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NEWS & VIEWS

213

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHOIRS

SUMMER 2017





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Crawford's Corner



*Sumer is icumen in,
Lhude sing Cuccu!
Groweþ sed, and
bloweþ med,
and springþ wde nu.
Sing Cuccu!*

Well that's got that sorted out then. I am writing this on a day which might well make me think that summer is on its way. The sun is shining and the birds are singing in the swaying trees. Perhaps today is summer, I wonder what the forecast is for tomorrow? I'm not going to cast too many clouts just yet. Stop blathering, Crawford.

We're all back from a pleasant weekend in Gloucester at NAC conference and it's time to put the Summer issue of News & Views to bed. I have had to do my own conference report this year. There is never really space to cover everything we did that weekend. I had a great weekend this year, I won the Jelf raffle.

You will notice that we now have a new Chairman and John has written his first Chairman's Chat. It felt rather strange not to be sending the unfinished copy of N&V to Brenda for her to read and create her Chat.

Karl's music review is only a small piece this time because it is the review I was unable to squeeze in last time.

David Goodwin has done a short piece but we had a whole hour session from him at conference. The thing to remember is, if you are unsure about PRS or copyright, David is only an email or a phone call away and he knows what he is talking about.

My favourite choral group has always been The Kings Singers so it was very nice to have a piece from Brian Kay, one of the original singers and a fine bass. As soon as I saw his photograph I knew what was going on the cover.

It was interesting to get a submission from Newchurch Male Voice Choir, especially as they sent me two photographs, one from their past and one from their present. There are still a number of choirs who write articles for me but don't include photographs. Your work on the page is far more eye catching if you can illustrate it.

That is nearly it for the Summer issue. Why don't you send me something for the Autumn issue. The closing date for copy is 31 August and I know that's probably in your holiday time but come on get writing.

Crawford

Chairman's Chat



Welcome to the summer edition of News & Views and my first chat as chairman.

It was an honour to be elected NAC chairman at conference, for me it was the highlight to a very enjoyable weekend and I would like to thank you all for your support. Crawford has produced a very comprehensive report on the conference which appeared to be enjoyed by all who attended. At the concluding Open Forum one delegate remarked 'I have been attending conference for 20 years and this has been the best one'. Please try to send a representative from your choir to our next conference in Norwich, they will enjoy an informative and fun filled weekend. More details will follow in the next edition of News & Views.

Speaking of the Open Forum, it would be of benefit to your officers if as many choir members as possible attended each one. We welcome your feedback and constructive suggestions to enable us to make the NAC as useful and beneficial as possible to all our members.

I have enjoyed reading about all the choir activities in this issue, in particular the ones involving joint concerts. These are the very essence of the NAC, 'Joining the nation in choral singing'. During the many years I have been singing in male voice choirs and involved with the NAC I have made many new friends around the country and enjoyed some fantastic joint concerts in magnificent venues.

I am looking out of the window at a cloud free blue sky; is this the start of summer at last? May I wish you all a very enjoyable summer filled with the uplifting and spine tingling sound of choral music.

John Croft



Members Open Forum

Holiday Inn (Crowne Plaza)
King's Road
Harrogate
HG1 1XX
Saturday 17 June 2017
11:00

Saturday 23 September 2017
11:00

Best Western Plus
Stoke on Trent City Centre
Etruria Hall, Festival Way, Etruria,
Stoke on Trent, ST1 5BQ

Sat 20 January 2018
11:00

Twin Oaks Hotel
Church Lane, Palterton
Chesterfield



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CONFERENCE

8 Report 2017



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National Association of Choirs
Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

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**Last date for submissions for Issue 214
AUTUMN 2017 - 31 August**

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Conference Coordinator Gloucester 2017 Reflections and comments.



I would like to personally thank all who had input into the successful conference staged last month in Gloucester. From emails and comments received I think the weekend went very well with many saying how much they

enjoyed the event. The Cheltenham Chase Hotel was a real find with ample amenities to suit our conference. The staff could not have been more helpful. The main ballroom was fantastic in that we could house all the event aspects in one room. The ten trade stands were particularly pleased that they were placed within the lecture theatre and coffee station area which meant delegates were able to view the stands and converse with their staff in a convenient and relaxed manner. We attracted several new stands this year together with companies who have been to our conference before.

Our speakers were both interesting and entertaining. Jonathan Willcocks covered

a diversity of musical styles, putting the delegates through an excellent musical workout within his seminars. Dr Douglas Coombes and David Goodwin of Banks Music Publications gave interesting and lively seminars on their chosen subjects. Douglas delivered his seminar entitled 'What's the Score' and David his seminar entitled 'Fun and Frolics with the Performing Rights Society.' Both were highly entertaining and of great interest to the delegates present.

The concert in Gloucester Cathedral was an occasion not to be missed. Hosted by the Churchdown Male Voice Choir, it proved to be an impressive concert which was very well attended with a packed audience in the cathedral nave. The cathedral was filled with sound as the choirs performed in sections and as a massed choral spectacular as the finale. My thanks to Adrian Law for his time in organising the event.

I always look forward to the Members' Open Forum as it is here I get to talk to the delegates to find out what they want from conference and what I can do to make the ideas and comments I receive happen in future years. This year I managed to implement one idea which was put forward two years ago at Worthing and two which were put forward last year in Newcastle.

At Worthing in 2015 it was suggested that the date of the conference be altered. By

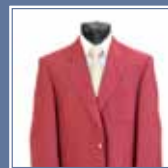
convention the date has been worked out using the template that if Easter falls in March the conference is staged two weeks later or if in April, two weeks earlier. The point was raised that many delegates are teachers and can only attend conference if it falls while their schools are closed. I accommodated this in Gloucester as this was the first opportunity to implement the idea. To my knowledge no one made use of this. Further to this I gather that several regular attendees at conference found they could not attend due to prior standing commitments on the later date. In view of this I am reverting to the original template.

The two successful ideas put forward in Newcastle were to give an opportunity for several trade stands to have a 15 minute spot each to present their company before the assembled delegates. We gave this idea the name 'Speed Dating'. This was entertaining with a great deal of information imparted in a short time. The other successful idea was to use the time from 4.30 to 6.00 on Friday afternoon of the conference to have Karl and Celia stage a 'Come and Sing' session for the delegates. This was well attended too. I feel both of these ideas will be continued next year.

So to next year and conference in Norwich with the fantastic venue for the concert be-



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ing the impressive cathedral. Four choirs, with another two looking to commit to the concert, are already preparing to deliver a concert on the Saturday evening. The conference will be staged in the comfortable and ideally placed Maids Head Hotel just 100 yards from cathedral close and the entrance to the cathedral. Our main speaker will be Bob Chilcott on this occasion and I hope as many as possible will support the National Association with their presence.

Clive Lawton

Music Reviews

Past Three O'clock



Publisher Banks Music
Publications GCL012

Composer: Thomas
Hewitt Jones

Lyrics: G R Woodward

Most carols and Christmas music allow one to ponder and consider the wondrous thing that has come to pass.

The musicality and time changes of this piece drive forward with an urgency carrying with it the uncertainty of the family's days to come.

It carries the characteristics of the London night watchman upon which the carol was loosely based possibly foretelling of the angel which told Joseph and the family to flee from this place after the visit of the Wise Men.

A faintly disturbing but uplifting interpretation of the words of G R Woodward which can ask questions in any carol service.

A well-constructed and musical carol for any choir with that hint of difficulty making an interesting learning experience.

Karl Harper
Music Review Officer

Music and Festivals Officer



Well, copyright continues to raise its ugly head. There continues to be a good deal of confusion over the subject. If anyone requires any assistance on this subject drop me an email and I will do my utmost to help you. And if your choir would like cop-

ies of my copyright notes from the recent conference or the MPA (Music Publishers Association) Code of Fair Practice, just drop me an email and I'll send them to you. It was lovely to meet so many of you at the conference in Gloucester, and what a grand hotel. We are going back there in the Autumn! What fun!

For male voice choirs 'Gwahoddiad' still remains unavailable and will remain so for some time to come, until the composer's family resolve the copyright issues which exist on the title.

And finally... a customer has recently asked me for a quote for *Doctor Foster* TTBB and I was shocked to see that Boosey's had it priced up at £9.50 per copy. £9.50! For 12 pages of music. So my next vendetta is back to Boosey's to reduce it. I'll let you know.

David Goodwin



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National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

90th Annual General Meeting 29th Annual Conference Weekend 21-23 April 2017

The Cheltenham Chase Hotel, Shurdington Road, Brockworth, Gloucester GL3 4PB



I had a great time at conference in Newcastle last year. It was made even better by the fact that Catherine Mears of Rolls Royce Ladies

Choir wrote a conference report that saved me having to do all the work.

