

NEWS & VIEWS



236 Summer 2025



**Mendip Male Voice Choir
lifts the Arthur Trowbridge
Cup at the Mid-Somerset
Festival**



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A business of Marsh McLennan

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Rob's Ramblings

Publications Officer — Rob Edwards



It is with some trepidation that I step into Bob's shoes after his many years of stalwart service as

Publications Officer. Hopefully it will be a smooth transition and you won't notice any disruption in service. Bob has still kindly contributed the crossword and sudoku for this issue to ease me into the process.

A good number of articles have been received for this issue and some interesting suggestions for future editions. Please keep them coming – this is your magazine – let's hear all the good news stories you have to share – and maybe some of the er um, what shall I say, more problematic issues you may have encountered and how you overcame them. We can all learn from each other and gain from positive and negative experiences.

Liz Moulder provides an update on the next MDs workshop – to be held in October. The article provides details of how you can enrol – and as Liz says – 'book early to ensure a place.'

Check out the smiling faces on the coach during Bestwood Male Voice Choir's successful tour of North Yorkshire. Whether they are smiling on the way there – or to be going home I leave you to decide.

Cantare Ladies Choir have been 'pulling their socks up', trying to utilise social media to attract new members for the new year. Let us know how you got on ladies – share your secrets of success.

Greater Manchester Police Male Voice Choir gives us an enthusiastic review of the NAC Conference held in April at Wakefield. Hopefully the review will motivate you to attend next year. As they say 'Get the next NAC 'singing workshops' weekend in Chester in your diary now and be part of the fun and learning on the weekend of the 20/22 March 2026.'

Glasgow Phoenix Choir gives us an update on their year so far and Mendip Male Voice Choir gets the prize for submitting two articles and the front cover this issue. The first article describes winning the Arthur Trowbridge Cup at the Mid-Somerset Festival, the second describes its 2025 Summer Concert Season.

Nankersey Male Choir describe how they are keeping the great tradition of male voice singing alive and thriving in Cornwall. Pasties, a few pints and singing Cornish folk songs and shanties sounds like a recipe for success.

'Singing Fun Taken Seriously' so says Romsey Male Voice Choir celebrating 30 years of song – here's to the next 30. Newcastle Male Chorus celebrated reaching its fortieth birthday with an Anniversary Concert held in St Charles Church, Gosforth – though you both have a bit of catching up to do to match York Philharmonic Male Voice Choir who are celebrating their centenary this year.

Southport Lyric Singers still have some free music on offer.

Enough waffle from me - enjoy this issue of News & Views.

Thanks to all our contributors – don't forget to check out our advertisers.

Rob Edwards



Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman — Brenda Wilkinson



Where has this year gone? It's May which means we're almost halfway through. When I was young I was

told to savour my youth as the years will fly by when I get older – well, at this rate I must count myself as ancient!

It was a sad day to part company with Bob at the recent Conference. He has been our publications officer for many years and I hope he is now

enjoying a well-earned rest. Rob (Rob Edwards) has taken over the reins and I am sure you will give him a warm welcome in this, his first, edition of the magazine. He is very enthusiastic, so much so that he has covered just about everything in his 'ramblings', but as I'm not as loquacious as some it helps to fill the page.

Reading through the contributions to this edition it was very heartening that a choir who had read my report of choirs folding due to the recent pandemic put pen to paper to tell everyone how it got the bit between

its teeth and made sure they didn't become a statistic by disbanding.

Many congratulations to them for their resolve. It is very hard work to raise morale when you feel the odds are against you, but it can be done.

Please enjoy the rest of the summer, so long as the weather remains as good as it is now and I look forward to the next edition to see what you've been up to.

Brenda Wilkinson

Ronald Corp OBE (1951-2025)

It is with deep sadness that I announce the death of our President, Ronald Corp OBE on the morning of 7 May 2025 at Bath.

Ron was a very talented musician and chorus master who accepted our invitation to become Honorary President of the NAC nine and a half years ago and very quickly bonded with the officer team.

Brenda Wilkinson

Chair



A members open forum is a platform, often online, where members of an organisation can:

- engage in discussions
- ask questions
- share ideas related to the organisation's activities, policies, or other relevant topics

These forums can be a valuable tool for fostering community, gathering feedback, and promoting open communication within an organisation.

Musical Directors' Workshop 2025

Music Review Officer — Liz Moulder

As mentioned in the Spring edition of News and Views, we are delighted to welcome back Dr Edward-Rhys Harry to deliver this year's workshop on October 5 2025.

As you are now aware, this is a continuation of the NAC's new initiative, begun last year, supporting the development of musical directors. Edward has many years experience working with and mentoring conductors, coaching with sensitivity, whilst imparting his knowledge with humility and humour. For further information please visit his website on:

www.edwardrhysarry.com

Held at the Priory Centre, Stretton, near Burton on Trent in the East Midlands, just off the A38, the venue has excellent parking facilities and will be able to accommodate up to a hundred and fifty participants. If you need to stay over, there are a wide variety of hotels around the Burton area such as Ibis, Holiday Inn Express, Premier Inn and The Hilton at St Georges Park. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is also available.

This year it was decided that the focus would be lower voice choirs. There are a variety of reasons for this. As an organisation, a fair percentage of our members are lower voice choirs.

We are also aware that research carried out before the first Male Voice Conference in Peterborough showed that many male voice MDs had little or no training either as conductors or in general musicianship. And finally, many male voice choirs have struggled in recent years to recruit members. One of the reasons could be a reluctance to move away from the traditional standard pieces of the male repertoire.

This workshop will offer the opportunity to look afresh at the traditional repertoire as well as introduce new music composed in the twenty-first century.

The workshop is open to all musical directors and assistant directors from around the country the only requisite being that your choir is a member of the NAC. (You do not necessarily need to be a member/MD of a male voice choir.)

Directors will have a choice of working on traditional and/or new repertoire. We also welcome observers and choristers to the event.

The previous workshop in 2024 had a tremendous response from the choir who found the whole business of how conductors are trained fascinating.

So, we are inviting choristers to join us in this exciting venture. Tea and coffee will be available throughout the day but you are asked to provide your own packed lunch.

The programme and timings of the day, repertoire, and areas to be covered will be further explained to all participants nearer the time.

Costs for the workshop for MDs actively participating is £25. Directors who would rather observe will be charged £15. Choristers £5.

Places are limited and bookings are already being accepted. Look out for the poster on our website, Facebook and the summer edition of News and Views. Bookings are through Trybooking or myself.

