

Steeton Male Voice Choir
SteetonChimes



Edition Number 81

October 2013

Editorial

There is a definite theme to this edition with several articles referring to

the health and wellbeing benefits of communal singing. Most of us are clearly aware of it and many of the pen portraits clearly speak of the value the choir provides to its members. We are also aware of the pleasure we provide for others and we all certainly get a buzz from that.

I am using this space to update you all on the forthcoming North East tour (last weekend of June). Two evening concerts are all but confirmed but the order of events is not fully nailed down. We are definitely singing with Hartlepool MVC with an afterglow in the local rugby club and it is almost certain we are singing with Middlesbrough Community Choir – hopefully in the Town Hall (this promises a substantial audience with extended family and friends of a large choir). We are also doing a lunchtime sing at Alnwick Garden on the Monday. The two major concerts would involve bus trips of around 45 minutes each way so they are accessible to hotels on Tyneside which is the planned base for the tour.

Various people have suggested a range of possible visits including Durham Cathedral, Hexham Abbey, Craggside (NT former home of the Lord Armstrong the armaments and shipping magnate – a very interesting house and fantastic garden) and of course we have the whole of the Northumberland coast to go at – the options are very varied. I hope to meet with a small group to discuss and plan bus trip options. Given that we are not travelling so far we should have more flexibility with drivers' hours etc.

For those of you who don't know the North East I can assure you that is definitely fit for more than 'fracking' and we are assured of a welcome. Could I encourage as many choir members to join the tour – it should be great!

Please keep items coming for future editions. I am always looking for volunteers to present their Desert Island Discs and hopefully we can look forward to more pen portraits of new members.

Ian

(as far as possible please contact me and forward articles to:
ianmcd51@hotmail.com)

From Our MD

From time to time I take a look back through my records of the programmes that we have performed. One of the reasons for this is to see if any pieces that we enjoyed singing at the time and then rested have been missed off subsequent updates. It also reminds me of the songs we spent time learning that never took off - Bohemian Rhapsody being a good example. For those not in the choir at the time we were requested to learn this for a Massed Choir concert at the Manchester Arena in 2000 but only ever sung it on that single occasion. Half the choir at least had such a dislike for the piece it was forgotten at the earliest opportunity. Perhaps the only other piece introduced in the last 20 years that created such a strong division of opinions was Nidaros, for which I take the blame.

Now that we have a much smaller repertoire list than we have had recently, and one that is more manageable, I think that it will allow us to update it more often and, therefore, keep it fresher.

I am always looking for "different" songs for our repertoire that steer us clear of the standard and rather predictable Male Voice Choir programmes, but at the same time trying to maintain a balance with songs associated with our genre. I do not believe that **all** songs are suitable for a group of elderly men to sing, especially in mind of recent court cases (Thank Heaven for Little Girls.....which IS in our library!) However, I always welcome suggestions for additions to our list and will try to find an arrangement where possible or do an arrangement when one is not available. There are 14 items in our current repertoire that have arrived there from suggestions from the choir and supporters and more pieces are in our library and being "rested" at the moment that were originally nominated this way.

I have already started a list of songs to consider for the next update - some old favourites to recall and a couple of brand new titles. So, no matter if you are a singer or a listener, please let me know what you would like to have in some future concert. But a plea on behalf of most of the singers - could you please try to chose a song we can sing in English!!

Alan Clarke

Reflections from John Dowlan (an article he wrote for his church magazine shortly before the Southowram concert.

It is hard to believe that it is exactly four years since my wife, Gaynor, told me that it was time that I found another male voice choir to sing with. Six months earlier, along with Tony Greenwood and Graham Firth, I had left the ailing Thornhill Male Voice Choir and she had become used to using Tuesday evenings to tackle ironing and other household duties without me under her feet!

I decided that I wanted to find a choir that would help me to improve my singing and after trawling the internet for choirs within reasonable commuting distance of our home in Bradshaw I latched onto Steeton Male Voice Choir. The website gave the impression of a well run, large choir with a large number of concert bookings each year. Steeton were a choir consisting of around 80 members in 2009 and had celebrated their centenary the previous year.

After checking Steeton's concert diary, Gaynor and I travelled over the border to the parish church of St Peter in Burnley, Lancs. After listening to an excellent performance she turned to me and said "You can certainly join this choir!" Thus I found myself making the 25 minute journey to Steeton the following Monday evening and was welcomed by choir members from the minute I entered the doors of the Methodist Chapel.

Steeton operate an audition process before prospective members are presented with their prized red jacket and after a few weeks I was invited to sing a couple of numbers in front of the Musical Director, his deputy and the choir accompanist. I was asked to sing something from the current repertoire plus something of my own choice – I opted for "Llanfair" and "Thou Visiteth The Earth" which I have often sung as a solo as St Anne's. The following week I was told by the then secretary that I had passed the audition in record time – which I can only put down to the excellent musical tuition that I have received from Tony Greenwood over the previous 30 years.

