

January 2012

Scarborough Workshop



The Choir's annual workshop was held, for the fifth successive year, at the Red Lea Hotel in Scarborough. This was Alan's first workshop with the Choir and, along with Anne, he worked hard to make sure we got a flying start on the new music. 'Angels', 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' and 'I Will' were well rehearsed by the time we departed on Sunday afternoon. Of course, the weekend is not all about rehearsal. The vast majority of the Choir come to Scarborough and it's an opportunity to enjoy some hard socialising as well. Members made visits to various bars and cafes and we held our usual 'sing-a-thon' in the Highlander on Saturday evening.

We broke our return trip on Sunday afternoon with an informal concert at the Masonic Retirement Home in Fulford, York. Geoffrey Richardson, a resident of New Mill for an incredible 92 years, wove a fascinating personal biography illustrating how he was connected to the Choir through our joint relationships with former Choir President Edgar Dickinson and his grandfather's founding of local butchers business Atkinson's, now run by our former Chairman John Mallinson. Later, a few members were privileged to hear Geoffrey's account of his 'sale', as a two year old, by his grandfather to a fellow drinker in a public house in Holmfirth. Fortunately, his irate Mother insisted on his re-purchase and his somewhat chastened grandfather had to return to the pub and rescind the deal!

First concert of 2012



The Choir started their 2012 Concert season in Thornhill as guests of the Parish Church. The venue was a first for us. The tower of this Grade 1 listed building dates from the 15th century and there has been a church on the site since Anglo-Saxon times. The tombs of early members of the influential Saville family surrounded us as we prepared for the concert. Our programme included the first performance by the Choir of Robbie Williams' Angels, chosen to coincide with the Angels display in the church. Unfortunately, the display had been postponed until May so we were a little premature although the Vicar, Sue Clarke, appreciated the song. We shared the stage with the Wakefield Youth Choir who produced the highlight of the night with their performance of the Elton John/Bernie Taupin classic, Your Song. This young choir were a delight, entertaining the audience with a lively programme which even included beatboxing!

Shelley Village Hall - April

The Choir performed at Shelley Village Hall for, I think, the first time. I have to confess that I wasn't at this concert so I have to rely on others for this report. Our two soloists were Alison Dempster, playing flute and piccolo and our very own Baritone virtuoso John Ibbotson who

sang a selection of Flanders and Swann numbers. I'm informed by John aka 'The Great Ibbo', that it was a resounding success but this concert was his first venture into solo public performance so 'he would say that, wouldn't he'. Perhaps it's best to quote this assessment of the evening from Leanne Childs, the concert organiser...

"I would like to thank you and all the choir for a wonderful, entertaining performance on Saturday evening. Everyone had an excellent and uplifting evening and I have received a lot of lovely comments about the performance."

Mirfield Parish Church - May

Mirfield Parish Church is huge but the acoustics are excellent. We enjoyed ourselves, as always, singing a varied repertoire to an appreciative audience. Afterwards we migrated to the Navigation and watched Chelsea thrash Bayern Munich 0-0. I think our concert was more entertaining.

Helen's Wedding and Birthday Concert - June

A double header in June saw the Choir sing at Pete's daughters wedding followed by a Birthday concert in New Mill Church. Whilst Helen could hardly stop smiling, Matthew looked overwhelmed by emotion.



Must have been our singing which effected him! Weddings are always fun events and provide plenty of humourous anecdotes. Personally, I enjoyed singing from the organist's pit and making the acquaintance of the pocket dynamo playing the said instrument. Characters are never boring and she had plenty of character. A piece of dodgy parking by an unnamed Choir wife kept Barry in a driveway and away from his job of piano porter. Thanks Kate.

The evening was a celebration of the first 21 years of the Choir's 'life' and the last concert where we would have Anne as our accompanist. Anne chose the concert repertoire so the evening was her personal 'Desert Island Discs' selection from the last ten years. Various Choir soloists performed, none more so, perhaps, than John Ibbotson. To try and emulate Flanders and Swann is a daunting undertaking but to try and pull off [Armstrong and Miller's parody](#) was heroic but a step too far for some...

Anne's Departure and Emma's Arrival! - June

A cracking evening of entertainment from a Galaxy of Choir Superstars! We said 'Good Bye' to Anne in traditional New Mill style with an evening of entertainment provided entirely by Choir members. This was also an opportunity to meet Emma who will be taking over the keyboard from Anne after the summer break. There's always some emotional moments on an event like this and Anne's farewell speech was one such but it was an evening of excellent performances by all who contributed.





St Paul's, Huddersfield - October

After a gap of several years the Choir returned to perform at St Paul's, the popular concert hall now owned by Huddersfield University. We were guests of the Royal British Legion and shared the stage with the excellent Hepworth Band. This concert gave the Choir the opportunity to air some of the repertoire that we will sing in the Town Hall in two weeks time, in particular the surprisingly tricky 'Wherever You Are', made famous by Gareth Malone and the Military Wives Choir. Although comparatively simple, it has very similar lyrical phrases that are completely interchangeable and fit perfectly with the music. Although we delivered a passable performance there is still a little work to do on this one! However, the performance by Band and Choir of American Trilogy, the last item of the night, was excellent. It's never easy balancing a Choir and Band - bands often get over excited and blast away - but Hepworth gave a masterclass in how to build a piece to a climax and make the most of both voices and instruments. The audience loved it!