To book a place or receive further information, please contact Liz Moulder on music.reviews@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk or 07779 130848

The current NAC officers would like to issue an apology to Brian Lynn, composer of *The Dove* which appeared in the Centenary Songbook. There were many errors in his composition that may have happened during the printing process. We would also like to apologise for the delay in rectifying this. I am very grateful for Brian's support and patience as we ensured that the copy now available on the website is accurate.

I am also aware that there may have been other errors. We are doing all we can to ensure that all compositions on the website are now accurate. They are free to download and use as you wish.

Liz Moulder

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Music Review Summer 2025

Music Review Officer — Liz Moulder



As I sit composing this article, the sun is shining and I have just come in from deadheading the daffodils! How peculiar then to be writing about Christmas music but by the time you read this, you will ready be to start planning your Christmas concerts and deciding whether to introduce some new pieces to your programme. So as always, I hope you find the following useful.

My first suggestion is an unaccompanied SATB piece, *All and Some* by Olivia Sparkham, composer and choral conductor, who studied composition at Durham University. In triple time with a rehearsal piano accompaniment, this lovely piece moves effortlessly through all parts intermingling the musical themes whilst keeping a repetitive rhythm which also moves between the voice parts stopping only to allow us to hear some contrasting two-part phrases. Written in the Dorian mode, the con moto tempo means good diction and attention to a precise rhythm is always required for a performance that will capture the feel of early music. Published in 2022 by Banks Music Publications under the Kassian Choral Series (choral music by women composers) this is one to consider.

In complete contrast, *Stars*, composed by Tim Knight is a gentle, slow-moving composition with a simple accompaniment to a melodic line which again is shared by voice parts. The harmony is supportive, often subtly doubling voice parts, which helps when rehearsing. I particularly like the piano introduction to each 'verse' and the closing piano phrase which is linked

to the melodic opening line. A useful piece for developing a legato melodic line it is arranged for both SATB and TBB. The text describes the heavenly stars so it could be suitable both for Christmas and other times of the year. Published in 2022, it is available from:

www.timknightmusic.com

St. Luke's Carol by Adrian Pitts is written for unison voices with optional descant and second part. A lively setting of traditional words with dotted rhythms and a catchy tune, this would be immensely suitable for school and youth choirs. A contrasting slower and quieter middle section leads us into the fourth verse which builds up to a forte ending. The accompaniment is syncopated throughout the presto section, with longer, thick chords supporting verse three. It is very 'playable' and helps to define the mood of the piece. Adrian has an excellent pedigree as a composer and conductor and with thirty-five years in education, he also composes pieces for schools. Written in 2019, it is available from Lindsay Music at:

www.lindsaymusic.co.uk

I do not apologise for recommending a second unison piece as I find out so much about my singers when we rehearse in unison. *Christmastime Symphony* was composed by Elizabeth Keetley-Smith in 2023. Studying at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, she graduated with a BMus(Hons) and MA in piano performance. The melodic line has interesting rhythms in the repeated verse with contrasting rhythms for the chorus, The accompaniment lends an air of excitement with its semiquaver dominated right hand, but it also shows Elizabeth's

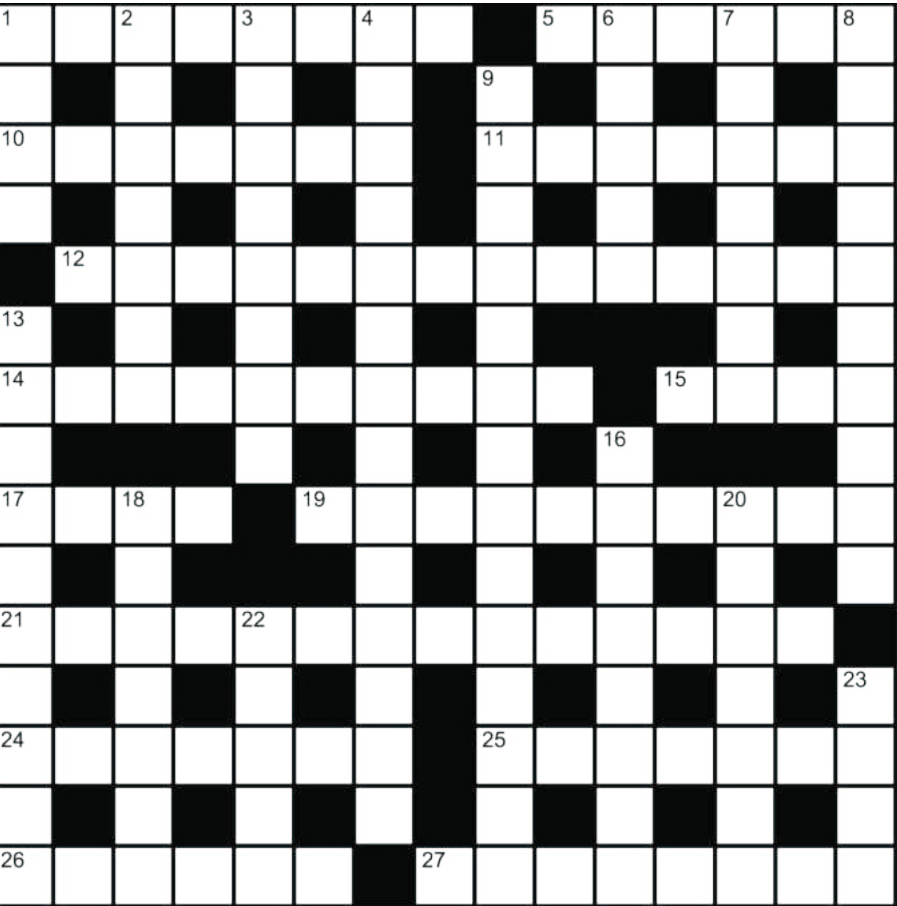
understanding of pianistic skills, sitting nicely under the hands. A piece worth your consideration. This is also published by Lindsay Music.

Carols for Choirs 6 was published in 2023. Covering Advent, Christmas and Epiphany this collection of fifty unaccompanied and accompanied SATB carols includes newly commissioned original compositions as well as arrangements of well-loved carols. Compiled and edited by Bob Chilcott and David Hill, there is something here for everyone. *All the Stars Looked Down* in close harmony from John Rutter does not disappoint but the range of pieces is shown with this and pieces like *The Unexpected Early Hour* composed by Reena Esmail and *There Is No Rose*, Ben Parry. Except for one, all have been composed by living composers from the UK and America. There are no traditional styled carols here but compositions that are full of 'vibrancy, energy and diversity' as described by the editors. It is available in paperback or spiral-bound copies and is published by OUP.

There also many arrangements of traditional carols and Christmas songs you can browse through online, but I think it is important to consider the many talented musicians who are composing unique and original pieces.

