

**Steeton Male Voice Choir**

# **SteetonChimes**



**Edition Number 82**

**February 2014**

**Editorial**

This edition could easily be entitled 'Reflections'. Included are annual reports from the Chairman and Musical Director and personal reflections from Alan and individual choir members. They all point to the group and individual benefits of being involved in our thriving choir.

I am delighted at the response to the North East Tour. We currently hope to have a choir of 57 which by any measure is a sizeable choir to take on tour. To those not familiar with my native region (born and grew up in Middlesbrough and studied in Newcastle), weather permitting, I think you will be pleasantly surprised by the region deemed by a member of The Lords as bleak and therefore suitable for developing fracking – it clearly is not in his backyard!

I have put further regarding the tour details in this edition. Please keep items coming for future editions. I have held some 'donations' over 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](mailto:ianmcd51@hotmail.com))

### **Chairman's Report for 2013**

2013 has been pretty special. The Choir is buzzing; we are definitely on a constantly improving trend. Choristers are pitching in to help with organisation and our new men have brought a new dimension with new solo performances and a dedication to performances and rehearsal. I am particularly impressed at the eagerness they have shown to take and succeed with their voice assessments and learn material so that they can take their place on stage proudly wearing their Red Jackets.

The recruitment drive, whilst in the immediate time following the event, seemed disappointing in the numbers recruited has in fact been and is continuing to be a success. We have decided to cease the September recruitment evening which brought little return for a lot of effort. We are now steadily growing organically, the seeds being the new men from the recruitment drive. This is most gratifying when so many other Male Voice Choirs are sadly in decline.

New Men who have received their jackets during 2013 are; Jag Gunpath, Stuart Ebdon, Malcolm Mitchell, Ron Horne, Terry Guest, Peter Stuart, George Hladowski, Roy Talbot and Richard Day, so many congratulations to them all. Richard Day made his first appearance on stage at our stunningly successful End of Year concert at Holy Trinity Church, Skipton.

Another recognition was the institution and presentation of Badges for 10 years' service in the choir. All those who had given between 10 and 25 years' service were presented with a badge at the rehearsal preceding the Annual Concert. I am delighted to single out Anne as one of the twenty seven members who received the badge and to Gordon Sugden who received his at home. The ceremony was conducted by our President Len Wilson.

A highlight of the year was our tour in June to Devon and Cornwall. We based ourselves in Torquay for two nights and in Plymouth for two nights. We all had a wonderful time especially as a cold Spring gave way to a glorious Summer just as we crossed the Somerset/Devon border. We sang in Brixham, Budleigh Salterton, Saint Mary the Virgin Church, Uffculme and in the Looe Lifeboat Station with the Polperro Fisherman's Choir. Many thanks to Norman and Eric for organising everything and of course to Alan and Anne for their musical leadership.

Other highlights included an excellent Annual Concert at Ilkley where we played to a packed house; singing at the wedding of Tom van der Gucht from the 1st Tenors and the Priory Church at Bolton Abbey – always a delightful packed venue. A particular highlight was the choir becoming a bunch of hard-hitting Rockers when we won the 'Choirs Rock' competition at the Royal Armouries in Leeds in March this year. Some of us were a little surprised as our competitors were mostly young, female, be-sequinned, who danced and bounced a lot and in general were not quite like us. As Fraser in 'Dad's Army' would say "I, of course, never doubted the result"!

It has been really gratifying that many concerts during 2013 have elicited a large number of favourable comments from audiences both by letter, e-mail and directly to choristers at the concert venues. Our MD Alan has instituted a process to enable us to mix and match music pieces and vary our concerts by establishing a new core repertoire of songs. This among other things will please our supporters who attend every concert, as well as providing more variation for the choir.

Our very full programme for 2013 is to be repeated for 2014 and we are taking bookings for 2015. We have had various requests to perform during the past year which sadly we could not accept due to a packed diary of commitments. Thanks to Eric for his commitment to concert bookings and publicity.

We continue to provide support to Gordon Sugden and his wife Margaret. Alan and Dorothy have spent much of their time both on their own and the choir's behalf visiting and helping them. It is gratifying that they are now back in Ilkley with fantastic support from specialised carers.

It is good to hear that Berti Gesting, having had to retire from the choir due to ill health, has been able to join a choir near his home where he gets help with

transportation. John Rawlings is still a long term absentee due to ill health and we wish him well and hope for a speedy return. We also wish David Keighley well and we are always pleased to see David when, despite his illness, he manages to attend when he can.

I would also like to recognise Ralph Beards for his commitment to the Choir. Whilst Ralph no longer performs on stage he attends rehearsals and continues to be in charge of choir uniforms. I particularly remember the moving ceremony when Noel presented Ralph with a picture of Torquay at the afterglow of our Budleigh Salterton concert to mark his retirement from performance singing.

The Choir remains financially healthy and as you will see from the Hon Treasurer's report we have raised around £10,000 for various charities and other good causes – an excellent result.

Alan Howell has continued to do an excellent job as Treasurer and we are sad to hear of his retirement from that post after 12 years of brilliant, dedicated service. He will however still be a stalwart in the Bass section of the Choir - thank you Alan.

As I said in my last report for 2013 I would like to thank Alan and Anne, supported by Noel, for their continued musical leadership and Peter Kitching for the way he has seamlessly taken over the role of General Secretary. Also thanks to Norman Hudson as assistant secretary who has helped in the organisation of tours and has become a compere for the choir. We have also been delighted to hear that Peter Abberton, who has officially left the choir, will be available as deputy accompanist for Anne's and later Pat Jones's planned absences.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to the continuing support given by our Ladies group who work hard fund raising and providing direct help with refreshments and raffles at concerts organised by the Choir. The group raised £1127.90 during 2013.

