

# News & Views



**Churchdown MVC admire a 1948 Morgan 4/4**

*The National Publication for all Choristers*

**Autumn 2009  
No 190**



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### Last Dates for News & Views Material

Spring Issue - 31st December

**It may not be possible to publish material received after this date.**

Views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the policy, or opinions of the National Association of Choirs. Manuscripts submitted to the Editor for consideration must be the original work of the author and not under consideration by any other publication.

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# Crawford's Column



*Hello there. This is my second issue of News & Views and this time I have done all the work with my friend, Jim Cooper, giving advice where necessary. You will notice that I have begun to make one or two changes. The first was to make the title of the magazine more significant on the cover. I would welcome your thoughts and ideas as to how News & Views can improve.*

What have we got in this issue? There is the booking form for next year's Conference with information about the hotel and news about our main workshop leader, Suzi Digby. Book early to avoid disappointment.

John Forsyth completes his article, Protecting The Future, and we hear of the formation of a youth choir in Hertfordshire. Many choirs are celebrating anniversaries in this issue, congratulations to all of them and long may they continue.

For those of you who enjoy the cut and thrust of festivals, Eric Cooper has news of the Isle of Man Festival and also some advice about copyright and performing rights.

A word about advertising. I have noticed a number of choirs who are asking for help in advertising for MDs and accompanists. While we are eager to help there has to be a limit. It has been decided that an advert may only be placed free of charge if it is less than 50 words and occupies less than 1½ column inches. You may spot one or two like this in this issue. You may of course buy advertising. There is a quarter page advert on this page. Should you wish to buy space contact Richard Bradley about costs.

I was at a Steering Group meeting last Saturday. It was held at the venue for Conference 2011 near Shrewsbury. So you see how far in advance your Officers are planning. One topic of discussion was the vexed problem of how to wake up those groups which are 'dormant'. If you have an active group and you know that one of the groups near you doesn't seem to be doing much, why not go and see if you can help them get going.

*Crawford*

## DURSLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR VACANCY FOR AN ACCOMPANIST

Dursley Male Voice Choir seeks a male or female Choir Accompanist as a matter of some urgency.

The Choir - now numbering over 90 singers - was formed in 1978, has toured extensively and has achieved successes in competitions together with TV appearances during that period.

It enjoys a very friendly social side.

Based in Dursley - half way between Bristol & Gloucester - rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings between 7.30 & 9.30 and performs 10/12 concerts a year.

The repertoire is wide ranging from traditional MVC numbers through religious and popular songs to original pieces written by current and past MDs.

Applicants requiring further details should contact the Chairman, Brian Tocknell

Tel: 01453 545184

[bt@briantocknell.plus.com](mailto:bt@briantocknell.plus.com)

## From the President



*On 12 June Gresley MVC made a three day trip to the London area doing two concerts. At our Walthamstow concert we were pleased to have Tony More, representing Thames North, in the audience. We introduced him to the choir and asked him to join in our last two items.*

He mentioned that it was one of his choirs 60 anniversary concerts coming up and he invited us to attend at Folkestone on 12 September where the Snowdown MVC and Snowdown Band would perform. This concert was aimed at improving the image of the NAC within Thames South group.

On 26 September I attend the North East Group Choral Spectacular.

*Eric Jackson*

[Eric-Jackson@care4free.net](mailto:Eric-Jackson@care4free.net)

# Around the Choirs

## Churchdown MVC

### South West

*On Sunday 22 June 1969, the BBC broadcast an edition of Sunday Half Hour recorded in St Andrew's Church, Churchdown, at which Churchdown Male Voice Choir sang what was thought to be the first broadcast of the great hymn, 'How Great Thou Art', which has been voted the most popular hymn of all time in a recent poll.*

Roy Dorrington, the choir's first conductor wrote to Stuart K Hine, translator of the original German words and received his permission for the choir to sing the hymn using his translation.

Now, the occasion is being repeated 40 years later for a Sunday Half Hour. Last Monday night in St Andrew's the choir recorded eight hymns for the BBC, including *How Great Thou Art*. According to the BBC producer, Janet McLarty, this is the first time in her career that the anniversary of the broadcast of a single hymn has been recognised.

The choir chairman, Pete Wilson, said, 'It was a great experience for us all. All the lads came dressed in their uniforms to give it a sense of occasion and they were on top form.' Knowing how long recording sessions usually take we had booked the church until 11.00pm, but thanks to the efficiency of the BBC and with faultless accompaniment from pianist Pam Taverner we were all having a drink by 9.30pm. The BBC producer Janet McLarty said that in 20 years of producing religious broadcasts she has never enjoyed the occasion so much. 'Out there in the recording van it was just like having my own private concert', she said.



'This choir still amazes me', Pete added, 'On 18 April thirty of us sang to the Twickenham crowd at the EDF final between the Gloucester Cheery and Whites and Cardiff Blues, and now the full choir will be heard by over half a million radio listeners. The programme will be broadcast on Sunday 21 June at 8.30pm on Radio 2 and again on Sunday 23 August.'

In November the choir will be appearing at Cheltenham Town Hall in a Military Music Spectacular with the Band of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan.

On Sunday 2 August the choir performed in a concert



at Cheltenham Race Course in connection with Morgan Cars Centenary Celebrations. Also in the concert were soprano, Natasha Marsh, Saint Michael's Singers and Malvern's English Symphony Orchestra.

No one was looking forward to the Morgan Cars Centenary Celebrations more than Julian Carter who had lovingly restored this beautiful example of a 1948 Morgan 4/4 in time for the show on 1 and 2 August. Julian is a great friend of Ralph Barnes and a loyal supporter of Churchdown Male Voice Choir, of which Ralph is Deputy Musical Director. Julian found the car in a lock-up garage in Bath where it had stood untouched for 42 years. Not surprisingly the ash frame had completely rotted through and the car had to be totally rebuilt. The project took 3 years and the result, finished in Old English White, as seen in the photograph, is stunning.

This is not the first rebuild that Julian has tackled; he has previously restored seven Jaguars and a Lea Frances and all have been completed to concours condition.

The choir took part in the Sunday night concert

## Around the Choirs

alongside the English Symphony Orchestra with soloists, Natasha Marsh soprano and John Hudson tenor, the Gotherington Singers and the Saint Michael Singers from Coventry Cathedral. The choir sang many showstoppers and finished with a medley of songs from the 60s. As many in the approx 3000 strong audience had been alive at the time they were happy to sing along with hits such as *House of the Rising Sun*, *He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother*, *Pretty Flamingo*, *Silence is Golden* and *Da do ron ron*. The spectacular evening ended with the ESO and the Saint Michael Singers coming together for the chorus of *O Fortuna* from *Carmina Burana* and a glorious firework display.

The choir's next major concert will be with the Central Band of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan in Cheltenham Town Hall on Saturday November 26. Details on the choir website, [www.churchdownmvc.com](http://www.churchdownmvc.com)

*Barry Woods, Publicity Officer*

### Charvil Voices

#### *Thames North*

*Charvil Voices have recently become members of NAC and are looking forward to getting involved in the local activities.*

Charvil is a small village between Reading and Maidenhead. The choir was formed just over a year ago. The ladies sing a wide variety of music including 'The Complete History of Western Music' (abridged) and a medley of songs by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

Earlier this year the choir took part in the Mid-Somerset Festival and received some very positive adjudication from Douglas Coombes.

Plans for next year include a workshop with David Lawrence, a Christmas concert and Bournemouth Festival. The choir would be interested in a joint concert with other local choirs so please get in touch if you would be interested.

*Suzanne Newman - Musical Director*

[suzanneynewman@btinternet.com](mailto:suzanneynewman@btinternet.com)

*The group began the year with its AGM held in Aldergate, Tamworth on 21 February 2009, the event*

## Around the Groups

### Midlands West

*was kindly hosted by the very supportive Tamworth MVC, with 50% of the Group's Choirs in attendance.*

The meeting was very lively with a lot of discussions, debate and questions from the floor. It was evident from this interaction that most choirs needed at least 18 months to 2 years notice to prepare for a big Midlands West Group Mass Concert. To facilitate this need a planning calendar has been sent to all members. Unfortunately we did not have a great response, with only Coventry, Walsall Harmonic and Cannock Ex-Servicemen's sending in their availability dates.

It was also agreed that venues are most important, with reference to their location, parking facilities and cost. Cannock Leisure Centre was £136 an hour, which was thought to be quite costly and member choirs were requested through their local experience to put forward suitable venues for the Committee to consider.

We did not have Workshop at this year's AGM, but hope to arrange one in the near future. A Mass Concert is one way of raising funds for future Workshops that have proved to be so much enjoyed and well attended in the past.

Sheffield MVC have very kindly agreed to host our 2010 AGM on Saturday the 20 February 2010; we also hope to have a Workshop arranged for that date.

I sadly report that again this year our Chairman Mrs Dorothy Bates has been very seriously poorly and is still having to take things easy. Happily she is well on the way to a full recovery, however, it did highlight our awareness as to how age and health are gradually affecting us all, and not many seem too keen to take on official roles.

One of the Committee's aims this year was to attend as many of our member Choirs' Concerts, to look for best practice that can be shared within the Group. A bonus in doing this was the enjoyment of attending so many really excellent performances given within the Group.

We hope to close the year with a joint Christmas Concert in December and look forward as ever to the engagement and support of all our Group Choirs.

*Stella Winfield*



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# Around the Choirs

## The Dalesmen MVC

### Midlands East

*This year the Choir has twenty concerts planned. In April we were part of a concert, for Rotary International, at the Derby Cathedral entitled "Make Dreams Real". It starred the internationally known blind opera singer Denise Leigh accompanied by equally talented blind musician Stefan Andrusyschyn and Derwent Brass. It was a great pleasure for the Choir to have the opportunity to sing with such professionals.*

The Choir perform many joint concerts with Derwent Brass with their Musical Director, Keith Leonard, and a great friendship exists between us. They are Derbyshire's premier Brass Band and have appeared five times at National Brass Band Finals. It is a pleasure to be on the same stage.

We welcomed our guests, Grimsby & Cleethorpes Ladies Choir, in early May when they shared a Concert with us to celebrate the start of Belper Celebration week, followed by an "Afterglow" which ended a very good evening.