As always, I hope that the above interest you and starts you on your own research to develop your repertoire and programmes.

PUZZLE PAGE



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

Across

- 1 Scrambled fins lack very fine leather (8)
- 5 Thin line (6)
- 10 Covered with cellulose pulp (7)
- 11 Old coach (7)
- 12 Having an allergy (14)
- 14 Romeo chick can be a caricature in poetry (4-6)
- 15 Great drink sounds like a stand to support a corpse (4)
- 17 Red corundum (4)
- 19 As a peculiar looking Belgian am I conceivable? (10)
- 21 Sidewalk and chalk user (8,6)
- 24 Elegant and ornate (7)
- 25 Toughie (7)
- 26 Give a good reason (6)
- 27 Holy warrior seeks reform (8)

Down

- 1 Made to be similar (4)
- 2 Mouth synchronisation (3-4)
- 3 Like a rusty hinge (8)
- 4 Fail to recognise distinction (14)
- 6 Language loosely hid in the north of India (5)
- 7 Sea water is flowing out (7)
- 8 Cause to lose enthusiasm (10)
- 9 Starting a new dad (8,6)
- 13 Clever talking device (10)
- 16 Excessively suave (8)
- 18 Temporary living quarters militarily (7)
- 20 Head sculpture accompanied someone energetically (7)
- 22 Mines altered people's bearings (5)
- 23 Muslim ruler in the mire somehow (4)

Report on NAC Conference 2025

Greater Manchester Police MVC — North West — Frank Pearson

The word 'Conference' is a misnomer as it implies lots of discussions and meetings whereas the weekend is always one of singing and enjoyment with friends. Put the date in your diary now and join in the fun at the next one which is to be held in Chester on the weekend of the 20 - 22 March 2026.

Margaret and I arrived at 2.30 and once settled in our room, we made our way to the 'Come & Sing' session (4.15 – 5.30) presented by a NAC committee member Liz Moulder which was great fun but there was a surprise at the end of it – we had done so well that we were now the entertainment at the Gala Dinner that evening! A necessary trip to the bar was required.

7.30 for 8.00 Gala Dinner with wine. At the end of the evening, the assembled NAC ensemble performed to those who hadn't made it to the Come & Sing session. There were definitely more performers than guests at this stage but as someone commented – no change there then. I think many choirs have had similar experiences including ourselves.

The singers made their way back to their tables amidst rapturous applause – OK maybe not rapturous - and I was definitely ready for another glass of that white wine. Fortunately for me, Pete, the NAC Secretary was drinking red. It was quite a late retirement to bed because, as normal when choirs get together in friendship and a meal, we break into song, quickly followed by another and another.



Saturday, after breakfast, was enjoyably busy. In the morning, we had two workshops given by David Lawrence with a coffee break and trade stand viewing between the two. This was followed by lunch (hot or cold buffet – or in some cases both). After lunch, we had the first of another two excellent workshops given by Nicola Hunt. Nicola had fronted the 'ad hoc' NAC choir the previous evening as she is a mezzo soprano and she performed two solo pieces which were enjoyed by all. All four workshops were interactive and involved singing techniques, breath control, MD interaction and voice first aiders.

You learnt so much in respect of your own capabilities in relation to breathing, posture and looking after your own health vocally. Nicola's two workshops were split in that the first was after lunch (2.00 – 3.15) and the second the following day. Her first session was again followed by a coffee break and a chance to further chat to the trade stalls.

5.00 – Dinner, 6.30pm – Coach departed the hotel to the evening's concert in the Riley Smith Hall at Tadcaster. The concert was given by three choirs from the area: Leeds MVC, The Rodillian Singers and Chordiality. The concert was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. The coach returned us to our hotel for the now customary 'bacon butties' and a night cap from the bar.

Sunday morning after breakfast began with the second of Nicola's two workshops which was enjoyed by all attendees. This was followed by a coffee break before the NAC AGM which was concluded in under 30 minutes – something we could aim for.

Following the AGM, we had the Members' Open Forum where we discussed the weekend and proposals going forward. It was agreed by all that the weekend had been a great success specially made so by our two guest presenters of the workshops.

The trade stands this year ranged from insurance, choir clothing, choir travel in UK or abroad, music and music gifts.

So, as you will have noticed from the above, hardly any discussions or meetings but plenty of informal chats with friends within the committee and other choirs about choral issues.

Get the next NAC 'singing workshops' weekend in Chester in your diary now and be part of the fun and learning on the weekend of the 20 - 22 March 2026.

Choral Humour

What do choruses pay in?
har-money

What do pirate choirs specialise in?
ARRRRmoney

Why did the violin go on a diet?
To get fit as a fiddle

To have your own copy of this page to work on go to www.nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk and look for the latest copy of News & Views then print the page. Easy!

[SOLUTIONS PAGE 27](#)

Seeking a New Musical Director

Banchory Singers Community Choir — Scotland East — Dave Valentine

We are a seventy strong non-auditioned SATB community choir based in the town of Banchory in Aberdeenshire and we are seeking a new Musical Director.

The choir is well-established - forty years old — and performs regular concerts and sing-outs enjoyed by many in the local community.

After thirty-one years, our current director is stepping down having raised the choir up to an enviable standard.

We are now looking for a new MD to keep the momentum going and take us forward.

We would welcome expressions of interest from potential candidates, with a view to making an appointment starting at the end of August this year.



For more information please contact the Choir Secretary:

info@banchorysingers.co.uk



MUSICAL QUIZ

1. The founding brother members of the Kinks were Ray and Dave who?
2. Which singer was known as Little Miss Dynamite?
3. Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen's 1962 hit was called *March of the ...* what?
4. Which group comprised John Phillips, Denny Doherty, Cass Elliot, and Michelle Phillips?
5. Which comedy actor had a novelty hit with *My Boomerang Won't Come Back*?
6. Who was Dionne Warwick's most famous cousin?
7. Which later-to-be-famous solo singer and guitarist toured as a member of the Beach Boys in the mid-60s?
8. Which English rock band, formed in London in 1969, takes its name from a fictional character in David Copperfield?
9. How many strings does a violin usually have?
10. Whose single *Glad All Over* knocked the Beatles' *I Want to Hold Your Hand* off the top of the UK charts in 1964?

Answers on page 15

Successful North Yorkshire Tour

Bestwood Male Voice Choir — Midlands East — Peter Fletcher



Bestwood Male Voice Choir, under their Musical Director Mirek Rus, recently enjoyed a very enjoyable and successful tour of North Yorkshire from Thursday 27 to Monday 31 March 2025.



Travelling by coach, 26 choir members joined by 24 wives, partners and friends were blessed with wonderfully unseasonable weather during the 5 day stay at the Esplanade Hotel in Scarborough.

