

NEWS & VIEWS



234 AUTUMN 2024



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Crawford's Corner

Publications Officer - Bob Swallow



Autumn days are now with us and that is about right for the Autumn issue of News & Views.

It seems to have been a busy year for many choirs. The NAC had a 'Cruise Conference' and so, it seems, did at least one other choir. Getting out and about to sing in the summer months is a great idea and it helps the choir develop friendships near and far.

Choir anniversaries are a great time to celebrate the wonderful things a choir has achieved in the past and to look forward to more great times in the future.

The photograph on the front of this issue is one of a number that celebrate long service. The work that members do for many years with their choir should be recognised and appreciated. What would many of our choirs do without the willingness of our volunteers.

After a 'Cruise Conference' we return to the more mundane next year with a con-

ference in Yorkshire. 'Ey up' I'm looking forward to a 'right' good time. There is information about our next conference and forms that need to be filled in so that you can ensure your place. You'll find what you need on pages 22-25.

I have no doubt that many choirs, after their summer break or summer tours, are thinking about the next busy time. I hope I shall be getting reports and photos of all the great things that will be happening in the closing months of the year.

Keep on singing.

Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman - Brenda Wilkinson



Reading through this magazine has really cheered me up, especially as we have just about come to the end of an almost non-existent summer, weatherwise. It has

taken a long time but I now feel a tangible energy in our choral world: journeys to sing abroad and on cruises, parties and concerts to celebrate special anniversaries, activities to promote skills and recruitment – you name it and choirs are doing it.

As well as all the choral contributions you will find Liz's music review which, this time, looks at music for mixed choirs, Carol has provided us with a thought provoking article about choristers especially as there is dwindling provision/encouragement for children these days. In July the NAC held its first MD Conductor's Day/Masterclass. Although we are a choral association, conductors (or MDs if that's what you wish to be called) are as important as the singers and Nicki's report on the day tells you all about it and I hope this will inspire you to attend the next one which we are preparing right now.

Our conference next year will be held in Leeds/Wakefield from 4-6 April and our guest speaker will be our friend David Lawrence. Many of you have seen David at previous conferences so will know what a great day of music is in store.

I know it's only September but this is the last edition of News & Views for this year, but a lot of choirs are already learning festive music for what is probably the busiest time for choirs, so I wish everyone all the very best for Christmas and I hope that the new year will be even better than this one.

Keep us up to date

NAC Records

It is very important that your NAC committee is able to contact its members to give or receive information. How can we let you know what is happening and find out what you need if we can't get in touch easily.

Our NAC Yearbook is a great thing to have but, unfortunately, it is only right for a short time each year. Things happen in choirs. AGMs mean officers change and this can also mean that information about who to contact changes as well.

PLEASE, if the people in your choir who we have contact details for change, let us know as soon as you can.

Our details are on the back page. We try to keep them up to date for you. Please do the same for us.

Music Review Autumn 2024

Liz Moulder - Music Review Officer



Although I no longer conduct a mixed voice choir, it has been a pleasure to research compositions for these during the summer months. There are a

huge variety of pieces available varying as always in style, technical difficulty, genre and possible audience suitability.

I came across my first composition, during the NAC's Musical Directors' workshop in Reading, in early July. *Ave Maria*, a four part a cappella composition is by the Latvian composer, Richards Dubra. With subtle modulations and time signature changes, this piece gently rises and falls, creating a calm and peaceful atmosphere. Hearing it sung in the church by the Harry Ensemble was a very memorable experience as the three conductors who attended, explored their conducting techniques, demonstrating their knowledge of the piece. Excellent breath control and a warm vocal tone are required throughout the performance. Published by Musica Baltica, it is available from Forwoods Music Ltd or musescore.com as a pdf download.

My second choice is *Song*, words by Christina Rossetti and music by Edward-Rhys Harry. Composed in 2023, on first glance, this subtle a cappella setting of Rossetti's words seems a straightforward, close harmony piece, but you are constantly surprised along the way. The opening first two bars that return twice more are simple in their melodic line and harmony being based on the tonic chord but do not be lulled into a false sense of complacency. Whether it be a change of time signature, a 'rush' of semiquavers, slightly dissonant chords, simple synchopation or triplet against duple time these one bar 'surprises' help to inter-

pret the words whilst creating a mood of sadness and melancholy. The ability to produce a controlled pianissimo, hold a note with perfect tonality and shape a phrase is a prerequisite for singing this piece which could be performed on many different occasions. Edward, who mentored and taught our young conductors in the aforementioned workshop, has a wealth of experience as a composer and choral conductor which shows in his compositions. This piece is available from www.lindsaymusic.co.uk

Music, my third piece, was written to commemorate the centenary of the NAC. Words by Walter de la Mare, set to music by our NAC President, Ronald Corp, it is a fitting song to celebrate the organisation. Ronald studied music at Oxford and began composing from an early age. His lifetime's experience shows in this composition. The verses are neatly sandwiched between an introduction which also becomes the finale, setting the mood for a composition which allows all vocal parts to show their strengths. Musical motifs appear throughout each verse differing slightly but helping to keep the unity of the composition. The third verse modulates to the flattened submediant for eight bars before seamlessly slipping back into the tonic major key bringing a different tonal colour. Published by Banks Music this is also arranged for three upper and three lower voices which stand alone or could be performed together.

Think of a World, based on a melody by Graham Westcott in 1973, was arranged by Antony Baldwin in 2019. This, my fourth composition, was originally a short Harvest Festival anthem but it is suitable for more than just harvest time as its title suggests. It opens with a straightforward unison 16 bars sung alternately by upper then lower voices before moving into four/five

part harmony sung a cappella but with a simple keyboard reduction for rehearsals. The final sixteen bars are arranged with all voices in unison with a descant coming to a close on a long tied note. There is an opportunity to accompany this on the organ as well as the piano. It is available from Banks Music Publications.

Finally, *May You Go Forth in Love* was composed by Sally K. Albrecht. Looking for a simple, adaptable piece suitable for perhaps a youth choir or relatively new choir, then look no further. With simple harmony and a singable, melodic line, this piece is immensely suitable for training choirs to sing unaccompanied but the piano could be used to support if required. An American composer, Sally has written many pieces, many for youth choirs, so she is a composer to explore further. It is no surprise that she is also the Director of School Choral Publications for Alfred Publishing. www.alfredpub.com

And finally, OUP released their Christmas choral catalogue in mid-July which is worth browsing whilst in August, the latest Voiceworks was published. *SingCircle* comprises of 111 rounds from two parts to 22 parts! Suitable for all ages there is a wide selection of rounds for everyone. A ring-bound copy is reasonably priced at £22.95. Tim Knight's Autumn/Winter catalogue was released mid-August and I would also recommend that you take a look at the Kassian Choral Series which highlights women composers. These are original compositions in a variety of styles and voices and are found at Banks Music.

So, as always, I hope you find something of interest to whet your appetite and a reminder, if you have found a piece that your choir enjoy, please share it with us, I will be delighted to hear from you.



NAC Legacy Funding Application Form



Return completed form to
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<u>Group/Choir</u>	
<u>Event Co-ordinator</u> <u>Contact details</u>	
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<u>Date</u>	
<u>Venue</u>	
<u>Lead Practitioner</u> <u>Music Qualifications/</u> <u>Experience</u>	
<u>Description of Event</u>	
How will you evaluate its success?	
Involved Costs	
Group/Choir Funding	
Request funding From NAC	
Bank details of Group/Choir	
Signatures	

60 Years Together

The Kentwood Show Choir – South West - Peter Carlyon Gen Sec NAC



and the Little Big Band.

To end the first half of the show, Sheila invited all past members of the choir onto the stage and, together, they all sang *Climb Ev'ry Mountain*. I was surprised that the stage was able to support that many people but it demonstrated the longevity and family spirit of the people who have proudly sung with the choir over the 60 years.

Throughout those years, the Kentwood Show Choir has been guided and moulded by the unique Sheila Harrod who directs them on stage in her own inimitable style that has become as much of their concerts as the singing itself. I really look forward to the next time that I am able to share their music.

The Kentwood Show Choir announces itself as 'The choir with a difference' and having heard it three times now, I cannot disagree with that statement. Based in Swindon, it is a group which thoroughly enjoys singing together and various changes of members have done that for 60 years now.

I first heard them when they sang in the concert for delegates at our Taunton AGM and Conference in 2022. They took my breath away. This year, they joined us for another AGM and conference that was held aboard the Fred.Olsen ship 'The Bollette' where they presented an hour's concert. Yet again, they did us proud and wowed a packed theatre.

It all began with five young girls receiving singing lessons from Sheila Harrod. They formed the embryo of what Sheila developed into the Kentwood Show Choir. They present their songs with fire and enthusiasm and with plenty of dynamic movement in the staging of it all. The joy of it all is always visible in the faces of the singers and the range of the voices is absolutely wonderful with never a hint of fear when even the highest notes are reached perfectly.

I was delighted to be invited to attend their 60th anniversary concert as a representative of the National Association of Choirs and of course, they did not disappoint the packed Wyvern Theatre in Swindon. They presented a wide range of songs that included many superlative solos, some even from the few male singers in the group. They were ably supported by their musicians, Steve Parker



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Cruise - St Malo, Guernsey & Honfleur

The Fairburn Singers – Yorkshire North and East – Sally Whittingham



On Saturday 25 May 2024, the Fairburn Singers, accompanied by 30 family and friends, embarked on yet another cruise with Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines. This time our destination was the Isles of Scilly, Guernsey and Honfleur, departing from Southampton. After an early start and a six-hour coach journey, we eventually arrived at Southampton dock and our first glimpse of MS Borealis, pride of the Fred.Olsen fleet. Check-in was speedy and efficient and soon we were on board and able to sample the delights of 'The View' restaurant, located right next to the Lido Bar and pool. The roof of the pool was open to let in the lovely warm sunny weather. We weren't due to sail until 19.00, so after embarking at around 13.30, we had plenty of time to explore the ship, unpack and get ready for dinner at 18.00.

Dinner was the usual 5 course delight, beautifully served by the very efficient waiters and by 19.45, we had left port and were sailing along the River Test, into Southampton Water and on into the Solent where we passed the Isle of Wight on our port side as we headed into the English Channel.