So, thank you all for turning out on many occasions throughout the year, without you there would be no choir. And thank you for your support to me during 2013. Here's to a successful 2014, when we have a tour to the North East and a mini tour to Scarborough, something to really look forward to.

**David Borley**

**Chairman SMVC**

**Musical Directors Annual Report**

This has been a year of great highs and disappointing lows. Our high points were winning Choir Rocks in Leeds last March; our truly great tour to Devon and Cornwall last June; the Concert at Bolton Abbey; a most memorable day out and concert to Ulverston in July and a sell out Annual Concert in Ilkley last November.

The disappointments came at some poorly attended concerts - Fairweather Green and Settle - and our own poor attendance which let us down at St. Georges, for the Remembrance Service. I feel that this was down to a lack of enthusiasm and commitment from some members which prevents the choir from reaching its full potential. The average attendance at concerts for the year was 44 from a possible 73 which is only 60%. If you switch this round and we were to charge 60% of our fee, it would probably require the subscriptions to be increased as much as 3 fold.

For those of you who like statistics we sung at 28 venues using 45 different songs - 5 of which were brand new to us and another 7 were brought back from the archives. We were able to boast 11 new singers to our ranks on stage and we only lost 2, which was possibly the best statistic of the year!

I know that I say this every year, but where would we be without Anne? I, for one, can never thank her enough for her hard work and support. I am sure that following her departure from the choir next June this will be highlighted yet again. However, we are extremely fortunate to have Pat Jones to step into her shoes, and already we are beginning to see how lucky we are to welcome her to our "family". I am sure that you will all join with me in wishing Anne & Peter a long and happy retirement, and a warm welcome to Pat and hope that she will enjoy many happy years with the new men in her life. We must also thank Anne for sorting out the various soloists -outsiders as well as our own singers - for our concerts.

My grateful thanks must also go to Noel and David Borley and Peter Kitching, to Len Wilson, to Tim Bastow and to Richard Hartley, Ken Wardell and Eric Parker. A special thank you must go Gil Sorrell and Jay Kerr well in their work as librarians, as well as our loyal and faithful supporters for turning up at so many of our concerts.

Early Bird rehearsals start again ahead of another busy year, with a full fixture list including joint concerts with the Anston MVC , Polperro MVC and Budleigh Salterton MVC all of whom we have sung with before. Plus we have the ladies from Penzance who have the conductor from Mousehole MVC (Stephen Lawry, who's arrangement of The Fields of Athenry we still sing), the Harrogate MVC, with our ex-member Len Simpson in their midst, and the Dalesmen choir who now have Colin Easterby and Mike Templeton's father with them. Finally, we can add the Middlesbrough Community Choir and Newcastle MVC to list of choirs we

will be sharing a stage with during the year. We should thank Eric, who has worked hard to organise such a varied range of concerts, and also Ian McDonald for his efforts in making contacts and helping to put together our venues for the trips to the North East this coming summer.

Thank you all, at least those of you did, for filling in the recent questionnaire regarding our ongoing repertoire. I had 60 replies from the 78 handed out. I deliberately set the number of songs to choose at 5 so that it would require some thought. Despite the moans at this I think it worked.

I would like to be able to ring the changes in our concert programmes more often than we have been doing, but to do so requires a lot more effort from everyone throughout the week. It is disappointing to come to rehearsal and feel that the majority of the choir is sight reading the music because so little "homework" has been done since the previous rehearsal. I don't care who you have as MD that person can only function fully if the choir members are prepared to work at home as well as attend rehearsals and concerts. The 2 hours we spend here each week is the absolute minimum time for rehearsing; most top choirs rehearse twice a week. The CD's for the cars do not seem to be as effective as hoped for, and I would welcome any alternative ways you can suggest that we can adopt to make it easier or quicker for everyone to learn their music, and I would be very interested to try and incorporate them into our routine.

Please remember we are amateurs, so we will never be as good as we think we are, but this should not stop us from trying to be better than we thought we were. I am sure that with your efforts and support, we shall be able to look back at 2014 in 12 months time with pride and satisfaction at a year well done.

So, once again, gentlemen, Anne & Pat, thank you for another very successful year.

**Alan Clark (Jan 2014)**

Having recently retired from my post as the Choir Treasurer I was surprised and unprepared to be presented, at the AGM, with a Certificate of Appreciation for my services.

I would like therefore to take this opportunity to record my thanks to the choir for the presentation and pay tribute to many people who have helped me along the way. One of the joys of doing the Treasurer job was that by extracting annual subscriptions etc from all of you I managed to learn the name of every individual member. (Unfortunately I have now reached the point where I'm starting to forget names that I've known for a long time – ask Richard Hartley about that!)

It is the individual members who make this choir the successful organisation that it is. Apart from the elected officers there is a host of people doing jobs, often unnoticed, which ensure the smooth running of the choir.

In looking after the choir's finances I have much appreciated the assistance and cooperation given by Eric Parker (collection of concert fees and ticket sales), John Kelly (running the bonus ball scheme), Frank Place, a retired member (collection of patrons fees and running Gift Aid scheme), Tim Bastow (production of concert programmes), Doris Craven (patron – sale of programmes), Ralph Lister (sale of CDs and DVDs), Malcolm Hopkins (sale of choir sweaters etc), Eric Stow (organisation of Annual Dinner), The Ladies Support Group (fund raising, catering etc) but finally (and as instructed by our President) my long suffering wife Jean who operates the computer in our household.