Also enjoyed was our visit to Chapel-en-le-Frith, joining their Ladies Choir in an entertaining concert at the Methodist Church, for which we thank them.

Outdoor Concerts followed in Belper and Bonsall Carnival, in July.

The Dalesmen are looking forward to their visit to Cornwall in September. They will be in Concert at St Petroc's Church Bodmin on the 11, followed by a Concert at St John's Hall Penzance on the 12 and at The Eden Project on the 13.

St Edmundsbury MVC will be visiting us on Saturday 26 September and we are all waiting to sing with them again.

We now rehearse at the Whitemoor Centre, Belper each Monday evening, with our Deputy Musical Director,

John Lloyd, until a new Musical Director is appointed. John is excellent in keeping up the high standard of singing we have now attained.

We hope to appoint a new Musical Director by the autumn. Would any interested applicants please telephone our Chairman on 01773 748986.

For further information of the Dalesmen MVC visit our Website [www.dalesmen.org](http://www.dalesmen.org)

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# Around the Choirs

## Felling Concert Choir

### *North East*

*Felling Concert Choir will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 10 October 2009 with a Celebrity Concert at St Mark's Methodist Church, Gateshead. The special Guest soloist will be soprano, Rachel Orr, who will sing the part of Mabel in extended excerpts from 'The Pirates of Penzance', as well as performing music from her regular repertoire.*

Felling Concert Choir began life as the 'Felling and District Gilbert & Sullivan Society' in Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. At that time the church choir at Felling Methodist Church regularly performed complete cantatas at Christmas and Easter and was usually augmented on those occasions by singers from other church choirs and singers from outside the Church. One of these helpers suggested to the Choir's Conductor, Bill Marley, that a Gilbert & Sullivan Society be formed in Felling to present complete concert performances of the G & S Operettas. Thirty five people subsequently attended a meeting to discuss this suggestion, as a result of which the G & S Society was formed. Bill Marley was appointed Musical Director and Mrs Hilda Grainger, a well known local pianist, was appointed Accompanist. The first production was 'The Pirates of Penzance', hence its inclusion in the Jubilee Concert. During the following twenty years the Society performed complete concert versions of all the G & S Operettas at least once, with the exceptions of 'Utopia Ltd.' and 'The Grand Duke'.

From the beginning it seemed clear that one performance a year was not going to satisfy either the Society or its rapidly growing audiences. To meet the demand, there were usually between 3 and 5 performances of the operettas each year at different venues around Tyneside (and sometimes further afield such as Morpeth, Alnwick, Northallerton, Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle and, on one memorable occasion, Market Rasen in Lincolnshire. The Choir has always been proud of the fact that with very few exceptions (usually involving a tenor!) all soloists came from within the Choir. To clarify the plot, if such a thing is possible with Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, a narrator was used to great effect. One of the basses, Bill Taylor, put his

own personality into this task and very entertaining his narratives proved. Bill was in his eighties at this time and only gave it up not long before his 99<sup>th</sup> birthday! Sadly, he died just days short of his hundredth birthday.

At its height in the late eighties and early nineties, the choir's membership totalled around eighty and the programmes expanded to include miscellaneous programmes at Christmas, Springtime and, every January, a Joint Charity concert with close neighbours Felling Male Voice Choir. Over the years the Choir's own Christmas concerts and those with the Felling Male Voice have raised several thousand pounds for various charities. A feature of the Choir has been the number of married couples in its membership - currently there are seven.

By 2004 membership had reduced naturally due to age and infirmity and the number of departures exceeded those coming in. The decision was taken to cease the practice of performing complete Gilbert and Sullivan works and concentrate on miscellaneous programmes instead, although it was agreed that future programmes would include substantial excerpts from G & S. To reflect this change the name of the choir became 'Felling Concert Choir' and although membership continued to fall slightly, in the last year or so it has risen to around the 50 mark. Since 2005 the Choir has been under the Musical Directorship of Mrs Elaine Marley, who for many years has been known locally as a Soprano soloist and who has sung with our choir since 1984. The present accompanist is Philip Chapman, another local musician of some repute, who succeeded Hilda Grainger in January 1994.

The Felling Concert Choir is (and has been under its previous names) a well known and respected choir in the North East and is a member of the National Association of Choirs - North East Group.

For further details about the Choir, visit the website at:

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

**Felling Concert Choir  
sent this to  
[crawford.nac@ntlworld.com](mailto:crawford.nac@ntlworld.com)**



# Around the Choirs

## The Traeth MC

*North Wales/Cheshire West*

*This year the Choir celebrates its fortieth birthday. From very modest beginnings seven youths, harmonising on a village square, asking a local primary schoolteacher to become their conductor. Four months later the membership had risen to seventy voices and gained top marks at the Anglesey Choir Eisteddfod.*

Mrs Magdalen Jones, who remains the Choir's President, was followed by other illustrious MDs such as Gwyn L Williams, formerly the Director of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and currently the Olympic Games in 2012; followed by the 22 year old David Davies, an Eton scholar and Oxford University organist and now Deputy Organist and Choirmaster at Guildford Cathedral.

The Choir's current MD is Annette Bryn Parri, a professional piano accompanist who accompanies many leading international vocal soloists.

Of all the extensive travelling that we have undertaken, two occasions remain in the mind, the first being the evening when a TV camera crew arrived at the end of rehearsals. This team from Belgium was anxious to record a Welsh male choir singing Celtic songs. At dusk, the members walked the short distance from the school to the seashore, whereupon the programme was recorded and ended as the incoming tide swirled around the heels of the back row of choristers.

Another time when members got their feet wet was when BBC TV Wales needed to produce a series entitled "The Great Choirs of Wales" which took place on Llanddwyn Island, named after St Dwynwen the patron saint of Welsh lovers, similar to the English St Valentine. A lorry transported an upright piano across the sands and as the choir sang, a grey seal pup popped its head above the waves and we moved to another location as again, some members' feet became damp. By this time the wind was at gale force when a multi-coloured umbrella appeared above our heads and we expected to see Mary Poppins clinging on to it. A

member had lost his grip on the handle of his umbrella! Throughout the forty years of its existence, the Choir's accompanist has been Grês Pritchard, another local primary school teacher of music. Many older members prefer to read the tonic sol-fa system rather than notation, which probably stems back to the days when sight reading was taught in Sunday Schools and in the Band of Hope. Incidentally, the Traeth Choir is known to have been referred to as "The Beach Boys"! We look forward

to celebrating the Choir's Anniversary in several ways as it prepares to compete at this year's Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales held in Bala, striving for its fifth success in that particular Competition.

[An Invitation from The Traeth Male Choir.](#)



At times when your spirits are daunted  
And horizons no longer seem blue,  
Take a stroll past the school in the village,  
Rest awhile to admire the view.

You'll hear a clear sound in the distance  
Of voices in true harmony,  
For decades the notes have been winging  
Their course over hilltop and lea.  
Your aspect mysteriously changes  
To a softer, more gentle hue,  
As this amiable band of songsters  
Starts tuning its song - just for you.

Walk in; you're assured of a welcome,  
You'll be glad you decided to stay.  
With the lads of "The Traeth" all around you  
You'll know that you've had a nice day.

W. Owen. 2004

PS. Visitors to Anglesey are most welcome to attend Rehearsals held every Monday evening at 7.45pm during school term time, at Benliech Primary School (next to Fire Station.)

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**From  
Eric Cooper  
Music & Festival Officer**

*Since the last edition my wife Sandra and I have had the pleasure of representing the NAC at two concerts.*

**Barnsley Youth Choir** Friday 3 July

This was their first public performance since they were formed in February. Having been to one of their rehearsals I was looking forward to this event - I was not disappointed.

The 150 strong choirs of the children's choir and the Youth Choir under the direction of Matt Wright and his team of four staff gave us an evening of absolutely superb singing. The soloists were from all age groups of the young choristers and they all without exception gave very assured performances. The choir excelled with their on stage presentation and discipline. Some adult choirs could learn from these young people.

I heard many new pieces all well sung but my favourite was the very much performed *Rhythm of Life*. This was vibrant with superb diction and one of the best performances of this work I have heard.

The young choristers were enthusiastically supported by their families who were able to witness their warm-up demonstration. Four part warm-ups each participant using Curwen hand signals as they sang the notes - what a performance!

We had a truly wonderful evening and were pleased that we had previously signed up to be patrons of the choir. It is £25, which gets you two free tickets to a concert, a news letter and your names published on the net and in their concert programmes. Money well spent.

If you would like to become a patron details are on their web site. [barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk](http://barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk) or Chairman Keith Norton. 01226 204686

**K Shoes Male Voice Choir 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert.** Saturday 13 June

Sandra and I travelled to Kendal and spent a weekend in this beautiful part of the world. We were guest of K Shoes who were performing with guests from Steeton, Chapel on le Frith and Much Wenlock MVCs.

We were treated to a wonderful fare of traditional male voice music with one extra surprise – a piece by Randall Thompson, *The Pasture*. This was a very short piece with lovely words from a poem by Robert Frost. This was accompanied with piano and flute. The flautist was David Edmonds and he gave a very professional performance. He would be a wonderful addition to any choir concert as a soloist. Wendy Sharrock was the soprano soloist performing some well known solos, superbly sung.



One piece which made me sit up was *Morte Christie*, sung by the massed choirs and directed by Ceridwen Constantine, MD of Much Wenlock MVC. She gave us her very slow but very carefully worked out interpretation of this well known piece. I was impressed by her direction and how the choristers responded to her demands.

The whole evening was an example of good stage managing and a very well thought out concert ending with a social event and supper. Our thanks for the invitation and a wonderful evening.

**Te Deum - Karl Jenkins**

Commissioned by the Liverpool Welsh Choral Society the *Te Deum*, text in Latin, is a very interesting and challenging work. There are scores available for various instruments and the vocal score has piano accompaniment.

The piece begins with four bars on the piano of a vibrant, fast, percussive theme which reappears at various intervals throughout the work. This is taken up by the choir and their notes are underpinned on

continued on pg 14

# Choir tours



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continued from page 14

the piano. Much of the choral score is helped by the same notes being played in the piano accompaniment.

The piano has prominence on some occasions and the percussive accompaniment is performed by the choir.

Starting at Bar 120 there are eight bars of difficult music, the top three parts entering at quaver intervals with the basses joining the piano in a rhythmic percussive accompaniment.

