



CHOIRLINK

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of Choirlink. There's plenty to read from around the choirs, but I'd especially recommend the piece from David Lindsay about the East Yorkshire Choir which sadly is no more. We start with the latest report from National Council.

COUNCIL REPORT: MARCH 2023

Ian Stangoe, Chairman

Council met on Zoom on Wednesday 8th March. In attendance were John Buchanan, Colin Carbert, Paul Davies, Mike Dewhurst, Huw Jones, Ian Stangoe, Allan Turner and Keith Youngman with apologies from Alfred Tarring who was feeling unwell.

Chairman read Psalm 62:5-8 with the thought that we have complete confidence in our God who is our rock, salvation, fortress and refuge and that we can trust in Him at all times and in all circumstances.

Council agreed again this year to

pay for the insurance indemnity and forego choir contributions as funds are still increasing year on year, mainly due to donations from choirs (e.g. Purley and Yorkshire) which have ceased to function.

There are steady sales of CDs and DVDs through the website and still a good stock at the moment to meet demand. Choirlink continues to be well received with many choirs contributing articles for inclusion. Council expressed their thanks to Vaughan for producing an excellent prayer letter/magazine.

Areas are beginning to see an increase in events with Festivals, church services and senior citizen housing complexes restarting. This provides encouraging news regarding the core work of the movement.

Mike ended with a reading from John 15 urging us all to remain in the Lord (the True Vine) as apart from Him we can do nothing (v5) and the importance of keeping close to the Lord in order to bear fruit for Him. (v1 -9).

United Kingdom

HIGHLAND GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Eric Halkett

Praise the Lord for He is good.

The fundraiser for Bear Necessities in January was a very enjoyable engagement with excellent items of praise and Gospel message as well as hearing how the charity is providing comfort and support to the children in Bulgaria. Donnie from the choir is going over to Bulgaria for the Easter trip. The annual dinner was held in February where the choir members, spouses and guests enjoyed a lovely meal and then had a relaxing time of fellowship with songs and poems provided by members of the choir.

The choir sang well at the annual Easter Ross Gideons rally where the speaker gave an excellent talk on the work of the Gideons nation-

ally and internationally. What can we say about our latest engagement – wow – what a night of praise and worship in Fortrose Free Church – such a wealth of talented folks (choirmen did no bad by the way!) and we now have an alternative uniform for non-Festival occasions – we all wear a Royal Stewart tartan tie instead of the FMVP tie, it does brighten up the lads’ appearance. For now it will be total concentration on the trip to Ballymena mid-April and Peterhead at the end of the month and planning for our own Festival in Inverness in a new venue in June.

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

I hope you all had a very happy Easter.

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES CHOIR NEWS

News from Uxbridge *Gerald Durrant*

There is little to report from Uxbridge. We had one Easter engagement at my church that went well with the usual support from Luton and Hertford. As reported last time we were not invited to Kings Church, Iver this Easter after the problems at Christmas. This is so sad as we have been going there for years, but I have known this to happen at other places in the past when the staff changes.

Our next engagement will be with the Luton choir on 18th May at Stanton Road Baptist Church. We have no Summer engagements at Uxbridge so after 18th May we will meet for fellowship on a couple of dates during June and July.

Please remember Lionel in prayer as he is having health issues.

On another sad note, we lost our new tenor recruit who joined us last summer. We understand there were domestic problems and he just moved away with no explanation or apology. So we struggle on with only 6 men and 2 or 3 at practices is quite usual.

News from Hertford *Keith Youngman*

In Hertford we have been privileged to sing at funerals of 2 former choir men who passed to be with their Lord in the past month. We thank the Lord for the many years of ministry they gave to our work. We also give thanks for the recent new recruits who are now becoming established as they get familiar with the MVP style of music and our current repertoire. The practice tracks on the FMVP website are helping their learning.

Outside Hertford, together with members of the Luton choir, this year we have already supported Uxbridge choir in two engagements within their area and we were pleased that they reciprocated by joining us for a well-attended afternoon service in Letchworth. As Gerald has mentioned, our next joint engagement on 18th May, which is a Luton Choir initiative comprising of an afternoon service of Praise around the theme of Trusting God, at Stanton Road Baptist Church.

News from Whitstable *David Casse*

We normally meet once a month at Andy and Gabi Webb's home for a time of fellowship, singing

and prayer. Yesterday (30th March) we had our one and only engagement (so far) of 2023 as we took an Easter themed meeting at Sittingbourne Baptist Church for their Bright Hour Group. It was good to be together again to share in this ministry and to bring the Easter message to the folk there..