I have also been amused by members who have (jokingly) questioned my honesty and, in one case, my sanity. All three members referred to have long since gone to the hereafter.

Jim O'Hara would regularly greet me by telling me he was always pleased to see the Treasurer. I would politely enquire as to why my presence gave him such pleasure. He would then reply "Because if you're here I know you haven't b.....d off with all our money".

David Town had a more subtle approach. Soon after I took on the job he started to enquire regularly about how I was settling into it and whether I was having any problems. Occasionally he would ask "Have you got the new car yet?" This question was repeated less frequently over the next few years until one day I had to tell him that I had changed my car. The old Rover had been traded in for a new Honda Civic. With a big grin on his face he said "Ah – obviously got the hang of the new job now!"

During one of our overseas tours Terry Eggleshaw took me aside, told me that what he was about to say was in the strictest confidence – not to be passed on to anyone! He then went on to explain that he was in the process of setting up, within the choir, a branch of a well known terrorist organisation.

He already had a handful of members enlisted and several more on the point of joining. He was now looking for a recruit who would also manage the branch's

financial affairs – I was the obvious candidate.

Entering into the spirit of this daft conversation I asked what remuneration there would be for such an important post. Terry's response was immediate – there would be substantial rewards – but not financial ones. The recompense would come in the form of a large belt which I would be required to wear under my shirt at all times. At a given signal from Terry I would have to press a button on the belt – my rewards would be instantaneous!

I declined his offer.

### **Alan Howell**

P.S. Is there any significance in the fact all these comedians resided in the upper echelons of the choir?

## **HOW TO PRINT YOUR OWN SHEET MUSIC COPIES FROM PERSONAL COMPOSER - from Alan**

It has been mentioned that some of the lyrics on the printed copy are too small. Tim often shrinks the Personal Composer original to enable him to print 2 pages on a single sheet.

However, you can print your own personal copy to suit your requirements as follows:-

Open the file for the song you want, Click FILE in the top bar, then PAGE SETUP in the drop box, then STAFF SIZE and try SIZE 1, GIANT. (It will probably be set on Choral when you see this list) Then OK, which will bring you back to the 1st page of your music.

Now click on EDIT on the top bar, select PAGE and scroll across and select PAGE LAYOUT.

On the new drop box there are a number of boxes to check. Leave any empty ones as they are, but SYSTEM SEPARATION should be 12

USE PAGE 1 AS TEMPLATE should be 1 change SYSTEM PER PAGE to 2 MEASURES to 3 STAFF SEPARATION to 6

Check the circle (to put a dot in it) next to TO END OF MANUSCRIPT.

All of this is not as daunting as it looks and sets up the MUSIC to a larger size, but it does not alter the lyrics. SO...

Back to page 1 of the music - or the first page where there are words printed, and click on the word ARROW next to ZOOM on the 3rd bar row, hold and scan your mouse across the line of text to change it to white text on a black background, now click TEXT on the top bar line and LARGER in the drop box that appears. You can do these last 2 actions several times until you are happy with the size of print.

When you are happy with the size, click on SAVE at the top, and then PRINT away.

When you set the size for the music size and saved, the number of pages shown at the top would have increased.

You can, if you wish, just do the actions to increase the print size, but unless you reduce the "measures" (which is what the Americans call "bars") there is a risk that your line of words will lose their spaces and become one word. A further alternative is to choose Size 0 or 00 instead of Giant when selecting Staff Size.

As usual, any problems, give me a phone call on 01282 545084

### **YORKSHIRE LOVE STORY**

An elderly man lay dying in his bed. While suffering the agonies of impending death he suddenly smelled the aroma of his favourite scones wafting up the stairs.

He gathered his remaining strength and lifted himself from the bed. Leaning on the wall he slowly made his way out of the bedroom and with even greater effort, gripping the railing with both hands, he crawled downstairs.

With laboured breath he leaned against the door-frame gazing into the kitchen. Were it not for death's agony he would have thought himself already in heaven for there, spread out upon the kitchen table were literally hundreds of his favourite scones.

Was it heaven? Or was it one final act of love from his devoted Yorkshire wife of sixty years, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man?

Mustering one great final effort he threw himself towards the table landing on his knees in crumpled posture. His aged and withered hand trembled towards a scone at the edge of the table when it was suddenly smacked by his wife with a wooden spoon .....

'Bugger off'. she said, 'they're for the funeral.'

<b>Reflections from Stephen Parsons – baritone</b>
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As a new member of the choir or am I? That's the question I suddenly asked myself when information was given to us about 'The Whitby Tour'. It was the first week of May 2012 when I joined the choir after receiving an encouraging phone call from Alan Clark. With only a couple of months to the tour I can hardly believe it is two years ago.

The singing and interaction through the choir's activities has filled a void in my life which I am thoroughly grateful for.

One thing I have recently become more aware of is the speed and efficiency that things are dealt with within the choir. It was at my first committee meeting this month (as baritone rep) that I realized the sheer commitment, dedication and workload these members take on to allow us all, including a common or garden lad (just kidding myself about the 'lad') like me to sing together.

As someone who has never sung in a choir before I hope I am not sounding too over enthusiastic about my experience and hope all new members will agree with me that the challenge of singing new songs, meeting like minded people and the fellowship of SMVC is a real pleasure.