The Choir publish their first book - Let All Men Sing

The Choir's first book, 'Let All Men Sing', a collection of reminiscences, anecdotes and observations by current and former members will be available from October 2012. With a Foreword by Thom Meredith and messages from, among others, Jason Macartney MP and Sir Willard White, we know that the book will both entertain and inform Choir supporters and casual readers alike. The inspiration behind the book has been editor-in-chief, Dave Walker, a member of our baritone section.



Well Done, Dave!

The book was launched at Waterstones book shop in New Street, Huddersfield on Tuesday October 9th and is available both from Waterstones and Amazon.

The book is available from
Shalliley Books,
The Pavilion,
30 Victoria Springs,
Holmfirth,
HD9 2NB
01484 683196
email shalliley@btinternet.com
Price - £9.99

Band of the Yorkshire Regiment, Huddersfield Town Hall - October



After a series of high profile solo artists as their guests, the Choir took to the stage with the Band of the Yorkshire Regiment. A military band with a massive sound and presence. The Regiment have suffered several tragic losses in Afghanistan this year but this concert, billed as 'The Pride of Yorkshire', was a celebration of the musical talents of both Band and Choir. The Band have a philosophy which includes audience entertainment as well as musical excellence and they certainly engaged with the Town Hall audience. Few will have witnessed virtuoso performances on a teapot, a chair and a finale played on the vitreous china of a toilet bowl! Do not try this at home.

After weeks of rehearsal, the Choir performed *Swing Low Sweet Chariot* for the first time in public. A piece with simple lyrics but precise entrances and harmonies. Destined to become a Choir favourite I think.

The concert was raising funds for the Yorkshire Regiment Benevolent Trust and the Choir and Band owe a big thank you to the ex-Servicemen who volunteered to sell programmes. They performed the task with such wit and charm that sales exceeded all expectations.

Pond's Forge, Sheffield - November

The Choir were the guests of Worrall MVC for a Help for Heroes Concert in the huge surroundings of the Pond's Forge sports complex in Sheffield. Also appearing were Bolsterstone MVC so a combined Choir of over 100 men were able to drown out the buzz of the electric arc lights and fill the hall with song. Christa (Ackroyd) was MC for the night and gave guidance on how to use the PA system! The Sheffield Youth Orchestra provided a musical counterpoint to the Male Choral singing. The Baritone ranks were restored to their full complement by a local taxi company who provided last minute transport for two forgetful singers who had to purchase white shirts from a local late night supermarket. They returned

just in time for our solo spot, much to the amusement of the assembled Choir and a non-the-wiser audience.

The Christmas Season

BASF, Low Moor.

Our annual trip to Low Moor for the BASF Carol Concert was, as usual, a great success. After 20 years we seem to be getting a winning formula! The children's items always steal the show but the relaxed atmosphere of this community event ensures that Christmas gets off to a flying start for everyone. Alan's waistcoat lighting delights the kids (of all ages!) and adds an extra dimension to the traditional singing of Rudolph and the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Fountains Abbey, a Wedding!

This event was a departure from our usual festive calendar but proved to be one of the highlights of the year. We were asked in October by Berenice and Daniel if we were available to sing at their wedding in Fountains Abbey in December. After hasty consultations with the Choir we readily agreed. In the unavoidable absence of Alan and Emma, Elizabeth and Anne stepped in as MD and Accompanist and on a grey December day we boarded a



coach for Fountains Abbey.





Informal singing for the Bride, Groom and their guests took place in Fountains Hall followed by the highlight of the day when we sang in the Cellarium during the blessing. We had not anticipated that illness would reduce our doughty bass section to just three members but confidence was high and we knew that, when the chips were down, we would come through. And so it proved. A bit of hasty improvisation and the exposed opening bass solo in 'Swing Low' was boosted by the baritones and all was well. The Cellarium is 300 feet long with a vaulted roof but no glass in the windows. Needless to say, we sang in overcoats and scarves to an audience similarly attired. As is usual on these occasions, the bride sacrificed warm clothes in favour of visual impact and froze for 45 minutes.

New Mill Christmas Concert

This year's Christmas concert in Christ Church, New Mill featured guests LB Brass and proved to be an enjoyable end to the year. The combination of Brass and Voices, when sympathetically mixed, is like mulled wine and mince pies. They just work together. LB Brass provided a rousing Christmas repertoire and the audience joined in the community carols with alacrity. The ladies of Vocal Expressions provided visual clues for the verses of the Twelve Days of Christmas and our annual Christmas Raffle was its usual success although we were a little down on prizes this year. Only eighteen I think! As the audience exited the church the most used adjective to describe the concert was 'fun'. At Christmas, I'll settle for that!