We now only have 5 regular choir men which includes Ron who is also our pianist. We welcome Trevor back with us. He was with us for some time and has now returned and it is great to have him singing alongside. We are all 2nd tenors, so it is virtually a case of singing unison rather than being able to implement much in the way of harmonies.

SWANSEA GOSPEL MALE VOICE CHOIR

Huw Jones

The Swansea Gospel Male Voice Choir are now preparing for Summer Praise at the Waterfront Community Church, Langdon Road, Swansea SA1 8QY at 6.30pm on July 1st.

We had our Communion Service in early March. Kenny Dykes preached on the centrality of Christ. Kenny has rejoined the choir after a break of a few years. His wife Helen is also helping out

as choir accompanist. We will be singing a number of pieces by Valerie Collison such as Lift High The Name of Jesus and The River Of Life. We continue to practice every Friday in Lonlas Gospel Mission. Jim Webber always gives a practical message from The Word of God at the start of each practice. We pass on our best wishes to all choirs in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

BOLTON MALE VOICE PRAISE

Mike Dewhurst

Not much has been happening recently. We have not had any engagements this Winter/Spring session and have only been meeting ad hoc to keep our fellowship going. However we do have some for later in the year and will start our regular practices from July onwards.

CHELTENHAM AND DISTRICT MALE VOICE PRAISE CHOIR

David Kendrick

Friday 27th January 2023 saw 8 of 10 choirmen sitting down to lunch at my home, after which the table was cleared, and we went ahead to hold our Tri-Annual General Meeting. Two members, sadly,

were missing, due to unforeseen circumstances. The meeting continued smoothly and with good humour, even when we discussed the changes of some roles, due to personal circumstances. Mark Mulley stepped down as Leader due to domestic circumstances and David Tingley, our Accompanist, took on the role, thus relinquishing his role as Treasurer. Andy Dole volunteered to accept the role of Choir Treasurer and was duly elected. The posts of Chairman, Secretary, Programme Co-ordinator, Publicity Team and Pastoral Carer remained as before and were unanimously accepted by the membership. Mark and Peter Hooker accepted the important posts of Conductor and Deputy conductor, thus we are able to function as a choir, if only small – 10 members in total, but one in mind and spirit.

We have changed our practice venue this year; we meet in a small Evangelical Presbyterian church which is much easier for access and parking, especially as we now meet fortnightly on a Friday afternoon, and we have flexibility of time and access.

We are hoping to hold a Rally, if we can recruit some new members, and invite other choirs to come and join us. Hopefully, it would be

during the summer or early autumn to enable other choir members to travel during ‘good’ weather conditions and enable us to plan a Choir Meal before we would recommence practising again in September.

We sang at the Thanksgiving Service of one of our retired 1st Tenors on Monday 27th February 2023 at Cambray Baptist Church, where we used to practise on a Monday evening. We enjoyed the occasion and did our best for the Lord; we were told that ‘we have quality without quantity’, at the moment. One sadness was that Brian’s wife, Ruth, who was our Deputy Accompanist for many years, was unable to attend Brian’s funeral and thanksgiving service, due to her having Alzheimer’s and now being resident in one of the Care Homes which we visit. Our plan is to make a visit to the Home as soon as possible.

I would like to close by asking the men of the other choirs, operational or otherwise, to pray earnestly, both for us at Cheltenham and the movement as a whole, that the Lord would touch the hearts of Christian men who can sing, to give serious consideration to becoming members of a male voice choir; the fellowship is wonderful and the singing is good practice for when we join the heavenly choir!

YORKSHIRE (EAST) MALE VOICE PRAISE

David Lindsay

It is with deep sadness that I have to report the closure of Yorkshire (East) Male Voice Praise.

We never recommenced after Covid restrictions were lifted due to my health problems and falling numbers.

It has been a privilege serving the Lord via the Male Voice Fraternity. I started with MVP in 1968 in the Dumfries choir under leadership of Bobby Orr. When the Dumfries choir finished I joined Carlisle MVP under leadership of George Payne, Willie Hope being area leader for Cumbria. I later became area leader for Cumbria after Willie's Homecall. I became assistant secretary to Dennis Balmer with festival responsibilities. When George was called home Ian Owen took on reins of conducting and made me his assistant conductor.