Just to return to this year's tours which I am getting increasingly excited about as it is my first time on tour with you all. I was about to get into bed last night when my phone rang. A nice surprise as it was my son who I don't see here very often. 'Hi Dad, are you OK' he enquired. 'Yes' was my reply, feeling a little concerned, as he is based in London with photography firm. As we continued I heard him give a yawn. 'Where are you?' I asked. 'In Brazil at the airport waiting for a flight to Peru to photograph some horses' he gloatingly replied. 'A great experience' I went on, not plucking up the courage to tell him I was going on tour to Whitby. He didn't diminish my enthusiasm for the tours with this exotic travels.

I have many fond memories of the North East both on holidays and with my son and living in North Shields with friends so I am really looking forward to this. Whether it is Whitby, some other country or Steeton Methodist Church Hall it is the singing that has fulfilled me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all baritones for their support in helping with my role as part rep and hope we can keep future concert tick list as full as last week's.

Ah, I have just answered my own question. Yes I am a new member and always will be, as with each new venue I attend, each member I meet, each new song I sing I will always be learning.

I can feel a vibrancy in the choir that I'm sure everyone is enjoying. So my thanks and best wishes to SMVC in future years.

### **SMVC End of Year Concert 2013**

Holy Trinity Church, Skipton

As choir members set out for this finale to the year it must have been with certain level of trepidation. Several factors did not auger well. It was a classic December night, cold and wet, which was not likely to encourage a large audience. On top of that we were competing with the final of Strictly Come Dancing. The lure of a night in the warmth of your own home with a glass of pre Christmas beverage must have appealed to many.

However, the anxieties were dispelled. There was a very healthy and very responsive audience. The promise of a glass of wine and a mince pie must have helped! There was definitely a positive air in the church.

In many ways the concert was a fitting end to a successful year. SMVC had 67 men on stage which is a recent record. More importantly there were 11 new men on stage since the same time in 2012. This is a very positive indication of the success of a well planned recruitment campaign but also a measure of the continued success and development of the choir.

The concert programme had been in large part determined by the choir members themselves. Choir members had been asked for their favourites in our repertoire and this formed the basis of the programme. The combination of choir favourites and communal carols provided the basis for a great evening of choral enjoyment interspersed with a great mix of solo items.

The opening carol (O Come All Ye Faithful) seemed to warm everyone up and lift the spirits of all present. The first set of songs began with a powerful and controlled version of Vivaldi's 'Gloria'. In contrast was a beautiful rendition of the ever popular 'The Rose'.

The first half solos began with an irreverent version of Good King Wenceslas reflecting on the commercialisation of Christmas, sung by second tenor Ian McDonald who had the audience laughing out loud. This was followed by Richard Hartley from the Baritone section singing 'I Saw a Star' which is a very moving, rarely sung piece and performed with tenderness.

The second set included three more restrained, quiet and moving pieces. This included the choir showing off their linguistic skills by singing Calon Lan partly in Welsh and finishing with a powerhouse version of How Great Thou Art which clearly moved the audience.

We had a lengthy and sociable interval during which everyone was fed and watered in a very jolly festive atmosphere.

The second half kicked off with a communal 'Silent Night' to be followed by a rousing set of songs including three Male Voice Choir classics finishing with a rousing version of Battle Hymn of the Republic.

The solos slots were filled by a seasonal reading by our compere for the evening, Tim Bastow. This was from 'A Christmas Carol' and fitted the mood of the evening and was clearly enjoyed. Mike Templeton (baritone) completed the solos with an evocative and moving rendition of 'O Holy Night' sung with his mixture of quiet control and power.

The final set included two of the three songs with which SMVC won 'Choirs Rock' earlier in the year and from the response of the audience to 'Pretty Woman/You Got It' and 'You'll Never Walk Alone' it was clear why they were winners. This set reflected the skills of Alan Clark and the choir with an excellent mix of light-hearted and a combination of quiet and controlled choral singing allied to a powerful and moving sound.

For the finale Alan Clark (the musical director) invited male voice singers in the audience to join the choir (in good male voice choir tradition) for a tumultuous performance of Morte Criste. A fitting end to wonderful evening.

### **A Choir WAG**

There was an item in the Keighley News in January about this concert and it made reference to the fact that we had guests in the audience from Australia and Egypt amongst more local places.

It also talked about the fact that we had 11 new men on stage who had joined the choir over the last year or so. The motley crew are on the front cover.

Back row from left: Malcolm Mitchell, Richard Day, Trevor Devine, Peter Heady and Martin Winterton ; centre: Peter Taylor, Peter Stewart and Stuart Ebdon and Front : Terry Guest, Ron Horne and Jag Gunpath

As the choir are aware, one of the audience was Peter Headey's daughter's sister-in-law called Doaa, from Egypt. Doaa wrote to the choir after the concert to say how moved she had been and even cried at the solo 'Oh Holy Night'. She commented "It made me realise that beauty, devotion and faith has no religion."

Peter also informed us that Doaa's hometown had been attacked by militants on Christmas Eve. Mansoura was bombed three days after our concert with 14 dead and 100 injured including one of Doaa's relatives.

Food for thought.

### **SUMMARY OF LIFE**

### **GREAT TRUTHS THAT ADULTS HAVE LEARNED**

- 1) Raising teenagers is like nailing jelly to a tree.
- 2) Wrinkles don't hurt.
- 3) Families are like fudge...mostly sweet, with a few nuts.
- 4) Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.
- 5) Laughing is good exercise. It's like jogging on the inside.
- 6) Old age is when you choose your cereal for the fibre, not the toy.