At this point, I should mention that we had been informed of a change of itinerary. Unfortunately, we were no longer going to the Isles of Scilly (where we had been due to arrive on Monday 27 May), as we were told that the water around the island would be too choppy for the tenders to get people safely off the ship and into shore. This was disappointing as

several of our group had been looking forward to a trip to Tresco Abbey Gardens, or St Martin's Vineyard, but it was not to be. The Captain explained that decisions to miss ports were not taken lightly, and with the safety of passengers and crew being paramount, plus the risk of accidents and incidents in the difficult seas around the Isles of Scilly, we were instead going to visit St Malo, on the French coast. But first, in another change to the itinerary, we were going to Guernsey two days early, where we arrived early on Sunday 26 May. This was a tender port so there was a need to launch the lifeboats to act as tenders to reach the shore, and whilst it was a little choppy and the boat bobbed around quite a lot, it was deemed safe enough for us to leave the ship and travel to the shore this way.

Once ashore, it became apparent that the islanders had not been expecting us. They are always given advance notice of cruises going to the island and they prepare themselves accordingly (rallying the volunteers at the port side and arranging tours). I heard there were several hasty emails and calls to the island to make them aware of our change of itinerary and imminent arrival. Unfortunately, as it was a Sunday, there were very few shops open, but those that were did a roaring trade. We were able to take a scheduled bus and at a cost of £10 a head, we travelled around the whole island in just under two hours taking in St Peter Port, the airport, Vazon Bay and Cobo Bay on the north side of the island and then back via St Sampson to St Peter Port. We mar-

velled at the beautiful flowers, quaint churches and lovely buildings and learnt that it is very expensive to live on the island, that house prices are bordering on extortionate, and that very few people ever leave once they had settled there.

Some people walked to the Castle Cornet, others explored the underground museum while some people went on the tour to the Candie Gardens and Victor Hugo's House. We were interested to see the French influence on the island with a lot of places and houses with French names.

Once back on the ship, Sunday was the day of our first concert (hastily re-arranged due to change of itinerary). We sang a variety of our favourite tunes including our signature song – *One Voice*, and a choir anthem *As long as I have Music*. We also gave a passable rendition of one of the new songs in our repertoire – *Africa*, by Toto. We have been practising this for months and our MD finally decided we were good enough to sing it. We finished our concert with a *Tribute To Queen Medley* and were pleased that our audience were soon waving their arms to the tune of *We are the Champions* and then gave us a rousing ovation and we were encouraged to do an encore so, we finished with a round of songs which include *Swing Low*, *When the Saints* and *I Wanna Sing*, which the audience joined in with and hugely enjoyed.

Monday 27 May found us already anchored outside St Malo by breakfast time. This was another tender port but luckily

the sea was less choppy and the distance to shore much shorter. However, the queue to get on a tender was very long and we waited nearly two and a half hours to get off the ship, which meant our time on St Malo was fairly short. But we walked round the lovely old town, observing the Cathedral of St Vincent, passing by the Maison de La Duchesse Anne (a pre-renaissance mansion dating back to the 15th century), and walked along the Rue du Pélicot. Many people chose to walk along the famous ramparts which surround the citadel and contain many statues of famous people born in the town.

However, we needed to get back to the ship because Monday evening at 17.15 saw us attending our personal cocktail party, courtesy of Fred.Olsen, one of the perks of being part of a large group. We gathered in the Observatory to partake of drinks and canapes before trooping downstairs for dinner at 18.00. This was followed by another show, this time with a comedian who was also a fantastic piano player and who told a very funny joke about the dancing made famous by Michael Flatley (you had to be there!).

The daily evening quiz at 22.00 in the Morning Light pub was a must for most of our group but, in all the five days, I don't think any of our teams won the coveted bottle of Cava! Entertainment back up in the Observatory followed and a very late night ensued, with many sore heads the next day, which luckily was a sea day. When I say a sea day, that usually conjures up the ship slicing through the water at some speed, allowing free access to the open air and enjoying the sights of the ocean. Unfortunately, our sea day could not have been more different. Due to the change of itinerary, after visiting St Malo, we only had to sail round the coast of northern France to Honfleur, passing Cherbourg, but as we were not due to dock in Honfleur until Wednesday 29 May, we literally headed into the English Channel and that's where we stayed, stationary, for around 12 hours. It was very surreal, made worse by the fact that it was quite foggy so we couldn't see anything, not even any of the ships passing through the Channel.

The other very confusing phenomenon was that we were sitting not far from Guernsey, which meant that our electronic devices were picking up BST from Guernsey, yet our analogue pieces were on French time, so

no-one really knew what time it was.

However, the one saving grace of being stationary was that our second concert, which took place at 15.30 that day, was achieved without having to anchor our feet and pray that the ship didn't lurch one way or another when we were on stage (it's happened before). This time we began with another choir favourite, *Let the River Run*, followed by medleys of *Oliver* and *My Fair Lady* and finished with *You'll Never Walk Alone* (always a crowd pleaser).

At this point, I feel I should make a special mention of our Chair and MC, Janet. Janet is the Fairburn Singers' USP (Unique Selling Point). She is certainly unique, and for a fractious few minutes during our concert when we suffered a malfunction with the keyboard (much to the frustration of our very competent accompanist, Mandy) Janet kept the audience entertained with a number of jokes and stories (of which she has an abundance tucked into her choir folder). At one point, she decided that she would sit on the edge of the stage to tell a particularly amusing story, but standing behind her, we all knew what would happen when she tried to get back up again. It took two tenors and two basses to help her to her feet, there were arms and legs everywhere, much to the amusement of the audience (and the choir), before we could carry on with our performance. But it caught the eye of the Cruise Entertainment Director who approached us after the concert to suggest we would be fabulous as the entertainment on a pre-Christmas cruise. We suggested he come up with a deal, which they have, and we are now looking forward to entertaining folk on a Christmas cruise in December 2025.

Tuesday was also the day of the Captain's welcome and cocktail party to which everyone was invited and where we were introduced to the Senior Managers on board who keep the ship running in good order (shipshape even). This was then followed by formal night in the dining room, so posh frocks and dinner suits were the order of the day, along with the posher crockery at the tables. Another bash at the 10pm quiz followed another comedian in the theatre, then more high jinks in the Observatory.

Wednesday 29 May found us finally moored up at the port of Honfleur, where we had arrived very early in the day. Unfortunately, the weather Gods were

against us this time with incessant, often heavy rain, marring our wander round the beautiful old town and marina. Several tours were happening this day, and I was on the tour to a Calvados Distillery which promised tasting and cheese. The coach journey was around 40 minutes from the port, and the French guide, who spoke extremely good English, spent the whole trip telling us how the people of Normandy didn't like looking into each other's gardens so planted tall trees (which also lined the roads) and that a lot of famous people live in the region because the Normandy people are good at keeping secrets. On arrival at the distillery, in the rain, we were shepherded into the room where the apples were taken to be mused, and then into the bottling room which was not in use that day, and then into two large warehouses full of very big wooden casks, no doubt full of the fermenting liquid, so we were all looking forward to the tasting.

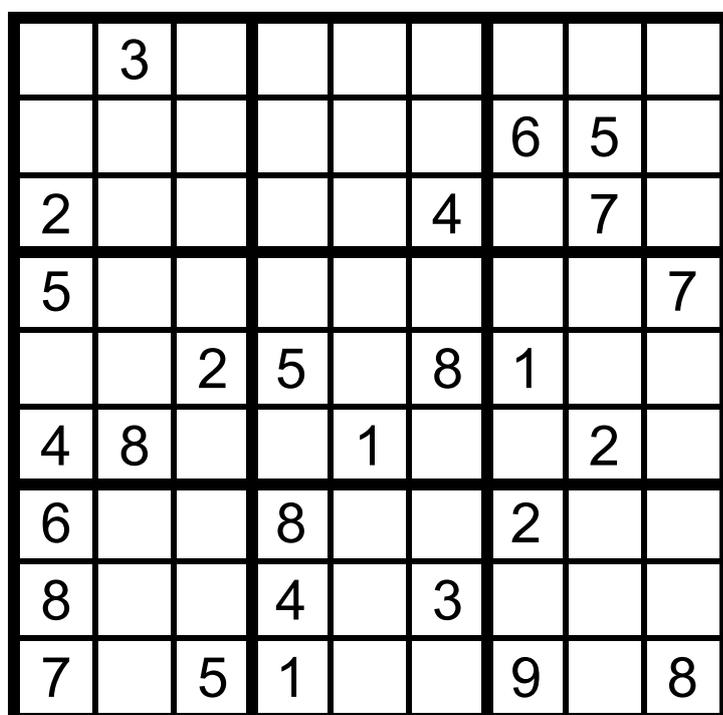
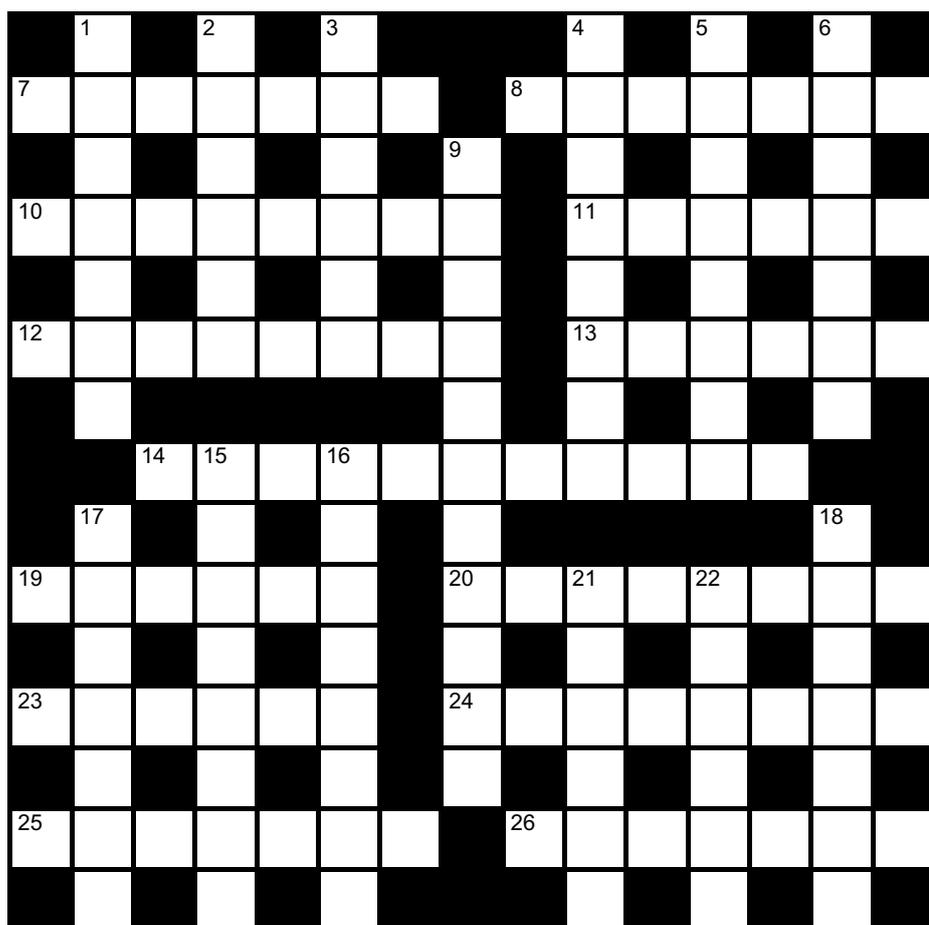
After being ushered into the gift shop, we were invited to partake of the Calvados liqueur, the smallest measure imaginable in a large glass, and offered a small plate of VERY small pieces of local soft cheeses, including camembert. One bite and they were gone. The miniscule offering of the Calvados brandy was also gone in a flash and the rather tasty looking Calvados version of Baileys looked delicious but the amount we were given was so small you could hardly taste it. So, all in all, not the best value for money trip.