Sadly, though she and Susan Oldfield were there, they have left it to me to relate what happened this year at the Cheltenham Chase Hotel.

I like to arrive around lunchtime so that I can help the other officers to welcome the delegates when they arrive later in the afternoon. One of the features of the hotel as you walk in is the near life size statue of a horse. I took a picture of it when I went to the MOF the year before last. The hotel is modern with lots of features that made conference a comfortable experience. My wife loved the fact that they have a good-sized pool with jacuzzi, sauna, steam room and spa. The conference area was so large that we could have all the trade stands in the same room as the seminars and the dinner was to be held in an area just next door. Very convenient.

At four o'clock we meet as officers to decide who introduces whom for the seminars and any last minute who does what. A new feature this year for Friday afternoon was a 'Come and Sing' led by our Gen Sec, Celia and our Music Review Officer, Karl Harper. I think this went down quite well. I know I enjoyed singing rounds and such. It gave a purpose to an afternoon when those who arrive early can be left swanning around with little to do musically. It got us off to a good start.

In the evening, we had our Gala Dinner. It is an opportunity to meet the delegates, old friends and new. The meal was well presented and I believe, enjoyed by all. The after-dinner entertainment was excellent. Jeff Bourton of Churchdown MVC sang, accompanied by Pam Taverner. We were treated to a large selection of songs from the shows, one or two of which were



new to me but many were well known favourites. Jeff introduced them with interesting anecdotes about the shows and the actors who performed in them. A great evening.

On Saturday morning after an early walk around Brockworth and a healthy breakfast, I viewed some of the trade stands. Celia introduced the first seminar led by Jonathan Willcocks, our main speaker for the weekend. He told us of life with a famous father and his own development and experience. He became a chorister at Kings College Cambridge where his father was Director of Music. He didn't get a place at the first attempt so there was clearly no nepotism there. His educational choices were dictated by his love of sport and his desire to take part as often as possible. At one point he gave up his choral scholarship because it got in the way. Nevertheless, he left Cambridge with an honours degree in music and has made a sparkling career in music. It was a very interesting first session.

After coffee, we set sail for the Battle of Trafalgar. Jonathan introduced us to 'A Great and Glorious Victory' for tenor solo, chorus, orchestra and organ which he was commissioned to compose to mark the bicentenary

of the battle of Trafalgar in October 2005, with text drawn from contemporary accounts, hymns, the Book of Common Prayer and the Latin Requiem Mass. It was a very interesting and challenging piece to sample. It was good to have our new President, Ron Corp, accompanying us. Jonathan finished the seminar with a piece of dialogue between Nelson and Hardy which was very amusing and a little 'naughty'. He was kind enough to send me a copy by email and I shall be using it in some of my talks that I do for charity.

Around noon we had a session that is new to conference. The officers have called it 'speed dating'. We gave Fred. Olsen Cruises, Lyn Oakes uniforms, Carole Lyndsey Douglas and The Really Big Chorus a fifteen-minute slot each to speak about their work and wares. Rayburn tours had been given a slot but car troubles meant they were unable to attend conference and Marianne Barton of The Really Big Chorus filled in at the last minute and spoke very well at such short notice. I think this may become a feature of conference, it went very well.

In the afternoon, Jonathan shipped us off to Africa. We certainly got about with him. He had brought some SATB music called 'Sing Africa' and we spent an hour trying to sing in Shona in four parts. We attempted *Mweya m'tsvene*, *Ndi Jesu chete* and *Monateng kapele*. My choir has *African Trilogy* in its repertoire so now I have sung in Shona and Swahili. A special 'well done' to Linda Sankey



Jonathan Willcocks

trying to provide accompaniment, All those syncopated rhythms, wow.

After a much-needed coffee, David Goodwin, our resident expert on PRS and copyright gave us a quiz. We were given several pieces of music and we voted as to whether they were in copyright or not. It was a very entertaining time trying to get our heads around what was covered and not. It is interesting the difference it makes when a composer's work is arranged by someone and the effect it has on the expiry date of copyright. The main message was IF YOUR ARE NOT SURE, CONTACT DAVID GOODWIN FOR HELP.

A buffet meal restored our energy for the evening concert at Gloucester Cathedral where seven local choirs entertained a large audience. Four male voice choirs opened the concert with *Anthem from Chess, Walk Away and Bridge Over Troubled Waters*. The guys were on staging and stayed where they were, the ladies came and went when it was their turn to perform. I was sitting well back in the cathedral and it was hard to see the ladies but we could hear them well enough. There isn't room to mention everyone and what they all sang but I was interested to hear the Wide Valley Singers and the Drybrook Ladies Choir sing *All In The April Evening*. I sing this lovely Roberton piece with three different choirs as a tenor so the only version I hadn't performed was sung by the ladies. It was a lovely evening in a fantastic venue with a finale of *You'll Never Walk Alone* and *Jerusalem* to send us, happily, back to the hotel for our bacon butty supper.

On Sunday morning, I had the privilege of introducing Douglas Coombs for a seminar entitled 'What's The Score'. Douglas is a hero of mine. As a primary school teacher in the seventies and eighties I was supported in my music teaching by Douglas with his programmes 'Time and Tune' and 'Singing Together'. What a fascinating time we had composing a song to celebrate the centenary of the NAC. Douglas had brought a poem that was out of copyright and we went through it line by line creating the tune. There was a great deal of lively discussion about each bit of it. In the end, we had something which Douglas will take away and polish up, adding the harmonies and accompaniment and it will be presented to the NAC to use in 2020. He has generously offered all the money that it might make in sales and PRS to the NAC to use as they think best.

The 90th Annual General Meeting passed

off with no major problem. If you want to know what happened I suggest a visit to the NAC website as I don't intend to take up space here. The AGM was followed by a Members Open Forum which gives those attending conference the opportunity to comment on what has happened and to pose questions to the officers. For those who attend conference it is the last activity and after it they wend their way to the dining room or out of the door to return home. For the officers, there is another meeting to wind up the weekend's activities.

Well that is it for another conference. I hope those who came enjoyed themselves. Why not try it out for yourselves by joining us in Norwich next year?

Crawford

Here is the story that Jonathan related at the end of the session on Trafalgar. I found I had space for it.

Admiral Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy

Nelson: Order the signal, Hardy.

Hardy: Aye, aye, Sir.

Nelson Hold on, that's not what I dictated to the Flags Officer

Hardy: Sorry Sir?

Nelson: (reading aloud) "England expects every person to do his or her duty, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious persuasion or disability". What gobble-de-gook is this?

Hardy: Admiralty policy, I'm afraid Sir. We're an equal opportunities employer now. We had the devil's own job getting 'England' past the censors, lest it be considered racist on a multi-cultural ship.

Nelson: Darn it, Hardy. Hand me my pipe and tobacco.

Hardy: Sorry Sir. All naval vessels have now been designated smoke-free working environments.

Nelson: In that case, break open the rum ration. Let's splice the main-brace to steel the men before battle.

Hardy: I'm afraid that the rum ration has

been abolished Admiral. It's part of the government's policy on binge-drinking.

Nelson: Good heavens Hardy. I suppose we'd better get on with it – full speed ahead.

Hardy: I think you'll find that there's a 4 knot speed limit in this stretch of water, Sir.

Nelson: Damn it man! We are on the eve of the greatest sea battle in naval history. We must advance with all dispatch. Report from the crow's nest please.

Hardy: That won't be possible, Sir. Health and Safety have closed the crow's nest. No harness, and they said that the rope ladders don't meet regulations. They won't let anyone up there until proper scaffolding is erected.

Nelson: Then get me the ship's carpenter without delay.

Hardy: I'm afraid that he's busy working on wheel-chair access to the foredeck, Sir

Nelson: I've never heard such infamy! Run out the cannons and tell the men to stand by to engage the enemy.

Hardy: Actually, the men are a bit worried about shooting at anyone, Admiral.

Nelson: What? This is mutiny!

Hardy: It's not that, Sir. It's just that they're afraid of being charged with murder if they actually kill anyone. There's a couple of personal-injury lawyers on board, watching everyone like hawks.

Nelson: Ridiculous. You'll be telling me that there's trouble with rum, sodomy and the lash next.

Hardy: Well, as I explained, rum is not allowed on board, and there's a ban on corporal punishment.

