea to examine the life and deeds of a local hero, Henry Blogg. His courage and heroism are the stuff of tales on which not only local folk

are brought up, but also the wider lifeboat community. He was the long-serving coxswain of the Cromer lifeboat (38 years), who rescued a total of 873 souls in 387 sorties and is to this day, the most-decorated-ever lifeboatman. And so, Douglas agreed to the subject matter, thinking that it would probably take the form of a long poem. It would examine the determination and persistence of Henry Blogg in rescuing the men on board two passing boats. Rescues that occurred in a single day on 9 January 1917 in the foulest of conditions in the North Sea. Conditions which would have deterred a lesser man.

Paul didn't just produce one poem, but a series of ten in all, linked by narrative. In short, this was a libretto worthy of an opera! Douglas realised that this 'piece' was going to turn into an epic and like Topsy, the project 'grew' - resulting in a work that would last 45 minutes or so, involving the SATB choir of 35 voices, baritone and tenor soloists and two narrators. All this, quite aside from the question of what the accompaniment would comprise. It was to be called a 'dramatic cantata'.

Spurred on by the heroic subject matter Douglas forged ahead with the composition while the choir director managed to find sufficient funding to support a chamber orchestra for two of the three 'premiere' performances and enough left over to provide a small ensemble for the



Choral Workshop

third. So that automatically increased the musical workload, but by the same token supplied a richer tonal palette for the composer to exploit.

The vocal score of *The Bravest Man* was the first element to be delivered to the conductor Stephen Richards and once his approval was gained, the work was published and delivered to the choir during the summer of the first Covid lockdown in 2020. It was to be a further 2 years, because of disease control measures, before the choir would be permitted to present the premieres in July and August of 2022.

And a lot of dedicated learning was undertaken.

‘We have sung in choirs for over sixty years and this work was certainly a demanding one and not without real challenges,’ commented one couple. ‘It deserves not to be forgotten.’

‘It is a complex work full of drama and emotion. For me, it was challenging to learn (and frustrating at times) but so worthwhile to perform!’ - the assessment of one of the sopranos.

‘The work was the best I have ever sung in a choir like ours. We so enjoyed the instrumental support.’

‘The music and libretto perfectly encapsulate what the RNLI has come to represent since its inception, with brave crews putting others’ safety before their own for ‘those in peril on the sea.’

Choirs that serve local communities are naturally disposed to support their local charities, and those in coastal areas with their own lifeboat station may already be looking for ways in which their programming can reflect notable milestones such as the bicentennial achievements of their own lifeboatmen and women. So, with the two hundredth anniversary of the

founding of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution just around the corner in 2024, all involved in giving birth to this dramatic cantata, *The Bravest Man*, hope that it will be taken up in support of this totally independent organisation (RNLI), to whom it is dedicated. Stories of daring, determination and perseverance happen daily around our shores carried out by ‘ordinary’ men and women – just like Henry Blogg. They do this without pay and without grants from the Government. We owe them so much.



**2024 IS THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION  
WHY NOT CELEBRATE AND FUNDRAISE WITH A  
NEW WORK?  
A DRAMATIC CANTATA  
BY DOUGLAS COOMBES**

**THE BRAVEST MAN**

**LIBRETTO: PAUL ROSIER**

This substantial choral work, consisting of 8 movements, through-composed and linked by narration, tells, very powerfully of the exploits of Henry Blogg of Cromer, Norfolk (1876 – 1954), Britain’s most decorated-ever lifeboat coxswain. He was coxswain for 38 years, launched the Cromer lifeboat 387 times and saved 873 lives; however, it is the effort and determination shown in a single day, the 9th of January 1917 that this cantata samples. The action takes place over a 14-hour period when two passing ships, the *Pyrin* and the *Fernebo*, separately find themselves in peril. Written in a tonal harmonic palette, this work has Douglas Coombes’ familiar stylistic melodic qualities as well as driving rhythms underpinning the drama of the story. It also references the sailors’ hymn ‘*Eternal Father strong to save*’. The piece was commissioned by Southrepps Chorale, to celebrate their 10th anniversary and it is dedicated to Southrepps Chorale, their musical director Stephen Richards and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution..

For SATB Chorus, tenor & baritone soloists, two narrators  
With piano/keyboard accompaniment or chamber ensemble  
Vocal score: Price £9.95 ISBN 978 0 85957 188 3

Duration c. 44 minutes

**01767-260815 or [www.lindsaymusic.co.uk](http://www.lindsaymusic.co.uk)**



# Glorious Sound After 2 Year Covid Delay

Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir – Cornwall – Rosemary Cole



Tamar Valley MVC

St Eustachius Church at Tavistock in Devon was filled with song as Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir and their guests, Mousehole Male Voice Choir came together for a magnificent concert on Saturday 1 October. The concert was planned to take place two years ago but had to be delayed because of the Covid pandemic.