And then before we knew it, we had had our last evening on board, and we were docked in Southampton by 06.00 on Thursday 30 May, where our coach was waiting to whisk us back to Yorkshire.

But, as ever, we had had the best time. We certainly made our presence felt on board and I think we leave a lasting memory for our fellow cruisers (if the compliments and feedback are anything to go by). We always enjoy our cruises, we love the camaraderie of always finding someone in the group to talk to, the banter between the dinner tables and most of all, for entertaining our fellow passengers at our concerts.

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, thank you for your continued sponsorship and for allowing us the experience of performing on board. We will be back.

PUZZLE PAGE



Across

- 7 Teach me violently how to use the knife (7)
- 8 Bewildered or alien controls lateral motion (7)
- 10 flood deluge (8)
- 11 Owe nothing (4-2)
- 12 Baby goat going fast (5-3)
- 13 Carefully placed (6)
- 14 A way to find sleep (11)
- 19 I can see the words in books but not further (6)
- 20 Wave has a pale hat (8)
- 23 Austrian capital (6)
- 24 Man-made opening (8)
- 25 Always busy (2,3,2)
- 26 Posh foreign pub (7)

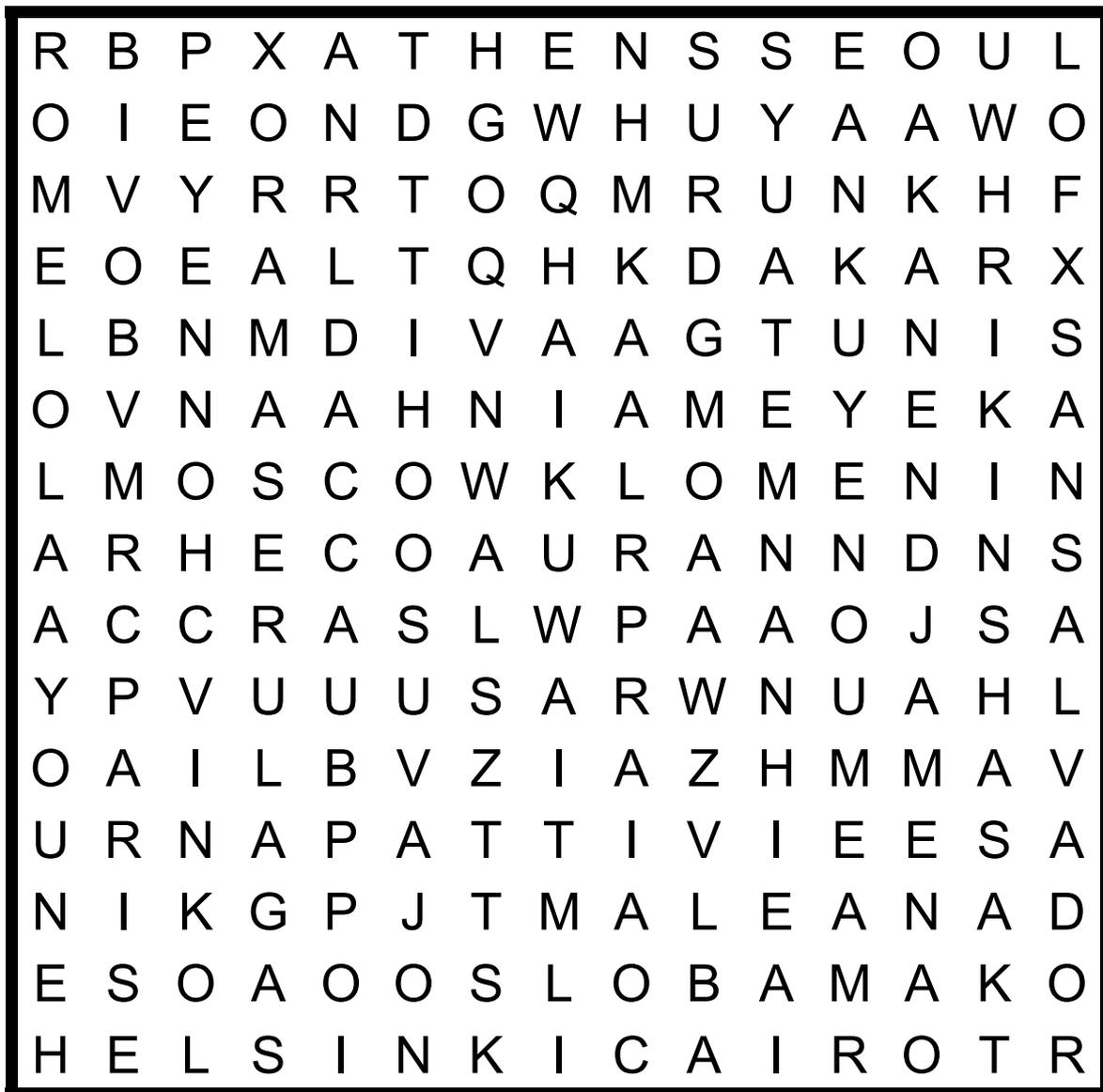
Down

- 1 Pa is not skinny (7)
- 2 Glazed cotton fabric (6)
- 3 Vicious nail may be aggressive (6)
- 4 A pocket full of rye (8)
- 5 Airy kite mixed with soy sauce and grilled (8)
- 6 Can the puzzle dissolve? (7)
- 9 Just slip it on (5-2-4)
- 15 Homer's medicine for sorrow (8)
- 16 Switch and swap (8)
- 17 Hello blue denim (7)
- 18 Reliant sadly on the loo (7)
- 21 Professional killer in a collapsed cinema (6)
- 22 Held in regard (6)

SOLUTIONS PAGE 30/31

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

CAPITAL WORDSEARCH



ACCRA	DOHA	MASERU	PRAIA
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BERLIN	LA PAZ	NOUMEA	SEOUL
BERN	LAAYOUNE	NUUK	SUVA
CAIRO	LIMA	OSLO	TIRANE
CONAKRY	LOME	OTTAWA	TUNIS
DACCA	LUSAKA	PARIS	YANGON
DAKAR	MALE	PORT VILA	

2024 Season

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir - Scotland West - Anne Kay

It was the greatest surprise to me to discover, some time in mid-May, that I had totally forgotten to submit my usual report to News and Views. I must apologise but, to put matters in context, we had a fairly quiet season leading up to that point, which may explain the issue. In addition, I have forgotten nearly every family birthday this year, too. I blame the ageing process. I sincerely hope the end is not nigh.

The choir's first 'engagement' of the calendar year was a second Open Rehearsal of the 2023-24 season. Sadly, while we had a great social event, we didn't attract any new members. Maybe it was the cold of a Glasgow Monday night; maybe no-one wants to join a choir mid-season. We have started operating a policy of inviting anyone who enquires about membership to come and sit in on a rehearsal (or two) and that seems to work reasonably well as we have had some recruits by that method; sadly, though, no gentlemen.

As we had no concerts in the early part of 2024, we did have plenty of time for rehearsing in the lead up to our BIG spring concert in Glasgow's RSNO Auditorium, part of the complex at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. Our special guest choir at this concert was 'A Choired Taste', a mixed-voice community choir, founded in 2009, and based in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire. The choir has 70 members and, like the Phoenix, they sing a wide variety of music and raise a lot of money for charity. The choir's conductor, Liam Baillie, gained a First-Class Honours Degree in Music Education from the University of Aberdeen and has recently been appointed Principal Teacher of Music at Marr College, Troon. Prior to his studies, Liam was also a member of our choir, and we were delighted to have the opportunity to meet him again and to enjoy the product of his and A Choired Taste's hard work. Often used to having parts of our repertoire pinched by others, on this occasion we have become 'the pinchers' as we are now learning *O Love*, an arrangement from 2016 by Elaine Hagenberg of the hymn, *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go*, which A Choired taste sang, beautifully, as part of their performance.

Following this very successful event, we



continued preparations for the remaining concerts of the season. Firstly, a return to Rothesay in the Isle of Bute where we were hosted by the Bute Arts Society which operates in Argyll and Bute and is a charity which aims to advance the arts, heritage, culture or science for the benefit of the community it serves. As in our concert in 2022, we were once again joined by the local Ballianlay (pronounced Ballanlay) Choir under conductor Fiona Shaw. This was an excellent concert with a terrific audience (and a great lunch for us provided by the choir). The mood of both performers and audience was lifted by the beautiful weather. Our final concert of the season took place in a new venue, Springburn Parish Church, Glasgow and was arranged by one of our tenors, Will Black, who is a member of the church. The concert helped to raise funds for the church. We were made extremely welcome by everyone and, once again, provided with an excellent lunch – we do like our food. It was also lovely for us to have some former choir members and one who has been on leave in the audience and a great relief when they told us how much they had enjoyed the event.

As always, we had our AGM in early June and, as a result, some changes to choir council. Dorothy Gunnee stood down as Vice-president after two years in office. Dorothy was somewhat thrown in at the deep end in her second year when our previous President became ill, and she

had to act up for him. She took this on with her usual energy and wisdom. One of our long-standing sopranos and soloists, Katie Orchiston, will take on this role in this new season. In another change our alto steward, Sheila MacNaughton, decided to step down after several years in office and she will be replaced by Fiona Milne. On the choir's behalf, I would extend thanks to all four for all that they have already done and will do for the choir as members and office bearers.