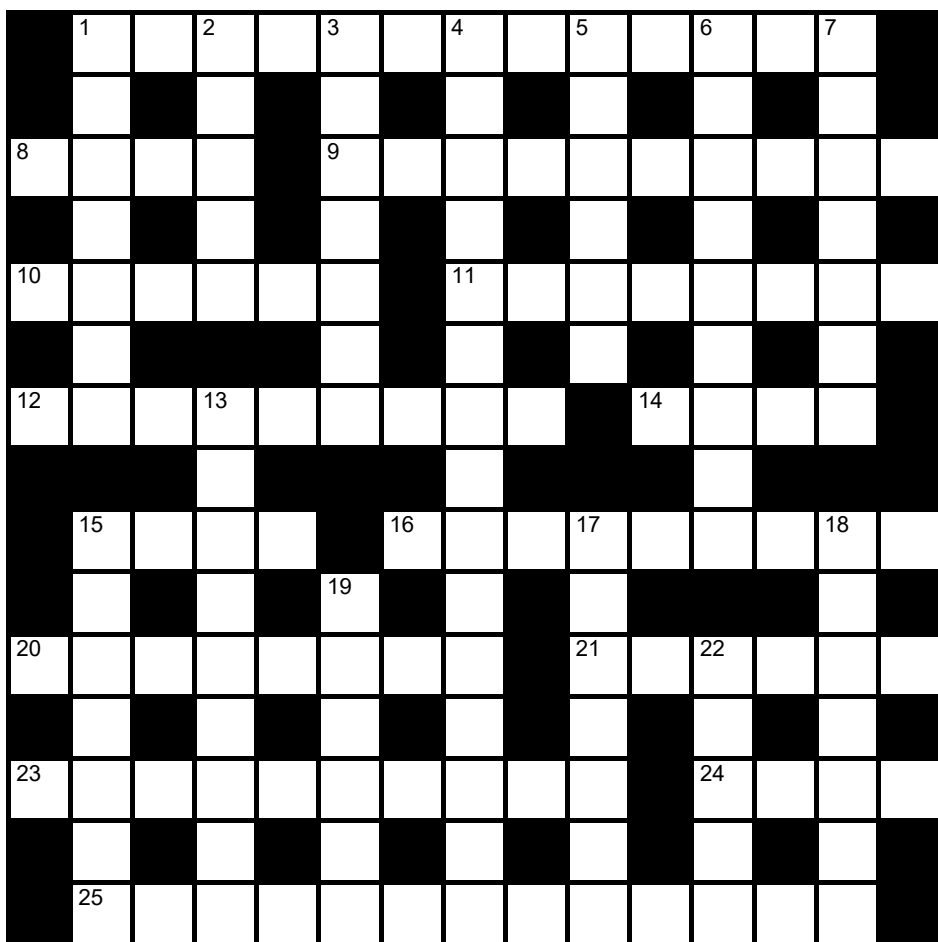
Nelson: What about sodomy?

Hardy: I believe that is now legal Sir.

Nelson: In that case - - - - kiss me, Hardy."



PUZZLE PAGES



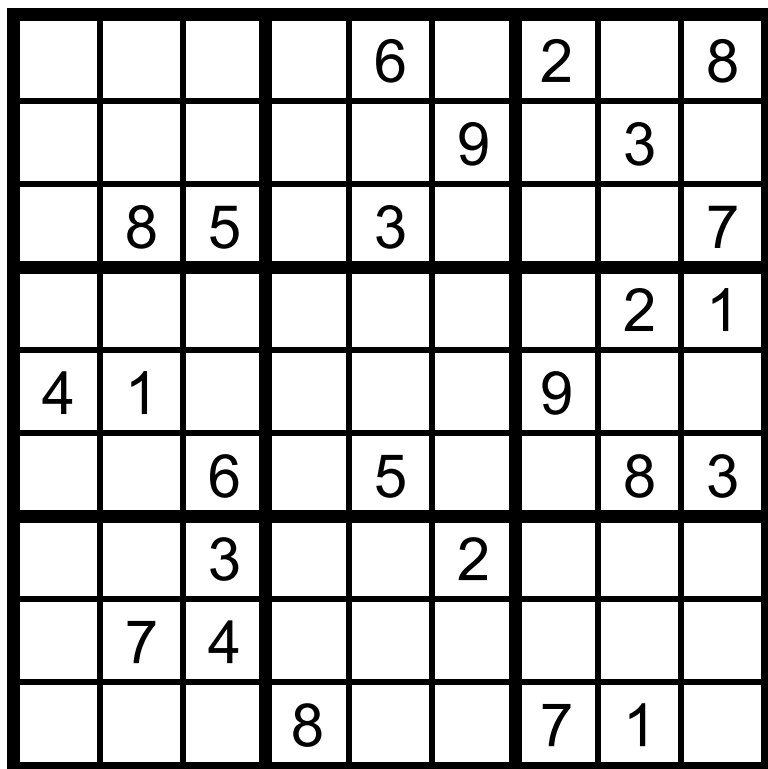
Across

- 1 Creating magic at fun run perhaps (13)
- 8 A thousand, now that I understand (4)
- 9 Reports show that the dilapidated tent steams (10)
- 10 Raging fire breaks out before the church (6)
- 11 Tied up and gone (8)
- 12 Fire set in tiny ruins (9)
- 14 Taxis for the horrible scab (4)
- 15 Possible post pinnacles (4)
- 16 Fellow tutor (9)
- 20 The tumble-down cart rots now replaced (8)
- 21 Traditional native (6)
- 23 Not stingy as if generating something pleasing (10)
- 24 Left help when the table was set (4)
- 25 Groups for a Rossini tango maybe (13)

Down

- 1 Utter casual remark (7)
- 2 Nothing old in the brown ewer (5)
- 3 Quick ties (7)
- 4 The appearance of the architect's car is redesigned (15)
- 5 Impatient tense (6)
- 6 Insane cries came for frozen desserts (9)
- 7 Builds up the crowd (7)
- 13 Enceinte (9)
- 15 Ragged hubbub is a twister (7)
- 17 The hopeless fighter came up with the goods (7)
- 18 Begin in one direction (7)
- 19 Sounds like it's not the coughing (6)
- 22 Welcome, there's nothing after the pit (5)

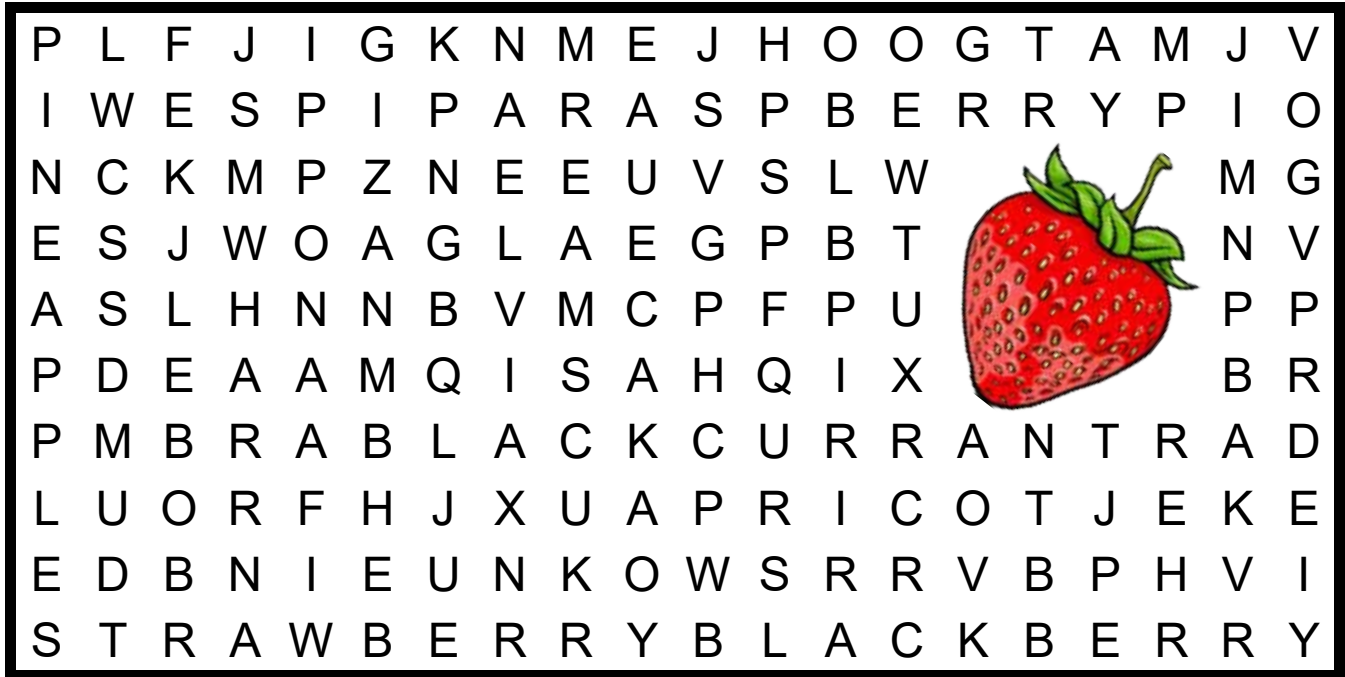
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SOLUTIONS ON PAGE 27

FRUITY WORD SEARCH



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SOLUTION
ON PAGE 26

Sing in your local venue today: next week perform in the Royal Albert Hall

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Come and sing for a day with **The Really Big Chorus** at London’s Royal Albert Hall and at venues all over the world.