When the Lord led Sylvia and me to Yorks (Scarborough) I joined York choir at that time led by Bert Claxton. I remember well my first visit to the choir at York. Bert said we need to discuss the future of the choir as he felt he could no longer continue as area leader for York or as a conductor for the choir. It

looked as if the choir was going to disband. I said that if no one else was prepared to take on responsibility, I would, but didn't consider myself as a conductor. Our esteemed brother David Hooper said "if you can look after the organisation, administration and festival work, I will take care of the conducting". So I became area leader for York as well as secretary for the York choir.

Over the years I have been at many festivals all over Scotland, England and Wales: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Galashiels, Dunfermline, Aberdeen, Peterhead, Buckie, Inverness, Carlisle, Newcastle, Morecambe, Lancaster, Bolton, Derby, Sutton Coldfield, Cardiff and Swansea all spring to mind. The highlight was the North West Festivals tour of Oregon U.S.A. I remember with affection the various number of mini festivals we had with Carlisle, Bolton and Morecambe choirs uniting at different spots around Lancashire and Cumbria and even Melton Mowbray

During my Male Voice Praise experience I have always had the full support of my wife, first of all Nan my wife of 41 years till the Lord called her home, and then Sylvia for the past 24 years. Sylvia is a fantastic organiser for catering, as anyone who ever came to a York

choir practice or a York Festival would testify She always made sure that after each practice and festival the choir went home with a cup of tea and something to eat.

I have enjoyed my 50 years plus with the MVP enjoying the fellowship and preparation and I wish

the members of the Male Voice Fraternity every blessing in their service for the Lord.

[This item, which contains both history and a personal recollection, was held over from the last Choirlink due to lack of space.]

Worldwide

BRISBANE FESTIVAL MALE VOICE CHOIR *Malcolm Arnold*

Warm Christian Greetings to all Choir Members from Brisbane, Queensland.

We started 2023 with two additional Choir Members, both First Tenors, with continuing good and enthusiastic attendance at practices of 25 -30 members.

We were able to make our first presentation at the Deception Bay Baptist Church on Sunday afternoon 26th March 2023 to a packed audience of approx. 200 people. Deception Bay is on the Redcliffe Peninsula just 40 minutes north of Brisbane. The program was received with much appreciation as we praised our great God in song.

DV, on April 23rd, the Choir will

be presenting a program at the Janoah Gardens Retirement Village at Manly West, an eastern suburb of Brisbane. The Choir will be travelling west of Brisbane to visit a new venue on May 21st, the Minden Baptist Church where two of our Choir men fellowship.

Our next major presentation will be an afternoon Festival at Maryborough, about 2 ½ hours north of Brisbane on Saturday 17th June. We anticipate choirmen from the Bundaberg and Toowoomba Choirs to join us on this occasion.

We are planning a combined Festival on Saturday 23rd September 2023, and an invitation to everyone - whether in Australia or beyond - is given on the next page..

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

AUSTRALIAN COMBINED CHOIRS FESTIVAL INVITATION

Derrick Newton

The Australian Combined Choirs Festival will be held on Saturday 23rd September 2023, at the Presbyterian Living Church, Creek Road Ministry Centre, 1541 Creek Road, Carina. This is a central suburb of Brisbane.

All choir members from the UK, NZ and other places are warmly invited to attend. This is our first combined festival since the worst

of the Covid and we are looking forward to a great time of united praise, presentation of the gospel and fellowship.

Anyone planning to attend will be made most welcome.

The music is still to be finalised but it will be available in due course on the Brisbane Festival Male Voice Choir Website: www.bfmvc.org

Please contact Derrick for more details [or me, Vaughan, if you are in the UK so I can pass your details on to Derrick].

From here and there

As well as the personnel changes within the Cheltenham Choir already mentioned by David Kendrick, I have also been told that Darren Osborne is no longer Secretary of the Whitstable Choir. His role has been

taken, for the time being at least, by David Casse. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Darren for supplying me with information following Freda Tassell stepping down as Secretary some while ago.

My grateful thanks to all who have contributed to this edition of Choirlink, and for the forbearance of those whose information was held over from the last, 12 page, edition!. This time the information better matches the space available.

Please send your items for the next Choirlink by Saturday 1st July. By that time, the UK should have crowned a new King, but we serve the King of Kings, to whom every knee shall bow!

Yours in Christ, Vaughan