### **THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE**

- 1) You believe in Santa Claus.
- 2) You don't believe in Santa Claus.
- 3) You are Santa Claus.
- 4) You look like Santa Claus.

### **SUCCESS**

At age 4 success is	Not piddling in your pants.
At age 12 success is	Having friends.
At age 17 success is	Having a driver's license.
At age 35 success is	Having money.
At age 50 success is	Having money.
At age 70 success is	Having a drivers license.
At age 75 success is	Having friends.
At age 80 success is	Not piddling in your pants.

Pass this on to someone who could use a laugh.

Always remember to forget the troubles that pass your way;  
BUT NEVER forget the blessings that come each day.

Have a  
Wonderful day with many \*smiles\*  
Take the time to live!!!  
Life is too short.

## Gift Aid

Choir members' subscriptions and patrons' fees become payable early in the New year and if you pay Income Tax you can, by means of the Gift Aid Scheme, enable the choir to reclaim from the tax man the tax you have paid on your contribution when it is grossed up.

Thus on a choir subscription of £50 we can reclaim an additional £12.50 and on patrons' fees of £35 an additional £8.75 for a couple and on £18 for a single person we can claim an additional £6.25.

None of us like paying Income Tax so here is a way to back some of the tax we have paid for the benefit of the choir at no extra cost to yourself.

So you can see that to Gift Aid your subscription is of great benefit to the choir and last year we were able to reclaim a total of £665 from the Inland Revenue.

There is the potential to considerably increase this amount as I am sure there are many more established members of the choir who would be eligible to Gift Aid their subscription. Now that we have several new choir members as a result of our recruitment drive there is further potential there, all at no extra cost to the subscriber. So come on choirmen and patrons not already in the Gift Aid scheme, sign the form now and let's increase substantially on the £665 we reclaimed last year.

To qualify you must be paying income tax and complete and sign a simple declaration form obtainable from me.

I am the Gift Aid secretary (although no longer a choir member having resigned for health reasons) and can be contacted on 01535 652232 or speak to Peter Kitching (the choir secretary) who will pass your name on to me.

**Frank Place** (Gift Aid Secretary)

## Pen Portrait : Ron Horne (2<sup>nd</sup> Tenor)



Some people can describe a life-changing conversion moment when they see 'the light' in a religious sense. In a singing sense I can pinpoint mine to a packed church service in Rastrick when the hymn 'Love Divine all Loves Excelling' to the tune of 'Blaenwern' was being fervently sung. I was enthralled by the soaring tenor line and resolved there and then to become a tenor. This was around the age of twelve before my voice had broken but fortunately I subsequently managed to reach near the top of the scale to achieve my ambition.

My first experience of singing in a choir was in the local Methodist church which I attended. One of my friends played the organ and we would gather round him to sing through the hymn book after church on Sunday evenings. One of the early highlights of my singing career was to join with hundreds of other sixth form students from West Riding to sing "The Creation" oratorio in Leeds Town Hall.

After studying for a Geography degree at Exeter I moved to a Methodist Teacher Training college in Oxford to obtain the necessary qualifications to enable me to take up secondary school work as a teacher of Geography. This was firstly in West Bromwich and then later in the Colne Valley. I enjoyed spells with small mixed voice choirs during these years.

The next step in my musical history was as a result of losing my wife in middle age to cancer. Feeling desolate and at a loose end I looked for a new challenge and discovered the Huddersfield Methodist Choir which sang to a high standard if not quite reaching the heights of the Choral Society. With almost one hundred members this was quite a new ground for me but once established there it was an experience I came to value greatly. In particular, I used to look forward with keen anticipation to the annual rendition in the Town Hall of Handel's 'Messiah' which I still love. There was great excitement amongst the choir members when a visit to North Carolina was arranged in 1990 and this went ahead to considerable acclaim. We stayed in the homes of local American families and got a good insight into the way of life they enjoy. Included in our itinerary was a concert we gave in the World Methodist Centre at Lake Junaluska.

After taking early retirement from teaching in 1990 (it had become a far different job from that I had appreciated thirty years before) I turned my hand to work firstly at a wheelchair maintenance company and then to manage the stores in a

Rover garage in Brighouse. These lasted a further six years before redundancy. At this point my second wife and I decided to retire to near Keswick where we lived happily for some sixteen years indulging in one of my favourite pastimes of fell walking. It was in Keswick that I joined The Mountain Singers ( a small MVC) and met a certain David Bertwhistle. Times were very hard for the choir and we struggled for many years to recruit new members. At times we were down to twelve or fifteen singers which proved to be a terrible handicap as you may imagine. Shortly after I left to come to bonny Skipton the Mountain Singers had to shut up shop, incidently not before we joined forces with the Dalesmen Singers to put on a concert in Keswick.

So to the present. Due largely to the influence of that late, lovely fellow David Birtwhistle, I was introduced to SMVC and with the help and encouragement from Alan , Keith, Ralph and Gil, I managed to earn my red jacket. I greatly enjoy the banter and fun but most of all the performances.