So began my career with Steeton Male Voice Choir commencing with the annual concert at the Kings Hall in Ilkley in front of a packed house. The choir operate mainly in the Aire and Wharfe valleys with regular sorties into Lancashire (it is obviously necessary to have a valid passport at all times!) In addition the venues where I have been privileged to perform have ranged from the tiny church in Burnsall to Ypres Cathedral.

I will try and identify the highlights for me over the past four years but there have been so many this can be difficult!

In June 2010 we embarked on a tour of Cornwall with three coach loads containing choristers and supporters staying at a pleasant hotel in Newquay. The first concert, with the famous Mousehole Male Voice Choir in front of a full house, drew a "wow" from the lips of many of our members as our hosts performed their first set of songs, such was the high quality of their singing. This, however, encouraged Steeton to sing at their best and merited a standing ovation from the

Mousehole members for our performance of the tricky “Easter Hymn”. Further concerts at the Eden Project in one of the bio domes and at Newquay with the City of Truro Male Choir followed to make this a memorable first tour for me. This was a fortunate choice of venue for us as our eldest son Jonathan lives in Cornwall with his family and we were able to enjoy their company on a couple of occasions.

The following year saw the choir, again with three full coaches, crossing the English Channel to Dortmund in Germany where the Pullman Hotel was certainly the best hotel that many of us had ever stayed in. We were there to sing with the Mannergesangverein “Harmonie” Zeche Victoria (which translates as the Harmony Male Voice Choir of the Victoria Coal Mine) to celebrate their 90th anniversary. The choir, who are based in the town of Lunen, invited us to a party on the first evening on the woodland site of the former coal mine – needless to say plenty of beer, schnapps, and typical German foods were consumed. One of our members was a former member of the Lunen choir and it was an emotional time for him. The following evening we sang in the beautiful protestant church of St George in Lunen, again to an appreciative capacity audience. From Dortmund we travelled to Ypres in Belgium where we sang in the evening Mass at St Martin’s Roman Catholic Cathedral. I think that we will always remember the wonderful musical sound of the massive organ but also being able to hear our voices still reverberating in the cathedral roof almost ten seconds after we had finished singing ‘Morte Christe’! (For those followers of the recent TV series “The White Queen” – the coronation scenes were filmed in Ypres Cathedral). This was followed by our singing at the Last Post Ceremony which takes place every evening at the Menin Gate war memorial. This simple ceremony, featuring the buglers of the Ypres Fire Brigade, was a very moving ceremony as wreaths were laid by our choir chairman and children from a local school to commemorate the fallen.

The main highlight of 2011 could only be our invitation to sing at the Rugby League Four Nations Final between England and Australia at Elland Road Leeds, in front of over 34,000 fans. With the choir of around 60 men seeming like 600 through singing via the ground’s amplification system and the noise echoing around the ground the sound was ‘fantastic’ to quote from “The Telegraph”: “All around flags of St George were waving as the brass band and the Steeton Male Voice Choir launched into ‘Land of Hope and Glory’. Into this great British din stepped England and Australia. Elland Road heaved with belief....After a rousing, patriotic musical prologue worthy of the Albert Hall, here were 34,000 fans fearing this might well be the Last Night of the Poms.” Unfortunately England could not match the opening acclaim and lost 8 – 30!

In 2012 there was no tour and the choir continued with its usual round of circa 25 concerts, including singing at Headingley for Leeds RLFC’s world title match against the Australian champions. Unfortunately in recent years the choir had lost a number of members through illness and death, and as a result concentrated on

a wide scale marketing campaign which resulted in around 12 new members joining the choir by the end of the year.

This year has proved to again be an excellent one so far. In February we were invited to sing in the annual Choirs Rock competition at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. When we arrived we started to wonder why we were there, with some of the other five choirs dressed in sparkling outfits, and including recent winners of Channel 5's 'Don't Stop Believing', the Dale Divas. This was compounded when we were given the criteria for judging which included movement – traditional male voice choirs don't move although we might shuffle a bit and we certainly don't rock! Each choir sang two numbers and were judged by a panel, X Factor style. The judges then selected two choirs for a final sing off and we were amazed to be selected alongside the Dale Divas. We were fortunate to sing last in both the preliminary round and final but gave our all with our performance of "You'll Never Walk Alone". The final vote was down to the 500 strong audience using their mobile phones. It was a sight to behold as 60 predominantly senior citizens leapt from their seats as the result was announced – yes Steeton had won! – But we're still not sure why we were there!

Following an invitation to sing with Polperro Fishermen's Choir (my son Jonathan sings with Polperro) we again set off on tour to the South West. Initially based in Torquay in Devo, we had successful concerts with Brixham Male Voice Choir in Paignton and then with the Budleigh Salterton Male Voice Choir. Before we moved on to Cornwall we were fortunate to be invited to sing at the morning service at St Mary's church in the village of Uffculme. Afterwards choir members were fascinated by the ancient church, particularly its 13th century columns and recently restored medieval panels in the rood screen. I can certainly recommend a visit if you are down that way. Our final concert was with the Polperro choir and was held in Looe Lifeboat Station (the boats had been removed!) and proved to be the highlight of the tour. The glorious weather that we had been blessed with continued and afterwards the Polperro men plied us with traditional Cornish Pasties and entertained with sea shanties in the Looe Sailing Club.