After this there is a relaxing legato section with some beautiful flowing passages, again the piano echoes the vocal score. The Adagio section is followed by an Allegro with a lively piano solo. As the work progresses there are longer breaks for the choir whilst the piano is repeating the section sung by the choir.

The Largo Miserere section is followed by the final Vivace and Stringendo section with a very demanding accompaniment. The piece ends with a final shout of praise.

This fifteen minute long work is worthy of consideration. It is reasonably priced at £7.99.

For further information contact Annet Ferguson.  
020 7534 0744

[Annet.ferguson@schott-music.com](mailto:Annet.ferguson@schott-music.com)

### **Copyright and Performing Rights.**

I have dealt with quite a number of PRS and Copyright enquiries and have found the (MPA) Music Publishers Association and (PRS) Performing Rights Society very helpful.

### **Videos at Weddings.**

Choirs engaged to sing at weddings are not responsible for the required PRS licence. The wedding organisers have this responsibility. Choirs are advised to make this clear when taking an engagement and to get assurance from wedding organisers that their singing will not be recorded and used for any commercial purpose.

### **Permission to make arrangements.**

I have obtained written permission for three choirs to make arrangements of existing works. There are rules to which arrangers have to agree.

### **Altering of Lyrics.**

I have had written permission for two duettists to alter the lyrics of a well known duet. The general rule: before copying or arranging or altering any part of a published work - get WRITTEN permission. If in doubt contact me I can usually help.

[eric@coopernac.f9.co.uk](mailto:eric@coopernac.f9.co.uk)

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Read the section on illegally produced music. Rule 24

Please note amended rule. i.e. You may sing in a male voice class or a Ladies class and also as a member of a choir in the mixed choir class

4. No person may compete as a member of more than one singing group in any one class of the Festival.

(Amended 26/08/09)

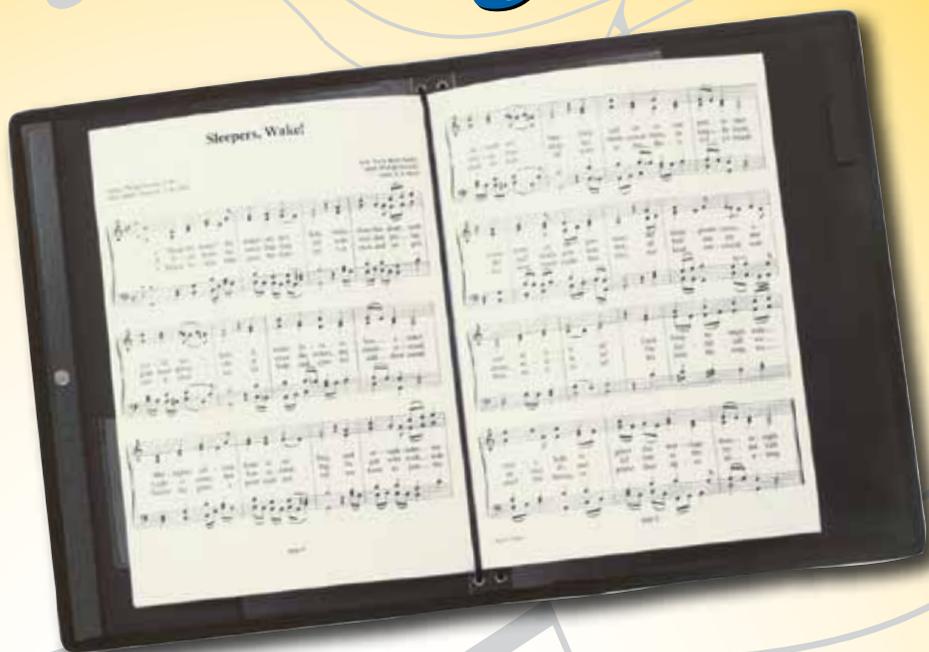
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# Around the Choirs

## Four Lanes MC Cornwall

Saturday 2 May was certainly a red letter day for the Members of Four Lanes Male Choir when they took part in the International Male Voice Choral Festival at the Hall for Cornwall.

Under the guidance of Musical Director Alastair Taylor and Accompanist Michael Uren the choir competed in the class for choirs of forty one voices and over. This large and competitive class included some ten choirs from all over the country and Ireland.



The Choir presented a challenging and varied programme which included *Hymn to Apollo, Isis and Osiris, Hey Nonny No* and *Psalm 126*.

We had a quite superb afternoon as we not only won the class but were awarded the trophy for being best Cornish Choir in the class, the Paul Martin Shield as the best Cornish Choir overall and the trophy for best UK Choir. It was a particularly wonderful occasion for life member, Albert Kemp, who joined the choir in 1944.

Musical Director Alastair Taylor said he was absolutely delighted with the results and that the hard work from everyone in the choir had been rewarded with such outstanding success.

**Four Lanes MC  
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# Around the Choirs



*The national cardiac charity SADS UK held their first Gala of Massed Male Choirs on February 7 2009, at St David's Hall in Cardiff, a wonderful evening of music and song. Eleven male voice choirs gave freely of their time, along with the Regimental Band of the Royal Welsh, famous for its great rousing sound and the quality of its musicianship; not forgetting of course their famous mascot, Shenkin the Goat, who drew the audience's attention in his wonderful regalia.*

The beautiful Natalya Romaniw (who also took part in the Singer of the World in Cardiff this year) sang wonderful solo items, enjoyed by audience and choir alike and all elements of the evening were brought together eloquently by the well known BBC TV Sports Presenter Jason Mohammad.



The charity were grateful to Mr Frank Jones Musical Director from the City of Newport choir who organised the music programme and conducted the massed choir of over 400 voices and to Major Denis Burton of the Regimental Band of the Royal Welsh who put together a wonderful programme for the Regimental Band. Music included Horse Brass, Swing March, Victory Beatings and Where Eagles Dare. Barbara Davis, accompanist brought her expertise to the evening.

February was the worst snowfall seen for many years and it was touch and go as to whether the organisers of the concert would get to St David's Hall!



The Severn Bridge had been closed due to shafts of ice falling from the suspension arms, but at the eleventh hour they were able to cross using the original Severn Bridge. The choirs were undeterred and made it to the venue despite the adverse weather conditions

and the audience were just as determined, as over 1,000 people took their seats for the Gala!

The evening was a great success and many of the audience spoke to us to tell us how much they had enjoyed the performances. Moreover, the charity was able to provide funding from the Gala to the Institute of Medical Genetics in Cardiff to assist them with their work with families in Wales living with inherited cardiac conditions.

Another Gala of Massed Male Choirs is being held on the 8 May 2010 and already 13 choirs have confirmed they will be joining us. The Regimental Band of the Royal Welsh and the corps of drums will also be performing again. Soloist Elin Manahan Thomas is guest Soprano soloist on the night, with accompanist Jane Samuel and Jason Mohammad again bringing all the items together with aplomb.

SADS UK is grateful to the following choirs who have supported the Gala or held individual concerts:-

Blaenavon Male Voice Choir  
Blaenporth Male Choir  
Caerphilly Male Voice Choir  
Chepstow Male Voice Choir  
Creunant Male Choir  
City of Newport Male Choir  
Haverfordwest Male Voice Choir  
Kenfig Hill & District Male Choir  
Llandybie Male Voice Choir  
Maelgwn Male Choir  
Maesteg Male Voice Choir  
Morrison RFC Male Choir  
Ogmore Valley Male Voice Choir  
Oxford Male Voice choir  
Penarth Male Voice Choir  
Penybontfawr Male Choir  
Porthcawl Male Choir  
Ynysowen (Aberfan & District) Male Choir

Please contact SADS UK for information about the Gala of Massed Male Choirs being held on the 8 May 2010, Tel: Anne Jolly, SADS UK, 01277 811215 e-mail: [info@sadsuk.org](mailto:info@sadsuk.org)

For more about the charity [www.sadsuk.org](http://www.sadsuk.org)

# Around the Choirs

## The Rowland Singers South Thames Group



Our Summer Season finished with two concerts where the choir let their hair down. A popular programme of show music medleys (Fiddler on the Roof & West Side Story) and party pops Rhythm of Life, The Saints Go Marching In and an exciting arrangement of You'll Never Walk Alone resulted in a very successful evening. Beautiful vocal duets were sung by Julie Le Manquais and Damien MacDonald with Helen Emery as the accompanist and musical director and Jacky Emery as conductor. Two sell-out houses raised a substantial amount for the St Barnabas House appeal, to rebuild our local cancer hospice.

Our next big concert is at the Assembly Hall, Worthing on Thursday 17 December when we will be celebrating our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Special guests will be Worthing Youth Big Band, (Conductor Andy Bearcroft) and we are very much looking forward to their solo spots as well as when they accompany us in the community carols. Maybe some of these teenagers will be inspired

to join us as singers too. Here's hoping! Needless to say, we would love to see some of our NAC friends in the audience. Please give us a ring for tickets.

We are going to the Isle of Wight for a weekend in March 2010. We will be performing Handel's Messiah in the hopes that with help from our friends Maurice and Chris who live on the island, we will get a good house. The church, All Saints, Ryde, has a magnificent organ and a very good acoustic and is regularly used for musical performances.

In November we are arranging a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meal and Celebration and are keen to trace and invite all our past members to join us at this grand reunion. Some of them have moved away from Worthing and we have lost contact but it is possible that they may have joined an NAC choir. If so, we would love to hear from them.

Lastly, I am sure the Officers will be pleased to learn that by the time News & Views is published, Thames South will have had its very first exploratory meeting to try and form an active group down south.

*Jacky Hetherington*

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# Around the Choirs

## Stevenage MVC Thames North

*The choir was formed in 1958 by employees of the English Electric Company (now BAe) and throughout the years has had busy concert schedules raising thousands of pounds for local charities. The choir's history is littered with awards and television appearances including; - 'Opportunity Knocks', the BBC's 'Let The People Sing' and 'Carols At Christmas' on Anglia TV.*

In recent years, in addition to its programme of concerts for local charities, the choir has entertained for special functions at venues such as Hampton Court, Twickenham Rugby Ground and corporate functions at the Natural History Museum in London.