On the Friday evening the choir performed at St Stephen's Church in Snainton, a small village between Pickering and Scarborough.

The varied programme included solos by current Chairman David Riley, past Chairman Colin Pursglove and Accompanist John Mark Rose.

A packed and very enthusiastic audience gave a standing ovation at the end of the concert, which was successful in raising £800 towards an appeal to raise much needed funds for the restoration of the church's historic Lychgate, dating back to 1150.

On the Saturday evening the choir was joined by the Ryedale Voices, a mixed community choir formed in 2019 by their Musical Director Alison Davies.

The concert took place at the recently, beautifully refurbished Wesley Centre in Malton, which in the recent past has hosted concerts by some well-known artists including Julian Lloyd Webber and Lesley Garrett.

A large audience enjoyed the mixture of both male and mixed voices of the two choirs, with a wide variety of songs, as well a delightful solo from Bestwood MVC's Accompanist, John Mark Rose.

After dinner on the Sunday evening, the choir rounded off the weekend by performing for the guests in the Esplanade Hotel and received another warm reception, ending with an enthusiastic round of applause and a 'bucket collection' in aid of choir funds.

All in all, a wonderful time of music and fellowship, highlighting the uplifting benefits of being part of a choir.



Spring Update from Glasgow

Glasgow Phoenix Choir — Scotland West — Anne Kay



It's a delight to be writing this item on such a lovely day here in Central Scotland. Can't often say that, sadly.

The months since my last report have been very busy with learning a lot of new repertoire. The culmination of that effort arrived on Saturday 26 April, when the choir performed its annual spring concert in the RSNO Auditorium at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.

As a venue, this is much smaller than the main hall where we perform at Christmas and it feels much more intimate and, dare I say it, relaxed. Not that any of us ever feel truly relaxed until AFTER a concert.

Unfortunately, I was unable to take part as I've had to take a bit of leave from the choir but I was able to join as an audience member and what a wonderful experience it

was. In fact, parts felt miraculous. The transition from hesitant and slightly uncertain singing to the final, polished performance was truly amazing to behold.

I recall attempting the words of *Adiemus* and having to struggle with a 'Addy, daddy, laddie, Maddy...etc.' as I just couldn't get it into my head. According to Wikipedia (the fount of all human knowledge), 'the lyrics themselves have no meaning. The vocals are simply used as another instrument to make music and not to convey any message.'

In the early stages of learning the piece, it's just as well there is no meaning, I'm sure I wasn't alone in singing utter balderdash.

By the concert, my fellow choristers had nailed all those non-words and managed to make them sound authentic. With the addition

of drums, courtesy of Robert Shearer, the piece sounded amazing and the audience received it enthusiastically.

And while the words can trip us up, we are much more likely to struggle with those awkward rhythm changes, such as in *Anything Goes* or strange, reiterated, whisperings, such as 'Swing, swing, swing' in Mac Huff's brilliant arrangement of *It don't mean a thing*.

It often takes longer to learn these parts than anything else. Do other choirs drive their conductors to the brink of insanity as we do? And yet, Cameron never loses patience and carries on with good humour and, quite often, a wee bit of cheek!

We were joined on stage by our friends of the Ballianlay Choir from the Isle of Bute. We have now sung

together on a number of occasions and it is always a pleasure to meet them again. We're already looking forward to our next concert with them in Rothesay in May 2026. I'm sure it will arrive more quickly than it sounds.

Before the end of this (our seventy-fourth) season, the choir will be performing, in mid-May, in St Andrew's Metropolitan Cathedral in Glasgow with our new friends of the Bangor Ladies Choir. We have enjoyed singing in this beautiful church before and look forward to sharing it with the ladies. We're also preparing to take part in the Glasgow 850 celebration by joining in the Clyde Chorus in Govan at the end of the month.

Not all members of the choir are Glaswegians, but we do have a very strong link to the city and are proud to be part of this event.

Speaking of anniversaries, next season will be our seventy-fifth. In 1951, we arose from the ashes of our glorious forebears, the Glasgow Orpheus Choir and have now been singing for 25 years longer than they did. I'm sure we'll be doing very special things to celebrate that milestone.

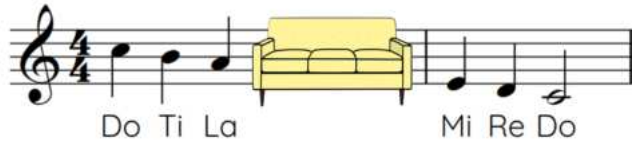
One item we are planning, is another Open Rehearsal in September. Like all choirs, we lose members throughout the year for a whole variety of reasons and we're very keen to replace them to maintain the standards we aim for.

Our newest intake of singers is to be greatly commended on the efforts they put into learning this season's new material as well as the many items we rotate as part of the wider repertoire. From my place in the audience, I observed that they all had everything learned perfectly. No mean feat in joining a choir that sings everything 'off-copy'.

As we come to the end of the season, we will be saying farewell to our Business Manager, John Blue. John is deserving of more than just a brief mention, so I plan to say more in the August report. Farewell until then.

MUSICAL QUIZ - ANSWERS

1 Davis	3 Siamese Children	5 Charlie Drake	7 Glen Campbell	9 4
2 Brenda Lee	4 The Mamas and The Papas	6 Whitney Houston	8 Uriah Heep	10 The Dave Clark Five



Music For Free

Southport Lyric Singers still have some free (but require payment for P&P) music on offer.

Please contact dh.hughs40@gmail.com for more information.

SATB	Copies	SATB	Copies
Black & White Minstrels on Parade	7	Roberta	17
Cycle Round Britain	15	Star Dust	17
For the Fallen	19	The Skating Minister	8
Looking High, High, High	26	Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer	19
Love is the Sweetest Thing	18	Travel in Style	14
Old Macdonald	17	Watching the Wheat	21
Ose Shalom	20	What Would We Do Without Music	13
		Christmas	
Deck the Halls	41	Shepherds Loud Their Praises Singing	43
In the Bleak Midwinter	37	Sing a Joyous Glad Noel	31
O, Holy Night (Ladies)	33	2 Spanish carols	30

Mendip MVC Cup Winners & Summer Season

Mendip Male Voice Choir — South West — John Kendall

Mendip MVC lifts Arthur Trowbridge Cup



Musical Director Kate Courage and Chairman Richard Luscombe hold up the Arthur Trowbridge Cup

Timsbury 2 April 2025. Mendip Male Voice Choir is celebrating after winning a trophy at the adult choral day of the Mid-Somerset Festival held in Bath recently.