Join us for **Gloria!** and/or **Messiah** at the RAH (9 July/12 November), a **Summer School** at Warwick University (8–13 August), a **trip to sing in Riga Cathedral** (5–8 October) and a **Choral Cruise on Portugal’s ‘River of Gold’** (14–21 March 2018)

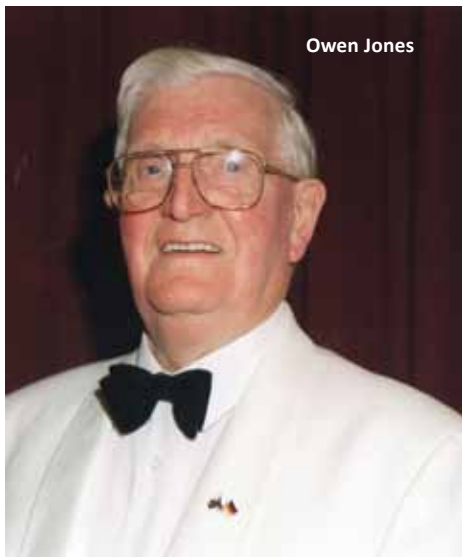


THE REALLY
BIG
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Pembroke & District Male Voice Choir Wales South

Celebrating sixty-five years of serving the community this year with its proud boast that it has never charged for its services to make money for charities, the Pembroke & District Male Voice Choir formally known as the Pembroke Boro Choir was formed in 1952.



One founder member, Owen Jones, still resides in Pembroke Dock, aged 94, and the founder Conductor was W P (Bill) Lewis MBE former principal of W P Lewis & Son, Vauxhall dealers for Pembrokeshire who sadly passed away in 1999 after 47 years in the post.

His daughter, Christine, became deputy accompanist, then accompanist and finally conductor, recently celebrating fifty years of dedicated service with the choir. Her husband Phil Lloyd has been a mem-

ber of the choir for 52 years, of which he has been secretary for 32 years and choir compère for 42 years. Their daughter Jenny Griffiths has been deputy accompanist and progressed to accompanist when her mother became conductor. She has given thirty-five years of service, and her brother, Steve Lloyd, now Managing Director of W P Lewis & Son has been a member of the bottom bass section for eighteen years.

The photograph shows the founder conductor, the late W P (Bill) Lewis and his family receiving certificates of service, and it would be interesting to know whether this family is unique in choir circles.

Phil Lloyd

Banchory Singers Scotland East

'Come and Sing' sessions, where a group of singers get together for a day-long session to rehearse and perform a specific piece or set, are increasingly popular. They can attract new choir members, whilst offering experienced singers the chance to develop their repertoire. Banchory Singers, under our imaginative Music Director, Dr Tara Leiper, has run several of these events, and the most recent, 'Come and sing Shakespeare', introduced singers to a range of work from madrigals to Vaughan Williams.

The authors don't claim to be 'veterans' of the 'Come and Sing', but having now attended several, are offering a few tips to help you get the most from these enjoyable events:-

Go as prepared as you can be – even if it's just a bit of preparation. Try to beg, borrow or steal the score and listen to the work

before you go. YouTube is a good source of videos, including the scores of some well-known pieces. If you have time, check out Choraline www.choraline.com which has hundreds of scores and CDs that you can buy online.

If you haven't had time to prepare – be prepared to mime. At least listen and you will know more next time you sing the piece. Miming can also give your voice a rest – although it's amazing what conductors notice.

Sit in a place where you can hear your section well, especially if you don't know the work. Keep a look out for folk who DO know the work and discreetly 'lug in'.

Don't forget your good singing habits. You might become so caught up in the spirit of the music (hopefully you will) that you forget the lifetime habits which protect your voice and produce the best sound. Remember abdominal support and breathing, which contribute to an amazing sound and keep your voice healthy.

Remember to look at the conductor even if it's just for entries and being taken off notes. It's tempting to go nose down in the score and forget everything else. Beware, especially of those moments when the whole choir goes nose down in the score – don't lose what the conductor is trying to do. Play the game and follow the conductor's instructions even if they are different from what you usually do.

Make an effort to socialise with others around you. If they are from another choir you will find out useful information, and if they are 'between choirs' you can snap them up for yours. Have a hearty breakfast and bring plenty of provisions, with something to drink. Not a hip flask – unless it's for the party afterwards...

Enjoy the challenge. You are sure to expend loads of energy but will reap the benefits of doing so. And – enjoy the feeling of elation at trying to replicate someone's genius, which is a real privilege. You should have found it physically demanding but you will sleep well and hear music in your head as you fall asleep.

Armed with these handy hints we hope any future sessions that you attend will go with a swing. If you have never organised one, get your own choir to host a 'Come and Sing' too.

Fiona Simmons, Fran Musselwhite & Mary Brown



BPIf
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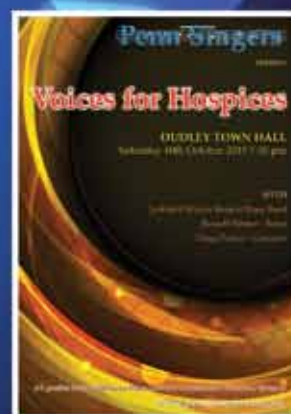
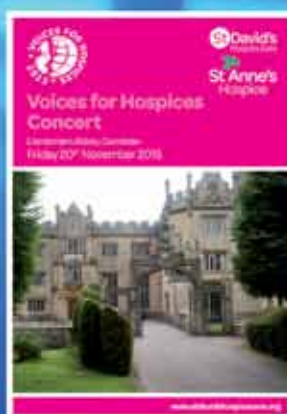
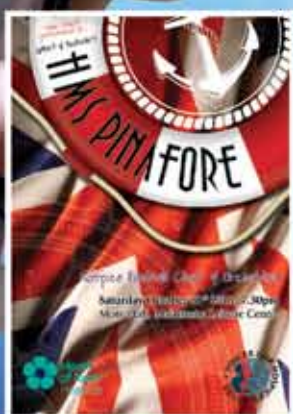


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Newchurch Male Voice Choir Southern Counties

Often referred to as 'The Diamond Isle' or 'The Garden Isle', the Isle of Wight lies just off the central south coast of England and is a deservedly popular tourist destination. In addition to being famous for its yachting heritage, perhaps most notably 'Cowes Week', and its colourful history (King Charles I was imprisoned at Carisbrooke Castle; Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made Osborne House their home away from London) the Island also boasts a very lively arts and music scene: it has many strong literary associations, including Dickens, Keats, Priestley, Swinburne, and Tennyson, and it has played host to major music events such as the Isle of Wight Music Festival and Bestival. Moreover, it is home to Newchurch Male Voice Choir.

Newchurch MVC began as a turn at the long-established Newchurch Village Concert in 1967 and was at first known as The Hart's Ash Male Voice Choir. Its members, some of whom were still singing with the choir in the 21st century, were dressed in white smocks, red handkerchiefs and string gaiters. The choir cut its first vinyl disc, 'Village Voices', with Solent Records featuring *All Through The Night* as one of the tracks. Fifty years on, and although members now sport badged blazers and ties, the choir still has *All Through The Night* in its repertoire which ranges from traditional male voice pieces to modern numbers such as *New York, New York*, *Singin' In The Rain*, *What A Wonderful World* and *You Are So Beautiful / The Wind Beneath My Wings*.

During its fifty years, the choir has ranged in strength from around a dozen men to its present count of 36 active members. Tens of thousands of pounds have been raised



Newchurch Male Voice Choir - Then

by the choir for numerous local charities through its concerts, the number of which it endeavours to limit to one per month, although it does not always achieve this restriction. It has enjoyed success in the Isle of Wight Musical Competition Festival, gaining a First Class (Commended) Certificate and winning 'The Association Cup'.

In the summer of 2001 Roy Bevan, who has been a member of the choir since 1982, agreed to act as the choir's 'caretaker' conductor until a 'proper' MD could be found. He is still 'caretaking'! The choir is fortunate to have the very talented Cate Clark as its accompanist. In recent years, the choir has ventured off the Island to enjoy trips to Cornwall, Yorkshire and Wales as well as to the Home Counties, and it has hosted visits from choirs not only from those areas but from as far afield as South Australia. The choir has enjoyed the privilege of singing in such venues as Bath Abbey, Christchurch Priory, The Eden Project and Winchester Cathedral; it sang with Aled Jones at the Isle of Arts Festival; and one of the most memorable occasions was performing on the main stage of

the 2009 Bestival, which was attended by some 39,000 people, although not all were awake on the Saturday morning!