In 1998, as part of their fortieth year celebrations, they embarked on a six concert tour of Eire which culminated in a dual concert with the Garda Siochana Male Voice Choir in Dublin. 2001 saw the choir in Malta performing one concert there and one on the neighbouring Island of Gozo.

Last year was a big year for celebration as it was the choir's 50th anniversary starting with a two concert

trip to France in May and culminating with a Golden Jubilee Concert in October which was supported by Hitchin Symphony Orchestra. This was attended by local dignitaries including the Mayor of Stevenage and a local Member of Parliament. Also in 2008, the choir performed a concert at the home of their patron, novelist Ken Follet.

The choir is very lucky in having as their Musical Director, composer and Symphony Orchestra conductor, Paul Adrian Rooke under whose direction the choir has developed its repertoire beyond Male Voice Choir Standards and has widened its audience appeal as a result.

Further information about the choir can be obtained from their web site: - [www.smvc.org](http://www.smvc.org).

*John Bishop (Chairman)*

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# Letter from NAC (OZ Branch)

## Letter from NAC(Oz Branch)

*My last letter in this series from the Antipodes was all about heat and fire but since then we have been in the throes of our winter. Well I say 'throes' but in most parts of Australia temperatures stay at very reasonable levels and it is often drier than the summer. However, now the temperatures are starting to rise – last week we had temperatures in the mid 20s – Centigrade that is of course so not bad for the end of winter.*

The Sydney Male Choir is having a full year, as usual, and we are getting close to the 'Big One' when 'Those magnificent men' perform in our annual City of Sydney concert. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> in that series and, as last year, will be held in the splendid surrounding of the City Recital Hall in beautifully named Angel Place in central Sydney. I previously mentioned the hard work going into learning the many new pieces of music chosen by our ever enthusiastic Musical Director and several of these will be on the programme for that concert. We have already test driven some of them and they didn't go too badly. Maybe needing a little polish here and there but they will be great. The title of the concert is taken from one of these new items, 'Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines'. Unfortunately I will not be taking part in this year's concert as Jan & I are visiting the UK and Spain at the end of August and will be in the Northern Hemisphere for all of September. Our MD is not amused as he likes a full turnout for this most important concert.

Since the last missive the choir has performed in 13 concerts with another 8 scheduled for the latter part of the year. Highlights so far have been leading the congregational singing in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney at a service to mark the centenary of a school in the Sydney suburbs founded and run by Marist Monks, a mini – for Australia that is – tour in the west of New South Wales to revisit friends made on Mates Across the Divide (The Divide relates to the Great Dividing Range of mountains that runs north to south in NSW. A bit like the Pennines in the UK!) and sharing the concert platform with National Australian Brass. This band is drawn from the best brass band players from all over Australia and is conducted by Professor David King, an Australian who is Chair of Music Performance at Salford University, UK who has conducted Black



Dyke Mills band to many UK championships. We were almost literally blown away by them!

As always if you wish to contact me please do so via email at [petefig@optusnet.com.au](mailto:petefig@optusnet.com.au). I always look forward to contact from the UK.

## K Shoes MVC Cumbria Isle of Man

Four decades – 160 seasons of the year – 480 months; so think of the songs, anthems and gentle melodies, both secular and non-secular, that have been practised, refined and performed over this period. Thus has the K Shoes MVC prospered, since it was opened-up to non-employees of the well-known Kendal shoe company in 1969 and became established in its present form.

Previously, its antecedents were a mixed choir, established in 1929 by the Somervell family, founders of K Shoemakers Ltd. It became the Netherfield Male Voice Choir after WW II but changed later to attract more male singers from beyond the Kendal area. Indeed, currently the choir draws members from south of Heysham to Keswick in the north, and as far east as Appleby – a lot of driving to rehearse every Wednesday!

In its modern form the choir was directed until 2000 by the talented Mary Powney (currently one of the top five choral adjudicators in the country) whose exact tutelage and musical knowledge kept the singing membership up to the highest levels. Indeed as a thirty-year veteran first tenor recently said “under Mary we sparkled!”

The membership was truly lucky to find Yorkshire-born

# Around the Choirs

and raised, Martin Webster as a replacement. A former conductor of the Welwyn Garden City MVC, he had all the requisite experience. Blessed with an acute ear and great man-management skills, he has taken up the baton with style, panache and wit. Martin has preserved the high standards of the choir upholding a long-held reputation, a large repertoire (including several songs in German and French) thus ensuring that choir and their concerts are in constant demand.

Since the Millennium the K Shoes choir has visited its twin-town Rinteln, Germany in both 2002 and 2007 and are planning to visit Kendal's other twin, Killarney, southern Ireland during May.

However the banner celebratory event this year will be held on 13 June at the Leisure Centre, Kendal when K Shoes link up with Chapel-en-Le-Frith, Steeton and Much Wenlock (also celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup>) for what should be a sell-out mega-concert.

Though shoe manufacturing ceased in Kendal in the mid-90's after the firm was bought by Clarks International,

K Shoes is still used as a brand name thus preserving the long-held association with town and choir. To this end Clarks continue to supply footwear and make an annual donation to the choir.

So, here's to the choir's next celebration-the 50<sup>th</sup>!

*Eric Seery*

**K Shoes MVC  
sent this to  
[crawford.nac@ntlworld.com](mailto:crawford.nac@ntlworld.com)**

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*Scunthorpe Male Voice Choir*

# Conference 2010

## Where is Conference?

*Conference 2010 will be held in Thames North territory at the Ramada Cromwell Hotel, Old Town Stevenage.*

The Hotel, once a traditional farmhouse, has retained the grace and style of former times whilst providing the very best of modern comforts. The Ramada Cromwell offers 76 well-equipped guest rooms and extensive conference facilities.

The hotel was once the home of John Thurloe who had the important task of being Oliver Cromwell's secretary. It has a contemporary and stylish decor which complements the features of its former past whilst having a modern and appealing feel to attract visitors. Ideally placed close to the A1 the hotel is a perfect base from which to visit many local places of interest including Knebworth Park, with its house, beautiful gardens and parklands.

Other attractions and places of interest are:  
Hatfield House - 10 Miles South  
Whipsnade Zoo - 12 Miles North  
Paradise Wildlife Park - 15 Miles South  
Duxford Air Museum - 20 Miles East  
Standalone Farm - 20 Miles West  
Woburn Safari Park - 20 Miles North



*Incredibly passionate about singing, both from a musical perspective and for its ability to transform lives, Suzi has an international reputation as a choral director and conductor.*

Suzi Digby read music at King's College, University of London, and studied piano and singing.

In 1993 Suzi founded the Voices Foundation. Working in infant and primary schools in deprived areas throughout England and Wales. The Foundation aims to transform children and the ethos of schools through singing, helping children socially, emotionally and intellectually. Close to one million children have benefited from the scheme.

Suzi also founded the chamber choir Voce in 2003. Comprising experienced singers in their twenties and thirties, they perform frequent concerts and tour abroad regularly. With a very high standard expected of her singers, she aims for Voce to become one of the finest chamber choirs in Britain and they are already well on

## Look who's coming to Conference!

their way.

Suzi Digby is in increasing demand for corporate team building workshops. Her clients include Marks & Spencer, Firmenich, Swedbank, Allen & Overy and BP. Her work has been cited as one of the highly effective approaches available, particularly in areas of team building, active listening, personal development, presentation skills and confident communication. She has also worked regularly with radio and television in the UK giving interviews for Radio 3, Classic FM and has presented for BBC Wales TV including The Cardiff Singer of the World competition.

Suzi Digby regularly adjudicates at choral festivals and competitions, including the Coleraine Music Festival in Northern Ireland and Sainsbury Choir of the Year, televised by the BBC, for which she adjudicated both the semi-finals and the finals at the Royal Albert Hall in 2000. Suzi recently judged the BBC prime-time series, "Last Choir Standing".





# Protecting the Future *by John Forsyth*

**Now you can read the second part of John Forsyth's article on the future of choral singing.**

## *An Alternative Strategy*

Choirs are not always good at supporting one another! This is to do with the fact that rehearsal time is precious and that singers, with busy lives, do not want to be side-tracked by other matters. They would rather concentrate on their own choir and their own needs. We are at a significant moment however, and I believe that now is the right time for all choirs in an area to come together and organise themselves into a strategic unit.

Currently, choral strategy tends toward national and regional models. However, whilst they do attract funding, I believe that they are often too big and unwieldy. Indeed recent initiatives have tended to side-track existing choirs. This, I believe is a strategic error. If we could mobilise the many thousands of singers, through their respective choirs, a significant and powerful lobby would be created. My concept and approach would be based on an area rather than a regional or national model

I would define an area as somewhere that supports about 20 – 30 choirs of all types; operatic societies, opera groups, male voice, female voice, barbershop, choral societies, church choirs, chamber choirs, pop/jazz choirs etc. The initiative would begin with a joint meeting of all the conductors with a separate meeting of the choir secretaries. Their purpose would be to define the nature of the problems, from their particular perspective and specific to their area. In a further meeting they would share their findings. A core umbrella organisation or Executive Body, consisting of representatives from each choir, would have to be created. A smaller Management Group would then be elected from within the Executive. It would report back to the Executive Body and its remit would be fourfold:

- to prioritise need across the area and organise activities and initiatives to begin to meet those prioritised needs.
- to consider ways in which money could be found through choir contributions, council subsidies, sponsorship, arts grants etc to help fund activities.

- to liaise with other area groups across a region.
- to keep abreast of national and regional initiatives and liaise closely with a National organisation such as The National Association of Choirs.

The whole point of this structure would be to give a voice to the choirs in an area. It would help keep everyone informed through collaborative exchange and ultimately would enable strategic planning. It would also encourage an area network of choirs to evolve across a regions and country as a whole. Organisations such as the National Association of Choirs would be able to support this network from within its existing remit. What is different about this is that it is not a 'top down' model and the move for change and development would come from establishing strong area roots. However, it also recognises the need for a national perspective, because past experience shows quite clearly that without that wider vision, local area parochialism can be a barrier to development.