Ron

### **THE NORTH EAST TOUR (Friday June 27<sup>th</sup> – Monday June 30<sup>th</sup>)**

Costs : Double/Twin room £48 per room/night (B and B) ; Single £40 (B/B) ; for three sharing 'family' room £60 per room / night B/B ; Coach travel is £45/head. Less the £25 subsidy for choir members. Choir members cost for 3 nights (T or D) and travelling by coach is £92 , single is £140 , sharing in family rm is £80

The outline plan for the tour will be as follows:

#### **Friday:**

- Travel to Durham City in the morning. Arrive late morning. Tour party to have time to explore Durham itself where there is much to see. We are hoping to have a short sing in the Cathedral but they have yet to confirm this.
- Mid-late afternoon head for Whitley Bay and our base in the Windsor Hotel – should be time for a walk along the coast – we are literally yards from the the sea. There is also a fine Weatherspoons nearby!
- We are being offered an evening meal with a choice of 3 starters, 3 mains and 3 desserts for £13 per head. I will get menus and take orders much nearer the time
- I am proposing a social evening in the hotel with the possibility of a quiz or even a D-I-Y musical evening in the hotel bar which we could take over

## **Saturday:**

- Coach trip to Cragside in Northumberland (about an hour from Whitley Bay)– NT house and extensive gardens/arboretum- café/restaurant on site – check out their website.

### ***Extraordinary Victorian house, gardens and woodland - the wonder of its age***

Enter the world of Lord Armstrong - Victorian inventor, innovator and landscape genius. Cragside house was truly a wonder of its age. Discover the first house in the world to be lit by hydroelectricity. It is crammed full of ingenious gadgets – most of them still working. The gardens are incredible. One of the largest rock gardens in Europe leads down to the Iron Bridge, which in turn leads to the formal garden. Cragside is a National Trust site so bring your membership. Adult cost (group) of entry to house and garden is £12 (will need numbers nearer the time in advance)

- Return to Whitley Bay – people may want to spend a little time in Tynemouth before any joint rehearsal and concert at (presumably) 7.30 pm with Newcastle Male Chorus at St George’s Church in Tynemouth. This church has great acoustics – I personally checked them out before Christmas!
- Planned afterglow and buffet with NMC locally.

## **Sunday:**

- Coach trip possibilities to the Northumberland Coast – many options with picturesque ports and castles – will confirm plans near the time
- Can return to Hotel for break before heading for Middlesbrough for a 6.00 pm concert with Middlesbrough Community Choir in the Town Hall followed by social and buffet in Town Hall Crypt. This is a large mixed choir (90-100). Journey time to Middlesbrough is also about an hour.



- Return to hotel.

## Monday:

- Check out of hotel after breakfast
- Trip to Alnwick
- Booked to sing at Alnwick Garden for 2 short sets at 1.00 and 3.00 pm.
- The choir get free entry and guests reduced entry for £9 per head
- Much to see and enjoy at the garden so would spend some time before first concert. Restaurant/café on site
- Head back to Steeton around 4.00 pm – should be back around 7.30 pm – dependent on bus stops on way back

Welcome to **The Alnwick Garden**. Just ten years ago, this site was derelict and forgotten. Today, The Alnwick Garden is an inspiring landscape with beautiful gardens, unique features - including a Treehouse and the Poison Garden - and magnificent architecture, all brought to life with water.



## Alan's Desert Island Concerts!

As the 20 year anniversary of the collision between Steeton MVC and Alan Clark approaches, Ian has asked me to compile a list of my choice of the 10 best concerts in that period.

Obviously this is very subjectiv, and some of the biggest and most prestigious concerts were not necessarily the best in my eyes. I suppose I should explain what, to me, is "best". This would be a concert where I got the feeling when standing waving my arms around that the choir and I were as one; if I went wrong - we all went wrong; if I hung on the that last note a bit longer than usual, then everyone in the choir had enough breath to meet my needs. There would have been a good turn out of singers, and even if the balance was not perfect, everyone seemed aware of what was required to cover this up. There would also have been a good and responsive audience in a venue that we felt was sympathetic acoustically. So here goes.

1. The outstanding performance to me has always been the service in **St. Marten's Church, Maastricht May 1996** and I get a reminder of it whenever I go to The Old Star, as there is a statue in the showcase there that we received following that service. Sadly, there is no video or audio record of the singing.

2. **The Centenary Concert at St. George's Hall, Bradford in April 2008** for all the effort that went into achieving this milestone event from so many people, including all those members in the 100 years who had each played their part to get us where we are today.

3. **The End of Year Concert December 2013** because everything seemed to fall into place and make a special evening. The bonus that night was having so many new members we had "collected" in the year on stage with us.

4. The first time we sang at **Fountains Abbey** was pretty special in September 1999..

5. ....as were all 3 occasions we have sung in **Bolton Abbey Church**. Such wonderful surroundings, acoustics and audiences, and the singing was pretty good too.

6. Perhaps because my wife and I made a weekend of it and thoroughly enjoyed the "whole package", the concert **last July in Ulverston** gives me a glowing feeling each time I remember it. Standing ovations are not given after all of our concerts, so when we do get one they stick in the mind.

7. The evening in **St. Mary's Church in Killarney with the Kerry Choral Union** is next, closely followed by

8. **The Congress Theatre in Cwmbran** with The New Harmony Singers as part of our tour to South Wales in 2007. I think both of these evenings were capped off with a decent "afterglow" to add the icing to the cake.

9. I probably am not alone in putting any or all of the performances at **The Menin Gate** on a list like this. I regard myself as being extremely lucky to have shared this experience 3 times with the choir (and am quite surprised I have got so far down the list before The Menin Gate appeared).