We have a good wide and varied repertoire, including some classical items, songs from the shows and religious numbers. The choir do appear to be 'on a roll' at the moment and I hope that we give the people of Southowram a concert to remember.

The Oldest Choir in the World



After months of nervous anticipation the waiting is finally over for a choir at St. John's House, Kirk Hammerton.

It is now official - their choir, who have a combined age of 1180 years, have secured their place in the annals of Guinness World Record history by becoming the Oldest Choir in the World.

Managing Director Lou Squires says "we are thrilled to become the Oldest Choir In the World. I get great reports about how it has had such a positive impact on the lives of our residents. From a business point of view I'm sure that it has contributed to our reduced number of falls and people's appetites and general health have improved. There are so many positive effects that this singing community has had on us all at St. John's".

I came across this article recently in a North Yorkshire magazine. Looking at the photo they are certainly an ancient bunch (make SMVC look like young men!) and I am puzzled how they have done their maths – quoting a combined age of 1180 years.

If SMVC were to calculate a combined age (say 60 men at 70 years on average) the figure would be 4,200 years. That's long before the pyramids were built.

Take note of the old fellow in the centre of the photo. Is it our own Ken Rainford visiting as a 'guest star'?

Eric Stowe

Pen Portrait : Martin Winterton (bass)



Martin Winterton: Slate 1, Take 1, No retakes!



In the words of Harry Secombe “I was born at an early age”. On 17th January 1940 to be precise, in Croydon, Surrey – well, someone’s got to come from Croydon! The weather gods celebrated the event by dumping 14 inches of snow on the town in three days!

Our house was near Croydon Airport, which became RAF Croydon Battle of Britain Fighter Station. When I was two years old I was sent, for safety, to the East End of London to stay with my grandparents whilst my brother was born. This coincided with the Blitz raids on the London Docks. We once had a near miss and were buried for some time in the communal Air Raid Shelter.

Dad moved to Sutton when I was 5 and then when I was 13 to Burgh Heath near Epsom Racecourse. My first secondary school was Rutlish School, Merton 10 miles away from Sutton. Dad was a Civil Servant and was moved to Plymouth when I was 14 so off we all went to Devon. Just as I was leaving the third form at Rutlish a new boy joined the first form. His name was John Major. Wonder what happened to him?

Down in Devon I attended Devonport High School. The school had been bombed out of Devonport during the Plymouth Blitz, which flattened the whole City

Centre, so was now housed in three wings of an old military hospital overlooking Stonehouse Creek. The other wings and adjacent land were subsequently developed into a technical school which, Surprise! Surprise! David Borley attended at a later date. Small world!

There was not much going for young people in the early 50s in Plymouth. Most parts were still recovering. The pride and joy was the Royal Parade Shopping Centre. All other facilities were non-existent. There was no swimming pool – if you wanted to go indoor swimming you joined the Dolphins Swimming Club inside the naval barracks at HMS Drake. Otherwise for school swimming (in March!!) it was the open-air pool at Mount Wise with the south-westerlies howling up Plymouth Sound. (West Men, West Men, Never, Never Fear the Foe! But a south-westerly is something else!!)

So I joined the youth club of St Andrew's Church, which had been gutted during the blitz and was in the process of rising from the ashes like Coventry Cathedral. The Club had 250 members from the 5th and 6th forms of Plymouth schools but in addition we also had a "floating" population of about 650 from all three Services, mainly National Servicemen. By 1956 I was the secretary of the Club.

It was the St Andrew's curate, Bob Stapleton, a keen walker, who taught me how to use a map and prismatic compass - my first major life skill. Bob often led club walks across Dartmoor and by the age of 15 I was going solo across the northern Moor through the bogs using map and compass bearings and also following the little known tracks revealed to me by the Dartmoor Guide, Eric Hemery.

I was not an academic pupil at Devonport High, which was a traditional grammar school that seemed not to be aware of the developments in post-war society. My hobby during my teens had been experimenting with photography with inadequate cameras like the Kodak Brownie Cresta but neither my parents nor the school seemed interested in the increasing importance of it as a possible profession. (After all, it wasn't "Varsity"!!) So, at the start of the 6th form I left and joined Lloyds Bank, determined to "do it my way" and get a commercial background. My first branch was Tavistock, where I was the junior then Looe, where I was the senior junior! Finally Modbury, where I was first cashier. It was a four-person branch and the last totally hand-written branch in the Southwest. You really had to know how to add up in those days!

My first day as a cashier at Modbury was quite eventful. It coincided with the reappearance of one of our customers from three years in Exeter jail for a massive tax fraud. In comes Mr X to cash a cheque and nearly has heart failure. There was my shiny new cashier's nameplate: MR M J WINTERTON. Did I tell you my father was a civil servant? Well actually he was the local Inspector of Taxes and it was he who had prepared the case against Mr X!!

