

Patrons Newsletter July 2011

Here we are, already half way through the year, and everything going on at a pace. Well let us get up to date. Our first concert this year was our annual fund raiser in March at Tower Street Methodist Church in Exmouth where our guests were The Rame Peninsula Male Voice Choir from Cornwall. A large audience enjoyed a varied programme from both choirs. One of the highlights was the Rame quartet version of Steal Away with four members standing in four points of the church singing unaccompanied. Very moving and emotional.

This concert also saw the introduction of our new style programme. Little did we realise that when Stan Browning took over as publicity officer last year, that he brought with him a lifetime of expertise in the Print industry which together with his wife, Jackie's technical prowess with computers means that each of our programmes comes with a different cover in full colour. These will become collectors items in due course, so do not throw them away. We are also very grateful to Taff Hooper and Friends Provident for the printing of these programmes.

Our next concert at the end of March was at the Temple Methodist Church, Budleigh Salterton in aid of Cancer Research. The soloist, flautist Jess Hill is the granddaughter of Gerry Hill who sings with the baritones. Jess first performed with us when she was thirteen and it is great to see her progress over the years. This concert was also our dress rehearsal for the international male voice choir festival being held in Truro at the end of April. Once again we were well supported and our competition pieces were well received.

As April 29th dawned the choir began its journey across the Tamar to Truro. The men were still trying to memorise their harmonies, whilst our ladies were somewhat distracted by a certain wedding. It is worth mentioning that this International Festival is held every two years and this was our third consecutive appearance. This year we stayed at The Falmouth Hotel on the Esplanade overlooked by Pendennis Castle. The location and service were exceptional; so congratulations to our secretary Adrian Haysom for making all the arrangements. Saturday morning, the day of the competition, dawned bright and sunny and full of hope we made our way to The Hall for Cornwall in Truro for our performance. It was the largest choir we have ever staged at Truro, with 55 of us up front. The acoustics are not great but we performed to the best of our ability and the packed audience greatly enjoyed our rendition of Comrades in Arms, All through the Night, and Music of the Night. Unfortunately we did not come in the first three. The winners were the Anglo Welsh choir Canoldir from Birmingham who beat the local favourites Four Lanes from Truro. Back to the hotel and a marvellous dinner followed by a sing-song in the lounge afterwards. On Sunday the weather turned against us as a south west gale arrived which kept most of us confined to barracks. After a late lunch we proceeded to St Andrews Church in Falmouth where we performed to a packed house. The afterglow with our Cornish hosts was held back at our hotel with local pasties and plenty of singing. Harry Carpenter one

of our baritones is well known for his love of these Cornish delicacies and was last seen collecting any unused pasties for his tuck box. Monday was very cold and with two outdoor concerts scheduled we could be suffering with frostbite by the end of the day. Our first venue was Pendennis Castle and with the wind howling around us we were very grateful that an indoor hall was available. It was a bit of a squeeze but it sounded very good and considering the weather there was a good crowd. We finished at Pendennis about midday and we were due to go on stage at the Eden Project at 2-30pm. A bit tight as with the holiday traffic it took a good hour to get there. Practically all of us made it in time and we gave our best performance of the weekend with several encores. So another Truro weekend came to a close. For me the lasting memory was the interaction between us all. At practice you tend only to acquaint with the members of your own section, so it was great to get to know others.

At the end of May we went to All Saints Church in Sidmouth in aid of the building fund. The work is almost completed and what a joy to perform there in front of a packed church with its improved acoustics. There was no room for the choir so we had to go to the church hall where we could follow proceedings on the big screen. Technology is a wonderful thing if you can comprehend it. Personally I think it is all magic.

In June we sang at the Temple Methodist Church in Budleigh in aid of Shandford Residential Care Home comfort fund. Once again a full house with extra seating having to be provided. The choir were supported by the soprano Josie Walledge with Mathew Cann at the piano. One month later and we were back in Budleigh to launch the Budleigh Music Festival at St Peters Church. We shared the stage with the Exmouth acapello group Renaissance. These ladies under the direction of Maire Hoppins have gone from strength to strength. They are very good and worth listening to, if you get the chance. The church was almost full and once again a good concert ensued. I see from the programme notes that during the last five years the choir has raised £50,000 for charity.

A week later and we held our Annual General Meeting at which it was announced that our Musical Director, Allen Coles would be retiring at the end of the year. Allen joined the choir in 1996 when he and Tegwen, his wife moved back to Exmouth after 40 years in Barnstaple. They were a well known couple in North Devon, both playing in bands and orchestras. Allen was also a member of Barnstaple Male Voice Choir for 9 years. The choir was very lucky to persuade Allen to take over the reins in 1997 when the membership had dwindled to 29. That we now have a membership of 70 speaks for itself. In nearly 40 years this choir has only had 3 MD's. A very fit 81 year old, we wish Allen and Tegwen all the best and a very big thank you from all the members.

Now I know I have been promising you a feature on our comperes but I have run out of time and space so I will include it in the next newsletter which will also feature our trip to Cardiff and the Royal British Legion concerts.