10. Finally, for the sheer difference to anything previously mentioned, **March 2013 Leeds Armouries, The Choir Rocks**, and Oh boy, didn't we just!

It has been amazingly difficult to pick 10 performances out of over 550. How could I not have included the night at Cullingworth for my 500th concert celebrations; our performance in Lunen Church on our last visit to Germany; the wedding party at The Full Circle Cafe in Leeds: the service in Church of St.

Francis in Chester (May 2002), Cologne Cathedral (May 1999), Penzance in June 2006 with Mousehole MVC, or the service last June in Uffcombe (John Gardner's church)? I also look back with sadness at the concert in May 2012 in Otley which was Barry Tayler's last concert with us, and I cannot let the moment pass without remembering Arthur Wilson, both the celebrations at Currergate for the award of his CBE, and the packed church for his funeral in February 2003.

In case you haven't already noticed, I have managed to cheat and list 20 for my Best 10 concerts. To balance things up, here are 3 that I would like to erase from my memory - and this list was so easy, because there were so few to recall.

1. Glusburn Institute, March 2011
2. Oswaldtwistle Town Hall, September 1996
3. St. Georges Hall, Bradford, November 2013

So many wonderful memories, so difficult to choose. I am sure that each of you would have at least 1 concert on your list that is missing from mine, probably more. Perhaps this could be an ongoing feature for future editions. For me the sheer joy and pride the choir has given me when we have sung at most of our concerts - not just these listed above - make it worthwhile, and set a challenge each time to try to get next concert we do up for serious consideration for the next time a similar list is compiled.

**Alan Clark**

### **Roy Talbot – Pen Portrait**

I had always said that if I ever lived anywhere near Steeton then I would join the choir. When I moved to Utley in August 2013 I made good that promise to myself and I now love every minute of it. I do not have a particularly musical background. I was in a church choir as a boy and as head choir boy I remember singing a few solos. But apart from that my singing has been restricted to the shower. I have always loved music though, and I go to as many concerts and musicals as I can, from Fleetwood Mac to Les Miserables.

I was born in Tunbridge Wells in Kent in 1954 where I went to Skinners School to do my 'A' levels. Then on to Leicester University where I did a Combined Science Degree with Astronomy as a main subject. Job opportunities in astronomy were very restricted and so I joined Marley Tile company in 1975 as a graduate trainee computer programmer, and that has been my career ever since. Back in those days it was all paper tape and card inputs. You would write your computer program on coding sheets, hand it to the punch girls (or data preparation workers

as they would now be called!) and a few days later it would be given back to you as a reel of paper tape! Then you would hand it in to the computer operators, and if you were lucky it would get run overnight. Usually it would land on your desk the next morning with perhaps a couple of hundred compilation errors all caused by a spurious full stop or comma in the wrong place.

After 3 years working here I decided it was time for a little travelling. A work colleague, one of his friends and myself planned to travel overland to Australia. We intended to go by campervan, but as these were way out of our budget we bought a cheap van and started work on it to add beds, cooking facilities etc. Meanwhile we advertised in the London papers for a fourth person to go with us. Then things started to fall apart. My colleague's friend dropped out and the van started to break down regularly as we worked on it. Our advertisement had been answered so there were three of us, but we decided that it was going to be too risky driving the van in Asia, where there was no guarantee of spare parts. So having read a book by Dervla Murphy called Ireland to India with a Bicycle I suggested we pedalled instead. In the end, and after a lot of persuasion, that is what we did. We left England in summer 1978 and we were 10 months on the road covering almost 10,000 miles altogether. We had a budget of £3.00 a day for Europe and then just £1.00 a day for Asia. Janet, Kim and I used to cycle around 50 miles a day going from one camp site to the next. We went through France down to the south coast, then across through Monaco, and into Italy. Through Venice and Trieste and on into Yugoslavia as it was then. All down the coast of Yugoslavia through to the top of Greece. Then into Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and finally Sri Lanka where Janet and I flew on to Australia and Kim flew back to England. Needless to say we had lots of adventures during our travels and in those days there were no mobile phones, so that we were effectively cut off from our families, apart from picking up mail at various pre-arranged Poste Restante stops.

Trouble in the world seemed to follow us round once we left Europe. Iran was in turmoil as the Shah was in the process of being thrown out and a few nights in Iran we saw tanks rolling through the streets and we often heard gunfire echoing in the distance. In one town we were smuggled out of the area in a van, as we were told that some locals thought we were American and they were coming to 'get' us. Afghanistan was beautiful, but the Russians were building up a presence there and there was a fair amount of hostility to any foreigners. We saw the wonderful Giant Bhuddas at Bamiyan. These have since been destroyed by the Taliban, but I understand that some sort of restoration is going on at the moment. We cycled up the Khyber Pass and into Pakistan, and my first memory of that country was having stones thrown at us as we cycled down into Peshawar. We spent about 3 months in India altogether and I must admit the Taj Mahal under a full moon is the most wonderful man made site on this earth. If only the choir could perform there!

I then worked for a year in Melbourne at the State Superannuation Board before coming home again and catching up with family after 2 years away. However having been back in England for about 2 weeks an opportunity arose to get a contract in Abu Dhabi and for various reasons I could not refuse. I worked out there for a year altogether, thoroughly enjoying the life style. We would start work at 7 or 7:30, but be finished by 2 in the afternoon. Then it was off to the beach for a barbecue lunch, followed by water skiing. We were allowed to apply for a liquor licence over there and once we had obtained one, we were very popular with the local Arabs, who were not allowed to buy any booze themselves!