Meanwhile, National Service was looming. The previous three juniors had been

posted to the Pay Corps in Harrogate. I wanted something more challenging than that so at 17 I joined the Royal Marines Forces Volunteer Reserve to ensure that I was called up into the Corps (The Navy was only taking ten per cent of the intake each year).

Then, shock horror, National Service was cut starting with those born in January 1940! We worked out recently that if I had been born a month earlier I would have found myself serving with my wife's cousin in Cyprus. I continued serving in the RMFVR and gained my Green Beret in 1960, the final course being with the Belgian Para-Commandos in Namur. I followed this with a short snow warfare course in Scotland. Meanwhile I left Lloyds Bank and joined the Civil Service in London.

In 1957-58 Ed Hillary and Bunny Fuchs were involved in the great Trans-Antarctic Expedition that fired the imagination of many young people in Britain. In 1959 I applied to join the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey but was told I was too young. However, I re-applied the following year and got a job with them as a General Assistant/Dog Sledger. I sailed on the "Kista Dan" from Southampton on December 2nd 1961. On January 1st FIDS became the British Antarctic Survey. After a run ashore in Montevideo and a stop in Port Stanley for kitting out with polar gear the ship headed for Base Z, Halley Bay on the coast of the Weddell Sea. The Kista Dan called once a year so I would get my first lot of mail in the following January and then a further batch when she called to take me home.

My job involved looking after 36 huskies (four dog teams) and the associated sledges, equipment and climbing gear and training scientists how to move and survive outside in temperatures down to minus 40 degrees Celsius without falling down crevasses etc. During this time, with two companions, I carried out the first reconnaissance of the Vestfjella 290 miles east of Halley. That journey took about nine weeks and we travelled just over 1000 miles ski-marching alongside the dog sledge. At one point a blizzard forced us to camp for a week until it blew itself out. By the end we were under nearly three feet of snow. It took a day to dig everything out. The end result was that we were the first people ever to reach these mountains and carry out a preliminary survey.

The second year was spent preparing for and mounting a full-scale survey of the Tottan Mountains, 300 miles north-east of Halley. This involved a 4-man team of geologist, surveyor, doctor and radio operator and two dog teams plus a tractor support team that towed a small sledge-mounted caboose out to the main start line of the survey. In addition, two of us took the dog teams out to the mountains and then returned on the tractors to prepare for the arrival of the Kista Dan that would take me back to UK. In the two seasons down south I sledged about 2,500 miles.

It wasn't all fieldwork. During the 100-day polar night the normal scientific life of

base continued as it had done since it was first built in 1957 as part of the International Geophysical Year scientific programme. Investigations into the ionosphere, geophysics, studies of the aurora australis and of course meteorology. In fact it was this body of early scientific records at Halley Bay that in subsequent years revealed development of the “hole” in the ionosphere.

We filled what spare time there was in a busy schedule with various hobbies. Some did model-making and several of us did “radio-hamming” using the base transmitter, calling up amateurs in all parts of the world. We even had a conversation with King Hussein of Jordan who was a keen ham.

The main hobby was photography and there was even a Midwinter Photo Competition. It was when I started photography that an amazing event occurred. One of the physicists, Stu Marsden, taught me the procedures for developing my first film, something I had always wanted to do but never had the opportunity at home or school. When the film was successfully processed and I made my first print I realised that this was what I had been wanting to get involved in since the age of 10! Talk about The Road to Damascus!

When I returned to UK I continued my interest in practical photography and wrote around 150 job applications around all parts of the industry until I was finally successful. In 1965 I became a Trainee Assistant Film Editor with the BBC at Ealing Film Studios. I worked my way up the cutting-room ladder, becoming a full Film Editor in 1970. I cut film in all the major production areas – Drama, Current Affairs, Science, Documentaries and Children’s. My most memorable times were with “Horizon”, two years, and with “Blue Peter”, 18 months, though my sons joke and say my most important contribution to Television was earlier in my career when I worked with Eric Thompson on “Magic Roundabout”. A new rabbit character popped up in one of the series and I happened to suggest the name “Dylan” which stuck! Fame!

By this time, living in Twickenham, I was married to Carole (who had been my boss in the Civil Service!) and had two boys, Ian and Giles. We worried about the prospect of bringing children up in London so I moved as a Film Editor to BBC North in Leeds. One notable series was “Beneath the Pennines” – five caving films shot by an old friend of mine Sid Perou.

In 1982 in my “spare” time I became an instructor with the Sea Cadet Corps, Marine Cadet Section. I served for 15 years and reached the dizzy rank of Lieutenant, Royal Marines Reserve. My last appointment was Area Staff Officer Adventure Training (East) covering eastern England east of the Pennines from Whitby down to Felixstowe.

With the increasing use of video over film I was frustrated by BBC Engineering Management’s desire to re-invent the wheel rather than use the techniques developed in film over some 90 years. The “engine room” was being ignored so I

applied for a management post where I could contribute! Thus I ended up as Film Unit Manager at BBC Open University Production Centre in Milton Keynes. During this time I persuaded all but one of my 29 film staff that they had all the skills necessary for going into video. Bringing these skills to bear on BBC video production greatly enhanced the product.

