



CHOIRLINK

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

No. 17

**JANUARY
2023**

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A Happy New Year to you all, and welcome to Choirlink. After the last issue, where there was little news to share, this time it's a bumper edition! We begin straight away with choir news.

United Kingdom

BOLTON MALE VOICE PRAISE

Mike Dewhurst

We have had a successful Christmas period taking 3 engagements (carol services) for which we had been practising during our Autumn / Winter session. These were reasonably well attended and an encouragement to us. We feel Covid has caused a change in attitudes and people still seem reluctant to come out and gather the same as before. At the moment we are on our winter break and will resume again in a few

weeks when the bad weather and dark nights period of the year are over. At the moment there is nothing on the horizon so our practices will be just to keep our fellowship together, trusting that the Lord will open doors and new engagements will be forthcoming. Our pianist Carol has recently had a major operation and thankfully is now back home recovering. Please remember her and her family in your prayers. We send greetings to all and trust 2023 will see 'normality' return to our work and witness for Him.

HIGHLAND GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Eric Halkett

Praise the Lord for He is good!

The choir were able to sing at the Cameron House Care Home and what a delight it was to hear and see the residents sing so heartily. We are now also back able to sing on a regular basis to the Isobel Fraser Care Home. It was a joy to hear one of the residents give a spontaneous rendition of 'It is no secret' and requests to sing an additional favourite hymn. However there were some problems with administration at the prison that meant we were not able to sing the Gospel to the staff and inmates this year.

Despite some logistical problems on the road to Dingwall (the Kessock bridge was closed causing traffic grid lock in Inverness) and a fresh fall of snow, the choir sang well at the Annual Farming Community carol service to a smaller congregation than in the past, but still raised a good amount for Alzheimer's. The staff at the

Mart went beyond helpful as they provided staging for us in the bull ring so that all the choirmen were able to see our talented conductor with ease.

A new year and we are certainly quick off the mark, as we have another engagement at the Isobel Fraser and a fundraiser for Bear Necessities in January. We plan to restart our annual dinner in February where the choirmen and guests can enjoy fellowship over a meal and have a wee social time. We have a couple of engagements in March, then it will be all concentrating on the trip to Ballymena and Peterhead and planning for our own Festival in Inverness in a new venue.

Thanks for the opportunity to share some of the news from the Highlands and may the Lord richly bless you.

[I would like to record here my appreciation to Ernie Collinson who was my very faithful contact with the Highland Choir since the passing of Sam Macdonald. Ernie has now retired from the Committee and taking a well-earned rest! - Vaughan]

**LONDONDERRY GOSPEL
MALE CHOIR**
Craig Henderson

The Londonderry Gospel Male choir re-commenced practices in September after a two and a half year lay-off due to Covid. We welcomed two new members: Ivor Ferguson to the second tenor section and Clarence Houston who has joined the second basses.

During the Covid break our brother Ken Garret suffered a stroke and we thought because of his disability he would not be able to return to the choir, but God had other plans and Ken is doing his bit in the second tenor section. We also expect another new member later on this month.. To God be the Glory.

On Friday 3rd February we plan to hold an evening of fellowship together with spouses and a few friends from around the country with whom we have enjoyed fellowship in the Gospel over many years, and we look forward to this.

Requests for the choir to sing at

Gospel meetings are now coming in again and for this we give Praise to God.

**LONDON & HOME
COUNTIES CHOIR NEWS**
Keith Youngman, Chairman

It is encouraging to see from the reports below how choirs are beginning to build a ministry of song again. Although it is with a reduced number of choirs in the Area, we pray that from this point we can grow and importantly attract younger men into the joy of singing with the added bonus it is God's Gospel they will be singing about and praising Him.

We are also in the process of closing the charity status for the Area movement. When we had a big London Festival each year this was an efficient way of managing the finances but now it has become a burden slowly eating into the remaining funds.

News from Uxbridge
Gerald Durrant

We are still carrying on with 7 members: three 1st Tenor, two 2nd Tenor, one 1st Bass and me

2nd Bass. We had two Christmas engagements as usual with help from Luton and Hertford.