Clearly, it is not for me to define a programme for such an area organisation, but here are some ideas of possible initiatives that could prove beneficial and might be worth considering:

- Establish a Junior / Youth Choir Structure ( If such a structure does not exist )
- A Male Voice Initiative - to attract more men from the community to come and sing.
- Create social opportunities via regular "Singing Days": A day's workshop with an informal performance to end the day.
- Encourage new young choral directors – create training opportunities.
- Encourage joint concerts, with an age range mixture.
- Produce a "clash diary" so that concerts do not coincide.
- Support each other's concerts.
- Set up "Music Reading" classes.
- Organise a Choir Gala Concert – several choirs perform their own material and come together for one or two final works.

- Organise a “Cross Genre” day – eg. Choral Society sing Barbershop and Barbershop sing Handel.
- Create an area Newsletter/Website for all the members of the choirs in the area.
- Find a regular opportunity for an article in the local press.

All of this is about breaking down barriers and making choral music a force to be reckoned with in each community. For instance, I would not be surprised if there are more people who sing in an area than play football and yet, how much coverage does football get on the back pages of local newspapers? A significant amount! On the other hand, how do choirs feature in the press? Generally, very badly because so few people in our communities understand or value what choirs stand for! Choirs are not seen as ‘cool’. We have got to get together more proactively and let each community know that singing is good for a healthy body, mind and soul. It is also important for us all to protect the choral heritage and traditions, which extend some 800 years and which are continuing to evolve through new composition and vocal styles.

If we fail to recognise that we have the power to make a difference and change the future, the decline which is happening now, will continue. It does mean that old rivalries will have to be put to one side. Choirs, collectively, have large populations of singers and there is strength in working together. Indeed, I have no doubt that in most areas of the country there will be singers who sing in several choirs, so the cross-fertilisation of ideas, activity and opportunity will already be happening.

The challenge I am making to those who read this article is –

Don’t continue to rehearse the problems! In your area get your choirs together and begin to manage your own future.

It is not easy, it will not happen overnight and it will require a real level of commitment from each member, but it needs to be done and now is the time to do it. If you need support I am sure that the National Association of Choirs will help. Give them a ring!

[crawford.nac@ntlworld.com](mailto:crawford.nac@ntlworld.com)

## **Orpheus MVC Grimsby/Cleethorpes Lincolnshire**

*The Orpheus Male Voice Choir is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee during 2009.*

Founded in 1949 by its first Musical Director, Vera Burton, the Choir soon established itself on the local concert scene and began to enjoy success in musical festivals at home and further afield. Later musical directors were George Cave, G. Arthur Robinson and the present incumbent Richard A Bradley, took over 1981.

Over the years concert visits, often on an exchange basis, have been made to many other choirs and bands in the United Kingdom and abroad. The first foreign links were with Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Boxmeer in The Netherlands. Afterwards there were associations with Meinerzhagen and Rauschendorf in Germany, Alingsås in Sweden, the Dutch National Male Voice Choir and Bordeaux in France.

Among the well known guest soloists to enhance our concerts have been Christopher Maltman and Michael Dore (singers), and Keith Swallow, Jonathan Plowright and Richard Markham (pianists). We have hosted ensembles such as the Fairer Sax, the Leo Solomon Trio, Humphrey Lyttelton and His Band, and The Best of British Jazz. Brass bands have been popular with our audiences, and it has been a privilege to welcome the RAF Cranwell, British Steel, Black Dyke Mills and Brighouse and Rastrick Bands.

After 27 years service our Accompanist, Audrey Ellis retired in September 2008. A former student of the Royal Academy of Music, Audrey was both technically accomplished and thoroughly sensitive to the conductor’s interpretation of the music. Her punctuality and reliability were exemplary. Luck was indeed on our side at this time, because another highly skilled and well known local musician, Barry Whitfield, succeeded to the position of Accompanist. As he also has other professional commitments, we have been fortunate in obtaining the services of Lisa Taylor as Assistant Accompanist.

The Orpheus Choir’s sixtieth anniversary events began on 11th February with a short lunchtime concert at Louth Library, at the invitation of the Allegro

# Around the Choirs

Appassionato Music Club. Then, on a Saturday in March, we visited Goldthorpe Parish Church, a few miles west of Doncaster, as the guests of the Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir.

The main Diamond Jubilee celebration concert, held on Saturday 4 April in the Grimsby Central Hall, featured as our special guest performer, Michael Dore, a Grimsby man who has achieved fame as a singer both in this country (particularly as a soloist on BBC Radio 2's 'Friday Night is Music Night') and in many other parts of the world. Michael arranged his contribution especially to mark our anniversary and helped considerably with publicity by giving interviews on local radio, for which we are most grateful.

During May the Choir performed at a concert organized by local singer, Emma Hammond, whose father, Bryan, is one of our baritones. This concert was held at Beacontorpe Methodist Church Cleethorpes, to mark the Church's Anniversary Weekend.

On the first Saturday in June we sang at a concert in St. Peter's Church, Cleethorpes, with local folk singer John Conolly as soloist. The Orpheus joined John in singing the chorus of two of his compositions about the local fishing industry.

The last event before our summer break was an outdoor concert on the following Tuesday. This event took place at lunch time at the Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa, on behalf of Age Concern/Help The Aged. As well as two groups of songs by the Choir, our own Bob Swallow delivered some entertaining readings and recitations. Afterwards all enjoyed an excellent buffet lunch in the hotel.

A special social event was held at the Grimsby Rugby Club on Tuesday 18 August in the form of a hog roast, to entertain members, their families and friends. In addition to the food, there were stalls and games.

The Choir sang on Saturday 29 August at the Classical Concert which took place at the Cleethorpes Lakeside Arena and feature Manchester Camerata.

The weekend 10 /11 of October sees the Orpheus travel to Newcastle upon Tyne for a concert with the Gibside Singers at Brunswick Methodist Church, with time to visit Durham during the return journey.

A Sixtieth Anniversary Gala Dinner is arranged for Saturday 1 November at the Grimsby Masonic Hall. The final month of 2009 brings a short concert in St. James's Church, Grimsby, for Grimsby Civic Society.

On 19 December, the Grimsby Central Hall is the venue for our Christmas concert, 'Seasonal Brass and Voices' with the Kingsway Printers Band of Cleethorpes.

'Sixty Years of Memories' is the title of a special CD produced to mark the Jubilee, presenting a compilation of favourite items from various earlier recordings. Our Music Director Richard Bradley pored over the Choir's archives wrote a concise but comprehensive history of the Orpheus, attractively illustrated with many photographs. The present writer acknowledges with thanks this source of information. Members of the Orpheus Male Voice Choir are enjoying a busy but momentous year.

*Ian Robinson*

---

## Cantare North West

*A choir by any other name?*

The Debrose Choir was formed in 1982 in Rochdale by Dennis Kay. Named for his two daughters, Deborah and Rosemary, the choir began a tradition of promoting choral singing and appearing locally and abroad in concerts and competitions. Eventually (after 24 years) Dennis moved on to conduct Tideswell MVC and the Debrose appointed Philip Asher to fill his illustrious shoes.

At this time it was suggested that a change of name



# Around the Choirs

would be a good idea, but as no-one had the inclination of a good suggestion the idea was forgotten.

Then Phillip left (we weren't that bad – he left for marriage, a job and a new life down south) and the choir appointed Joanna Porter. The choir also moved rehearsal venues, and instantly gained 14 new members!

Once again the subject of a name change was and now the time felt right. A voting list was duly compiled (who suggested 'Stilettoes and Tiaras', it must have been a soprano!) and each member cast their vote.

White smoke from the chimney told the world that a decision has been made! 'Cantare' rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the old Debrose and looked forward with enthusiasm to singing for many years to come!

We are currently planning a 'Singing Day' which will help us to bond with our new members as well as teaching us new singing techniques and choreography! Other plans in the pipeline are a concert on 11 July 2009 in Rochdale and to compete in the North Wales Choral Festival in November. Amongst all this we have a new repertoire to learn and our MD has done a weekly 'lesson' plan for us!

So, if we are appearing at a venue near you come and say hello, 'friends who sing' are always welcome!!

*Jackie Holt*

**Cantare sent this to [crawford.nac@ntlworld.com](mailto:crawford.nac@ntlworld.com)  
Why not tell us what your choir has been up to?**



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# Around the Choirs

## The Kelsborrow Choir Wales North/Chester West

*The Kelsborrow Choir takes its name from Kelsborrow Hill, a feature of the village of Kelsall, near Chester. The choir is now based in the next village, Ashton Hayes. It was formed in 1956 to support the fund raising activities of the PTA of the local primary school. The choir celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006 with a gala dinner and entertainment at Chester Town Hall.*

The choir is around 60 mixed voices, and is now well established on the Chester musical scene. Members come from all the surrounding areas with a few travelling around 30 miles each week to be a part of the choir.

We have performed a wide ranging repertoire both in the UK and in Europe. The choir has been a registered Charity for some years and regularly performs concerts in support of other charities, such as Meningitis Trust, Barnado's and many other smaller local charities. Members also took part in the Edward German Festival in Whitchurch in April this year, joining with two other choirs to perform the Concert version of the operetta Tom Jones.

Our Musical Director, Ken Hughes BEM, joined the choir as a tenor in 1958. It was very much a family affair as his father was then the MD, his mother a soprano and his brother a bass. He took over as Musical Director on his father's death in 1964. Recently Ken has suffered with ill health and has been unable to conduct the choir. In his absence we have been delighted that Peter Dalton has agreed to take up the baton.

Peter is a highly regarded musician in the Chester area, having previously conducted the City of Chester Male Voice Choir and the Farndon Brass Band to name just two of his many positions. He has also sung bass with the "Kelsborrow" for some years.

The choir's main project for this year is a second concert in Chester Cathedral with the Grimethorpe Colliery Band. The choir first brought the "Grimethorpe" to Chester in November 2007. The concert was such a tremendous success, attracting an audience of 1200, that a repeat was arranged there and then. It will be

a Christmas concert on 12 December, also in Chester Cathedral, at 7.30 pm and in aid of the Alzheimer's Society. Tickets are available on the choir website at [www.kelsborrowchoir.org.uk](http://www.kelsborrowchoir.org.uk).

In common with most other choirs we are always looking to attract new members. At the moment we are particularly short of male singers, but all are welcome into what we believe is a very friendly and caring choir. Prospective new members need only visit the website or call our Secretary, Alan Hibbert, on 01948 710572.