Six years later the BBC got rid of all its Regional Film Unit Managers so I was on the beach for a short time then got a production manager's job in corporate video industry. After two years I joined the Government Information Service, running my own civilian video production unit making training videos for all three Services and the MoD. My MoD rank was equivalent to a Lt. Colonel or Wing Commander so I had quite a bit of clout when it came to budgets and buying the right digital equipment!

I retired in 2002 since when, with five grand-children and my history research, I have never been busier – or so I thought! The, one Saturday afternoon at Broughton Hall, near Skipton I saw these old fellers in red blazers singing. Thought I'd buy one of their CDs and this guy called Ralph started chatting to me about the Choir.....!!

My Travel Plans for 2013-2014

I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently you can't go alone - you have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear nobody recognises you there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport - you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there thanks to my children, friends, family and work.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore – especially if I have to jump from a plane. I'm afraid that would be final.

I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capabl, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favourite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimulus I can get!

I may have been in Continent and I don't remember that country I was in.

It's an age thing. They tell me it very wet and damp there.

Singing is good for you 'body and soul'.

You will all be aware that many new recruits comment on the pleasure and enjoyment that joining the choir has given them. Many of the 'pen portraits' are also testimony the very positive impact that joining our choir has been for many

people, often on the back of very difficult personal experiences or at the very least on retirement from 'working' life.

Peter Lofts and Eric Stowe have forwarded articles from different newspapers highlighting academic research that confirms what many of us know, perhaps without actually being aware of the scientific basis. The theme of the articles suggests that singing is as good for us as Yoga. I've only ever done Yoga once so I have no evidence on which to comment on its benefits. Maggie is a devotee of more than 35 years and she would definitely testify to its benefits. Her singing however does nothing for my wellbeing – she's tone deaf! Below is a summary of some of the salient points from those articles.

The most recent source of research evidence has come from Gothenburg University in Sweden.

We are all aware that singing makes us feel good and 'What would I do without my music' is something of a choir anthem but the research evidence identifies the actual health benefits.

It appears that when we sing together our heartbeats become synchronised, growing faster and slower at the same time as we breathe in and out in unison (well Alan would like us to!). It suggests that variability of heart rate is likely to be good for well being. The synchronised heartbeats bring about a calming effect that is likened to that of Yoga.

The researchers asked a group of teenagers to take part in humming exercises, in singing a hymn and in chanting. They identified a dramatic effect on heart rate variability which is linked to reduced risk of heart disease. The melody and structure of music directly affected heart rates and pulses rose and fell at the same time. The lead scientist suggested that "songs with long phrases achieve the same effect as breathing exercises in Yoga. In other words, through a song we can exercise a certain control over mental states". He also suggested that singing also benefits people as they are forced into adopting a calm and regular breathing pattern which in turn regulates heartbeat.

The study also suggests that singing can enhance the spirit of cooperation in a group because it helps regulate activity in the brain's vagus nerve, which is linked to emotions and communication with others. SMVC can provide at least some evidence to back up this assertion!

There is a plethora of scientific and anecdotal evidence that singing has huge benefits.

A Cardiff University study in 2012 found that lung cancer patients who sang in a choir had a greater expiratory capacity than others.

Singing has also been shown to boost our immune systems, reduce stress and help people cope with chronic pain.

A joint Harvard/Yale study went further and suggested choral singing increased life expectancy and surely we must provide living proof of that! It states that singing delivers a host of physical and emotional benefits including increased aerobic exercise, improved breathing, posture, mindset, confidence and self esteem.

The Telegraph article suggests that all this explains why people are flocking to choirs in their thousands. There are over 3000 groups listed on the British Choirs on the Net website. It is said that there are now more choirs across the country than fish and chip shops.

Gareth Malone, with his various TV series, is given significant credit for reigniting interest in choral singing.

A choir leader is cited as suggesting that people recover faster from depression, arthritis, surgery, dealing the effects of cancer and many other ailments and goes on to suggest singing should be prescribed on the NHS! (they'd only want to privatise it!)

Choral singing has been used as therapy in hospitals, care homes and hospices for decades. It is known that singing enables people with dementia to access memories and joy when their communication mechanisms are breaking down.

You can guess that the Yanks would come up with combining Yoga and singing. The latest trend in the US is vocal Yoga attempting to combine the health benefits of both in a single class. (Don't let Maggie's Yoga classes find out about this great idea!)

All in all we must be living proof that the science doesn't lie so let's keep on singing!

Ian McD

Yorkshire Messiah

Most of us are familiar with the words and music of this great oratorio by Handel but an old Yorkshireman Bill Jones had never been to a performance and he tried to persuade a friend to go with him t't'local Town Hall to hear it but his friend declined. "Nay" he said "that sort o'music's nowt in my line. I like a good comic song or a lively jig me, but I reckon nowt to this sacred stuff as they calls it. It's beyond me that. Another thing, there'll be none of our sort there. It'll be mostly religious folk and swells done up in boiled shirts and wimmen wi' nowt much on. Nay, you go by thee sen and then you can tell me all about it sometime".

