

As Ian Stangoe mentioned in his Council notes, the **Melbourne** Choir disbanded during 2020 after more than 50 years of proclaiming the Gospel in song. The reasons were advancing age and dwindling numbers - a story that has sadly been repeated in choirs elsewhere.

In August, Steve Dart, formerly of the **Bury** Choir and latterly the **Suffolk** Choir, passed away after a short illness.

Elizabeth Hawes, wife of Patrick Hawes, formerly of **Whitstable** Choir, passed away in August.

In September, **Council** decided to postpone the Scottish Festival until a future time when choirs can once again meet and such an event is a possibility. However, *Keep Singing 4 (KS4)* was published on the FMVP Website and is available to choir members, together with training tracks old and new.

Also in September, the **Highland** choir shared some news: Eric Halkett's wife Morag sadly passed away in April; Bob Matheson had successful heart surgery

in June; Duncan Chisholm had successful stomach surgery in February; Donnie Cumming left the choir after nearly 30 years to look after his disabled wife.

During September we also heard that Alan Smith had, with regret, stood down as **Chesterfield** choir leader after 18 years. At that time the choir was without a leader. I have no further news.

In January 2021 Alison, wife of Colin Carbert of Council and **White Rose** choir, sadly passed into the Lord's presence after being ill for a number of months.

**Bristol Evangel** choir have lost 3 members in just a few months and would value prayers for their future. This year's Bristol Festival has been cancelled.

**Bolton** choirmen have kept in touch with each other by various phone calls and EMails over the winter.

**Morecambe** choirman David Tennant sadly passed away in hospital on 7<sup>th</sup> March after a short illness. Please remember Dianne and Adam in your prayers.

Thank you so much to all who have contributed. I will let everyone know about the next edition in due course. Please remember the **Annual Day of Prayer** for the movement on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March, James McRoberts' birthday. If ever the movement needed prayer for its work and its very survival, it is surely now.

*Yours in Christ, Vaughan*



# CHOIRLINK

*The Prayer and Praise bulletin of the Festivals of Male Voice Praise*

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Welcome once again to Choirlink! The last edition was written just under a year ago in the early stages of The Pandemic. Since then no choirs have met in the UK although there has been some activity in Australia which you can read about. You may also spot the fact that your editor has moved house in the interim, though my EMail address has not changed. We begin with news from UK National Council, which met via Zoom on 10<sup>th</sup> March.

## COUNCIL REPORT: MARCH 2021

*Ian Stangoe, Chairman*

Ian opened the Zoom meeting to all Council members with the exception of Gordon Wells by reading from Psalm 89 verses 5-8.

Apologies were received from Gordon Wells who tendered his resignation from Council due to ill health. Council wish to thank him for his contribution to the FMVP leadership over many years.

Paul Davies had previously circulated a summary of accounts for the period which obviously showed little change in the last six months. Council agreed that under the present circumstances we should give the choirs and choirmen a subs and Insurance "holiday" for the next year.

The website now contains all the music printed in our FMVP books together with training

tracks for choirmen to access, print and listen to. Thanks to Alfred Tarring and Ewart North for their dedication with this project. Also to David Wilson who spent so much time 'proofing' the material.

The meeting discussed the Scottish Festival and it was unanimously agreed that due to the present Coronavirus crisis this should be put on hold until the picture becomes clearer once government restrictions on large

meetings and social distancing rules have been lifted.

Since our last meeting the Melbourne Choir have informed us that they have ceased to function. Deep concern was expressed for all the choirs in the movement as we are all unable to meet together due to the present pandemic.

No other business was discussed; Mike closed the meeting in prayer.

## United Kingdom

### HIGHLAND GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

*Eric Halkett / Ernie Collinson*

The Highland Choir has recently lost two much loved members.