It was well worth the wait. As well as treating the packed church to a wonderful evening of song, the two choirs supported Children's Hospice South West in their invaluable work.

TVMVC and MMVC were planning to join together on 6 May next year at the church

of St Paul, near Mousehole but with the news of King Charles III's Coronation date we naturally changed our plans and so we look forward to another glorious evening of song together on Saturday 13 May 2023.

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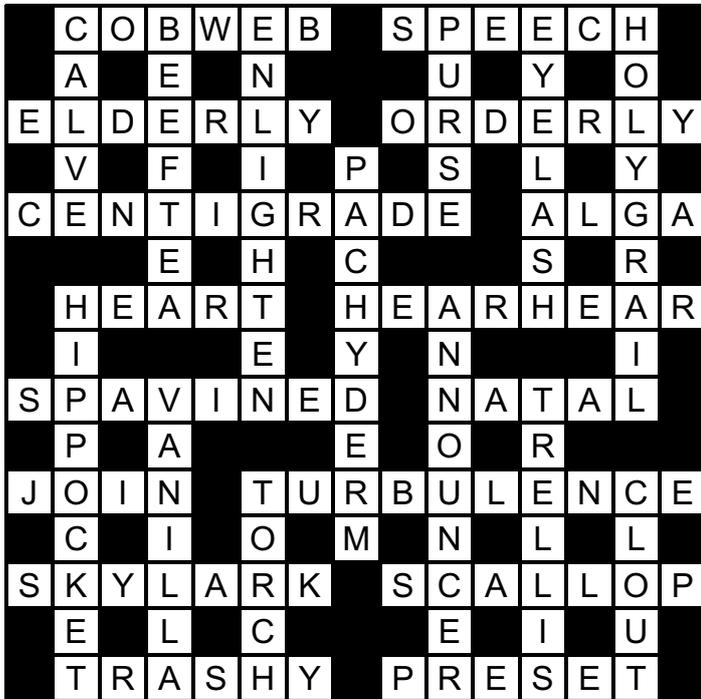
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1	7	4	9	6	8	3	5	2
3	8	5	7	1	2	4	6	9
6	2	9	4	5	3	7	1	8
7	5	3	2	4	6	9	8	1
2	6	1	3	8	9	5	4	7
9	4	8	5	7	1	6	2	3
5	9	6	8	2	7	1	3	4
4	3	2	1	9	5	8	7	6
8	1	7	6	3	4	2	9	5

### Composer Quiz Answers

1 1812 Overture 2 Johannes Brahms 3 Maurice Ravel 4 Franz Liszt Antonio Vivaldi

## HOW I LIKE TO RECEIVE ARTICLES

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

[publications.officer@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk](mailto:publications.officer@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk)

'Wow! that is a long email address', I hear you say. Yes it is but you will find that once it's in your computer you can just start to type it and your computer will offer to finish it for you.

Many of our contributors love to show their prowess by sending in wonderful finished articles with **coloured** headlines, five different fonts and many underlinings, *italics* and **bold** bits. Then, of course, I have to spend time taking them all out before I can set their article up the way you will see it in the magazine. I'm afraid I also have a thing about exclamation marks. I allow one per article. Anymore I remove.

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

### PHOTOGRAPHS

Send me pictures as high resolution .jpegs of 1mb or more, minimum 300 dpi.

### HOUSE STYLE

- We use Calibri 10pt in News & Views. (If you don't have this, don't worry I can soon change the one you use.)
- Set your paragraphs to single space with no spacing before or after paragraphs.
- Start with the name of your choir.
- Then the NAC group your choir is in.
- Tell me who has written it.
- Write your article.
- Quotes use single speech marks (same key as @ but without the shift).
- Dates do not include st nd rd or th
- Abbreviations do not have full stops.
- Song titles are shown in italics.
- Please do not put photos in the text.
- Don't use am or pm in times.
- Unless the word 'choir' is part of a title it should NOT have a capital letter.
- Your choir is singular so 'the choir is' not 'the choir are'

# THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHOIRS

Registered Charity: 1014630

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## **Officers**

24-26 March - Taunton

6 June - Twin Oaks Palterton

5 September - Twin Oaks Palterton

14 November - Twin Oakd Paterton

9 January - Zoom

## **Members Open Forum**

26 March - Taunton

17 June - VTA

30 September - VTA

27 January - Zoom

## **Closing dates for submissions to News & Views**

Spring Issue - 31 December

Summer Issue - 30 April

Autumn Issue - 31 August