Although a holiday elsewhere, the August Bank Holiday marks a return to singing for our choir and the start of preparation for the season ahead. Our first rehearsal was most enjoyable with the added advantage of beautiful new toilets; oh, the joy! The first formal event of the year will be an Open Rehearsal, where interested parties can sit in and sing with us and, afterwards, have the opportunity to have a chat (or blether) about choir membership. We already seem to be attracting a reasonable number of interested parties, mainly ladies – and while we welcome them - we would appreciate the chance to meet some new gents. Does any other mixed voice choir have a similar problem and how are you dealing with it? I'm sure I am not alone in pondering this mystery and would welcome suggestions to improve recruitment.

My delight at remembering to complete this report is tremendous – now, who has the next birthday?

Tours - What They Mean For A Choir

Gwalia Singers – Wales South - Richard Keene



Here in Wales there are two great traditions; Sport and Singing. As one of the very few choirs that continues to flourish and expand, Gwalia Singers, is able to perhaps cast some light on how people are motivated and our choir keeps expanding. Naturally, it is important that the music is of the highest quality and our guys get a kick out of good performance of the stirring *Hymns And Arias* with which Wales is most associated. At the same time, variety is important, because people will not want to come to concerts that do not vary from one performance to the next. Now, not every choir member can be a budding soloist, so we need to add a music team that will produce the very best out of a bunch of regular guys who perform for the love of the game. This we have in the exceptional presence of Matthew Ioan Sims, musical director, Rhian Liles, accompanist *sans pareil* and former MD Nick Rogers as well as reserve accompanist and violinist Gareth Widlake.



So, what else can bind people together as a team and motivate others to want to be a part of this organisation? I mentioned the sporting connection earlier and any sportsman will know the values of camaraderie and fellowship that can come from a tour together to places that we might

never have thought of before. Sure, not everybody can go, as commitments, relative health and family will come to bear on availability, but there is considerable merit in being able to look back on a successful and happy trip where a totally new audience is exposed to our own choir's talents and repertoire.



In the past, stories have been related to newer and potential members of many places our choir has attended, such as different European cities, Disneyland and so on. For some time the Pandemic curtailed such adventures, but recent years have seen yet more exciting ventures, visiting the Barbados Music Festival and then a tour to Greece based around the Agrinio Festival, then last year a revisit to old

friends in Feudenheim, Germany, each creating memories and stories that are related with enthusiasm and laughter over and again amongst the members and adding to that warmth just as though the lads had been on an Easter Rugby trip, but without quite so many disaster stories.

This past year, Gwalia Singers has experienced some great local trips for weddings, birthdays and various celebrations outside the normal run of concerts and charity events. All of these add to the discoveries of both quality and amusing talents, building that very core of 'belonging' that is so important in a unified body of people. This year's trip will be another new venture, this one to another music festival in Sardinia, certainly a place that not many choristers will have visited before.

Of course, as can be gathered, this is far from being the only factor that influences the success and unity of a progressive and popular Male Voice Choir. It is, however, a great motivator and adds to the binding together of a team to rival any sporting tour! Ask any member why he wants to sing with Gwalia Singers and you'll probably hear 'I like it!'



An Active Group

Midlands East NAC group - Liz Moulder

We are not sure when the Midlands East NAC group was formed because all that Brenda inherited was an agenda for the Group meeting to be held on 28 September 1996 when she took on the post of secretary. My choir joined in the early 90s, mainly for the availability of a good insurance scheme that suited our circumstances at the time. Realising there was a local group, my chairman and myself, then Musical Director, decided to attend the next meeting. There, we were warmly greeted by the chair, Eric Jackson and secretary, Brenda Wilkinson. The rest is history.

Meeting four times a year, in the mid-1990s the main focus was an annual group concert of six choirs run by a host choir, and the exchange of choirs' concerts with the odd discussion over current 'issues' and a very well attended choral workshop led by Donald Maxwell-Timmins organised by Brenda. But over the ensuing years we have developed into a very pro-active group.

This began when we first started to run half day workshops for our local choirs. Having studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, I was keen to share ideas on looking after our voices as well as general vocal technique. Over ten years ago, I found myself elevated to being chair of our group and with the support and help of the secretary and treasurer, things developed rapidly. We ran half-day workshops, bringing in outside expertise starting with the late Pamela Cook from Cantamus, followed by Dr Douglas Coombes and Tim Knight as well as using our own teachers and MDs in the area. Becoming braver, we then moved to a whole day workshop in 2023 with Dr Edward-Rhys Harry leading a choral workshop that also had a session on supporting musical directors with nine local MDs as well as NAC members from outside our own group attending. (This was partially funded by the NAC Legacy Fund which was explained in News and Views. It is there to support choirs throughout the UK). The day was a great success and enjoyed by all.

Prior to Covid, we had also introduced a 'focus' to every other meeting as suggested by our members. These covered



topics such as recruitment, copyright, new music, recruiting and auditioning accompanists and MDs. We also dealt with common problems that often arise during the normal working year of a choir. Again, outside help would be brought in to support us if we felt we did not have the necessary experience within the group.

Covid hit us all badly and it would have been very easy to sit back and bemoan our lack of rehearsals and concerts. But having been approached by my own male voice choir early on in 2020 about resuming rehearsals, I prepared a 'discussion' sheet stating the few facts as they were known at the time, uncorroborated 'news' reports and a warning that scientists, academics and those in government often disagreed. What was beginning to become obvious was that it was an airborne virus. A suggestion on how to return to rehearsals followed, but I clearly stated this was not going to happen soon. Other choirs were phoning up, asking for help, so we sent it out on the proviso that it was there to help them start a discussion in their own choir. It was not to be considered as an instruction.

Beginning zoom meetings for my choir through the expertise of my choir's secretary, Ian Webster, we soon found ourselves being asked for help, so we also set up a series of zoom meetings to help instruct our choirs through the technical aspects as well as showing them an example

of how they could use it to help their choir rehearse. Meetings of the group also continued through zoom meetings.

Post Covid, we continue as a group to actively support and encourage our choirs as much as we can. Do we get excellent attendance at our four yearly meetings? Not always but zoom meetings are better attended. We are sometime told that choirs have not received information about our activities. Our choirs' contact details are only as good as the information we have received. If we are told of changes from choirs, we do ensure that we update our information. However, we are now in the process of creating a What's App group as another way of keeping in touch.

So, our next workshop, run by David Lawrence, will take place in September and our 2025 concert is being organised by Bestwood Male Voice Choir. Over the years we have had lots of fun and laughter whether during our workshops, meetings or concerts. It really is worth the effort. If you are interested in re-invigorating your own group there is lots of support and help available by contacting the NAC.

It just remains for me to thank my secretary Brenda Wilkinson, Treasurer Clive Lawton and all those who regularly support our local group in so many ways. And of course, there is always tea/coffee and biscuits at every meeting!

80th Anniversary

Mansfield and District MVC - Midlands East - Geoff Mansfield



2024 is a big year for Mansfield and District Male Voice Choir as it celebrates its 80th anniversary. In April this year they appeared at the Royal Albert Hall, London as part of A Festival of Massed Male Choirs for the Welsh Association of Male Choirs with 22 other choirs and 524 male voices.

Geoff Mansfield, Publicity officer said, 'We were honoured to have been selected for a fourth time as one of only two English choirs to perform with our Welsh colleagues at the iconic venue.'

The local highlight concert of the year will be in the glorious Southwell Minster with two fellow Nottinghamshire male voice choirs namely Bestwood Male Voice Choir and Eastwood Collieries Male Voice Choir together with a guest choir with whom the Mansfield choir has had a long and fruitful association: St Edmundsbury Male Voice Choir from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

We are delighted to be joined by the talented Ravenshead Swing Band also from Nottinghamshire, with whom we have had many collaborative concerts. This will be the biggest male voice festival in Nottinghamshire in 2024 and will include classic male voice choir pieces, hymns and modern songs and by way of contrast the foot tapping swing band sound. It is sure to be a great evening of entertainment.

The history of the choir can be traced to 1926 and the formation of Rainworth Male Voice Choir. 80 years ago, in 1944 Mansfield and District Male Voice Choir was created by the amalgamation of Rainworth Male Voice Choir (1926)

and Mansfield Orpheus (1931), formerly a very successful competition choir winning first prizes on no less than 58 occasions at various Regional and National competitions, the choir, in common with many male voice choirs, now performs a wide variety of music including popular songs, musical theatre numbers and male voice choir standards. The Choir performs locally and 'away from home' with male, female and mixed choirs, bands and orchestras and count among their notable achievements singing with four Welsh choirs on a one-week Welsh tour, performances in 10 Downing Street and concerts with The Band of the Royal Marines and the Syd Lawrence Orchestra.

Ian Grice is the longest serving member of the choir with 40 years as chorister, committee member, Deputy MD and, since 2018, Musical Director. His extensive contacts and unending enthusiasm



extend our reach and participation in wonderful concerts around the country. His sense of inclusion, welcome and care for all choristers encourages commitment and attracts new many new members. We are skilfully and sympathetically supported by Margaret Ball who last year be-

came the longest serving accompanist having been with us for 22 years. Margaret, along with Ian, is a cornerstone of the choir. Maureen Lockwood has recently joined the music team and will become our accompanist in 2025 as Margaret takes well-earned retirement.

In our 75th year (2019) the Mayor of Mansfield conferred the Honorary Freedom of the District on the choir to add to the right, gained in 1966, to bear the Mansfield Coat of Arms on our uniform in recognition of its ambassadorial role in promoting the town.

The choir is proud to support charities local to our area and our efforts have raised over £60,000 in the last ten years.



What these cold facts cannot convey is the sheer pleasure we get from singing together and sharing this enthusiasm at our sell-out concerts with our audiences. Clearly evident is the sustained camaraderie and sense of family unity for those belonging to our choir. We love it and we hope you do too!

Tickets for the concert at Southwell Minster are priced at £20. They are available from choir secretary Eileen Lawrence on 01623 455373, as well as on the choir website at www.mansfieldmvc.co.uk

Money raised will go to Hetty's which supports local families affected by loved one's alcohol and drug abuse and Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes whose volunteers support the NHS.

The choir meets weekly on Tuesdays at St Augustine's Church, Mansfield, at 7.30.

Double Celebration

Dunfermline Choral Union – Scotland East - Alison Baxter



The choir has just finished celebrating its sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) and at the beginning of last season we celebrated Mandy Miller having been our musical director for 30 years. So, as a choir we had a year full of celebrations.

Dunfermline Choral Union was founded in September 1874. Mr William Harrison, organist at St James Episcopal Church in Leith was engaged as conductor and the first performance was Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* in April 1875.