The Mendip Men entered the Show Song and Male Voice Choirs classes, held at St. Swithin's Church on Saturday 15 March.

For the Show Song class, musical director Kate Courage chose *Anthem*, from the musical Chess by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus of ABBA, with lyrics by Björn Ulvaeus and Tim Rice. *Rhythm of Life* from the Broadway musical Sweet Charity by Cy Coleman with lyrics by Dorothy Fields was the second choice.

Rhythm of Life is consistently popular with choirs and audiences alike and *Anthem* is a firm favourite with the choir. In this class, the Mendip Men were competing with the Andover Ladies Choir and a second ladies choir, the Courage Choir from Bradford-on-Avon, directed by Kate's sister Felicity.

For the Male Voice Choirs class, Kate chose *Thankful* by Josh Groban and *Chattanooga Choo Choo* composed by Harry Warren with lyrics by Mack Gordon. In the Show Song class, the Mendip Men were awarded a score of

84 percent, giving way to the two ladies choirs, who turned in fine performances. Adjudicator Tim Parker praised the choir for its 'wonderfully warm sound' and diction, noting that there were some amazing rolled rrrs! in *Rhythm of Life*. Tim Parker specifically praised the accompanists and musical directors of all three choirs for their important roles in the choir performances, recognising the vital contributions of both Kate Courage and accompanist Dominic Irving, who joined the choir less than six months ago.



Mendip Male Voice Choir lifts the Arthur Trowbridge Cup

To lift the Arthur Trowbridge Cup for the Male Voice class, the Mendip Men needed to up their game to score at least 85 percent. Adjudicator Parker praised the choir's performance of *Thankful*, noting that, 'A great performance is one that makes the listener feel something and that we believe what we hear – I believed you.'

Chattanooga Choo Choo, when performed by the Glenn Miller Orchestra was the first song to be awarded a gold record back in 1942 and it proved to be a trophy moment for the Mendip Men at the festival, with Tim Parker praising the choir's tuning balance and diction.

With an overall score of 87 percent, the choir was awarded honours and lifted the Arthur Trowbridge Cup. 'I'm really proud of what the gentlemen have achieved today', said Kate Courage, 'We've worked hard on diction, quiet singing, loud singing and a good overall

musical performance and it is really satisfying that this has been recognised.'

'It shows what hard work and determination can achieve', said choir chairman Richard Luscombe, 'It will help to set us up for our summer season of concerts which begin in May.'

Men who would like to join this award-winning choir would receive a warm welcome at our Monday night rehearsals, held every week in term time at St Mary's School in Timsbury. Summer Term rehearsals resume on Monday 21 April (Easter Monday) with a rehearsal at Camerton Community Hall, Meadgate, Camerton, before returning to St Mary's School from Monday 28 April.

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

The choir currently has 67 members arranged in four sections. Kate Courage recently re-joined as Musical Director in 2024. Kate has the distinction of being the only musical director to have directed the choir twice. Kate studied Music and English Literature at University and has taught, directed, conducted and composed for many choirs, groups and schools, including twice conducting the Royal Albert Hall Schools Proms with a massed choir of 500 children singing two of her compositions.

For further information about Mendip Male Voice Choir please contact: PR officer: PR@mendipmen.co.uk, 07941 782956.

Mendip Male Voice Choir gets set for its 2025 Summer Concert Season

Fresh from success in the Mid-Somerset Festival last month, when the choir lifted the Arthur Trowbridge Cup for the Male Voice Choir class, preparations are under way for the 2025 season of summer concerts.

The Mendip Men will team up with Westfield Voices for the first concert of the year. It will be a fund-raising performance organised by Midsomer Norton Rotary, staged at Downside School, at Stratton on the Fosse, on Saturday 10 May at 7.00. Expect a variety of music for the concert, with the Mendip Men bringing old favourites and new material into the repertoire. Funds raised will go to Rotary Midsomer Norton Boot Swap and other Rotary Charities.

The choir will continue with fundraising for Rotary at its next concert, when it will team up with the Chew Valley female choir Vox in Frox. Chelwood Bridge Rotary will be our hosts, raising funds for Great Western Air Ambulance and other Rotary Charities. The concert will take place on Saturday 24 May at St John's Church Keynsham starting at 7.30.

The choir's next concert on Saturday 7 June will bring the Mendip Men together with Cowbridge Male Voice Choir from South Wales. Cowbridge MVC will be fresh from a tour of the Lake District and will join the Mendip Men at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Weston-Super-Mare for a 'Harmonies for Hospice' concert, raising funds for Weston Hospicecare.

The concert is being organised by Weston-Super-Mare Rotary. This will be the first joint concert with Cowbridge MVC this year. The Mendip Men will be on tour in South Wales in September and will join Cowbridge MVC on stage at Llantwit Major School on 19 September.

Rounding off the choir's summer season will be the Annual Summer Concert, continuing the theme of music from stage and screen shows. This concert will take place at Midsomer Norton Methodist Church on Monday 14 July. Along with the annual Christmas concert, it's an opportunity for the choir to raise money for its own funds which will help it to continue to offer fundraising concerts for charities and other good causes throughout the year.

'Success at the Mid-Somerset Festival has fired up the choir for our summer season', says Chairman Richard Luscombe, 'The concerts give us a great opportunity to help raise funds for a range of charities and good causes, including Great Western Air Ambulance and Weston Hospicecare, which do such great work for the communities here in the South West.'

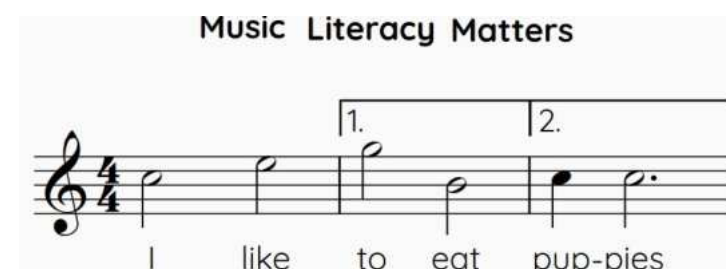
'We have enjoyed working on our 'Songs from Stage and Screen' programme for the summer and unearthing some old classics as well as learning new repertoire', says Musical Director Kate Courage, 'This music will take us into the autumn with our choir tour and a special fundraising concert for the Bradford on Avon Lions Club with the wonderful youth choir, West Wiltshire Young Singers on 13 September.'

'We look forward to singing with several other choirs this term, and enjoying sharing our music far and wide, and we are delighted to welcome the superb woodwind player, Emma Powell as our guest soloist at our annual concert on Monday 14 July. Hope to see you at one (or all!) of our concerts!'