The regular visit to Kings Church, Iver, where we have been going for many years, did have some problems. Two of my choir men with prominent parts in the programme were ill at the last minute. No time to make other arrangements so Gerald did it all! Furthermore they had new church members in charge, and the chairs were not as we wanted them and the piano was in a most inconvenient place and covered in Christmas decorations. I asked the new Leader to clear the piano and she said 'I wasn't told you wanted a piano, most people bring CDs or tapes these days'. However we muddled through and the singing was OK. Whether now we will be asked again at Easter after all these years remains to be seen.

On February 16th we have been asked to sing at a new venture at Waterloo Road Church called 'Food for Thought' As the title implies it include a lunch! This is the church where the choir started 80 years ago

and where we meet for practice. We used to visit their Friday Fellowship for many years but that closed with the pandemic and never started again.

On March 16th we have been invited to join the Hertford choir with an engagement at Letchworth. This will be a first for us and it will be good to assist them after all the help they give us. Fortunately one of our choir members can drive his church mini-bus and has offered to transport us there, as the rest of us are not keen to drive that distance.

News from Hertford ***Keith Youngman***

The autumn period saw some of us joining the Uxbridge and Luton choirs for 3 engagements as well as ourselves undertaking 2 care home services on Sunday afternoons. For 2023 we have one Thursday afternoon engagement in March and we are in discussion about a Sunday morning service revisiting a chapel which was a regular for us pre-Covid. We find Sunday engagements easier to accommodate as some of our choir men still have day jobs!

The two new choirmen who joined us last year are now getting familiar with our music although with the older scores, the tonic can confuse them, getting in the way of the words!

News from Whitstable
Darren Osborne

We have been meeting monthly. In memory of David Roberts, Ron Ashman gave our choir a new book with songs that David liked. So, each time we use them, we think of David and thank God for his hard work and sing praises to both God and David.

We have had a former member come back to our choir, Trevor Smith, who is a 2nd Tenor, bringing us up to 7.



We had our first engagement in December to sing at Greenhill Community Centre. Six at-

tended as Tom Gascoigne was not well, though he has since recovered, praise God.

Ken Burgess is now 102 and doing well. He had to move to a new nursing home, which by chance is one we sang at pre-Covid.

Please do pray for us and keep us in your thoughts.

News from Luton
John Cowell

A Happy New Year to all.

We will start our new season of practices on 9th January at Stanton Road Baptist Church, Luton. We will continue our fellowship with the Hertford and Uxbridge choirs with whom we share our various engagements. God willing, we are hoping to have an evening of Gospel male voice praise in Hitchin this year with the place, date and time to be confirmed.

To all choirs: keep singing, God's work is not yet finished – God is still blessing us. We trust we will see some of you during this coming year. God bless you all.

“THE CHOIR”

Ruth Gisby

The following poem was sent in by Chaz Gisby, who writes:

My Dad, Harry Gisby, sang with the choirs from the 1950's, going all over the UK to sing with different choirs, and even to Canada.

My Mum, who was a Methodist local preacher, was with him on many occasions and wrote the poem below some 60 years ago. I'm hoping it will give inspiration and please feel free to use it whatever way in the Lord's service.

THE CHOIR

We have come here today to hear the choir.
The singing from whom I never tire.
But they don't want us just to hear their voice.
They want us to see Jesus and make Him our choice.

They sing of how He died to save.
To free us from fear of death and the grave.
We can Believe and trust their word.
And own Him now as Saviour and Lord.

We can, of course refuse, and go our way home.
But what if tonight the Saviour should come.
And we have not known His love and His care.
You will wish you had listened and said this prayer.

I know I'm a sinner. You died in my place.
Lord Jesus I'm a sinner. You died in my place.
Help me to love You and serve You today.
To help to show others that You are the way.

Ruth Gisby

CHELTENHAM AND DISTRICT MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

David Kendrick

It is with a very happy heart that I sit at my computer to write this report for Choirlink. Having reformed as a choir in August to enable us to sing at the Thanksgiving Service for the life of our late brother James O'Donnell (Jimmy), we decided to continue to meet fortnightly on a Friday afternoon at the church of one of our 2nd Tenors. It was such a pleasure to be meeting regularly again, enjoying the fellowship of our brothers and preparing to sing for the Lord during the Christmas season at our local Care Homes, which we had not visited for three years.