Today the choir performs three times a year: the Christmas Concert is a wonderful mix of traditional and more recently composed Christmas songs and carols. Many of the audience feel that Christmas doesn't begin until they have been to DCU's Christmas concert. At the beginning of March, our Spring concert is when we perform choral works with a full orchestra and soloists. As well as standard repertoire (Handel's *Messiah*, Verdi *Requiem*, Fauré *Requiem* to name a few), we have performed 'An Evening of John Rutter', 'An Evening of Choral Classics' and 'A Night at the Opera'. In addition to this we have performed some more recently written choral works by composers such as Rebecca Dale, Dan Forrest, Ola Gjeilo and Karl Jenkins. Our summer concert is always delightful mix of lighter music.

Our year of celebrations began with the choir appointing its first patron – Frances McCafferty. Frances has had a long career in opera and has sung with many of the national opera companies and orchestras in the UK and throughout Europe. This included singing at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on many occasions. Frances retired from opera in 2018 but continues to sing in concerts.

Frances has always been an ardent supporter of DCU, both as a popular guest soloist and as a loyal audience member. Her enthusiasm for and commitment to choral music has been greatly appreciated throughout our sesquicentennial year and we are grateful to her for agreeing to be our patron.

We began our anniversary year with a 'Come and Sing' in August to which we invited members of other choirs and indeed, anyone at all who wanted to come along to sing. We rehearsed a wide variety of songs, finishing with a performance in the evening. The event was a great success and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

As well as our Christmas concert we took part in Dunfermline's Christmas Lights Switch-On, carol singing in the High Street to help raise money for charity. This was a fun event, contributing to the festive atmosphere.

For our 150th anniversary concert we per-



formed Dan Forrest's *Requiem for the Living* and *Symphonic Variations* by Sir Karl Jenkins. These are two very different works which delighted our audience, and which the choir thoroughly enjoyed singing. The *Symphonic Variations* was a new work for us: we enjoyed the contrast between the tribal sections accompanied by many percussion instruments, and the calmer, lyrical chorale movements.

At the end of March, a large number of the choir went off to Pitlochry for a residential weekend. This was the first time we had done this since lockdown, so it was an eagerly anticipated event. We spent the weekend singing beautiful music, socialising with other members of the choir, exploring Pitlochry and of course, there was a quiz. Everyone enjoyed the weekend, so we are already planning one for 2025.

In May we had our summer concert which was a mix of songs from musical theatre and films, swing songs, and some lighter choral repertoire with a guest appearance by Richard Colvin. The audience was very appreciative, and it was a lovely way to end the season. To mark the 150th anniversary, current and past members were presented with a special commemorative pin badge.

We rounded the season off with an anniversary dinner which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who were there.

As we move on to our 151st year, our programme for the Spring concert will be *'Sunrise Mass'* by Ola Gjeilo and *'Illuminate'* by Elaine Hagenberg

Dunfermline Choral Union is an amazing choir to be part of – and we would like to

take this opportunity to thank out Musical Director, Mandy Miller and our Accompanist, Yvonne Ferguson.

Mandy was appointed as Musical Director with DCU in 1993. Over the years with Mandy as MD the choir has grown substantially. We are very privileged to have Mandy as our MD: she works very hard for and with the choir, she even organised Zoom rehearsals during lockdown and rehearsals in a car park (socially distanced) when we were allowed to sing outside!

As well as performing much of the standard choral repertoire, Mandy has introduced us to many new choral works, and we always have a varied and exciting programme for our Christmas and Summer concerts. Rehearsals are fast paced but always with a sense of humour. Through her teaching and conducting skills, Mandy brings out the best in the choir, resulting in excellent performances which delight our audiences.

To celebrate over 30 years with the choir,

we presented Mandy with a conductor's baton, with a pearl handle (pearl being representative of 30 years anniversary) and flowers. We were delighted that Mandy was with us for our 150th anniversary and hope that she will continue to be our MD for many years to come.

<https://dunfermlinechoralunion.co.uk>

Stalwarts Honoured

Saddleworth Male Voice Choir – North West – John Watts.



Three stalwarts of the Saddleworth Male Voice Choir were honoured recently for their outstanding service to the choir.

Ray Smith, a member of the second tenor section for 46 years, stood down from the committee after an unbroken spell of 40 years. During this time, Ray has spent many years as Minute Secretary and his knowledge of choir rules, custom and practice, and choir history is of great value to the choir. Ray was awarded an Honorary Life Membership.

Peter Hatton, also a member of the second tenor section, has been a choir member for 50 years. Peter is a long-time member of the Music Sub-Committee and was its chairman for many years until he stood down last year. His encyclopaedic knowledge of male voice repertoire gained over his 50 years membership of SMVC, allied to a concurrent period of

around 30 years membership of Colne Valley MVC, has been invaluable in ensuring the choir maintains a varied and audience pleasing programme. During his 50 years with the choir, he has always been a member of the second tenor section and one of our leading soloists. Peter was also awarded an Honorary Life Membership.

John Redfearn, the son of one of the choir's founder members is regarded as the 'father of the choir'. John has been a member of the first tenor section for 65 years, having joined in 1959 aged 19 years. He has also served on the committee as Assistant Secretary, Secretary, Treasurer, Concert Secretary, Stage Manager, Membership Secretary and Chairman. John's life-long devotion to the choir was guaranteed to extend far beyond singing when he married the choir's first Musical Director's daughter Dilys 56 years ago.

John was awarded an Honorary Life Membership 5 years ago when he completed 60 years with the choir and has now been appointed Vice President of Saddleworth Male Voice Choir.

The choir has a busy time ahead. In December this year the choir will celebrate its 60th annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*, with a 48 strong augmented ladies' chorus, professional orchestra and soloists. Previous soloists have included Sir Thomas Allan, Valerie Masterson and Thomas Round. Many, more recent soloists from the RNCM in Manchester have performed with the choir and we look forward to some of them becoming household names.

The choir is currently planning a special year in 2025 when it celebrates 70 years of singing.

A Day to Remember

Reading MD Conductor's Day - Nicki Hunt

Thanks to the NAC, on Saturday 6 July, in Reading, I had the opportunity to attend a most wonderfully inspiring and informative whole days masterclass, to develop choral conducting skills. This was with the excellent Harry Ensemble under the brilliant instruction of Dr Edward-Rhys Harry. (I think I may have already used up most of my allotted superlatives in the first paragraph, but it really was that kind of day).

Details were well considered; the venue was super, with a resonant acoustic enabling the Harry Ensemble to sound effortlessly gorgeous in rehearsal. Much effort went into the cakes, which were equally gorgeous, all kindly provided by the choir, who really went out of their way to welcome and fuel conductors, observers, and cake-lovers alike.

Participants were invited, in advance, to explore and choose from a smorgasbord of delicious traditional and contemporary choral repertoire: William Mathis, *Missa Brevis*; Eriks Essenvald, *Only In Sleep*; Eric Whitacre, *A Boy And A Girl*; Rihard Dubra, *Ave Maria*; Thomas Tallis, *If Ye Love Me*; John Taverner, *Mother of God*; Robert Pearsall, *Lay a Garland*; and Edward-Rhys Harry's own beautiful setting of three secular poems for SATB and piano, composed earlier this year; *The Closing Of The Day*,

After introductions, conductors were each invited in turn to jump straight in and direct the singers in a 10-minute vocal and physical warm up. Personally, I'm a huge fan of warm-ups and regard them as literally setting the tone for the whole rehearsal. A good, short, productive warm up helps us in avoiding vocal injury, and to strengthen and develop our individual and collective instruments.

In warm-ups, we engage brain, breath, body, and voice, gently stretching the vocal folds and setting up our very best singing. All this, whilst having a giggle making strange faces and sounds with friends. It's a great ice-breaker and super for vocal and overall health. What's not to love?

Conductors and choir then dived straight into the opening movement of Faure's *Requiem* and had the best of times exploring both fundamental and more advanced



elements of gesture, beat, timbre, breath, tessitura, and so on and so forth, sometimes staying with one passage or section before heading on to another movement. The Harry Ensemble were ever patient, even through many repetitions of the same phrases, and much was learned.

With Dr Edward-Rhys Harry at the helm, and an outstanding accompanist on hand at all times, we were invited to observe, explore, and develop a greater understanding of skills and needs as choral conductors, vocalists and musicians. And, of course, and perhaps, most importantly, to develop as people. Were we the kind of people who could lead? And could we inspire a choir to follow? Was our intention and gesture clear and confident? Could we make important reflective and reactive judgments and decisions regarding blend, tempo, dynamics, phrasing, interpretation, and whether Keith and Ken should sit together again after their wives fell out over the last raffle? This, and so very many other nuances of the conductor's brain, body, and role were explored, and all in front of an audience!

The Harry Ensemble was accommodating and responsive, kind, and professional at all times. It quickly became evident that their ability to blend voices, coupled with a sensitive musicality and an evident enjoyment of singing together, created a rich and vibrant atmosphere. They did make a wonderful sound! It was clear that there

is deep-rooted trust and respect between choir members and their conductor, Edward, and this strong foundation was evident in the open and honest discussions that took place throughout the day.

And so, on to the subject of blend: halfway through the day, Edward requested two sopranos swap places, which they did without batting an eye. I just loved that no explanation was needed, no one felt slighted, singled out, or said that they had sat next to whomever for 30 years. This evidently, was a common occurrence, and a necessary one for all vocal ensembles.

Edward and the Harry Ensemble have evidently worked together thoroughly to explore and understand the impact that each voice's physical placement would have upon the living, collective, and unified being that our voices become; the choir. Knowing that each voice is valued, and will be physically placed to give of its very best qualities to the overall sound and effect of the choir as a whole, eliminates the perceived boost or slight to the ego. Your voice is valuable. Your voice becomes the choir in its most effective way, and to complete the circle, the choir then becomes your voice, also, in its most effective way.

Of course, understanding, honesty, and trust between conductor and choir will always enable best practice and best results. In our own weekly rehearsals, we get caught up with, perhaps, spooning music and words in, dynamics, expression, ensuring that our singers are watching every gesture, or at least looking in the right direction. The choir is a beautiful, adaptable, and incredibly versatile creature, worthy of its own David Attenborough documentary. If our singers are not situated to blend optimally, our nuances of tonal light and shade, spin and weight are affected and limited. Seeing this put into practice in Reading really inspired me to step forward on a journey of the perfect blend with my own wonderful singers. Doesn't every choir deserve that?