So Bill went by himself and the next time the old pals met the following conversation took place.

" Well, cum on then ... how did you get on at Messiah?"

“Ee well!” said Bill “It were fair champion. I wouldn’ta missed it for all ‘t’ tea in China. When I got there the Town Hall were crowded. It were choc full o’folk and I had a job to get a seat but no wonder – it were all them singers – they took up half the gallery, like. There was chap larkin about on t’organ, although he were nowt in particular, just running his fingers up and down as if he were practising.

Well, after a bit a lot of chaps came in carrying diffles, then they brought int’Messiah – well that’s what I took it t’be. It were the biggest instrument on t’ platform and it were covered in a big bag. Well, they took the bag off it and then some bloke rubbed its belly with a stick and you should have heard it groan! It were summat like a dying cow!

I was just thinking of going when a little chap came on all dolled up in a white waistcoat and wi’ a flower in his buttonhole and everything went dead quiet. You could have heard a pin drop! He had a stick in his hand and started waving it about and all the singers stared at him I reckon they were wondering what was t’matter we’ him. They all started to sing and they hadn’t been going long before they were fighting like cats! I reckon he shoulda walloped one or two or ‘em with that stick of his. First one side said that they were t’King o’Glory then t’other side said they were, and they went at it hammer and tongs, but it fizzled our and I’ve no idea which side won.

Then there were a bit of bother about some sheep that were lost. I don’t know who they belonged to but of lot of singers must have been very fond o’mutton ‘cos they kept on singing “All we like sheep”. I couldn’t help saying to a bloke next to me that sheep’s all right in moderation but I like a bit o’beef meself, and he looked daggers at me and said ‘shhhh’ so I shushed.

A lot o’wimmen stood up after that and a load of ‘em looked as it they were well....gettin’ on a bit, you know. Some of ‘em must ha’ been 65 if they were a day! They sang “Unto us a child is born” and t’chaps sang back “Wonderful” an’ I thought t’meself – Wonderful? It’s a bloomin’ miracle!

After that they sobered down a bit and sang about a lass called Joyce Greatly. I’ve never heard of her meself but the chaps had ‘cos they all mighty please about it. Then some bloke got up and said he were the king o’kings, and another said he was and then, blow me, they all started arguing about it. I was getting a bit fed up when everyone stood up to see what was the matter and they suddenly shouted “Hallelujah ... it’s going t’ rain for ever and ever”. Well, at that I jumped up and made straight for t’ door. I’d ‘ad me money’s worth and besides, I was thinking that if it were going t’ rain for ever and ever I’d better get home before the floods came.

Still, it was real good do though – you shoulda come but, oh, I do hope they find them sheep.”

Thanks to **Richard** for providing the copy of this.

From The Ladies Group

The ladies group would like to thank everyone for providing raffle prizes for the

Annual Concert, we have some great prizes this year. All we need now is to sell the tickets!!

The ladies have organised a trip to Oswaldtwistle Mills on Thursday the 5th December and there are still a few seats left on the coach if anyone out there would like a trip to the mill (a great day out). We leave Steeton Methodist at 10.00am and return from Oswaldtwistle Mill at 3.30pm the cost is £8.00 per seat. Please give me a call on (01282 545084).

We would also like to thank you all for supporting the Quiz Night which was a great success and our thanks must go to Jean and Peter Lofts - they are definitely professional quiz masters. Although this event was purely social we managed to raise over £200.00 for choir funds and thank you to everyone.

Our next fund raising venture is plant and cake stall in May 2014. No actual date has been fixed but the ladies are already busy taking cuttings and planting seeds. We will keep you informed.

Finally, any new ladies wishing to join our "merry band" we now meet at a new venue - The Old Star at Steeton top every third Monday so we welcome you all, you will be sure of a good laugh.

Thanks again,
Steeton Ladies.

Pen Portrait:



Reg Daniel (1st tenor) - Reg is hardly a new boy but it was drawn to my attention that he had never done a pen portrait and that he had an interesting story to tell so he kindly provided me with the following:

My story begins back in 1975. Our daughter emigrated to Australia and after about 3 years my wife and I visited her. They took us all over Australia. I loved it and felt I wanted to make my home there. We made plans and in 1978 we migrated to Australia.

I worked hard and after numerous positions I became warehouse manager for Hallmark greeting cards. But this was not enough and I found out that Sir James Hardy (the wine people) wanted a distribution manager for Australia and after numerous interviews I managed to get the job. It was great challenge but I settled in and took his turnover from two million dollars to four million per month – a great achievement I thought.

During this time my wife and I became Australian citizens, so I now have dual passports!

All too soon it came time to retire so we both decided to return and see more of England but sadly my wife passed away with breast cancer.

She died in Manorlands Hospice and after it was all over I decided I wanted to work for Manorlands to say thank you for what they had done for her. I became a volunteer tea trolley attendant and spent a lot of time with the patients.

I was approached and asked would I take a course in palliative care at St Lukes Hospital in Bradford. This I did and so spent more time with the patients.