After Abu Dhabi I was offered a 2 week contract in Yorkshire working for ICL in Leeds. That 2 weeks was extended and extended and I stayed working for them for about 10 or so years. By this time I had started my own Company and, through my contacts at ICL, I employed about 20 others, all contract staff also working for ICL. Since then the programming industry has withered away to a fraction of what it was. I still own my own company but I only have one other person working for me now. I have stayed in Yorkshire ever since that first 2 week contract back in 1981, although I have not managed to lose my southern accent.

I have had contracts with NHS (2 years commuting to Newcastle from Leeds), CAA (one week in London), and various other private companies over the years. Currently I am working for SolarCentury, who are also based in London, writing some solar power monitoring software for them.

I first met my lovely wife Niki back at Marley Tile Company in 1977 where she was one of those punch girls! I met her again in the Middle East, where she was working in Dubai, and we finally got together when I came back from Abu Dhabi. We went back to Sevenoaks in Kent to get married in 1982, and a year later had Geraldine followed 2 years after that by Charlotte. These two wonderful girls (or ladies now) have been brought up as Yorkshire lasses through and through, and thanks to Geraldine, we have been blessed with two lovely grandchildren, Zach and Imogen. Charlotte is an F1 doctor at Leeds teaching hospital and I couldn't admire her dedication to her chosen career any more, as she has suffered a great deal healthwise. I cannot believe how over-worked most of the front line staff of the NHS is, but despite that I do believe there isn't a country in the world with a better health service.

Niki is working at a nursery school in Bradford where she helps parents in the community. One of her roles is to try and get fathers to become more involved in their children's lives. This has been very hard with the culture of the Asian community that leaves all the responsibility of bring up children to the females. However this is gradually changing, and in no small part to her work.

She is the best thing that ever happened to me and our life together is perfect. Our interests include gardening and DIY. Part of the reason for moving to Utley

was to buy a house with a larger garden and as soon as we have the inside of the house sorted out we are both looking forward to spending time sorting out the garden.

I am a keen Liverpool supporter, to the extent that I have to wear red clothes whenever we are playing! I used to go and watch them a lot but these days it is much harder to buy tickets. When I was at University I went to the Liverpool - Newcastle cup final (which we won 3 – 0), but I had to buy a ticket from a tout outside Wembley. It cost me the grand sum of £40, which might not sound much at all now, but back then and being a student it was a fortune. I have been to a few other finals but sadly missed the amazing Champions League final where we came back from 3 – 0 down to win on penalties. Another memory I have of going to see Liverpool was the day the twin towers came down in America. Just before we set off, I was watching it on TV unable to believe what I was seeing. And the atmosphere at the match was so quiet all the way through. Actually I don't even remember who we played or what the score was.

Anyway that is a brief summary of me. I am now looking forward to being an active member of the choir for many many years.

### **The Ladies Group:**

On Saturday 10th May we are holding a plant and cake stall at The Buttercross at Otley Market Place and we would welcome any plants, cakes etc you are willing to contribute. The ladies now meet every second Monday at The Old Star (where the chaps go after rehearsal) so any of the ladies (especially the new ones) are more than welcome to join us. We are also planning our annual outing this year. It may be Liverpool or Southport or - who knows - both!!!. So if you are up for a trip out please let us know.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has supported our fund raising efforts, we like to make a bob or two for your funds.

### **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.

### Contacts for SMVC

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

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

<b>March</b>		
Saturday	8 <sup>th</sup>	Padiham, Unitarian Church
Saturday	15 <sup>th</sup>	Choir Dinner
Saturday	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Ilkley Rotary – All Saints
<b>April</b>		
Saturday	5 <sup>th</sup>	Shipley, St Peter' Church
Saturday	12 <sup>th</sup>	Leeds City Banqueting Hall
Saturday	26 <sup>th</sup>	Shelf, St Michael's
<b>May</b>		
Saturday/Sunday	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Weekend tour with Whitby Lifeboats concert on the Saturday, possible Sunday lunchtime shorter concert in aid of Hospice in Scarborough
Saturday	31 <sup>st</sup>	Skipton, charity concert with Polperro Fishermens Choir - Holy Trinity
<b>June</b>		
Saturday	7 <sup>th</sup>	Cullingworth Village Hall, Anne's Farewell Concert
Saturday	21 <sup>st</sup>	St Luke's East Morton
Fri-Mon	27-30 <sup>th</sup>	North East Tour – staying on Tyneside
<b>July</b>		
Fri or Sat (TBC)	18/19 <sup>th</sup>	Margaret Carey Foundation Concert TBC
<b>August</b>		
Saturday	30 <sup>th</sup>	Woodlands Methodists Harrogate
<b>September</b>		
Saturday	13 <sup>th</sup>	Joint concert with Budleigh Salterton All Saints Ilkley
Saturday	27 <sup>th</sup>	Joint concert with Anston MVC Beckfoot School
<b>October</b>		
Saturday	11 <sup>th</sup>	Annual Concert, Kings Hall, Ilkley with City of Bradford Band
Saturday	25 <sup>th</sup>	Joint concert with Harrogate MVC St Peter's Harrogate
<b>November</b>		
Saturday	8 <sup>th</sup>	British Legion Skipton Holy Trinity
Sunday	30 <sup>th</sup>	Joint concert with Opus 44 The Octagon Riddlesden
<b>December</b>		
Saturday	13 <sup>th</sup>	End of Year concert at All Saints Bingley