For more information about the choir's summer concerts, visit:

www.mendipmen.co.uk/performances

where full details of the concerts and ticket sales can be found.



Nankersey's 75 Year Anniversary

Nankersey Male Choir — Cornwall — David Phipps



Nankersey Male Choir were founded in 1950 mainly by men from the pretty little fishing village of Flushing, near Falmouth in Cornwall. The choir's name is the old Cornish name for the village of Flushing. As many of the members lived in the village it was decided that Flushing should be where the choir was based. However, Flushing's location, on the opposite side of the harbour to the town of Falmouth, sometimes provided more than a few problems for members from 'across the water'.

The only public transport to Flushing in the early days was by a ferryboat, which finished at 7.00. After that time it was by rowing boat, which on a dark and stormy night could be very risky. Older members quite clearly remember standing on Flushing Quay for half an hour or more, shouting 'Over' to the boatman who was waiting for passengers on Falmouth's Greenbank quay, or possibly in the bar of the Greenbank Hotel! The choir's signature tune is appropriately *Row Boatman Row*.

The choir now numbers over 50 members who now hail from various other towns and villages in nearby West Cornwall. The choir is extremely lucky to have a talented and stable music team. Elaine Tangye, the Musical Director, joined Nankersey Male Choir as accompanist in 1990 and in 1998 became their Musical Director. In 2005 Elaine was made a Cornish Bard for her

services to music in Cornwall. Michael Uren joined in 2014, and he has a fine tenor voice and has sung with choral societies in Penzance and Helston.

The choir is really looking forward to their seventy-fifth anniversary year. With a great blend of experience and new blood the choir can look forward to many more years singing for pleasure. Thanks to various recruitment drives the choir members number the same as pre-COVID, and there are not many choirs that have done this. There is much competition for men's voices these days and the choir needs to offer constantly changing repertoires, and a good social scene which is not often mentioned. A few of the newer songs to look forward to this year are *Divine Brahma*, *The Fields of Athenry*, *Riversong* and *Vaya Con Dios*. It has taken a great deal of planning but finally thanks to our concert secretary, Kevin Hoskins, the choir is looking forward to singing with choirs across the whole breadth of the county. This has already started with a local choir, Treverva MVC in April, and takes in Launceston MVC in North Cornwall, Marazion and St Buryan MVCs in West Cornwall and Mevagissey and Loveny MVCs in East Cornwall. With an average of two concerts a month there is still time to fit in the Falmouth International Sea Shanty Festive in June, where the choir regularly kicks off proceedings after the official opening ceremony.

The choir is also very indebted to the committee members who give up a great deal of their time for the well-being of the choir. Peter Thomas had the unenviable job of choir secretary through the COVID years and its associated health and well-being issues. Peter has now passed the baton on but not before liaising with a local web design company to build a new and highly editable website. This has many functions including who we are, listen to us, book us, join us and an event diary. With the re-branding we hope to attract those many individuals who are looking to learn to sing in four-part harmony, stay fit and continue to be healthy, which are some of the benefits of singing.

Lastly here are a few words from our chairman, Paul Trenery. 'I joined the choir the year before COVID hit, just as a novice and I had very little singing experience. But, I did want to join a group of people and an organisation that offered camaraderie, company and importantly a social outlet. I have found all this in spades and more. Meeting up every Monday evening for practice and a pint at the local pub, singing at concert venues, has brought a great sense of achievement.

'Our choir is one of the biggest in Cornwall and is well known. Our annual fete at The Falmouth Hotel has proved to be very successful and brings in much needed funds. The coffee mornings, bingo evenings and bowling nights are organised by our lady supporters. So, there is a part for the lady in your life to play. The boat trip in June to St Mawes is always well supported. Meeting at Prince of Wales Pier, having pasty on the boat, a couple of pints at St Mawes sailing club and singing Cornish folk songs and shanties. Finally singing on the boat returning to Falmouth.'

As you can see, we are trying to keep the great tradition of male voice singing alive and thriving in Cornwall.

www.nankerseychoir.org

Forty Years of Singing

Newcastle Male Chorus — North East — Kevin Vale

On 21 March, Newcastle Male Chorus celebrated reaching its fortieth birthday with an anniversary concert held in St Charles Church, Gosforth. Among a large audience were a number of guests invited to join us because of their association with the choir over its history.

Former members, widows and relatives of former members and many others enjoyed an evening of music provided by the choir, solos from its members and those by invited guest performers.

A buffet was provided by members' wives and a most successful raffle was held. The choir made many new friends that evening - and strengthened ties with old ones.

Newcastle Male Chorus began on 11 January 1984 when a large number of men answered an advertisement placed in the local evening paper. Norman Williams, a renowned choral trainer, directed the choir for twenty years and led it to many successes in competitions.

Norman died in 2002 and the baton passed to his wife Doris - already a conductor of the Gibside Singers - and she has conducted for another twenty years until forced by injury and illness to stand down from the podium. For all of her work both locally and nationally, Doris was awarded the British Empire Medal.

During most of the choir's existence it has been accompanied at the piano and organ by David Scott who also received the British Empire Medal for his services to music.

During the unfortunate absence of Doris Williams, the choir looked to appoint a new Director. It did not need to look too far, for in the bass line was Alan Clark, a conductor of many choirs, particularly Steeton MVC. Alan is taking us into the next forty years.

The choir is becoming more active again after the enforced shut down caused by COVID. Concerts have been increasing since we started seriously again in March 2023.

Recently we have sung in Spennymoor, Stocksfield, Sunderland and Stamfordham. We held two joint concerts with local primary schools and are looking forward to singing with Newcastle Boys School in May.

We enjoy an annual Christmas fund raising concert for the nuns of St Joseph's Care Home in Newcastle and are proud and honoured to lead the singing at the Remembrance Day Service in Eldon Square in the city.

The choir has welcomed new members over the last year and is delighted to see former members returning. We encourage 'young men of all ages' to join us.

As Newcastle Male Chorus sings into its next Forty years, it is changing its name to reflect closer ties with Newcastle City Council - to 'City of Newcastle Male Voice Choir'.



60 Sensational Years of Travel

Rayburn Tours — Bethan Beddow



This year marks a fantastic milestone for Rayburn Tours, as the Derby-based company proudly celebrates its sixtieth anniversary. Since 1965, this family-run business has been shaping the concert tour experience, offering music-focused travel that brings live performances, diverse venues, and unforgettable musical moments to life.

From its humble beginnings, Rayburn Tours has grown into a leading provider of tailored group tours, helping youth and adult music groups explore new cities, connect with fellow musicians, and experience the magic of live music across the globe.