So I am now coming to the time when I came to join SMVC. One day I went to one of the patients and said “now Alice what shall we talk about today?”

She looked at me and said “Can we pray?”, so this we did and then she asked if we could sing a hymn so we sang ‘There is a green hill far away’.

What I didn’t realise that her daughter was listening in the doorway with some of the nurses and she was crying her eyes out. As I went to leave she stopped me and asked if I would sing at her mum’s funeral. Of course I agreed and she asked me to sing ‘Abide with Me’ and this was at Bingley Parish Church.

John Kelly heard me singing and suggested that “with a voice like yours you should come to our Monday night sessions”. This I did. I started with the second tenors with Gareth Davis as my mentor.

I could not settle so Gordon Sugden suggested that I should be in the top tenors. So I moved and came under the mentorship of Terry Eggleshaw. I could not have had a better man but sadly he passed away and I still miss him very much as well as Lindley Wormold who helped me also.

I have since been back to Australia to visit my daughter. I visited Sydney and went on a tour of the Opera House. As I went I could see a Japanese man singing. I asked our tour guide what he was doing. She informed that he was testing the acoustics. She said that she wished she had someone who could sing. One of our group told her that we did and pointed to me. She asked me to sing and I did and thus I got to sing a piece from the Phantom of the Opera in Sydney Opera House – if I say so myself it sounded very good and I got a standing ovation from those present.

Back to the present – I have a good life now. I have a new partner – Audrey – who has a lovely singing voice and keeps me on my musical toes. She has sung

in a top choir and performed for the Queen Mother. She will always remind me if I am not singing correctly.

I am so happy with what I do with the choir. I practice my music on a regular basis. Even before a concert I always go through the programme we are about to perform. As Alan says 'get your words correct' and he will take us through the rest. It is about dedication!

Historical Activities

Len was talking to me about having had some conversations with choir members about dates of various previous away fixtures. To put any possible arguments to bed he provided me with his log of away fixtures dating back to the 80s so the chart below summarises the key events. I also thought it might be of interest to many of the choir who may not be aware of all of this.

Date	Venue/location
1986 - June	Dortmund tour
1988 - Oct	Cwmbran (with Pontnewydd MVC)
1990 - April	Berwick on Tweed at the Maltings
1991 - May	Spalding – Flower Festival
1991 - June	Ostend/Ypres Tour
1992 - April	Rerun of the Berwick trip
1992 - Nov	Cwmbran
1993 - May/June	Utrecht Tour (including singing at the Hague)
1993 - Nov	Swansea – singing with Morryston Orpheus MC
1996 - May	Maasticht / Liege Tour
1999 - May /June	Dortmund/Cologne/Ypres Tour
2000 - Oct	Coventry (incl a sing in the cathedral)
2002 - May	Chester / North Wales Tour
2004 - June	Bristol and Bath (incl. Bath Abbey)
2006 - June/July	Worcester (Kidderminster and Worcester Cathedral)
2007 - June	Cardiff (incl singing at Millenium Centre)
2008 - June	Rep of Ireland Tour (incl. St Mary's Cathedral Killarney)
2010 - July	Cornwall (incl Eden Project sing)
2011 - May	Germany/Belgium Tour (incl Luenen and Ypres)
2012 - Sept	Worksop Concert with Anston MVC
2013 - June	Torquay and Plymouth Tour

A musical surprise.

Some aging hippy friends bought me a copy of the Durham Concerto. I was gobsmacked to discover that it was written by the late Jon Lord, a founder

member of Deep Purple.

Being a minor Deep Purple fan in the 60's and 70's I was blissfully unaware that he was so 'cultured'. It appears that he wrote several large scale works for orchestra and rock musicians in that era – even to having been conducted by Malcolm Arnold.

He last toured with Deep Purple in 2002 and then concentrated on composing and performing his own music.

I really like the piece (and not just because it features the Northumbrian Pipe player, Kathryn Tickell).

Given that we are touring the North East next year and may even visit Durham Cathedral I thought you might like to sample it on the internet (it is on Youtube). I have included the Wikipedia description out of interest.

The **Durham Concerto** is a classical work composed by Jon Lord. It was commissioned by Durham University and was first performed in Durham Cathedral on 20 October 2007, as part of the university's 175th anniversary celebrations.

Instead of the usual solo instrument typical of a classical concerto the *Durham Concerto* gives solo opportunities to several different instruments: cello, violin Northumberland pipes and Hammond organ. At the premiere of the work, Lord himself played the Hammond organ part and Kathryn Tickell the pipes.

Part I. Morning

The Cathedral at Dawn — solo violin, solo cello, Hammond organ

Durham Awakes — solo violin, solo cello, Hammond organ, Northumbrian pipes

Part II. Afternoon

The Road from Lindisfarne — solo violin, solo cello, Northumbrian pipes

From Prebends Bridge — solo cello

Part III. Evening

Rags & Galas — solo violin, solo cello, Hammond organ

Durham Nocturn — solo violin, solo cello, Hammond organ, Northumbrian pipes

A typical performance lasts just under an hour.