In its fiftieth year Newchurch MVC is visiting Cornwall for five days which will include a concert with Newquay MVC. On the Island, it will be joining with The Sussex Gruffs MVC and later the Mendip MVC, and it will be presenting a Golden Jubilee concert on Wednesday 16 August 2017 at the Medina Theatre, Newport.

Roy Bevan

Corby Male Voice Choir Anglia

On 2 March 2017, The Corby Male Voice Choir was saddened to learn that Tom Love, 1st Tenor and one of the two remaining founder members of the choir, had decided to retire.

Tom was for many years the choir's representative on the NAC and took an active part in the association's affairs. He



Newchurch Male Voice Choir - Now

was the choir's Honorary Secretary from 1999 until 2006 and throughout his long membership, took a lively interest in all the choir's activities.



However, in recent years Tom has experienced a lot of ill health; this has taken its toll and has meant that his attendance at rehearsals has been much less frequent than both he and the choir would have wished. Sadly, Tom's wife, Carol, passed away earlier this year after a relatively short illness.

The choir and particularly those choir member's who remember Tom in his earlier days, thank him for all he has done for us over the years and bid him Godspeed in his retirement.

David Watson

LOW FELL SINGERS

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

The Low Fell Singers, based in Low Fell, Gateshead wish to invite applications for the post of musical director to succeed our Musical Director, Jean Stevenson. Jean who was a member of the choir for 61 years retired from post in Jan 2017. We currently have Philip Dixon, seconded from a local choir, and Geraldine Brennan, one of our members, who are acting as Musical Directors on a temporary basis.

We have been invited to sing again at the Royal Albert Hall in Oct 2018 as part of the Festival of Brass & Choirs' fundraising venture.

The ladies choir was formed in 1941 and currently has 44 members. We rehearse each Monday evening at 7.15pm in The Hardman Centre, Dryden Road, Low Fell. We are supported by two excellent pianists and an enthusiastic committee.

Throughout the year the choir is invited to sing at a variety of local venues, The Sage, schools, churches, museums and galleries as well as singing at weddings and funerals. We also organise exchanges with other choirs for weekend concerts, which have taken us to London R A H, Harrogate, Chester and Lincoln.

To apply, please send a covering letter and C V via email to:-

Miss G Straughan
Choir Secretary
gillstraughan@hotmail.co.uk

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A View From The Podium

The Really Big Chorus Corporate Member

It was that great 16th-century composer William Byrd who famously said: 'Since singing is so good a thing, I wish all men would learn to sing', encouraging us all by writing such wonderful music. It should hardly need to be spelled out that this life-enhancing facility applies equally to women and, in my experience, more people seem to be singing than ever – a great situation for the wonderful world of choral music. The doom-mongers have been trying to tell us for years that choral singing is endangered, and it is so good to be able to refute that argument totally, as choirs of all shapes and sizes seem to be on the increase.

The Really Big Chorus is an outstanding case in point and it's my privilege indeed to have been Principal Conductor now for several years, stepping into the somewhat voluminous shoes of my predecessor, the late, great Sir David Willcocks. This remarkable organisation recently celebrated 40 remarkable years, in which countless thousands of like-minded enthusiasts have flooded all areas of London's Royal Albert Hall to give of their best in some of the most exciting performances in which it has ever been my good fortune to take part. If you have never been to one of these massive gatherings it must be hard for you to imagine the impact of 3,500 voices raising the roof in Handel's *Messiah*, or a mere 2,000 enjoying the delights of requiems by Mozart, Brahms, Verdi, Fauré and Rutter, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, *Glorias* by Vivaldi, Rutter and Karl Jenkins (the last being commissioned by and written for The Really Big Chorus) and – always one of the most popular – Jenkins's *The Armed Man*.

And that's not all: with members of The Really Big Chorus we travel to many exotic parts of the world. Recent trips have included places as far away as Beijing, Cape Town, St Petersburg, Hong Kong, New York and many parts of Europe. We also enjoy – and believe me, that is the right word – regular singing cruises: the

Baltic, the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, along with river cruises on the Nile, the Rhône, the Danube, the Yangtze and – coming up in 2018 – the Douro. There's nothing quite as exhilarating as singing one's way down one of the great rivers of the world, enjoying great music, wonderful scenery and the pleasure of the company of fellow devotees.

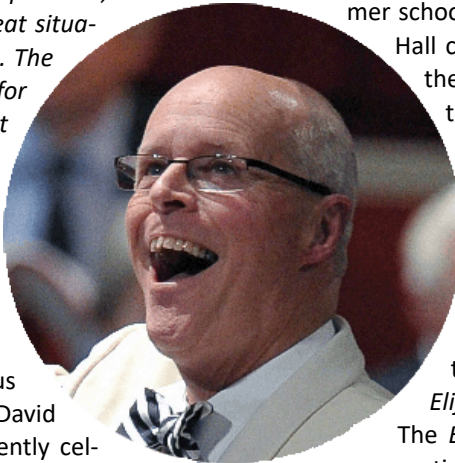
One of the more recent innovations has been our annual summer school, now in its fourth year. Although the Albert Hall concerts involve very little or – in the case of the annual *Messiah from Scratch** – no rehearsal, the summer school gives us a chance to work solidly on a great work for a few days of intensive rehearsal and then to perform in such glorious venues as Coventry Cathedral and Birmingham Town Hall.

In summer school, we have already worked on and performed Durufle's *Requiem*, Rutter's *Gloria*, Brahms's *Requiem*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and – in 2017 – *The Dream of Gerontius*. The *Elijah* performance in Birmingham Town Hall was particularly special – certainly for me, standing exactly where Mendelssohn stood 170 years previously to conduct the first performance of that much-loved work.

There are two things which worry potential singers who fancy the idea of joining a choir on a regular basis: one is the fear of audition – understandable, though it should in no way put people off – and the other is being able to commit to regular weekly rehearsals given so many other demands on our time. With The Really Big Chorus, there are no such constraints or concerns. Anybody can sing – without any form of audition – and there are no advance rehearsals prior to the singing days, the away weekends or the cruises. Of course, a little private preparation is a huge advantage, not only to the individual singer but also out of fairness to everyone else, and this increases enormously one's own enjoyment of the singing. There are also readily available 'ChoraLine' learning CDs which have proved invaluable for many years as a guide to personal preparation. As always, however, it is the joy of sitting in one place with others and giving forth in full heart and voice (whether 120 on a ship, 200–300 on an away weekend or a cast of thousands in the Royal Albert Hall) which is the icing on the cake.

For me and for my colleagues it is a joy and a challenge in equal measure to try and coax the best possible singing in the shortest amount of time from the available people. Since I began conducting The Really Big Chorus many years ago, life has never been quite the same. Every event is unbelievably special and there's nothing quite like it. Come and join us and put the sheer joy of choral singing where it truly belongs – back at the centre of your life: it's one of those rare privileges and pleasures which remains constant in an ever-changing world.

Brian Kay
Principal Conductor



The Really Big Chorus at The Royal Albert Hall

Sing Barbershop

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The British Association of Barbershop Singers (BABS), established over 40 years ago, is a registered charity and a specialist umbrella organisation supporting barbershop singing in the UK. BABS is the largest male barbershop organisation outside North America and has 60 registered choruses (choirs) and nearly 100 registered barbershop quartets.

As a charity, BABS provides educational grants totalling many thousands of pounds each year, to anyone, male or female, to develop an interest in harmony singing and performance. Also it provides financial support and resources to its member clubs for the running of Learn to Sing courses. Over 300 of these free courses have been run so far, each one designed to encourage individuals to get involved with singing as part of their leisure activities.

BABS also runs a 3-day residential college, plus training events and courses for musical directors, music teams, clubs, quartets and individuals. In addition, it has its own training programme for competition judges, many of whom are invited to adjudicate at non-barbershop festivals.

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SING BARBERSHOP

It's the Harmony that makes the difference

Stirling Male Voice Choir Scotland East

To the best of my knowledge this is the first time our choir, now in the 30th year of its existence, has contributed to News & Views. Perhaps this is as the result of a new feeling of optimism prevailing in the choir following the recent appointment of our Musical Director, Michael Nolan. We have recruited several new members (much needed additional basses), who have skills in addition to their choral singing. This has enabled us to develop our website

www.spanglefish.com

now nearing completion. To facilitate this, we had a recent photoshoot with a professional photographer, not just for the website but also for future publicity purposes. We acquired new Concert Folders and replaced some items of our concert uniform.

In addition to this we've actually managed to do some singing! We had an exceptionally busy programme up to Christmas. We are now in preparation for the Lanark Festival of Male Voice Choirs, now in its 63rd year at the end of March, and our own Annual Concert on 21 April. There is even talk of recording a CD at the end of our season.