Rayburn Tours' chairman, John Boyden, reflects on the company's journey, highlighting how their commitment to creating enriching musical experiences has remained at the core of their mission since day one.

'No trouble is too much trouble for Rayburn Tours' was the mantra of the founder Barry Rayburn when speaking of customer service and with these words

day, continue to reflect the changing syllabus and educational needs.

Our work is infectious, it's interesting, and we feel a valued part of assisting the next generation to be more informed and to be a positive influence on our communities.

Very early on in my career I learnt that work would fill a large part of my life and, therefore, to be happy and satisfied with my life I should do what I believed was interesting and fulfilling work. I believe that being part of RT I have achieved that, and I believe the majority, if not all of our company, love what we do.

Now, in my retirement from day-to-day operations, I have handed the baton of control to the next generation of the family and a group of highly competent non-family directors and senior managers. I am immensely proud of our team and I feel confident that, in their hands, our company will achieve yet further growth, enjoyment and recognition.

To all the musicians who have travelled with us, thank you for being a part of our story.



Here's to the journeys yet to come!

Recovering from COVID

Cantare Ladies Choir — North West — Jackie Holt



In her opening comments in the Spring 2025 edition of News & Views, our chairman makes reference to the many choirs who have sadly not survived the pandemic.

There was a time just before Christmas last year when I seriously thought what was going to be our fate too. Selfishly, I didn't want to be the chairperson at the choir's demise, so some serious discussions took place.

As a choir, we rely solely on member subscriptions to fund our hobby. We do a couple of concerts a year, but 'gigs' seem to have dried up since COVID. During the pandemic, we used our 'safety net' in the bank and paid a reduced fee to our MD for sessions carried out over Zoom. Once it was all over, we didn't increase subs in order to attract or keep members. This eventually came to a head without me realising it.

We decided as a choir to pull our socks up, try to utilise social media to attract new members for the new year and to increase subs. We also asked members to pay monthly, rather than termly, and all year round despite not rehearsing in August. This should mean that our cash flow is pretty stable, as long as our MD and accompanist bill us regularly too.

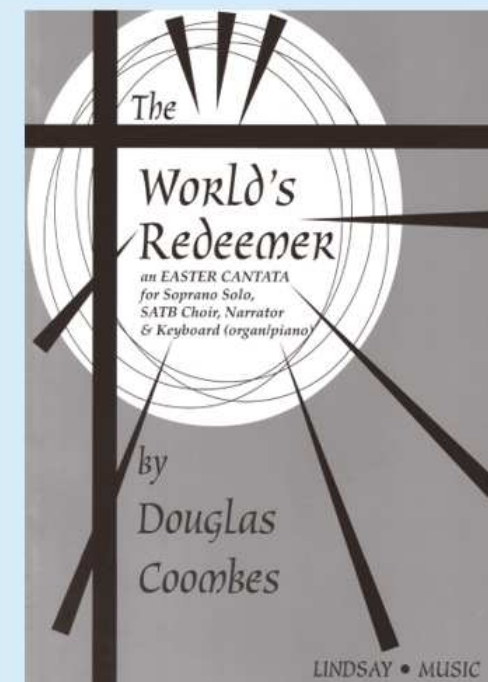
At Christmas the choir was delighted to perform their concert in the newly renovated Rochdale Town Hall. This was well received and hopefully a solid foundation on which to promote the choir. We also became members of 'Rochdale Creates' which is an organisation dedicated to helping develop the arts in the town.

Cantare began life as the Debrose Choir in 1982, changing our name when the original MD left.

Our aim for 2025 is to 'up our game' in respect of self promotion through social media and as many other outlets as we can. Hopefully this will help us gain new members which will also help funds!

Something different for EASTER ?

The World's Redeemer



an Easter Cantata by Douglas Coombes
for Narrator, Soprano solo, SATB Choir & Organ
This was commissioned by Paoli Presbyterian Church, Pennsylvania, USA and first performed at Easter 2003 in the USA by the commissioning body.
Vocal score £6.95
English text 126pp.
ISBN 0 85957 047 9
Duration approx. 1hr 15mins.
Vocal scores available for purchase or hire.

This is a highly accessible longer work of oratorio proportions, and full of drama, telling the whole of the Easter story, using a variety of texts - including two by the composer (*Judas* and *Betrayed by a kiss*). The music is continuous, although the ten choral movements may be sung in isolation as anthems etc. Instead of sung recitative, the narrative is spoken, thus broadening the opportunities for performance. *The World's Redeemer* offers an alternative to the standard Easter repertoire in which the composer has fully exploited the full range of emotion in the expression of this poignant story.

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30 Years of Song

Romsey Male Voice Choir — Southern Counties — Kevin Cleary



Compared to many choirs Romsey Male Voice Choir is a relative youngster, yet in reaching and celebrating our thirtieth year in 2025 we are proud to be able to say that RMVC, through hard work, dedication and humility, has gained a reputation as one of the best male choirs in the South.

For the choir it all started at our conception in 1995, when our founder and President, Keith Lawrenson, together with 15 raw recruits and one beer drinking dog nestled into a back room in the Abbey Hotel in Romsey with a piano, an accompanist and the dream of taking to the stage in the Royal Albert Hall, or more modestly, a local village church.

From our infancy, through to our metaphorical short, then long trousers, and onward to an increasing, maturity, RMVC followed a sometimes ascending, sometimes stumbling learning journey. This was characterised by music and singing infusing its way into each of our choristers and the choir as a whole to make us determined to get it right, where we got it wrong and take risks to stretch ourselves, while holding fast to tried and tested favourite music.

By the turn of the century the choir had grown to 29 singers, and had

become not just a place to sing, but a bonded, socially active group embracing also our spouses and partners.

In the millennium year we joined other male choirs to sing in the Manchester Arena. We made the first of our CDs and were regularly performing in concerts by invitation. We'd already by then had two Musical Directors. The latest, Hannalie Bekker, initiated us into African music, so we were singing not just in English and Welsh, but also in Afrikaans, and a little later Italian and Maori. We had as well enjoyed the first of our tours to France. As the years passed, our current talented Musical Director Marion Maxey joined us in 2015 greatly extending our technical and performance expertise. Our choir numbers rose again to around 60.

We'd already sung many times in Romsey Abbey and other similarly fabulous Cathedral and secular venues, including the third largest theatre in the UK, the Mayflower Theatre in Southampton. We'd organised and hosted massed male choir concerts with some amazing male choirs and staged our much-loved 'Generations' concerts involving young people from primary school age through to teenagers.

Annual tours in the UK and overseas continued, cups were won in competitions, and twice RMVC was part of the Cornwall International Male Choral Festival.