Ian McD

SMVC Leisure Wear

A reminder to longer standing members and information for newer members.

Malcolm Hopkins is in charge of our shop and you or your loved ones can purchase the following SMVC items.

The following items are available for sale:

Blue Lambswools Sweaters	£30
Grey Sweaters	£12
Polo Shirts	£ 5
Silver Grey Ties	£ 2
Blue Ties	£ 5
Uniform Ties	£ 5

The Silver Grey tie was previously official uniform. There are very few left and are reduced to clear, so bag a bargain.

The lambswool sweaters were previously regarded as uniform and were worn with the blue ties.

The polo shirts are available in many colours (we have a large stock) but large sizes are in short supply.

Desert Islands Discs : Richard Hartley

My musical taste is varied and I have not tended to choose particular musicians/singers- just pieces that I like and have memories for me.

My first piece would be of my father (had he ever made a record) singing "The Windmill" a poem by Longfellow. I suppose I will have to make do with Owen Brannigan singing it.

My 2nd choice would be the song of the Pirate King from G & S Pirates of Penzance, again memories of my father- who had a good bass voice and at 6 foot 4 and 18 stone made a very good Pirate King.

3rd and 4th Pieces are Steeton singing both from our old vinyl records - but we still sing them with the same feeling.

An Evening Pastoral from " In Harmony" this I think shows SMVC doing what we do best "delicate" interpretation of the music, and as Maurice Lilley once put it "us diction".

The other Steeton piece would be "The Blue Tailed Fly" not sung for many years, but with Watson Barnes providing the solo - his interpretation of an American from the deep south would always bring at least a smile.

My 5th pieces would be Kathleen Ferrier singing the good old Blow the wind Southerly - why I just enjoy the richness and control in the voice.

My luxury - I have always enjoyed watching sport, but never much of a player. Therefore, I would have a set of golf clubs and an endless supply of balls as I am sure I would lose one or two.

My Book would be the complete short stories written by a friend John Waddington- Feather. He writes short stories about old Keighley characters, but changes their names. I could spend the evenings as the sun was setting over the palm trees trying to fathom out who these characters really were.

Richard also sent me this quote which seems appropriate:

The best book is not the thought which it contains, but the thought which it suggests; just as the charm of music dwells not in the tones but in the echoes of the hearts. Oliver W.Holmes

Contacts for SMVC

Chairman	David Borley	01943602719	david.borley@02.co.uk
Musical Director	Alan Clark	07538377035	alanclark51@hotmail.co.uk
Secretary	Peter Kitching	01535273171 07827669444	peterkitching@live.co.uk
Concert Secretary /publicity	Eric Parker	01274598221	ericjparker@blueyonder.co.uk
Treasurer	Alan Howell	01756 794244	jandaowl@talktalk.net
Accompanist	Ann Mott	01535 601499	Peter.mott@chipmonk.co.uk
Dep. M.D.	Noel Aspinall	01535 603602	noel_aspinall@sky.com
Dep. Accompanist	Peter Abberton	01274 551526	peterabberton@btinternet.com
Recruitment	Ken Wardell	01943 817432	
Stage Manager	Richard Hartley	01535 603380	hartleyrich@yahoo.co.uk
Chimes Ed	Ian McDonald	01274 400375	ianmcd51@hotmail.com
Attendance/ Web man.	Steve Fenton	01535 604373	steeton@stevfenton.me.uk
Duplicator	Tim Bastow	01535 603065	tim.jtbastow@blueyonder.co.uk
Archivist	Peter Lofts	01535 634388	Peterlofts30@hotmail.co.uk
Top tenor rep	Tim Bastow	01535 603065	Tim.jtbastow@blueyonder.co.uk
2nd Tenor rep	Gordon Bishop	01943 465201	Gvbishop@hotmail.co.uk
Baritone rep	John Dowlan	01422 248010	john@dowlan.co.uk
Bass rep	David Brown	01535274919	

Concert/ Events Dates 2013/14 (7.30 unless noted)

Nov		
Saturday	2 nd	Annual Concert, Kings Hall, Ilkley
Saturday	30 th	St. James Clapham
Dec		
Saturday	7 th	St. James' Thornton
Saturday	21 st	End of Year Concert – Holy Trinity Skipton
Jan		
Friday	30 th	Curragate
Feb		
Thursday	6 th	Beanlands
March		
Saturday	8 th	Padiham, Unitarian Church
Saturday	15 th	Choir Dinner
Saturday	22 nd	Ilkley Rotary – All Saints
April		
Saturday	5 th	ShIPLEY, St Peter' Church
Saturday	26 th	Shelf, St Michael's
May		
Saturday/Sunday	3 rd	Weekend tour with Whitby Lifeboats concert on the Saturday, possible Sunday lunchtime shorter concert in aid of Hospice in Scarborough
Saturday	31 st	Skipton, charity concert with Polperro Fishermens Choir - Holy Trinity
June		
Saturday	7 th	Cullingworth Village Hall, Anne's Farewell Concert
Saturday	21 st	St Luke's East Morton
Fri-Mon	27-30 th	North East Tour – staying on Tyneside