*Alan Hibbert*



## Aughton MVC North West

*On Friday 19 June 2009 the choir held a successful concert with the Greenalls Brass Band, which was attended by the first Mayor of West Lancs. We also had the pleasure of singing for him on Sunday 21 June 2009 at his Civic Sunday service held in the Parish church at Ormskirk.*

We are at present trying to arrange a visit to Scarborough, both as a choir break but also to sing in one of the local Methodist churches. This will be in early September, but no date is confirmed by the organiser.

In October we welcome to the area Churchdown MVC, when once again we will be sing for the Mayor's Charity on Friday 16 at St Bede's RC High School Ormskirk, when we also hope to have with us the High Sheriff of Lancashire. On Saturday 17 we have a joint concert at the local Church of England on Lord's Street again for a local charity, Both concerts commence at 7.30pm and will contain some old favourites along with a few newer items.

# Around the Choirs

We then prepare for our usual Christmas concerts with 3 in 8 days. So if you are looking for an early Christmas present why not buy one of our CDs for them. If it is for someone you don't like then perhaps you could buy two. On the CD are such favourites as *Morte Criste*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *You Raise Me Up* and *Nessun Dorma*, sung in what passes for Italian in Ormskirk. The cost of the CD is £8.00 plus p/p and can be obtained by contacting the choir secretary on the website.

*Neil Williams*

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## Haydock MVC North West

*On Saturday 16 May our choir had the great honour of hosting a workshop under the direction of Dr Alwyn Humphreys.*

The programme, chosen by Alan Herbert, mainly featured items familiar with most choirs but also included a number of unpublished Alwyn Humphreys' arrangements that we at Haydock had obtained from him over the last two years. Copies of these arrangements were made available to the guest choristers and in addition to this our Tuesday rehearsals for the six weeks prior to the event were devoted to the concert programme and thrown open for all participants to attend.

St Helen's Parish Church was the venue for the workshop and concert which started in the morning and after a break for lunch continued on into the afternoon. Dr Humphreys put us through our paces and stamped his own style and interpretations on each of the pieces to be performed. It was a great thrill to see the master at work and the choir responded with full attention and enthusiasm.

The evening concert included guest soloist Kate Brian and took place before a large and responsive audience. Alwyn Humphreys got the very best out of the choir and between items entertained the audience with humorous anecdotes and stories. The concert ended with a standing ovation from the enthusiastic audience and applause that seemed as if it would go on forever. That the whole exercise was an unqualified success is without question. It was a memorable occasion and

those who spurned the opportunity to be part of that day should, in the words of the immortal bard, "think themselves accursed they were not there".

Haydock MVC requires a Deputy Conductor. The choir rehearses Tuesday and Friday. An essential requirement for any applicant would be attendance for one rehearsal per week, minimum! The successful candidate would be mentored by Alan Herbert, Choir MD, a leading figure in the field of choral conducting.

*George Anderton (Chairman HMVC)*

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## The Glasgow Phoenix Choir Scotland West

*Season 2008/09 closed with the Choir's Borders Tour to Melrose, Langholm and Newcastle, followed by concerts in St Bride's Episcopal Church, Glasgow and Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh both for masonic charities. The Glasgow concert was well supported by the masonic hierarchy notably the Grand Master Mason of Scotland, Bro Charles Wolrige Gordon of Esslemont. Part of the proceeds was to go to the refurbishment of the magnificent organ in Freemasons' Hall. The audiences were impressed with the Choir's performances and, as a result, it has been invited to give a concert in Freemasons' Hall next year when the organ will be fully restored. We look forward to hearing our brilliant accompanist, Cameron Murdoch, playing it then.*

On 24 August the choir will be joined by The Co-operative Funeralcare Band (formerly the SCWS Band) to rehearse for a joint recording in early September for the Choir's lead sponsors The Co-operative Funeralcare. The recording will be entitled "Songs of Solace" and will be included in every funeral pack throughout the UK. Music plays an important part in funeral services and this will include many favourite items both modern and traditional.

The new season promises to be as busy as always with 16 performances scheduled before Christmas. These include concerts in Newton Mearns, Strathpeffer, Inverness, Elgin, Greenock, Paisley, Galston, Shettleston, Hamilton, Linlithgow, Glasgow and East

# Around the Choirs

Kilbride. Apart from our normal Christmas Concert in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, two days later the Choir has been asked to accompany Ray Davies of the Kinks also in the GRCH in his nationwide tour reprising some of the best-loved music of the Kinks set in an updated classical choral style.

The Phoenix will also start rehearsing Faure's *Requiem* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* for its diamond jubilee in 2011. Although not principally an oratorio choir, the choir has nevertheless performed a number of major works in the past, including Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup>, Mahler's 8<sup>th</sup> and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. The Choir hopes to be joined on that occasion by many choirs from Scotland, plus old friends the Hereford Police Male Choir and the Widukind Chor from Germany. The Diamond Jubilee will coincide with Musical Director, Marilyn Smith's, 20<sup>th</sup> year as Conductor. In that time, she has established herself as a favourite with Choir members and audiences alike due to her lively personality.

Future tours planned include Ireland (North and South) in May 2010 and Germany in September of that year when our hosts – the Widukind Chor and ourselves will

perform a programme of items reminiscent of our 25 years' association.

[www.phoenixchoir.org](http://www.phoenixchoir.org)

*J Lawson Purdie – Publicity Officer*

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## Cradley Heath Male Voice Choir Midlands South West Group

*The whole choir and its many supporters were saddened to learn of the death of the President, Ray Crow, who died on 16 June.*

Ray did not think of himself as some exalted figurehead occasionally putting in an appearance, he was one of the boys. Our choir was formed two months before 'The Titanic' (anchor chains made in Cradley Heath) sank in 1912 and for two thirds of the choir's existence Ray was singing with it; a fantastic achievement for any chorister. Not only did he sing with the choir, but his gift of a fine baritone voice of professional quality was appreciated when singing solo items. One of the memorable occasions was when we were hosting a seven choir concert and Ray's voice filled the glorious Pershore Abbey with his solo rendition of 'An English Rose'. Our chairman received many compliments and comments to the effect the choir was so fortunate to have such a remarkable and gifted member.



Ray held many positions in the choir. From librarian, sorting out about 400 items of music accumulated over our long history, to deputy conductor. He would have been looking forward to our centenary in 2012, but his sudden death has tragically changed all that. Ray was very proud to have followed in his grandfather's footsteps in becoming President of the choir. He will be missed.

*Jeff Waldron*

## The Bolton Male Voice Choir has a position available for a Musical Director/Conductor.

**The choir meets throughout the year on Wednesday evening at the Lee Clough Mission Church Old Road, Astley Bridge, Bolton.**

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Interested individuals are invited to contact the choir Chairman, Mr. Les Herriot  
tel: 01204 305457  
31 Delph Road, Egerton, Bolton BL7 9TT.

## Around the Choirs



### **Cor Meibion Brymbo 1959 – 2009** *Wales North/Cheshire West*

*Brymbo Male Choir was formed in 1959 and since that time has travelled widely, from the Choir's home in rural North Wales to many areas of the USA and Europe. Their radio and TV broadcasts with concerts at the Royal Albert Hall have helped to make Brymbo Choir's 50 years of choral music an occasion to celebrate: and what better celebration than to bring together French and Scottish bands to combine with Welsh voices in a "Celtic Festival" of music and singing.*

This active and tremendously enjoyable weekend, organised over many months by our present chairman and his wife, who have had connections with France for a number of years, finally arrived. And what a weekend it was!

Two coaches from France arrived on Wednesday 29 April 2009 bringing the band "Harmonies d'Origny-en-Thierache et de Montrepuis", along with friends made over the years, to North Wales. Many of our French visitors came from La Capelle in Picardy, where some of the Choir members have enjoyed warm hospitality at their annual Cheese Festivals. Friday saw the arrival from Scotland of the Coldstream Pipe Band and, together with the Guards Division Corps of Drums North who had convened from all over the UK; there was now a full complement to accompany the rousing singing of Brymbo Male Choir in their celebration concerts.

As well as all the musicians for the weekend, the coaches also brought many non-playing supporters and these guests were entertained in a full programme of sightseeing whilst two days of rehearsals took place. On the Thursday a party of French guests had the choice between a tour of the North Wales coast and a part of Snowdonia, or a trip across the Mersey by ferry to see Liverpool, the 2008 City of Culture. Both groups enjoyed their day of UK sightseeing but, although being only some twenty miles apart, the Welsh coast basked in sunshine and we in Liverpool had our brollies up for most of the day! On Friday all our French visitors went to Chester and explored the Roman Walls and the Rows unique to that city. A few were anxious to sample real UK fish 'n' chips, so they got their wish!

The arrival of the pipes and brass and drums had enabled the various programmes of music to be rehearsed all together, a very necessary opportunity as bands and choir had not performed together before! Even at the end of the days of rehearsals they stayed in the club bar with impromptu singing for all to join in, and a taste of the enjoyment in store.

An outdoor celebratory concert was the first event to take place in Wrexham on the morning of Saturday 2 May with charity collections divided between the Alzheimer's Society and a local hospice. The day dawned fine and warm, which was a relief to all involved as the previous days had been cold and wet. The town Square at midday suddenly became alive with the sound of bagpipes, drums and brass as the bands marched in to take their places, in a riot of colour with the blue

# Around the Choirs

Nova Scotia tartan of the kilts and the red blazers of the choristers. A large crowd gathered to hear the rousing singing with pipe and brass accompaniments, the like of which is not usually heard on a quiet Saturday morning in Wrexham!

The main concert was held later that evening at a nearby Sports and Social Club - and what a splendid occasion it was. The tickets had been a sell-out and every seat was taken. Tables with chairs, cabaret style, were around the sides of the hall adding to the main body of seats in the centre. Buffet refreshments had been served earlier with the bar being open, and the atmosphere was vibrant and convivial, even before the entry of the choristers and bands on to the big stage and front section of the hall.

The evening was fantastic: Brymbo Male Choir celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> year in great style with the performance of combined pieces for choir and bands, and displays from the accomplished Coldstream Pipers; the signalling with the Mace by the Drum Major in his command of the skirl of the pipes was indeed

fascinating to watch. The massed singing and pipes heard in *Highland Cathedral* was haunting, and this was only one of a number of pieces with the essence of Scotland. *Flower of Scotland* was exhilarating and patriotic, as were the renditions of the Welsh and French national anthems – *La Marseillaise* sounding near perfect after much practice by the Welsh voices of the Brymbo Choir!