In 2010 Romsey Male Voice Choir gained charity status and as a result the choir is delighted to have since raised thousands for great causes both local and national, many close to the hearts of our members.

In this, our celebratory year, so far six concerts are on the horizon together with a short tour to Barnstaple to sing with the Barnstaple MVC. However, on 11 October 2025 choir members, resplendent in new jackets, will stand ready in Romsey Abbey, quietly acknowledging what has been and those who have given so much to the choir, before performing a programme of music reflecting the past, the present and the future, giving their hearts and souls to sing in celebration of the choir's '30 Years of Song'.

Never to be forgotten the concert 'Afterglow' full of adrenaline filled singing, together with the love of the bonds of friendship and fellowship between our wonderfully eclectic and characterful choristers, will without doubt be another celebratory event to be remembered.



PS: if anybody is wondering, Romsey Male Voice Choir's early aspiration to sing at the Royal Albert Hall came to fruition in 2016 when the choir sang in the London Welsh Festival of Male Voice Choirs.

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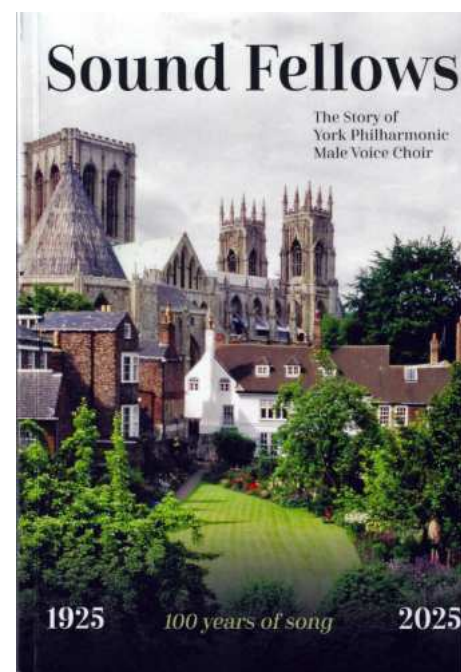
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Centenary Year

York Philharmonic MVC — Yorkshire North and East — Colin Hockridge



The York Phil will be 100 years old in April 2025. This will be a year of both looking backwards with pride and forward with optimism whilst staying rooted in the present.

The first centenary events have already taken place - the publication of a 300-page history of the choir enhanced by modern technology using 20 QR codes to link to audio and visual clips going back to 1958, and a successful social evening.

From April the concert programme will then take the choir East to West and North to South across our large county leading up to a gala night in York's Barbican Centre in September.



The centenary is also a reminder of the responsibility we have to sustain the Phil, to maintain our musical standards and plan for the next 10-20 years. Longevity has taught us to be alert to complacency.

We are proud to report that our 100 years is unbroken service. The choir never suspended activities during the war and maintained weekly rehearsals, although for a time during 1941-42 there were insufficient singers available to perform full concerts. We were also fortunate to have singers with IT skills available when the pandemic struck in March 2020, which ensured we were up and running with on-line rehearsals after one week and giving on line concerts by the summer. We are also proud of our continuing history of Christmas concerts which began in 1962 as 'Carols in Kirkgate', gained wide recognition after being broadcast by Yorkshire Television

between 1970-75; and now called 'Christmas Traditions' still needs a four-night run in a 400-seat hall.

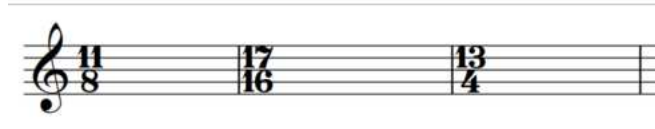
There can be no long-term success without continually striving to be 'a bit better' and to be alert to new music and tastes for we all need a continual supply of both new singers and audience.

Details of our 2025 activities can be found on the website:

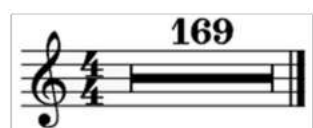
www.yorkphilchoir.org.uk

and hopefully, in the spring 2026 edition of News & Views we will be able to report on a memorable centenary 2025.

When times are challenging...



You need a long rest!



Up and coming Opportunities with the NAC

National Association of Choirs Structure

The association was formed by choirs to give them a collective voice and representation in matters that concern them. Whereas this role has expanded considerably into a full support function the National Association of Choirs is still driven by its members.

The Officers

Officers of the NAC are all directly involved with the choirs. They bring a wealth of experience to the function of the NAC which they give freely and voluntarily and for which the reward is the satisfaction of helping choirs and moving the NAC forward.

Officers directly incurred expenses are reimbursed. Giving so much, it is understandable that most Officers are retired although working members are not precluded and are welcome to stand for election to office at the Annual General Meeting. All of the current Officers bring with them a wealth of experience in business, management, education, industry and commerce.

The Officers are the Trustees of the association and as a Registered Charity are responsible to the membership.

NAC Services Officer

The work of the Services Officer and of the Public relations Officer had been handled by John Croft but John will be retiring in April 2026.

The Services Officer is responsible for:

- the advice sheets available to member choirs; their content and their relevance in the light of changing legal requirements
- negotiating ALL advertising for both the Year Book and News and Views
- negotiating any advertising literature/information placed by the association
- liaising with the approved NAC insurance provider and also member choirs requiring insurance cover

Treasurer of the NAC

Our present NAC treasurer is retiring from the position at the AGM in March 2026 and so we are looking for someone to replace him in that role.

We are therefore searching for a keen and capable person who would like to put his or her skills to work for the satisfaction of working with a team who strive to do their very best for members of the NAC.

The Treasurer:

- receives all payments to and all payments from the association
- produces the annual accounts for the association
- arranges for independent examination of the association's accounts before presentation to the membership
- advises members on banking for charities

Public Relations Officer

John Croft has held several position within the Officer Group of the National Association of Choirs over many years but he has now decided to retire from it all and take a well-earned rest.

That means that we are looking for a keen volunteer to take over this work and join our team of dedicated people who keep this charity running.

The Public Relations Officer is responsible for:

- the image of the association as presented to the public and other associated organisations
- promoting the association with member and non-member choirs

To express your interest and find out more by contacting the Chair on the email:

chairman@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk

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HOW I LIKE TO RECEIVE ARTICLES

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

publications.officer@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk

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

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

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4 June - Twin Oaks
2 September - Twin Oaks
11 November - Twin Oaks
13 January 2026 - Zoom

Members Open Forum

28 June - Zoom
20 September - Chester Doubletree Hotel
24 January 2026 - Zoom

Closing dates for submissions to News & Views

Spring Issue - 31 December Summer Issue - 30 April Autumn Issue - 31 August