To conclude then: the day was a unique opportunity for conductors to share their experiences and challenges with a group of experienced singers. It was fascinating to

observe the dynamic between choir members and conductors. The honesty and bravery displayed by participating conductors, admitting when they didn't know something and asking for guidance, created a safe and supportive environment.

Edward's role as conductor and mentor was exemplary. He combined technical expertise with a warm and empathetic approach, was generous with his time, and offered encouragement, specific advice, and gentle reminders of fundamental techniques. His ability to guide choir members and participants towards finding their own solutions was particularly impressive, and it was evident that the choir held him in high regard, with this trust ex-

tending to the visiting conductors, creating a welcoming and open atmosphere.

Members of the Harry Ensemble were incredibly generous in sharing thoughts and experiences. Their feedback was invaluable, and it became clear that conductors often underestimate the level of skill and knowledge required for effective leadership, whilst choir members can be vague at best as to why there is a person seemingly directing traffic in front of them. Between us all, we were able to highlight the real importance of clear communication, strong musicianship, and the ability to create a positive and supportive rehearsal environment.

The whole day was filled with insightful discussions about a wide range of topics, from vocal technique and rehearsal planning to leadership styles and performance anxiety. The open and honest dialogue between the conductors and the choir members created a powerful learning environment, and it was clear that everyone was eager to learn and grow, with a genuine sense of camaraderie developing throughout the day. I would like to thank everyone involved in this event, especially the NAC for their continued good work on behalf of MDs, choirs, and choir members, in generously supporting and enabling excellent training and CDP opportunities across the country.

A Busy Half Year

Cor Meibion Colwyn - Wales North / Cheshire West - Charles Cooksley



Cor Meibion Colwyn is a male voice choir first founded in the 1890s and is now a choir of 60 voices rehearsing every Wednesday except during August in the Community Centre in Old Colwyn. Our MD is Owain Gethin Davies and accompanist Anne Leavitt. A number of our choristers perform solo items including tenors Hywel Roberts, John Roberts, Alf Gladman and Stuart Davies and baritone Gwyn Jones.

Cor Meibion Colwyn has completed a successful and busy half year and we are now on our usual break in August. In addition to our regular programme of our own concerts through the year are a range of varying joint concerts with bands, choirs and soloists. Notable concerts with bands have included the Holywell Brass band and the Werneth Concert band, the latter involving a concert in Heaton Chapel Stockport on 11 May.

This year we have hosted two visiting mixed choirs. The Nordurljosakor mixed choir from Iceland sang with us on 3 July on 10 September we are also pleased to welcome Kor Ost from Norway.

The highlight of 2024 so far has been

singing in the Conwy Classical Music Festival on 27 July in the 15th century St Mary's church in the centre of world heritage Conwy. You may have seen some of the performances on the NAC Facebook pages. The festival is a week long held annually with performances by soloists, ensembles and orchestra and attracts an audience locally, the UK and abroad. The joint concert included Cor Cantilena, a young mixed choir in their 20s, whom we met last in 2023 when our two choirs won their sections in the 2023 Pan Celtic festival in Carlow. Guest soprano soloist at Conwy was Meinir Wyn



Roberts, who sings with Welsh National Opera and Scottish opera. As a finale Cor Cantilena and Colwyn sang Hafan Gobaith, as the concert was in aid of Ty Gobaith Hope House Children's Hospice. Then a stirring Hen wlad fynyhadau with the capacity audience.

We resume our concert season with a joint concert with Kor Ost from Norway on 10 September, in aid of the Llandudno

Museum, followed by further concerts on 15 and 29 September in Old Colwyn and Betws y Coed respectively. On 5 October we will be joined in the 1000 seat Rhyl Pavilion Theatre with 90 strong Cor Alaw mixed choir with whom we have enjoyed many concerts and soloists. This will be a special charity concert in aid of retired members of the Police Federation. On 12 October we welcome the New Mill choir to Llandudno. Our accompanist Anne will enjoy working with former friends with whom she had a musical partnership. On 31 October we sing at St John's Llandudno.

Christmas events include outdoor carols on 24 November on Rhos on Sea promenade for the Tree Of Lights where the Beulah band and Colwyn will perform with around 1000 members of the public singing in aid of the St David's hospice. Other carol events will include a concert inside the Lifeboat station on Llandudno for RNLI on 8 December, followed by further carol concerts later in December.

We have a number of concerts scheduled for 2025 and we would welcome further enquiries both locally and in UK, Ireland or further afield. We will be pleased to welcome visitors and prospective choristers at our Wednesday rehearsals.

For further details contact Charles Cooksley Concert Secretary 21 Allanson Road Rhos on Sea Colwyn Bay LL28 4HN charles@colwyn.plus.com

How Could We Refuse?

Tamworth Ladies Choir – Midlands West – Rhona Pownall

The choir was formed in 1990 and not since the late 1990s and very early 2000s when the choir toured Germany and Holland have they ventured outside the UK.

Our fantastic Musical Director, Hilary Griffiths, who took up the post in 2017 was anxious to show us off in the Isle of Man the island of her birth where most of her family still lives. How could we refuse? So committee members set about making Hilary's dream come true and that culminated with us visiting the Isle of Man for five days from Friday 16 August to Tuesday 20 August this year.

We were joined by another choir from Tamworth, Mercian Singers, as some TLC members are also in this choir and their Musical Director, Andy Smith is the TLC accompanist.

A smooth ferry crossing from Heysham to Douglas saw us arrive at our Douglas hotel just in time for our evening meal and then get ourselves 'on song' for the upcoming sightseeing and concerts.

Saturday fortunately was dry and most choir ladies took the opportunity to look around the sights of Douglas before we headed to Ramsey for our first concert of the tour.

We were fortunate enough to get the Lon Dhoo Male Voice Choir to share our concert in Lezayre Church just outside Ramsey.

The church had wonderful acoustics and the concert was a great success. Mercian Singers opened the concert with a selection of songs and they were followed by the Lhon Dhoo MV Choir who showed their versatility with a wide variety of songs. The Ladies then joined the men and sang *The Lord is my Shepherd* and the beautiful *Ellan Vannin*. The concert closed with all choirs singing *One Moment in Time*.

The highlights of the evening were when Tamworth Ladies' Choir sang *Flying Free* for which Hilary's sister played a haunting flute accompaniment and a poignant song for Hilary *All the Way Home* which almost brought her to tears.

Sunday was again fine and we set off for



our afternoon concert in Erin Arts Centre in Port Erin. Here all of Hilary's family were able to join us, some to perform and others to listen.

We were hosted here by a small mixed local choir Caarjyn Cooijagh who only sing songs in the Manx language mostly about folk lore and Manx history, all unaccompanied. Hilary's two sisters are members of the group and they were out to show off their talents to her. They provided a very different aspect to the concert and thrilled the large audience.

The format of the concert was similar to the previous evening with Mercian Singers taking the stage initially, followed by Caarjyn Cooijagh with their selection of Manx songs and then all three choirs came together to sing *Geay Jeh'n Aer* in Manx. This was well received by the local audience who would not have been aware of the hours of practice put in beforehand by the Tamworth based choirs.

Tamworth Ladies' Choir then started their performance once again with *Flying Free* with Hilary's sister playing the flute accompaniment beautifully (more tears from Hilary!). In order to provide something different Hilary instructed the audience on providing the sound effects of an African thunderstorm before the choir sang *Africa*. This was very well received and enjoyed by all. As someone said, 'it went down a storm', if you will excuse the pun.

Hilary's elderly mother, who was in the audience, and had only heard the choir once before when she visited Tamworth several years ago gave praise indeed with

'they aren't bad are they?'

That was the end of another pleasant day and all were looking forward to a day of rest the following day when we were to visit Laxey and Peel.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't too kind for us on the day but despite that our visit to both places was enjoyable.

As it was our last evening before returning home a number of members of both choirs performed for our own 'afterglow'.

It was a very pleasant end to a most enjoyable trip.

But it wasn't all over yet.

On the ferry home we organised a 'flash mob' and entertained other passengers with a few songs including *I Can't Help Falling in Love With You*. Of course, now the ladies are asking where can we go next to better that?

We are open to suggestions from any choir who would like to host a concert with us in future. Past visits have taken us to Treverva MV Choir in Falmouth, Military Wives Choir in Helston, Neath MV Choir, Shifnal and District MV Choir and many others.

If you would like to contact us via our website,

www.tamworthladieschoir.com.

We can also be viewed on YouTube where a number of songs from our very wide repertoire can be found.



SUMMER QUIZ

- 1 'The First Day of Summer' is an annual public holiday celebrated in which European country in April?
- 2 Which feast day falls on July 15 every year?
- 3 The "dog days of summer" are named after the Dog Star; what is the better known name of this star?
- 4 What term is often given to a period of dry hot weather that occurs in the autumn?
- 5 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' is the first line of which William Shakespeare sonnet?
- 6 The summer solstice occurs in the Southern Hemisphere during which month?
- 7 By what two names is the character Puck also known in the play A Midsummer Night's Dream?
- 8 In the famous nursery rhyme what did the Queen of Hearts make 'all on a summer's day'?
- 9 What are the summer signs of the Zodiac? (three answers needed)
- 10 British Summer Time begins and ends on the last Sundays of which months? (two answers)

ANSWERS ON PAGE 30

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98th Annual General Meeting 36th Annual Conference Weekend 4-6 April 2025

Doesn't time fly? It's that time again to tell you about my travels to several parts of the country in search of locations for our annual conferences. For next year my thoughts were to look at Leeds as our next conference destination. This has proved to be a good choice. Location is very accessible from the motorway system. In fact, the hotel I have recommended to the officers is the Holiday Inn Leeds/Wakefield on junction 40 of the M1 motorway.



Just to be clear, there is another hotel of the same group called Leeds Holiday Inn which is not the destination. The hotel layout is similar to the hotel we stayed in at Taunton for those who attended the conference there. It is a comfortable hotel having adequate conference facilities and a location where the local bus stops to and from Leeds are outside the hotel. Accommodation costs have risen dramatically over the past two years and particularly for 2025. This is due in part to staff minimum wage increases and principally to the cost of food. I always try to find the best deal and do quite a bit of bargaining to bring costs down where possible, but it is a fact we have to accept prices have risen within the hospitality

sector. There is free parking for guests staying for the whole conference weekend.

Our speakers for conference are David Lawrence and our president, Ronald Corp OBE. Both are well known to the Association as excellent speakers with a wealth of knowledge in the art of choral singing and conducting. David will be taking the three seminars on Saturday and Ronald will cover the Sunday morning one. We look forward to their presentations which will be packed with singing opportunities under the baton of two masters of their craft.