If there's a lesson to be taken from our experiences it's that best results, whether it's recruitment or concert engagements, nothing works as well as face to face personal contact. There is help out there if you go looking for it.

David Yorke
Chairman

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir Scotland West

Sponsored by Co-op Funeralcare

The year started well for us, as we undertook our first concert of the year in the magnificent setting that is St Andrew's Metropolitan Cathedral, Glasgow. This year marks the cathedral's bicentenary. The building and its beautiful Italian water garden are worth a visit, if you get the chance. Our next event was a concert in Cambuslang Parish Church and was a celebration of the life of a great friend and former associate member of the choir, Neil MacNaughton. Neil's wife, Sheila and Ruth Watt, both first altos with the choir, organised the event and raised £3000 for the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice and the Beatson Cancer Centre in Glasgow. The choir was delighted to be able to support this concert and everyone enjoyed singing in the great acoustic of the church and in memory of such a good friend.



Photograph by courtesy of Alan Paterson Photography

Our next event was the opportunity for the choir to let its collective hair down (well, for those of us who have hair, that is). All those attending our Burns' Supper had a great evening and many people said it was the best such event they had experienced. On a personal note, it was my first Burns' Supper and I had the unenviable task of offering a response to Chris Johnson's Toast to the Lassies. He was a very hard act to follow, as one hilarious story followed another. However, my very supportive Phoenix family tell me I acquitted myself well. The whole night was a great success – the food, the tributes to the Bard, the venue and the organisation were all excellent. Extra special thanks to John Blue and Stewart Moir for their efforts on behalf of the choir.

Last Saturday, saw us travelling to Tillycoultry (imagine you are Victor Meldrew and say Tilly-coo-tree) near Stirling to the beautiful Devonvale Hall. The hall first opened in 1940 and was a gift to the workers of the Devonvale factory by its owner, Samuel Jones. The factory produced paper of all sorts, including sweet-wrapping paper and their logo was the Camberwell Beauty, once plentiful in the area, though this is no longer the case - except in the hall, where many images of the butterfly are used to good decorative effect.

The hall is looked after by a dedicated band of volunteers and this concert was in aid of new equipment. Our generous sponsors, Co-op Funeralcare, provided a range of raffle prizes to add to the fun, and the funds, on the night. As we had had a break in performances since early February, the choir was delighted to be back in action and premiered two new songs – a spirited version of Sir Hugh Robertson's *Westering Home* and an interesting rendition of Eric Idle's *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*. We hope to get the words right next time! It was a great concert with a warm and receptive audience.

And so, to the last couple of months of the season. Between early May and mid-June,

we will be performing in nine concerts. The hearts of the ladies (and some of the gents) of the choir are a-flutter as we will be taking part in Aled Jones's concert in Paisley Abbey at the beginning of May – Aled, as I like to call him, will be on tour throughout Britain and had invited local choirs to apply to sing with him. Apparently, the organisers were inundated with submissions. We were lucky enough to be selected and are agog with anticipation.

Next on the agenda will be our spring concert in Glasgow Royal Concert Hall in the middle of May. The concert is in aid of Legion Scotland and Poppyscotland and features our very special guest, Isla St Clair. Known to millions for her numerous television appearances including *The Royal Variety Show*, *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, and most notably as co-host with Larry Grayson on the BBC's long running *The Generation Game*, Isla was born in Scotland and is one of Britain's foremost traditional singers. Isla has many connections with military charities and is a member of the Commando Veterans' Association and is an active supporter of the Not Forgotten Association, a forces charity for veterans. She has also been made an honorary member of the Burma Star Association. We are looking forward to the concert and to the involvement of our other guests the Salvation Army West of Scotland Youth Band, The Mackintosh Choir and a Solo Piper & Dancers. It will be a night to remember.

At the end of May, we are off on tour to Oban and surrounding areas where we will be performing five separate concerts, including a welcome return to Iona Abbey. We end our choir year with a series of concerts in mid-June, featuring our friends of the Oban Gaelic Choir. I hope I can survive all that and will tell you all about it in my next report.

Anne Kay
Publicity Officer

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The Phoenix Singers Lincolnshire

The View from Pew 3

I've been with the Phoenix Singers for over a year now, and I'm no longer the new girl. I'd like to think that I stand at the back of the sopranos because I am tall and it is not that Gloria (our director) wants me to be as far away from her ears as possible. I do hope the readers of this prestigious magazine will enjoy my View from Pew 3 as I share with you some of the highlights, trials and tribulations of my first year.

Our summer programme seemed so daunting in January, but with practice, perseverance and Gloria we got there. Some of the pieces, *Seal Lullaby* for one, made little sense at all to begin with (not to mention an abundance of top Fs), but eventually it felt more natural and became one of my favourites. Then the concerts began and we graced many a church, village hall, WI meeting and our own concerts, too including the final 'Supper and Song', with our performances. I began to realise that the quality of a venue was no indicator of how large or appreciative an audience is. The same goes for the acoustics, stage, lighting, or even location and parking. It's all to do with the refreshments. I found I was able to sing so much better with the prospect of a large slice of Victoria Sponge and hot cup of tea to look forward to. I was not alone, the frisson of excitement upon arriving at a venue and catching a glimpse of a groaning table of victuals was palpable. We are always very lucky with our hosts - people who evidently know the dangers of that notorious post-performance parch - as, without exception, we are well fed and watered. I have to wonder: is it luck or just excellent planning? Gloria expects us to sing without music - a challenge for a programme that lasts an hour, but we do manage. Of course, it does help that our director mouths the words to us and gives us lots of clues, I've become quite an accomplished lip-reader.

For these concerts, we don our green waterfall tops over an all-black ensemble - even sporting matching jewellery. I confess that I am not a great fan of the uniform, but I concede it is eye-catching and a style to suit a range of shapes and sizes. Even so I took it upon myself to update our uniform - how hard can it be? I made it my mission to scour catalogues, the internet, department stores and I even enlisted the help of a boutique in town. I collected samples and took them along to choir

practice, only to have my efforts picked over and criticized - they were too short, too long, too tight, too plain, too orange, too expensive, etc and I couldn't get upset about it because they were right. I am sure that anyone who has ever tried to organize a uniform will know exactly what I am talking about. Needless to say, my quest for a new uniform is on the back burner for the time being.

Our summer season was rounded off with the traditional Supper and Song which sounded like such a treat. Little did I realise what was in store. We were all to choose an item from a list to make and bring along (I was lemon drizzle cake for 30). The day arrived and Mel, our Chairman, was already there and had been for most of the day, setting up the hall with tables, chairs, tablecloths, flowers, long tables for the food not forgetting the potatoes in the oven and soup bubbling away. We sang our programme and the audience of mostly friends and family where most enthusiastic and approving, so far so good. I sat down at the table with my friends waiting to be served when I received a gentle nudge towards the kitchen, the choir members had to be waitresses. Not only that, but the clearing and washing up too, that's the problem with being the new girl - not knowing what to expect - I'll know to bring my rubber gloves next year. It was a great night with lots of giggles; a great fund raiser too. With the end of the season came an unexpected sadness at saying goodbye to songs I had grown to love; I confess that I was pleased to see the back of *The Queen Medley* - though don't tell Gloria.

Soon Christmas was upon us; the concerts came thick and fast as we jettisoned our green uniform for a rather more festive red satin shirt with black skirt combo. This

year we had the additional excitement of new folders with our logo on them (we needed them because we were allowed to have the music for the Christmas Cantata, phew). Amanda, our librarian turned into a folder tyrant, we practically had to sign them in and out. To round off our year we had a Christmas meal at Kenwick Golf Club, the usual turkey, complete with all the trimmings, pudding and maybe a little too much wine for me. I'm a great fan of quizzes so I volunteered to organize that. Who would've thought that such a little thing would take up so much time to compile, check and copy? If I've learnt anything this year, it's that I'm very talented at underestimating mammoth tasks - don't even talk to me about the sound system or pen logistics on the night. The music round may have been a bit too difficult (surely everyone knows the year in which 'Lonely Pup in the Christmas Shop' was released?), and maybe it was a bit of a stretch to remember the month when Tim Peake returned from space, but it must have gone down well because I've been asked to do it next year, note to self, get organized early.

Now we're full steam ahead with the new Summer programme, far too many top Gs, it all seem a little daunting...

Lesley Pringle
Soprano on Pew 3

Worcester Male Voice Choir Midlands South West

The theme Worcester Male Voice Choir adopted for Spring was one of celebration. Concerts to celebrate the patron saints of England and Wales, and an annual lunch to celebrate the awards to choristers for long and distinguished service. However, it all started with us entertaining at a spe-



cial celebration evening dinner arranged by the internationally acclaimed Morgan Motor Company and held in the Abbey Hotel, Malvern. Then the following day the choir made the trip to Cradley Church, not in Wales but on the way from Worcester to the west, where we have led the St David's Day celebrations on many occasions. Joined again by a guest harpist it proved to be an enthralling concert. Much of our singing was in Welsh or had a Welsh connection and included Ar Hyd y Nos, Calon Lan, Cwm Rhondda, Gwahoddiad and Sunset Poem. A smaller group of choristers also gave a much appreciated and polished presentation of Mwanwy. The smaller group had been under the tutelage of Assistant Conductor Haydn Thomas.