With Covid-19 still at large, we had to follow the specific protocol of each home. We were welcomed back eagerly to seven homes, and we were invited to visit a new Care Home, thanks to the efficiency of the Cheltenham Branch of the "Good News for Everyone!", who paved the way for us; the Manager is a Christian lady.

We took lateral flow tests to enter one home and, sadly, had to cancel a visit to one of our favourite establishments. They had insisted we wear masks throughout our visit, which the Activities Co-ordinator agreed was impractical.

We also had to cancel two engagements due to icy, and even foggy weather conditions.

We have lost another of our faithful 2nd Tenors to cancer. Ken Spink was a widower of 92 years of age, who passed away very suddenly. He was at our practice on the Friday afternoon, and was called home the following Sunday morning. Four members of the Choir were able to sing 'We'll All be There', ably assisted by our faithful accompanist, at his funeral service. We are missing Ken very much. However, we are so grateful to the Lord that he took him before he had to endure a great deal of suffering, according to the advice given by his consultant.

Job 1:21 says that "the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of

the Lord.”. We as a choir can re-echo those words, being blessed with the gift of a new 1st/2nd Tenor, moving from Cornwall to join our Choir. Roy joined us last August and we are benefitting from his company, talents and Christian fellowship.

We are now a small, reasonably balanced choir, preparing for our AGM on Friday 27th January. We would covet your prayers for our future direction. We are not young, ages probably ranging from 50 to early 80s, but we are all keen to serve the Lord in the ministry of song.

Meanwhile, we send our love and best wishes to our fellow brothers in the FMVP choirs.

McROBERTS FESTIVAL MALE VOICE PRAISE

Bryan McKay

It is my privilege to put to paper encouragements with regards to Male Voice singing in the Glasgow & West of Scotland area.

Since starting practices after the Covid lockdown it was evident

that although down in number by almost half, the McRoberts Choir & Festival Choir, both based in the Glasgow area, desired to sing together again as a combined choir of eleven members.

Looking back since start of September 2021 has proved to be nothing short of amazing. The way the men have blended, even without piano accompaniment, has been so encouraging, so much so that an Evening of Praise was arranged for 29th October 2022.

It was a real joy to be singing together again. The Praise Evening was beyond what we could have anticipated. The speaker for the evening was Brian More and the singers our great friends Ministry in Song. What a night! Our God is able to do exceedingly more than we could possibly imagine or think.

Looking forward to what may lie ahead as we keep the choir going with the Lord's enabling.

Words & thoughts from ‘I come to the garden alone’ - I come, He speaks, I listen, we share.

Worldwide

SYDNEY CHRISTIAN MALE VOICE CHOIR

David Gordon

The Sydney Christian Male Voice Choir hopes to resume practices on 27th January. The choir was unable to practise in the last quarter of 2022 because the facility was made available to another group which used it on Friday nights (when we practised); the new group was not told that we were using the building! We were offered Tuesday nights, but that didn't suit half the members. So we have been looking for another venue, and are in the final stages of completing an agreement.

As far as presentations are concerned, there's a very large aged-care facility (run by Anglicare, an arm of the Anglican Church) at Castle Hill, and we're looking at the possibility of two presentations there on 6th April (just before Easter): one in a high-care unit, the other in the chapel for the more mobile residents.

Our usual pianist has been in the Philippines awaiting a spouse visa for his wife to remain in Australia - but the government doesn't move quickly in these matters. However, the Lord has enabled us to find another proficient pianist who (as it happens) was looking to Him to point her to a Christian ministry!

We would appreciate prayer for new members: like many choirs, we're feeling the pinch of attrition due to age and illness - but again (quite coincidentally) a member of the church where we hope to practise has indicated his interest in joining the choir!

BRISBANE FESTIVAL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Malcolm Arnold

Warm Christian Greetings to all choir members from Brisbane, Queensland.

As we end one year and commence another we are reminded of God's faithfulness and good-

ness to the choir in so many ways. We continue to present the Gospel and to 'Lift High the Name of Jesus' on every occasion given to us as a choir.