The rest of the programme offered a diverse selection of pieces: from the merry G&S chorus, *With Cat-like Tread*, the thought-provoking *American Trilogy*, to the all-time Welsh favourites of *Cwm Rhondda* and *Rachie*, and many more.

It was indeed a Celtic celebration of Brymbo's 50 years of singing and brought three nations together in an atmosphere of warmth and vigour.

Our thanks must go to the Chairman, Gwilym Hughes, and his wife, Alwena, who worked tirelessly over months in organising such an enjoyable event to mark the Choir's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Thanks, too, go to the many local businesses which so kindly sponsored the occasion and enabled hospitality to be shown to our many guests over those days, and also to the Ladies' committee whose catering ensured that nobody went hungry. We shall all remember for many years to come the great friendliness, goodwill and enthusiasm of that weekend.

The Choir's anniversary celebrations continue with a tour of Germany which is planned for the end of October this year. They will also visit Ypres where they have been invited to sing at the Evening Ceremony of The Last Post at the Menin Gate. This will be a memorable and moving engagement for Cor Meibion Brymbo.

Brymbo Male Choir was delighted to learn that its Musical Director, Mr Glyn Hughes AWACM. ALCM. LLCM. has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, for his services to music in Wales.

Glyn has been Musical Director and Conductor of Brymbo MC for over 40 years and is also organist and Director of Music at St. Paul's Church, Pentre Broughton, NorthWales.

Glyn's MBE was wonderful news coming as it did in the Choir's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

*Wendy Beynon, wife of the Choir Secretary.*

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# Around the Choirs

## Swindon MVC South West

*A male voice choir's life involves many highlights, none better than travelling. Swindon Male Voice Choir makes a habit of touring and this, our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, is no exception having recently enjoyed an especially good ten-day trip to Ireland in late May.*

Leaving Swindon with a double deck coach full of happy travellers, we made our way to Holyhead, via Caernarfon, to catch the fast ferry to Dun Laoghaire. From there, we headed for our first port of call, Bangor in Northern Ireland. A number of the tourists took the coach to Carrickfergus where we, of course, sang the folk song of the same name, somehow gaining us free entry to the castle! That afternoon saw the Choir's first formal event at a reception for both SMVC and Donaghadee MCV hosted by the Mayor of North Down, Alderman Leslie Cree, prior to both choirs joining together in song that evening to raise funds for the Mayor's charities. It proved to be an excellent concert with an unusual touch as the guest slots were filled by an excellent comedian – the guys have never laughed so much and then had to stand to sing Gwahoddiad!

The following day saw us travel to Lisburn for another joint concert, this time with Queens Island Victoria MVC. After rehearsing and consuming a superb tea

courtesy of the local ladies, we enjoyed another very good concert, again seeing the choirs working together well, presenting fine combined items that brought the audience to their feet.

We then headed along the North East coast of Northern Ireland as best we could – low bridges and a double decker do not mix! We called in at the Giants Causeway, took many photos and looked at the amazing rock formations before continuing to Sligo via an overnight stop in Letterkenny. Sligo was the venue for concert number three, where we were joined by a very accomplished local children's choir, full of youthful exuberance, clearly enjoying their singing.

Whilst at Sligo, we noticed a large group of cyclists at our hotel, some blind and partially sighted who, with their chaperones, were completing the Ireland equivalent of a Lands End to John O'Groats charity cycle ride for the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind. That evening, we gathered for a meal to express thanks to those who had made the tour possible and also made a collection for the cyclists which, along with the whip-round we held in the Bar having sung to the assembled throng, amounted to around €700.

From Sligo we journeyed to Carrick-on-Shannon to our fourth hotel and an evening concert raising funds for the South Leitrim Arts Council. Stopping outside the



# Around the Choirs

hotel to unload cases, the coach went BANG making quite a few people jump! After an anxious time with our driver getting his white shirt very dirty, but assisted by a local mechanic the coach was back on the road which was good as our next and final destination was back across Ireland to Bray, just south of Dublin. The following morning, many of the choir headed into Dublin to the Maritime Festival being held and watched The Lord Nelson, a tall ship operated by the Jubilee Sailing Trust, moor up closely followed by a Navy Frigate – pure coincidence we think! Choristers went aboard to sing for the crew and then were given a tour by our Chairman who regularly sails aboard her. That evening saw the choir prepare for our final concert, in Balinteer, in aid of Diabetes Ireland and the Neill Mellon Township Trust. The choir rose to the challenge of singing in another vast venue, producing a most memorable concert of the very highest sustained quality, enjoyment and expression.

The following morning the coach was loaded one last time and a group of very happy and tired travellers made their way back to the ferry. After what seemed an age, helped at one point by a quiz produced by one

of our choristers which occupied those still awake, we arrived safely back in Wiltshire. We have learned that through our endeavours over the ten days, some £12000 had been raised, thus putting the icing on what had been an excellent trip, organised by the very best of care attention to detail and made by the free spirits of all the tourists who really enjoyed what was another remarkable SMVC tour success.

*Simon Grove, Secretary*

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

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# Around the Choirs

## Keighley Vocal Union Yorkshire North

*We have enjoyed a very successful season, beginning with a concert in Cartmel Priory in September.*

On Easter Sunday, 12 April, the South Bank Show on ITV presented a programme to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Handel's death, which considered the Yorkshire tradition of performing *Messiah*. It did this by following three very different Yorkshire choirs – KVVU, Huddersfield Choral Society and Sacred Wing from Leeds.

It was most interesting to see how the choirs approached this magnificent work, through the perspectives of individual choir members and the unit of the choir. We were well represented by Frank Smith (our conductor) and members Ruth and Steve Clayton. The production team visited us at rehearsal, on the coach to Freckleton, Lancashire, where we perform *Messiah* annually in the Methodist Church and, of course, in the pub afterwards. It was fascinating to hear both how Frank learned to conduct with the help of his father's helpful diagram and Ruth's link to the past with her father's copy of *Messiah* which she still uses today.

In May we toured Holland, spending three days there which proved to be a good mix of singing and sight-seeing. We arrived by ferry from Hull on Saturday and in the afternoon sang in Delft at the Maria van Jessekerk. The following day was spent enjoying the sights of Amsterdam and taking part in the morning service at the Oude Kerk. Our final concert was outdoors in the Town Hall square in Leiden. We had superb weather and it was an extremely satisfying weekend.

In June we hosted the Aurin Girls' Choir from Kecskemet in Hungary. The choir is one of many at the Zoltan Kodaly Music School and they are trained and conducted by Laszlo Duranyik, an internationally respected musician. They spent three days with us, giving concerts in Skipton and Barrowford and treating us to some choral singing of rare quality.

Although the fact that KVVU has been around for more than 100 years is not unusual, what perhaps is, is that we haven't had many musical directors and accompanists.



Our present conductor, Frank Smith, is one of eight and our accompanist, Ellis Wright, is the latest of nine and this year celebrates his 40<sup>th</sup> year with us. Ellis is a gentle and modest man with a rich background in music. He was organist for various local churches and was in great demand as an accompanist, having played for some great names such as Kathleen Ferrier, Norman Allan and Richard Lewis. He has given excellent and loyal service during his time with us, enduring our shortcomings with patience and humour.

*Tom Prat*

## Hertfordshire Community Youth Choir Thames North

*A Musical Dawn For The Youth Of Hertfordshire*

After lots of hype at the National Association of Choirs conference in March, Hertfordshire Community Youth Choir, under the direction of Ann-Marie Chessman, was born. Our first rehearsal on Thursday 23 April was one of great excitement and some apprehension.

If I'm honest I'm not sure who was more excited, the adult team who spent weeks to get to first night or the kids who walked through the doors unsure of what to expect.

I know there had been one sleepless night for our Musical Director, (out of pure excitement-I'm hoping) of what Thursday evening would bring.

The age range of the choir is 11-18, there are no auditions, our aim is to try and encourage those who have never sung in a choir to take part, sing and have fun.

## Around the Choirs



After just 10 minutes the 20 strong group (including 6 lads!) were singing in 3 part harmony, not bad when you consider some had never sung in a choir before!

After just 1 hour they had sung their way through 3 pieces of music.

The highlight for them being, "Breaking Free" from High School Musical. At the end of the evening they performed to parents and members of Stevenage Ladies Choir who had gathered to watch. Some were truly

amazed at what had been achieved in just one rehearsal; the choir had worked really hard, and that was reflected in the applause they received at the end of the evening.

My thanks go to the team, without whom the night would not have been possible; Ann-Marie, Guy, Tanya, Tracey and Wendy. Please visit [www.hertschoir.co.uk](http://www.hertschoir.co.uk) and keep up to date with all our exploits over the next few months.

*Natasha Cole, Chairperson - HCYC*



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# Around the Choirs

## The Gwalia Singers Wales South

*This is a Welsh male voice choir which was formed in Swansea in 1966. Big changes have taken place in the choir since then. The choir's current growth indicates that, contrary to what some might believe, choral music is as popular as ever. The choir is larger today than it has ever been. However, its original essentials – that of being a male voice choir with a strong sense of family togetherness – have prevailed. This is demonstrated by the fact that some of the "founder members" are still singing in the choir today.*

The choir has achieved considerable success over the years in competitions such as eisteddfodau and similar festivals throughout the UK. Members have also travelled to Ireland, twinned with a German choir from Feudenheim and even sung in Lanzarote! In addition, several choir members travelled to Beijing, China, in 2006 as part of a combined choir with members of the Swansea Male Voice Choir to sing at a special St David's Day gala concert at the invitation of the Beijing Welsh Society.

To celebrate their 40th anniversary, the choir held two special concerts. The first was in May 2007 at the Grand Theatre, Swansea, along with the choir's current president, local songwriter and celebrity, Mal Pope, his daughter (Daisy Blue), female vocal group Vivace and local pop group The Storys. The second was a sell-out in November at Swansea's Brangwyn Hall, which also featured the Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir and the children's choir from Talyccoppa Primary School.