Sam MacDonald died peacefully on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at the good age of 90. He was an excellent first tenor and was secretary of the choir for 10 years 2003-2012 but he served on the committee before then and until his death. He was a

devoted family man and cared for his wife Tina for several years after she was confined to a hospital bed in their home, although his daughter Ann was a very able helper. He was also a much loved elder in the Inverness East Church of Scotland for many years and wrote many helpful meditations on the Psalms and New Testament books to help the members draw closer to the Lord. In his professional life Sam was an excellent civil engineer and was responsible for the supervision

### SYDNEY CHRISTIAN MALE VOICE CHOIR

*David Gordon*

As with many choirs in Australia, we suspended meeting in person in late March, and (by NSW Government decree) were not allowed to resume; however, we "met" almost every Friday night from late April onwards using Zoom, and most of the men appreciated "connecting" again, even if it was virtual. We invited the committee members from the Brisbane choir to join us ... and two did. December 11<sup>th</sup> was our final Zoom meeting until we

(hopefully) meet again in person in late Jan. - and both the Brisbane men said how much they had appreciated the fellowship and the camaraderie. (The situation in Qld was more relaxed than in NSW, but because the ages of the choir men put them in the high risk category, their committee chose not to resume meeting for practice; however, they organised a face-to-face lunch in a park a couple of weeks ago, and about 18 men turned up.) The Brisbane choir had scheduled a Festival in Brisbane last Sept., but that has been rescheduled for Sept. 2021.

## From here and there...

*In addition to current items, I'm taking this opportunity to provide a brief digest of some news which came in since the last 'printed' edition of Choirlink over a year ago. This was only communicated by EMail at the time, so not everyone may have seen it.*

Sadly, **Cheltenham** Choir lost one of their 2<sup>nd</sup> Tenors, Jimmy O'Donnell, in April 2020 after suffering for some time from a form of dementia and living in a Residential Home.

Also in April, Win Watkins of the **Bristol Evangel** Choir passed into the Lord's presence after suffering a stroke and heart at-

tack. This happened while he and Barb were visiting family in Denver, Colorado. The travel restrictions made things very difficult but Barb is now back in the UK and living in Winterbourne.

In July, **Cheltenham** lost another of its 2<sup>nd</sup> Tenors, David Duffey. The cause wasn't given but COVID-19 is a possibility.

## Worldwide

### BRISBANE FESTIVAL MALE VOICE CHOIR

*Neil Moss*

The Brisbane Festival Male Voice Choir has been in 'Shutdown' since March last year. The Covid 19 rules have now been relaxed to a certain extent. Our other problem has been the availability of a Practice venue. In November 2020 the Church which we have used for our practices for the last thirty-five years advised us that their premises would not be available to us except on a Monday or Tuesday night which was not really suitable.

We subsequently approached six churches to see if we could obtain a suitable venue. After a lot of phone calls, visits and discussions we have now been offered a Baptist Church at Upper Mt Gravatt in Brisbane. We had the first practice last Friday at 7.30pm. with more than thirty men present. The acoustics of the Church are good and

they had the piano tuned especially for us. Please pray that the regulations will be eased to enable us to go out and present in the coming months.

We have a couple of matters for prayer. Noel Gom, our most senior member, is terminally ill and under the Doctor's recommendations is not receiving treatment. Some in the UK may know him as he lived many years in the UK and sang in choirs while there. Please also pray for our longest serving first Tenor Richard Goodison who has severe back problems. Under his current medication he is unable to drive long distances. Normally he commutes from the Gold Coast to Brisbane for practices which is an hour plus drive on the freeway.

I trust that in future messages we will be able to share details of outreach in Brisbane and/or nearby country areas.

of building many of the causeways in the Western Isles as well as many of the good roads in the West of Scotland from Campbeltown to John o' Groats.

Ian Colquhoun died on 17<sup>th</sup> January having been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer six months before. Ian was a gentle, quiet, private man but on occasion had a sharp wit, which made us all smile. He too was an excellent first tenor in the choir and was in fact one of the original founder members, but left after several years, returning in 2015 with his second tenor friend Jim Main.

Both of these men were gentlemen and loved to sing about their trust in the Lord Jesus and our Heavenly Father.