The conference concert on Saturday evening will be organised by Leeds Male Voice Choir who will be joined in concert by several choirs from the surrounding area. The concert venue is the Riley Smith Hall at Tadcaster. The ticket price for the concert will be included in the full delegate package. I will organise coach transport to the concert at Tadcaster. The cost of transport is also included in the package.



A proposed timeline for the conference weekend is included in this issue. Please note this is a guide only. Please refer to the timeline within your delegate packs

given out on your arrival at the hotel which will include any alteration to timings if required.

You will find a booking form for the conference within this issue of News and Views.

Full conference stay - Total cost per person for the whole conference weekend is £275.

Day delegate rate - for Saturday including lunch and morning coffee. £60

Add evening meal before departure to concert if required £28

Add transport and ticket to concert if required £25

Clive Lawton





National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference Booking Form 1 4-6 April 2025

Holiday Inn Leeds/Wakefield

Junction 40 M1 motorway. Queens Drive, Lupset, WF5 9BE

CONFERENCE COSTS

Full Conference Stay

The price quoted is

per person for the whole conference

There are no single room supplements

Price per person for whole conference includes admission to all lectures

two nights bed breakfast, evening meal, refreshments and free admission to Saturday evening concert.

per person £275

Cancellations two weeks before conference will incur a charge of 50% of the total fee payable.

Substitute guests will be welcome.

Day Delegates

Payment in full when booking (non-refundable)

Please circle requirements

Day delegate fee including refreshments and lunch £60

Evening meal Saturday add £28.00

Concert ticket Saturday add £12.00

Friday Gala Dinner add £35.00

Deposit of £70 with booking form. Balance by early February 2025

Please circle Room Type -

single double twin

Amount submitted £ _____

Please return your completed forms and deposits to the address below

Payment method - tick the appropriate box

Paying by cheque

Cheques should be made payable to

The National Association of Choirs

Please return your completed forms and cheque
to the address below

Paying by BACS

You may pay by BACS

(please indicate BACS on booking form)

Pay to **National Association of Choirs**

Sort code 30 94 19 - Account no 30254060

Reference: Conference 2025.

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

Clive Lawton - Conference Coordinator, 20 Arthur's Court, Stretton, Burton upon Trent Staffordshire DE13 0GS
01283 569677 or 07939012458 cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com

National Conference Booking Form 2 4-6 April 2025

Holiday Inn Leeds/Wakefield

Junction 40 M1 motorway. Queens Drive, Lupset, WF5 9BE



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

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

Guest 1

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

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

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

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

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

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

Guest 2

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name.....

Surname.....

Address.....

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

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

Email Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet [type].....

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

NAC group.....

Choir Name.....

PLEASE PHOTOCOPY THIS FORM FOR MORE GUESTS IF REQUIRED



Reg'd. Charity No. 1014620

National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference Timetable 4-6 April 2025

Holiday Inn Hotel, Leeds/Wakefield, M1 Junction 40. Queen's Drive, Ossett WF5 9BE

Friday 4 April 2025

2.00	Delegates arrive, register at reception, and collect delegate pack.
3.00	National officers meeting.
4.00-5.15	Come and sing.
7.30	Delegates and guests assemble for dinner.
8.00	Gala dinner with wine.
9.30	After dinner entertainment.
12.00	Bar closes.

Saturday 5 April 2025

7.00	Access for trade stands to set up
7.30-9.30	Breakfast in main dining room
9.30-10.30.	Seminar 1 David Lawrence
10.30-11.00	Coffee break and trade stand viewing
11.00-12.30	Seminar 2 David Lawrence
12.30-2.00	Lunch
2.00-3.30	Seminar 3 David Lawrence
3.30	Coffee and trade stand viewing
5.15	Early evening meal [2courses]
6.45	Coach leaves hotel for concert at Tadcaster
7.30	Concert at Riley Centre Tadcaster with choirs from local area.
10.00 Approx	Light refreshments provided on return to hotel.

Sunday 6 April 2025

7.00-9.30	Breakfast [For those delegates wishing to attend local places of worship, details and directions will be available at reception]
9.30-10.30	Seminar 4 Ronald Corps
10.30-11	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.00-11.30	Annual General Meeting
11.30-1.00	Members Open
1.00.	Conference closes. [Lunch is available in the dining room at member's own expense]
1.00	National officers debrief meeting [guillotined after one hour]
Extra night's stay	The Holiday Inn group offer reduced rates on a regular basis. For our delegates to obtain the best rates I advise you to book these online.

80th Anniversary End Of WW2 In 2025

Jersey Island Singers – Southern Counties - Judith Scott

Like many choirs, Jersey Island Singers is still not quite the force it was before the pandemic and, although our membership numbers are coming back up, we do not have the person power to perform major choral works at the moment. The same is true for our colleagues in Jersey Festival Choir. So, in 2025, the two choirs will combine to sing Ralph Vaughan William's *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Each choir will learn the work under the guidance of its own leader and then come together in joint rehearsal during concert week. This is a first for the choirs – a challenging, but exciting, project.

Dona Nobis Pacem (Grant us peace) was commissioned to mark the centenary of the Huddersfield Choral Society. Vaughan Williams wrote it in 1936 and it was first performed in October of that year. He took the texts for the work from the Mass, three poems by Walt Whitman, a political speech and sections of the Bible. It is scored for soprano and baritone soloists and orchestra and makes reference to recent wars being composed as fears for another major conflict were gathering pace. Within three years, the world was at war again.

As readers may know, the Channel Is-

lands were occupied by German forces from 1940 until 9 May 1945, Jersey and Guernsey's Liberation Day. Sark was liberated a day later whilst the occupation forces left Alderney on 16 May 1945. All the islands continue to mark this historic event every year.

Our performance of *Dona Nobis Pacem* will be on Saturday 26 April 2025, ahead of Liberation Week but, nevertheless, in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2 and freedom from five years of foreign occupation.

Celebrates 20th Anniversary

Dunfermline Junior Chorus – Scotland East - Alison Baxter



20 years ago, our Artistic Director, Mandy Miller, realised her dream and founded Dunfermline Junior Chorus. It began with P5 children and grew year by year. Today we have around 100 singers in four choirs: Wee Music Makers, Music Makers, Junior Choir and Senior Choir. The choir caters for children and young people from ages 5 to 18 in the Dunfermline area and beyond.

Throughout our 20 years some members of the choir have sung in Carnegie Hall in New York, the Royal Festival Hall in Lon-

don and the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow. We have also taken part in a choral event in Maynooth, Ireland, with other choirs from Ireland and London.

In our 22/23 season some of the Senior Choir had the honour of singing for the King and Queen when they visited Dunfermline to confer city status on the town. This was indeed a special event as it was the first public event for HM King Charles after the period of Royal mourning and was attended by many other dignitaries,

including the Lord-Lieutenant of Fife, the First Minister, and the Provost of Fife.

All four choirs have performed at various civic events in Dunfermline.

Christmas 2023: the choir was invited to take part in the Christmas Lights Switch-on, singing carols in the High Street. This was a fun event and was very much enjoyed by the large crowd we had listening to us! We were also asked to sing at the Scottish Christmas Carol Event in Dunfermline Abbey and were delighted to be

invited to sing at this prestigious event.

The four choirs in Dunfermline Junior Chorus rehearse as individual choirs once per week in The Vine, but in our concerts we always have a few pieces where the choirs can sing together. Our repertoire is wide, from Traditional, to African, Gospel, Musical Theatre, and Popular, with all songs being carefully chosen to develop the skills of the singers.

Rehearsals are fun and exciting. Singing in

the choirs is an opportunity, not only to sing and develop musicianship skills, but to make friends and develop confidence.

We are a non-auditioned choir. We welcome any young singer who loves singing and would like to join us. details on our website: djchorus.co.uk

We have an amazing group of children and young people in our choirs, and we would like to pay tribute to them for their enthusiasm and hard work over the years

as well as to our Founder and Artistic Director, Mandy Miller.

For our 20th Anniversary, we are planning to have an Alumni Choir for the Anniversary concert in June as well as other special events throughout the year. It will be a very exciting year for us as a choir so if you are aged 5-18, and live within travelling distance of Dunfermline, come along and join us!

<https://djchorus.co.uk>



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The staging is a

“MODULAR RISER SYSTEM”
and is in extremely good condition.

It has only been used on a handful of occasions since its purchase (from new), and can safely accommodate 40 persons.

If purchased today as new its cost would be £3936.00.



The staging consists of the following elements

24 x 350mm Frames

58 Deck sections

2 Corner Vertical bar handrails

8 Single bar handrails

6 Tie plates.

1 Storage Trolley

The staging has been well cared for and has been stored in clean and dry conditions. It is available for immediate use, no remedial work required.

Offers are invited in the region of £1000 ono

For further details please contact:

Grimsby and Cleethorpes Orpheus Male Voice Choir

Trevor Jones (Chairman) 20 GREYFRIARS, WYBERS WOOD, GRIMSBY. DN37 9QT

Tel No: 01472-581511

E-mail: t.jones19@ntlworld.com

Time And Tune

Douglas Coombes – Lindsay Music – Carole Lindsay-Douglas

It will come as no surprise to those familiar with composer, conductor and workshop leader, Douglas Coombes, that he has a great passion for helping choirs to be the best they can possibly be. This enthusiasm spans all ages – from the very youngest to those who are rather more ‘experienced’. It has always been his desire to help everyone find their own joy of choral singing. There is however, a developing gap in the supply chain of singers wanting to join adult choirs, for a whole host of reasons, most of which, in the first-place stem from a reluctance of many primary schools to engage with singing in any sustained or meaningful way; some no longer even sing in assemblies. Douglas, with each of the three choirs that he presently conducts, has, over the last few years since Covid, invited primary school choirs to perform with his adult choirs in at least one of their concerts. He provides

the schools with melody line, words and piano accompaniment as well as sound files to support their learning. He also goes along to the schools to help with some rehearsals. The youngsters learn the songs and the whole work is brought together on the day of the concert.