Choir members believe they owe their current success to the variety of musical items they can perform, many of which are not what you might expect to find in the repertoire of a male voice choir. They attribute this to the exceptional talent of former Musical Director, Simon Oram, who transformed the quality of singing during the 10 years he was in post and believe it has been enhanced by current Musical Director, Nick Rogers, who was deputy to Simon for several years and was previously the conductor of the Rhayader Male Voice Choir.

The choir remains in constant demand, giving up to

three concert performances each month, including several weddings. In May 2009 the choir gave a particularly special performance at the wedding of their accompanist – previously Rhian Liles, now Mrs Rhian Stone! It was invited to represent the City and County of Swansea by the City of Mannheim, Germany, in January 2007, to sing at the celebrations of 50 years of twinning between the two cities and the 400th anniversary of the establishment of the City of Mannheim. In 2008 the choir was invited to perform at Disneyland, Paris, for their St David's festival. The performances all took place indoors due to the poor weather. However the choir was invited back in 2009 and this time sang on the outdoor stage next to the Sleeping Beauty castle.

On a sad note however, 2009 saw the sudden passing away of the choir's chairman, Paul Smith. Paul had been a member of the choir for 18 years and served on the committee for 10 years before becoming chairman last year. He was a very popular chairman and was the instigator of the choir's trip to Birr last year. He was a wonderful person and will be sadly missed by all.

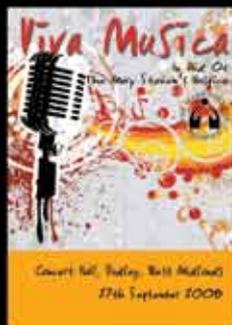
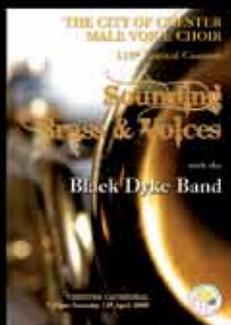
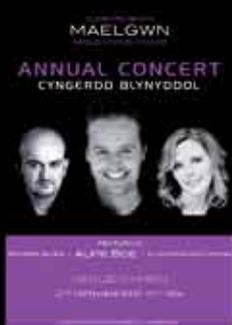
Future events include a joint concert in 2010 with the Llanelli and Duvant male voice choirs. This will be along with Shaheen Jafargholi, a Swansea schoolboy who was a finalist of the 2009 series of "Britain's Got Talent" and who also performed at the Michael Jackson memorial service. Also booked to perform at the choir's 2010 annual concert is the Mousehole Male Voice Choir.



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# Around the Choirs

## Newcastle Male Chorus North East

*Newcastle Male Chorus has been celebrating its Twenty Fifth Anniversary this year. Formed in 1984 following the response to a newspaper advertisement, the choir has enjoyed much success over the period of its existence.*

A celebration dinner was held at The Marriott Hotel, Gosforth Park, on 4 June 2009 when the choir welcomed as principal guests Richard Bradley (Chairman of NAC for the last six years until March 2009) and choir president Marc Le Brocq. Mrs Bradley also attended. All guests were warmly welcomed and received by the choir's Chairman, Ivan Marsham and his wife, Valerie.

Fourteen of the choir's original members were still active in the ranks when the quarter century mark was reached in January 2009. Their service was recognised by each founder member being presented with an illuminated certificate of thanks by Mark Le Brocq. They also received a re-engineered CD of the choir's first ever concert held on 22 June 1984 - only six months after its inception. Current Musical Director, Doris Williams (a Vice President of NAC) received a silver memento to mark her quarter century of work with NMC in so many and varied capacities. All members and friends of the choir received the booklet which chronicles "The First Twenty Five Years" of the choir.

Richard Bradley spoke about the state of male choral singing at the present time and wished the Newcastle choir good luck in its journey into the second twenty five years. The evening concluded with music provided by cornetists and friends of the choir, Brian Tait and his son Phillip, Marc Le Brocq and, of course, the choir itself.

The Annual Concert this year will be a Celebration of 25 years which will be held on 24 October in the People's Theatre, Newcastle, when young soprano Bibi Heal will be guest artist. The programme will look back over the years whilst also keeping an eye on the future. The eighteen years service of founding Musical Director, Norman Williams (former president of NAC) will be remembered and celebrated.

The Choir, having concluded its 2008-2009 season



with a most successful concert in the picturesque Northumbrian village of Seahouses at the end of July, opens the new season with a performance in another lovely coastal village, Cullercoats, on 5 September 2009. NMC will then join with other North-Eastern choirs of Group 7 in the NAC Choral Spectacular in Newcastle's City Hall on 26 September.

Newcastle Male Chorus looks forward to its next twenty five years with hope, vigour and enthusiasm.

*Kevin Vale (Chairman 2009-10)*

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

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## Around the Choirs

### Essex Police Thames North

*The Essex Police Choir is having a year of exciting events as it celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

Earlier this year, present and past members of the Essex Police Choir, their friends and supporters enjoyed a celebration dinner to mark the 20th anniversary. The Force already had a well-established Band and Musical Society when a meeting was held at Police Headquarters in March 1989 to discuss forming a Choir. Potential choristers included serving and retired officers, civilian staff and family members. By its first AGM in September 1989 there were 28 members who sang from music borrowed from Tiptree Choral Society, to which the Choir's musical director, Norman Eastbrook, belonged.

Twenty years on, Norman - head of the Force Photographic Department - is still waving his baton at the Choir which has grown to around 60 men and women, several of whom were in at the beginning. Since the first concert was given to Boreham Women's



Institute in December 1989 the Choir has taken part in around 250 concerts all over Essex and East Anglia, and also acquired a taste for foreign travel. Participation in the 1993 International Festival of Police Choirs in Victoria, British Columbia was so much enjoyed that two years later the Festival was held on home ground in Chelmsford. As well as a return trip to Canada in 2000 the Choir has also sung in such elegant cities as Paris and Prague, as well as at various venues in East Anglia and throughout Essex.

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# Around the Choirs

While the Choir represents the Essex Police, which has encouraged its value for public relations, members are self-funding, but financially supported by an active Friend's Group which organises a wide range of fundraising activities. The Choir makes no charge to an organisation which requests a concert, and it is a source of pride that over £200,000 has been made for charitable purposes and good causes in the last 20 years. The Choir's concerts have helped to raise money for many local and national charities. To mark its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year the Choir has been on tour again with two concerts in Southern Ireland.

## Dursley MVC South West

*When the last report was published, a dinner to celebrate the Choir's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was anticipated. This was held at the end of September and it was good to see a number of former choristers, who had moved away from the area, managing to return for the event. The food was good, the company excellent and Mandy Starr proved to be an immensely entertaining Guest Cabaret Artiste.*

Concerts in the latter part of the year produced an interesting sequence of venues. These included a sequence of churches dedicated to St Mary – at Wootton-under-Edge, Tetbury and Berkeley. “Which St Mary's are we in next time?” was a common cry!

The Choir year drew to a closure with the traditional two Christmas concerts. The Guest Soloist on this

occasion was John Qualtrough – the award winning Gloucestershire baritone. The Lister Hall in Dursley was sold out once again showing the considerable support that the Choir has in its community. Carols were sung for various charitable organisations on a number of occasions at various venues. Once again choristers were present at Frenchay Parish Church to support Headway (Bristol) Carol Service. With the choir as patrons of this brain injury association, participation is always a rewarding annual event.

February saw a number of choristers make the journey to Hereford to participate in the workshop run by Alwyn Humphreys. All thoroughly enjoyed the occasion.

Male choirs are often called on to sing national anthems. Invitations to sing at various conventions are a normal for the choir and MD tries to respond positively to requests for the choir to sing the appropriate music. In March it was the Lions Clubs International Convention in Bristol that made the requests. Prior to the formal start to the day's proceedings, the choir sang many items from its extensive repertoire and then sang anthems for the countries represented. *God Save The Queen*, *Mae hen wlad fy nhadau* in Welsh, *La Marseillaise* in French and *The Star Spangled Banner* produced no trepidation in choristers but the request to sing the Indian Anthem in Hindi had raised a few worried eyebrows. Fortunately our MD, Barrie Cooper, had only recently made a visit to India and came back armed with the music and the phonetics for the words. No problem – and it was received well by the Lions!

The two Annual Concerts were held in early May, once again at the Lister Hall to packed audiences. The Guests Soloists on this occasion were Therese (Violin) and Dominic deSouza (Clarinet) – two very talented young local musicians still at school in the locality.

The Annual Concerts are always anticipated enthusiastically, given the choir's policy to present as many new repertoire items as is possible. However the imminent participation just three weeks later in the Cornwall International Choral Competition for Male Choirs added to the rehearsal pressure. In due course well over 100 choristers and wives made the journey to Cornwall. The resulting third place out of 10 choirs for the 65 choristers who sang in the ‘over 41 singers’



# Around the Choirs

group was pleasing. With Four Lanes and Mevagissey ahead of Dursley, we were the first 'foreign' choir!

The Adjudicators were very positive about the performances of the three songs presented and one commented specifically that Barrie Cooper's arrangement of *Behold God the Lord* from Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was worthy of being sung more widely. In addition to the competition, the Choir sang at Redruth prior to the competition and at the Eden Project on the journey home. In the Redruth concert the choir performed the arrangement of *The seven ages of song* that was commissioned from Alan Simmons by the Festival organisers. It was hoped that the choirs in Cornwall would learn this song but in the event it seems that Dursley were the only choir that learned the song in its entirety.

In the near future the choir will be hosted in concert by Cowbridge MVC, the concert taking place in Cardiff in aid of Leukaemia Research. We get many choirs from Wales on this side of the Severn Bridge so it is good to create traffic in the other direction.

The diary is full and filling into the future and new songs written by the MD and others are either learned or to be learned. These include Barrie's setting to music, of the words of the poem *The Soldier* by Rupert Brooke. We have his arrangement of *The Hallelujah Chorus* to learn and another item he has set to music and arranged for MVC - inspired by the poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred Lord Tennyson.

For further details about the choir, please visit [www.dursleymalechoir.org.uk](http://www.dursleymalechoir.org.uk)

*Huw Jenkins*

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**Tues 10th Nov 2009 Van Dyk Hotel**

**Tues 12th Jan 2010, venue to be agreed**

**Fri 19th Mar 2010, Ramada Cromwell, Stevenage**

**Sun 21st Mar 2010, Ramada Cromwell, Stevenage**

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