A quick review of the 2nd half of 2022. We held Regional Festivals on the Sunshine Coast and Bundaberg (4 hours north of Brisbane) in September and October respectively. It was particularly encouraging for us all to join with the Bundaberg choir and we filled the local venue which made for a great afternoon of corporate praise and proclamation of the Gospel. Other presentations were made at Living Faith Uniting Church Carina, Forest Lake Baptist Church, Beth Eden Christian Care Graceville, The Plains Retirement Village Eight Miles Plains and Wynnum Community Church. All presentations were well attended and appreciated. Beth Eden, which provided Aged Care and independent living units for many years, has now been sold (and closed) and the occasion of our visit on 1st December assisted management to 'mark the occasion' and give thanks to God for the many years of care given at that

facility. Our programme was followed by a 'High Tea' which was enjoyed by residents, relatives and choir members and wives.

A well-attended 'End of year Dinner' was held on 19th November - our first for a couple of years due to Covid. Then, would you believe, 5-6 came down with Covid following the event - all now fully recovered. It was a very enjoyable evening of fellowship and encouragement, especially for our wives.

Plans are under way for a Regional Festival at Maryborough (3 hours north of Brisbane) in June 2023 as well as other churches and retirement villages. We are also planning another COMBINED FESTIVAL in September this year and further details will be given in our next report. This will be the first such festival since 2018.

As is evident in most of our choirs, choir numbers are slowly reducing due to ageing and illness issues. However, it is always encouraging to welcome new members. We have also had to say 'farewell' to

some members called home to Glory.

We are thankful that we still have around 35 active members, with approx. 30 attending presentations, and practices being well attended during the year. We continue to appreciate the guidance (and patience) of our Conductor, Robyn Geddes and the brilliance of our accompanist, Geoff Renton.

Blessings to all as we together serve our wonderful Lord and proclaim His powerful Name.

BAY OF PLENTY MEN'S CHOIR *David Cantwell*

We have had a strange choir year with the choir in recess caused by the inability to practise and perform anywhere. However in September the decision was taken to start again

with a concert to raise funds for Gideons International at the end of November. The first practice saw 7 members turn up but from there a choir of 15 formed and the first concert went very well with 1500 dollars being raised for Gideons. The choir sang well with good reports from the folks who came. We have since sung at the local rest homes with carols, and then our major carol service at one of the retirement villages. It was a wonderful night closed off with "Praise My Soul the King of Heaven" and "Go Now in Peace", which seemed appropriate to us. The rest home Christian group concluded with a supper which was appreciated by the 80-100 folk attending.

We now look forward to a more fruitful choir New Year, and take this opportunity of wishing all our fellow choirs God's Richest Blessing for the New Year.

From here and there

*John Buchanan from the **Moray Choir** passes on some sad news concerning Audrey Hall, who played for the choir for*

many years. Audrey went home to Glory at the start of this week. Ray was a past Area Leader and council member.

Mike Dewhurst wrote in November to say he had heard from David Lindsay that the **East Yorkshire Choir** based at Bridlington had officially closed down. Mike says: "Sadly we lose another faithful choir and our thoughts and prayers go out to David whom many of us know and have shared fellowship with for many years." [I hope to include something from David next time - Vaughan]

From Marilyn Davies, leader of the former **Poole Choir**, comes the news that Mike Tate died suddenly and unexpectedly on Saturday November 19th 2022. Mike, a very faithful and valued member of the choir, is now with his Saviour.

David Flatman writes with news of the passing of Derek Daines. Derek was in the former **West-cliff Choir** and was called into the presence of his Lord whom he served in so many ways, on Saturday 7th January aged 92.

Derek was possibly better known in the Anglia area than in the wider movement, but was always ready to tell the facts of salvation to all those who would listen and frequently led local choir engagements.

In last July's Choirlink, Andy Dart from the **Suffolk Choir** mentioned the sponsored cycle ride undertaken by former work colleagues of his late father Steve to raise funds for a headstone. The stone has now been purchased and is at Steve's grave. The picture below shows the inscription commemorating Steve's life.



My sincere thanks to all of you who have provided news and prayer items for this edition of Choirlink. It's bigger than usual as there has clearly been a lot of catching-up and I didn't want to use masses of 'red pencil'! While one choir has sadly closed, and others have to manage with reduced numbers, some are being blessed with new members, which is a wonderful encouragement. Please send your items for the next Choirlink by Saturday 1st April.

Yours in Christ, Vaughan