Another successful Saturday morning recruitment campaign was held in the main Worcester shopping complex in March; we can certainly recommend this approach. The challenge then is to properly support the new recruits and nurture them through the period of learning everything in the current repertoire over the next few years. We now have 70 choristers which means we can always get a good 50 plus for concerts. We also trying to obtain sponsorship to help our aims and objectives and we celebrated in March a new mutually beneficial sponsorship agreement with a local community transport group Worcester Wheels. On our part, we will benefit from other avenues of publicity, use of transport by choristers as individuals and by the choir for concert journeys at cost price. The other key asset is a new advertising tool that of our name and logo on the Worcester Wheels mini buses which are constantly moving around the city roads

Like many choirs, we hold an Annual Awards Lunch and this time Adrian Hutt our hard-working Membership Secretary organised our best ever event. It was at a new venue for us in Droitwich where 120 choristers and friends together with the Mayor and Mayoress of Worcester gathered to enjoy a wonderful occasion. Various activities took place for all to join in, the aim being to raise funds and getting the right party atmosphere, the choir entertaining with a number of popular pieces, the Tenor 2's with an hilarious version of *My Way* altered to fit the comments often made by our MD of that section and called *Nic's Way*. The theme though was that the Tenors do it *Our Way!* However, pride of place was of course the presentations to celebrate many years of loyal service to the choir. Awards are presented for 5,

10, 15, 20 and 25 years' service and there were 19 awards. It would be inappropriate to list all the names but we must mention Sheila Leatherland our accompanist (and her husband Barry a member of the bass section) who received 15 year awards but the really significant award was to our main man Nicholas Wright, Musical Director, photographed here with the Mayor of Worcester and Alan Simmonds our Chairman. Nic has filled a number of posts in the choir but his leadership as MD over



Nicholas Wright, Musical Director, with the Mayor of Worcester and Alan Simmonds

many of the years has been outstanding. He has undoubtedly been responsible for the choir achieving a much higher standard of performance, a larger and more varied repertoire and a very good reputation. As a result, the choir has performed in many prestigious venues home and abroad with Nic leading from the front in the planning and arrangements for such activity. Not only that, he has done so much more. Keen to continuously promote very successful recruitment activities, helping and advising on press, publicity issues, use of new media techniques, fun practices twice a week and not least of all his excellent summer picnics by the lake. So, it was and it is great to celebrate his wonderful contribution. However, he has also announced in 2016 his well-deserved retirement as MD and is now working two-year notice. Nic will be helping ensure we get somebody who can continue his great work so the final celebration of his contribution is still to come and that will be something special. In the meantime, if you or somebody you know wants to fill his shoes do contact the choir.

The final activity for this quarter was the traditional Celebration Concert for St

George's Day on Sunday afternoon 23 April. It was good to be able to celebrate on the actual day and to welcome as our guests the ladies of the Kidderminster Valentines Choir and Anna Downes an outstanding violinist. The concert started off with Worcester MVC formally singing its version of the *National Anthem* followed by several pieces including two recent additions to our repertoire *The Water Is Wide* and *If We Only Have Love*. Anna then continued with some wonderful violin pieces which

made her an instant favourite with the audience. Next the Valentines who with a fondness of Rutter pieces included *The Beauty Of The Earth* in their first set. This was followed by two joint pieces by the choirs conducted by Kidderminster's MD, Jane Richardson, with *Speed Your Journey* and then the very rousing and energetic *Rhythm Of Life*. Following the interval, we had a similar format but in reverse and the audience were well warmed up for the finale. With Scott Wolfendon on the organ and Sheila Leatherland on the piano the joint choirs - men in white shirts and red ties and the ladies sporting their red jackets - and the audience, raised the roof with the singing of *Land Of Hope And Glory* and *Jerusalem* waving their flags with gusto. Another great concert and the chance to celebrate as the Worcester's ladies group provided an excellent party tea for our visitors. Inevitably there was more singing and then a final goodbye with *Farewell Ladies*. One more concert in May then off to Devon on tour when we will be the guests of Budleigh Salterton Male Voice Choir at their Annual Concert

Terry Dillingham
Public Relations Officer

Orpheus Male Voice Choir Grimsby/Cleethorpes Lincolnshire

On 11 March this year the Orpheus held a very special celebration concert.

The occasion was in honour of two men who, in different ways, have made a significant contribution to the history of our choir which was formed in 1949.

In 1966 the choir performed in the nearby town of Immingham and their guest artist was a teenage pianist named Richard Markham. It was his first public appearance in a career which has seen him become an internationally-renowned concert pianist and today he still plays to audiences all over the world.

He makes sure that he is not forgotten in his home town and has appeared with the Orpheus in many concerts over the years. In that same year of 1966 a young man named Richard Bradley joined the choir and in due course became its Musical Director, a position which he still holds



Richard Markham and Richard Bradley with The Orpheus Male Voice Choir

today. Some of you will know him from his chairmanship of the National Association of Choirs for several years.

It was felt the 50 years of musical connection with the choir by the two Richards should be commemorated in some way and this celebration was the outcome.

The concert was a great success and the audience was treated to a wonderful performance of classical pieces by Richard Markham. A few years ago he had put together some arrangements of Lincolnshire

folk songs which formed part of a concert in Grimsby performed by joint local choirs and two of these were taken up by the Orpheus and have appeared in their concert repertoire ever since. For this celebration, we asked him to accompany us in the two songs, *The Grimsby Fishermen's Song* and *The Lincolnshire Poacher*, and they received a great ovation when they were sung as the climax of the evening.

Bill Threapleton
Chairman

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The St Helens Singers North West

The St Helens Singers is a mixed choir of approximately 25 members who perform regularly in and around St Helens. The group has undergone many transformations over the years and in 2016 celebrated its 90th anniversary.

Back in July 1926, two local men were lamenting the demise of the local Catholic Choral Society when the idea came to them: 'Why not form an Operatic Society?' Thus, they contacted various members of the original Catholic Choral Society arranged a rehearsal venue and date, and awaited the outcome eagerly. At the first meeting eight people turned up; the following week numbers grew to ten, and increased steadily thereafter.

The first production was 'The Lily of Killarney' in 1927. This was such a success that the Society staged another production the following year and continued until the outbreak of the Second World War. Many of the productions were Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, and costumes were all made 'in-house'.

After the war, the Society hit a bad patch and it was only thanks to the donations from members that the Society was able to continue with its productions. 1949 saw the staging of 'HMS Pinafore' at the Pilkington Theatre – this was a great success and the popularity of the Society grew again. In 1964, following the closure of the Pilkington Theatre, the Society moved to the Theatre Royal in the town centre.

Productions continued annually (sometimes two productions a year) until 2011, the last operetta being 'The Gondoliers'. After this production, it was decided that the Society needed a new direction, due to falling attendances at the shows and the ever-increasing cost. We joined forces with other local singing groups to stage joint concerts, including a semi-staged version of 'Trial by Jury'. In 2014 a major recruitment drive was launched and the Society changed its name to 'The St Helens Singers', with the emphasis on singing in four-part harmony.

Our current repertoire does include some Gilbert & Sullivan as a reminder of our roots, but we also include swing, country, African music (guaranteed to get the toes tapping), religious pieces and songs from West End shows; there is something for everyone. 2016 also saw special commemorations of the First World War. Many

of our concerts raise money for charity, particularly those with a local connection.

As part of our 90th birthday celebrations we had a get-together in July 2016 at the home of our Chairman, Magdalen Scott. This was an ideal opportunity for current and former members to meet and reminisce over a glass or two. A number of our members have been singing with us for over 30 years (some for over 50) and it was good to hear their stories from years gone by.

We pride ourselves on being a very welcoming and friendly group. We are always keen to have new members and would welcome enquiries from anyone who may wish to join us. Rehearsals are on Monday evenings from 7.30-9.45 at the Baptist Church in Hall St, St Helens.

We are currently rehearsing for a concert at St Julie's Church Hall, Eccleston, St Helens on Thursday 25 May. Following successful concerts at this venue in the last 2 years, this is becoming an annual fixture.