Once a fortnight our musical director, Eileen Mackintosh, has been hosting a zoom practice. The format is a welcome prayer from our chairman Alex Kelso, Eileen takes each part through one of our core pieces (all muted of course), a time of corporate prayer, sing a hymn –

this varies between old and modern favourites, and a time of open fellowship catching up on news. Members in Moray choir asked if they could join us for these practice sessions and we are extremely happy to welcome them and some previous members who have moved away physically, but of course can join in virtually.

By the time this is printed, John Buchanan of Moray Choir will have brought together various singers and musicians for an evening of Praise and Worship.

How we all long to meet together for practice and to bring the Praise and Worship of our Lord and Saviour to Old folks homes, evangelical outreach and of course our Choir Festivals across the country.

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### ST. IVES MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

*Frank Stevens*

What a strange year it has been! No choir for twelve months, and will we be able to continue once Covid restric-

tions are finally lifted?

Like other choirs, we too have lost members. A few years ago we had 39 in the choir but our number dropped to about twenty at the last practice. It seems difficult to attract younger members, which is so sad when we have such a valuable message to give. In January, one of our founder members of the choir, John Trevor-row passed away (not Covid related.) He will be sorely missed for his sense of dry humour, but his two sons (the youngest choir members) both sing in the choir and his brother, William, sings with Burraton Choir in Saltash.

On a lighter note, when I formed the choir back in 2007, I explained what the aims of a Male Voice Praise Choir were, viz 'to spread the Gospel message through song.' At that time, there were major road works between the town centre and the chapel where we practice at the top of the town. After the practice everyone jumped into their cars and went home. But one car, stopping at the traffic lights, noticed a water bottle

dropping on to the bonnet and the driver realized he had left the bottle, together with his music folder, on the roof while he found his keys. Looking behind the car at the lights, he noticed a dozen or so photocopied music sheets going up the road! At the next practice I thanked the person concerned for spreading the Gospel around town! We all had a good laugh which makes us all feel better. This is part of what I have missed over the last year, the comradeship between fellow Christians and choir members.

In a few weeks I will contact all those in the choir and see if we are able to continue once restrictions are lifted.

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## LONDON & HOME COUNTIES CHOIR NEWS

*Keith Youngman, Chairman*

As we begin to see an end to the pandemic and rejoice in thought of being able to return to communal worship, we can also start to think again about the FMVP mission of singing about our beliefs and what a life with the Lord can mean for eve-

ryone. I was pleased to receive a call a few weeks ago from John Cowell of the Luton choir suggesting a Service of Thanksgiving when the restrictions allow. I understand this idea has already received support from many others and I am adding my whole-hearted support to the suggestion.

John's suggestion is for a service in the late summer/autumn subject to Covid restrictions being lifted. The service would be one of Thanksgiving for both the life of choirmen who have passed to be with the Lord during the pandemic as well as thanks to the Lord for bringing us through these unprecedented times. The service would be open to all choirs and I hope that this special service would be attractive to many in the Area to make this a truly regional time of Male Voice Praise and worship.

Please be prayerful that the preparations for this service will continue to go smoothly and that many choirmen will take this opportunity to get back singing the gospel message again.

## EXETER MALE VOICE PRAISE

*Alfred Tarring*

Exeter choir is in the same boat as most choirs with nothing to report! Also, along with many choirs our numbers have reduced by 3 members being called home to glory.

However, we have been really encouraged by one of our choirmen, Maurice Harrison, who has been determined to keep contact with everyone and to engender fellowship amongst the choir. He has performed a really wonderful service for the Lord and for the choir by sending out a letter or email either once or twice a week to each member – he has sent out 74 since the start of the first lockdown. These emails/letters have included up to date information on the choirmen, any FMVP news, comments on the daily news as it might affect us, some spiritual gems from God's word, and a regular source of humour! Thanks, Maurice, you've done a grand job, but we hope that we can soon meet again and so you won't have to do it for very much longer!