So, what are the benefits of such an approach to programming? The serendipitous outcome provides an opportunity for the school to participate in a community activity while providing the children themselves with the unforgettable experience of performing in their own right but with the added satisfaction and thrill of singing with ‘grown-up’ voices. The adult singers derive pleasure in singing with the children, and the primary school itself can put a massive tick against music in the requirement to provide a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’, as well as use the

material in their own school concerts. The adult choir experiences a ‘feel-good factor’ as a reward for having shared their love of singing with the younger generation. The school is happy that all they have to organise is getting the children to the concert venue (along with their own packed refreshments). If the concert happens on a weekend, parents have been more than willing to transport their charges to and from the concert venue, and offering the parents and families concert tickets at a preferential rate, means that they also swell the audience numbers. You need to ask the school to provide a couple of DBS- checked members of staff to supervise the youngsters while they are on the concert premises and ensure that none of the adult choir are ever in an unsupervised situation with any of the children.

Recent titles from Lindsay Music ... www.lindsaymusic.co.uk

sales@lindsaymusic.co.uk – or

Why not give us a call? We’re always pleased to discuss your needs in person 01767-260815

Five through-composed music-stories in the “Sing Together” series by Douglas Coombes designed to allow adult and junior choirs perform together –

- **help your choir’s OUTREACH programme**
- **ENCOURAGE the NEXT GENERATION**
- **EXPECT LARGER AUDIENCES**

TITLES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE –

- *The Adventures of Pinocchio*
- *Trig Trog and the Christmas Children*
- *A Legend of the Three Kings*
- *La Campanelita (The Little Bell)*
- *Scenes from Wind in the Willows*

Each music-story lasts about 30 minutes incorporating seven songs with linking piano accompaniment and spoken narration.

The children’s part is basically unison with some optional 2-part work.

The story and lyrics are child-friendly yet not babyish. The melodies are engaging and enhanced by either SATB or SSA parts for the adults (you choose).

Sound files (MP3 or Midi) are available to support learning.

Each “Sing Together” package supplied as a download – price £25.00



Having attended to the practicalities, where do you find suitable material for such an undertaking? Douglas has delved into material which he originally produced for his 'Time and Tune' programmes on BBC Radio for Schools. He has adapted five of these classroom cantatas into works that incorporate both children's and adult voices. Douglas has linked individual songs within each music-story by means of a descriptive piano part along with spoken narration (an adult speaker) which carries the story along. The seven songs in each music-story are easy to learn and have words that are very child-friendly, though not babyish. Parts for adults – either SATB or SSA (you choose) are rewarding to sing and lend a richness to the melody line carried by the children, often supported by the Sopranos in the adult choir. The duration of each of the works is approximately 30 minutes. The story lines lend themselves to exploration in other subject areas – such as Art and English, enriching the educational benefits. The titles comprise:

Trig Trog and the Christmas Children

Trig Trog is a singer and storyteller who gathers up and looks after lost children. After many an adventure they end up in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.

A Legend of Three Kings

The Three Kings (Magi) set off to explore new lands. They see a star and follow it, reaching Bethlehem. They return home to relate their finest discovery.

Pinocchio

All the main episodes of Carlo Collodi's original story are in this adaptation.

La Campanelita (The Little Bell)

Set in Peru, it tells of how two poor children who win a singing competition with the help of a Duende (a friendly, wandering spirit) which changes the lives of the children and their parents.

Scenes from Wind in the Willows

This includes the adventure of Mr Toad

and his love of motor cars, and how, with his friends – Badger, Mole and Rat – they defeat the weasels, ferrets and stoats who had captured Toad Hall.

The performing material is supplied in electronic form with the understanding that it will not be given, lent, hired out or sold to any other organisation or individual. The purchasing choir and the school may make as many printed copies for their own use as necessary – again the same restrictions apply about not sharing beyond the purchasing choir and school. The sound files may also be shared to both choirs to assist with learning. All this is available for just £25 per title. You have your own costs of printing out the material of course.

Samples are available from

sales@lindsaymusic.co.uk

and please specify whether you would like the SATB or the SSA version.



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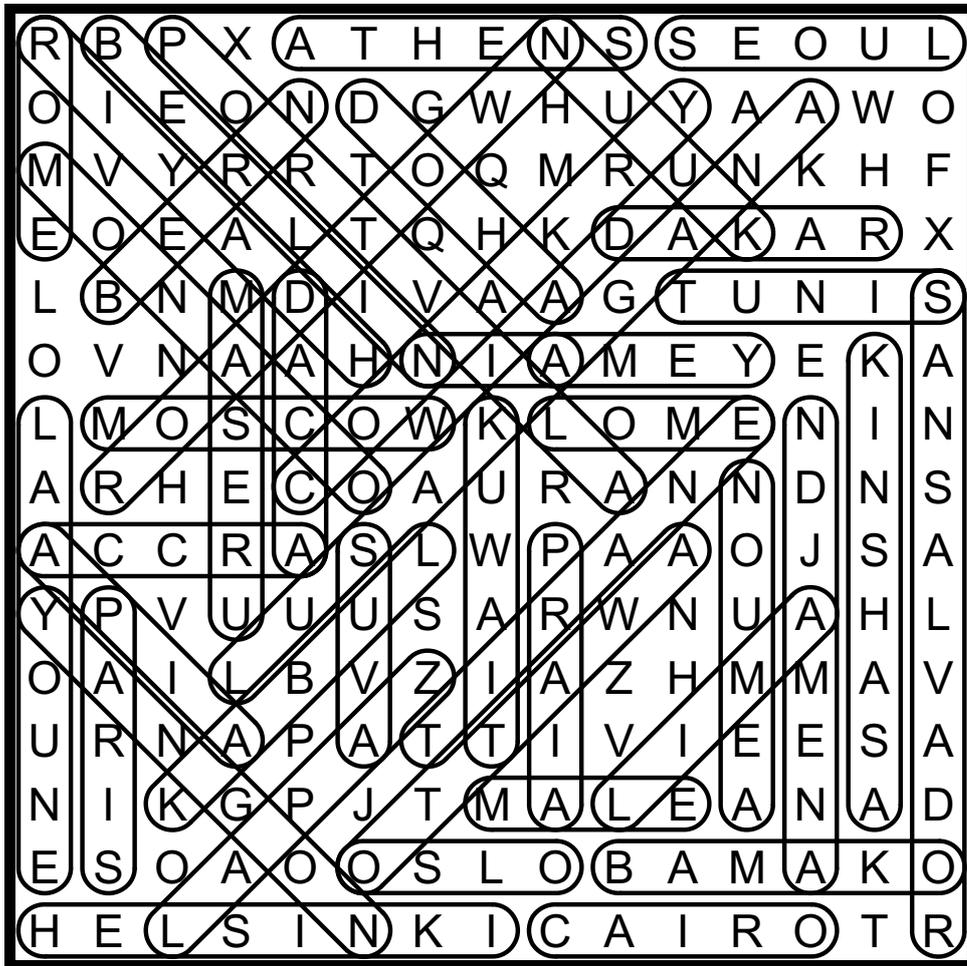
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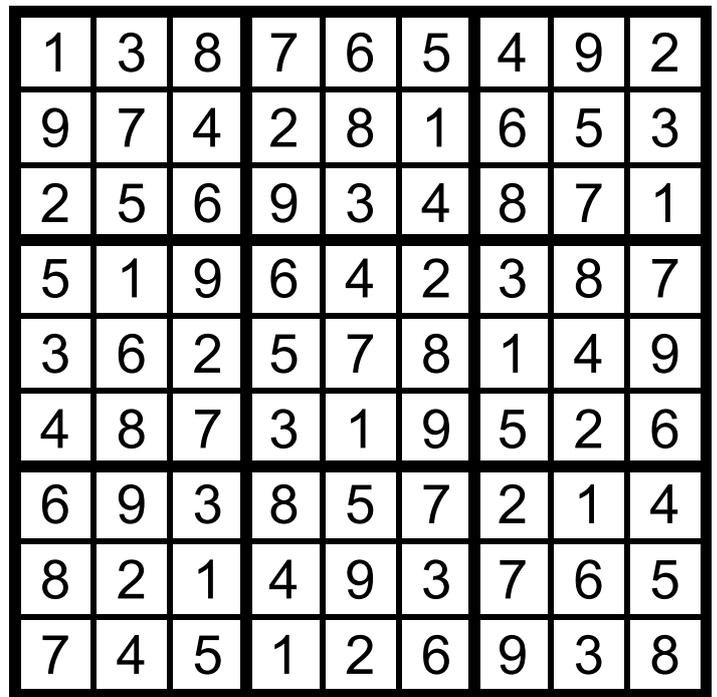
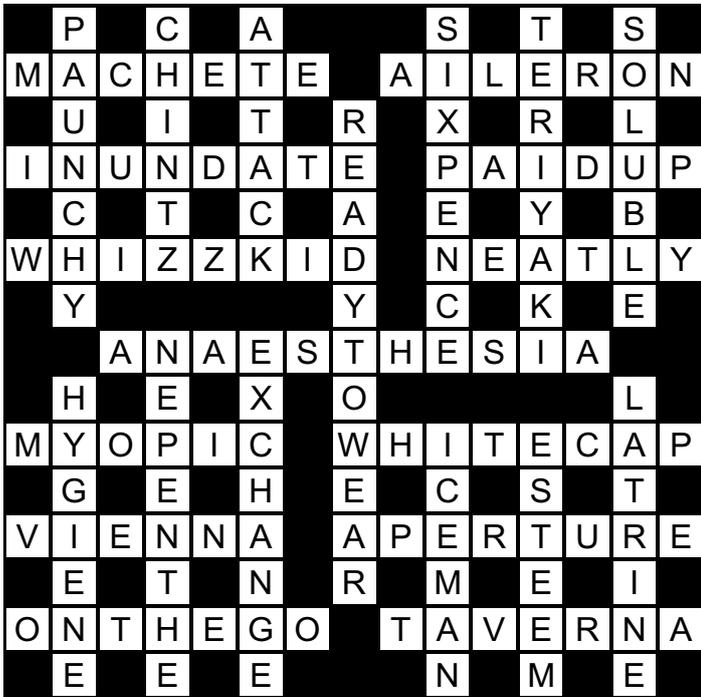
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- 1 Iceland
- 2 Saint Swithins
- 3 Sirius
- 4 Indian Summer
- 5 Sonnet 18
- 6 December
- 7 Robin Goodfellow
- 8 Some tarts
- 9 Gemini, Cancer, and Leo
- 10 March and October (begins last Sunday of March, ends last Sunday of October)

SUMMER
QUIZ



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

publications.officer@nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk

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

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

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

HOUSE STYLE

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

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14 November - Twin Oaks Hotel - Palterton
9 January - Zoom

Members Open Forum

27 January - Zoom

Closing dates for submissions to News & Views

Spring Issue - 31 December

Summer Issue - 30 April

Autumn Issue - 31 August