For further details on this concert, and membership enquiries, please contact our Secretary, Mrs Marie Holden, on 01744612485 or info@sthelensingers.co.uk

Helen Tierney
Publicity Officer

Hawarden Singers Wales North and Cheshire West

In 2016, Hawarden Singers performed concerts with two other NAC member choirs. First, in May, they visited Culcheth near Warrington, Cheshire where they joined with Culcheth Village Choir (North West Group) for a very successful concert. Arrangements have been made for the Culcheth Choir to come over to North Wales to join Hawarden Singers for a concert to be held in May 2017.

In September Hawarden were invited to join the Glenfaba Chorale (Cumbria/IOM Group) to celebrate their 50th anniversary with a concert in St George's Parish Church, Douglas attended by the Governor and other dignitaries of the Island.

The Singers left their hotel for a mini tour of the Island followed by a delicious lunch organised by members of the Glenfaba Chorale before their return to North Wales.

The programme for 2017 includes a performance of Maunder's *Olivet to Calgary* at Saltney Methodist Church during Holy Week, followed in early May by another joint concert with Culcheth Village Choir, this time in Ewloe, Flintshire.

In June, Hawarden Singers will be off to France visiting Auzeville, a village near Toulouse, which is twinned with Broughton and Bretton (Hawarden's neighbouring village). There they will take part in concerts with the local choir, the Chorale d'Auzeville with whom they have forged a lasting friendship with many exchange visits over the past 16 years.

Janet Helsby & Margaret King

Alfreton Male Voice Choir Midlands East

We are sorry to announce that one of our oldest members, Frank Kirk, recently died. We all wish his relatives and friends our sincere sympathy. The funeral was held at St Martins Church, Alfreton, Derbyshire on the twenty second of December 2016. The choir was asked to attend and we therefore made a guard of honour at the entrance for the arrival of Frank at the church. During the performance we sang a couple of Frank's favourite songs, half way through we sang *Bring Him Home* and at the end of the service we sang *Rhythm Of Life*. A retiring collection was made in support of 'The blind and visually impaired'.



Frank Kirk

We had another busy year and managed to gain a reasonable amount to pass on to local charities. Our first concert of the year was in Derby Cathedral on the 16 April. This was organized by the Derbyshire Constabulary Male Voice Choir and included Derwent Brass and the Pye Hill Male Voice Choir plus the Chesterfield Male Voice Choir. The event was compared by the BBC Radio Derby's reporter Andy Pot-

ter. The concert was in aid of the Derby, Leicestershire and Rutland branch of the Air Ambulance and also for Safe and Sound fighting CSE.

Our next concert on the 30 June at Stonebroom Church followed the same procedure as at Alfreton church hall and was much appreciated once again by the audience. As before the proceeds went towards the upkeep of the Church.

Our next concert on the 3 July was the annual visit to Belper River Gardens where we held a Sunday afternoon concert on the bandstand. This concert is always well received and we have become a firm favourite for the local population, who enjoy strolling round the garden or sitting listening to the music and taking in the magnificent scenery. This concert is sponsored by the local council who arrange weekly concerts throughout the summer months.

On 14 July we had a concert at All Saints Church in Ripley. This was in aid of the Ripley Music Festival and all income went to local charities. A very good concert enjoyed by all and well attended. Our next concert was at St Mary's Church in Bulwell, Nottingham. This was organised by one of our accompanists Michael who played several very entertaining pieces on the church organ and accompanied the choir for our usual songs.



Our annual concert at the Grange Academy in Alfreton followed on the 15 October. All profits went to a NHS division in Manchester catering for specialized care. Our guests for this occasion were Ben Swift, a young man who is an expert on the accordion and really entertained at the highest standard, and the Treble-Clef Ladies who introduced a different dimension to the singing and were extremely good. Our next concert was at Swanwick Baptist Church. This was a very enjoyable concert for both the audience and the choir. Our guests were the Torkard Ensemble, a group of ladies with a fabulous range of music from pop to classical and were very enthusiastically received by all.

We then had a bit of a break before we did our next concert. This was a Christmas concert mainly of carols, which was held at the Palmer Memorial Club in Alfreton

which is where the choir practise throughout the year. A very enjoyable evening and a little something back to the club who very generously allow us to practice throughout the year free of charge. Then an evening visit to South Wingfield Social Club for an entertainment of Christmas Songs and Carols. We finally ended our year with a couple of sing-alongs the first in Tesco, Alfreton and the second in the Co-op, Ripley. These are annual visits to entertain the Christmas shoppers and to give ourselves some publicity by distributing leaflets and of course talking to local people.

Add a few funerals, during which it seems to have become accepted locally to have a Male Voice Choir singing during the service. We look forward to an equally busy year in 2017 during which we shall start preparation for our return to the Albert Hall in 2018. Any further details please either email or phone 01773 829248

1943les@gmail.com

Les Dorey

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If they are in your group give them a call and say hello.

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Yorks W Mixed voices 75 choristers
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William Jones 1 Glebe Place, Leeds LS5 3HW
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Mrs Susan Airston 16 Haddon Croft, Halesowen B63 1JQ
0121 602 0389 sueairston@blueyonder.co.uk

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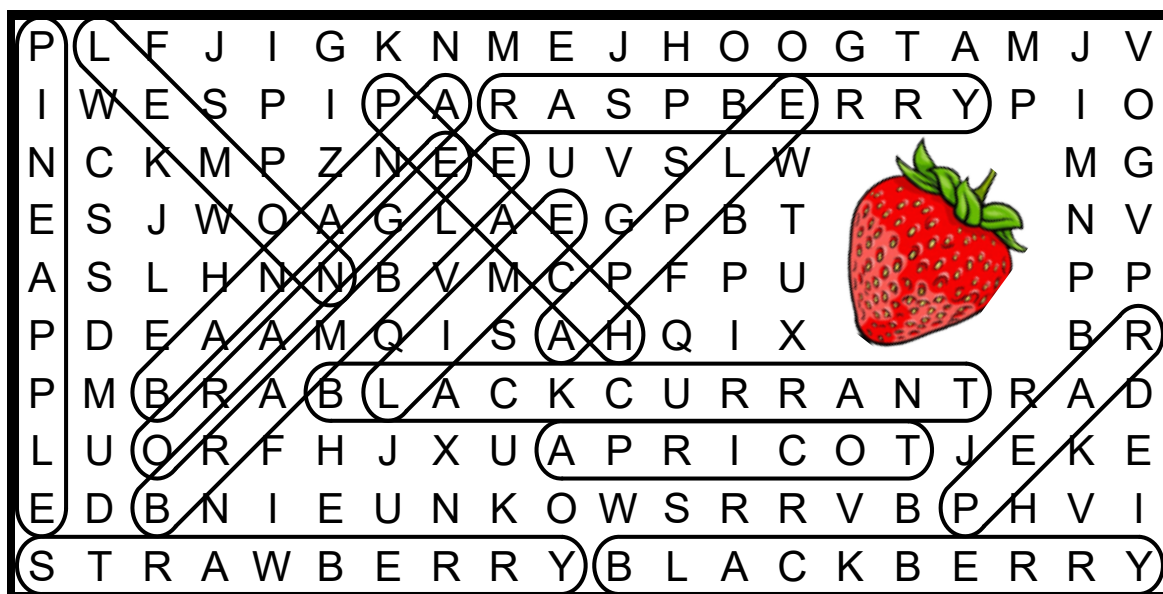
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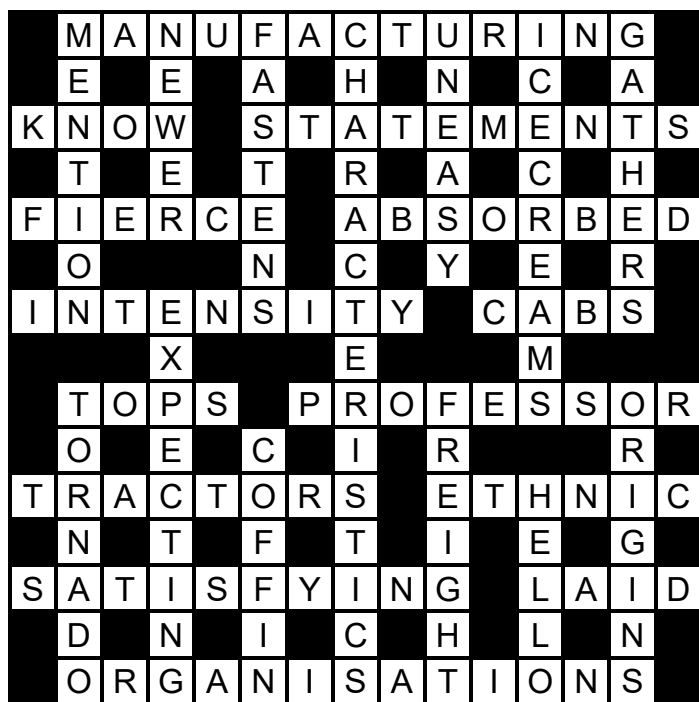
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