

VOCAL



The Newsheet of Felling Male Voice Choir

*Make the world with music ring
While with heart and voice we sing*



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EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the 70th edition of the Vocal. I'm sorry it's taken so long to produce. It has been a very busy, and in some ways challenging, few months for the choir and a new edition of the Vocal didn't quite get to the top of the 'to do' list until now. I hope it is worth the wait. In this edition there is information about the year's big event of 2006; the appointment of a new Music Director and team. There are notes from last year's Wansbeck Music Festival, introductions from two recent[ish] new members, lots of little snippets of information and an article on the big event of 2007, the Celebrity Concert with the King's Singers.

Don't forget, we always need new copy, so if you are a choir member, a patron, a family member or an interested party, get writing. Aim for a maximum of 300 words and send or pass it to me, stuart.dearlove@virgin.net. You won't have to wait so long next time to see yourself in print.

Stuart Dearlove

APPOINTMENT OF A NEW MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Following a period of instability with regard to the musical director of the choir, I am delighted to announce that David Conway has been appointed to this position. He has been working closely with Colin Short under the watchful eye of Chris Wiltshire, [former MD], for the last year and the progress made has prompted the choir to demonstrate its confidence in his ability and potential by confirming his appointment. Colin Short, whose exemplary service to the choir has again been demonstrated, will support David in the role of assistant musical director. With Chris Wiltshire's support for at least another year David and Colin will work to establish settled musical leadership for the Choir. David has been a member of the Choir for 16 years and is already very experienced in male voice singing. His father is a top tenor in the choir and his father in law sings in the bass section David's mother is one of the loyal band of Choir supporters. He has developed his all round experience by playing in Brass Bands, singing with the Felling Gilbert and Sullivan Society, [now the Felling Concert Choir], and performing as a very capable baritone soloist. Hopefully this will continue in some form in the future. We are sure that you will join with us in wishing him well and we all look forward to a long and happy relationship.

Ken Self, Chairman

DAVID CONWAY ON DAVID CONWAY

I am, and have been, very proud of Felling Male Voice Choir since joining as a top tenor back in 1990. I am equally as proud to be leading the choir as Musical Director and have to say a great thank you to those who have supported me over the last year. Obvious thanks go to the men and the committee but especially to Colin Short and Chris Wiltshire for their advice and guidance. I joined the Choir in 1990 as top tenor, moving through second tenor section to Baritone. I've been a soloist with choir since around 1991. I earn my living as Head of Systems, Student and Learning Support at the University of Sunderland having graduated from the OU with honours BSc in Maths and Computing followed by an MSc at Sunderland in IT Management. I live locally with my wife Helen and daughter Rebecca.

I am very keen in my first full year as MD to engage a wider and younger audience, to attract new members

and to develop the choir as a whole through competition and music of a substantial nature. I want to surprise and challenge the choir and myself and I want to delight new audiences.



David Conway

SNIPPETS

Shopping

Here's a way to combine support for the choir and shopping on the internet. Go to <http://buy.at/fmvc> where all purchases lead to a commission for Felling Male Voice Choir. Most of the High Street suppliers are here and the prices are often cheaper than the shops. Deals include CDs, books, clothes, flights, short breaks, presents, toys and much more. FMVC gets up to 10% of your purchase value as income so you can save money and the Choir still benefits.

He's a Celebrity, get him up.

Top tenor Albert Hedley recently found himself the honoured guest of another local choir. Asked by Wansbeck Male Voice Choir to boost their tenor line for a concert, Albert was of course glad to help. Little did he know that his contribution was so valued that he would be identified for special mention in the concert programme, thanked personally at the end of the concert and congratulated for being a member of that most famous of male voice choirs, The Felling. Fame indeed Albert, top man, top choir.

CDs

The Choir has purchased Disc-Publishing and Recording equipment so we can produce our own CDs. The first two to come off the production line, are 'Chart Toppers' and 'Keep your Feet Still'. Chart Toppers does what it says on the tin; Keep Your Feet Still contains North of England songs. We've bought another device to make recordings of the more difficult pieces for each section of the Choir to use as learning aids. We intend to use this equipment to record concerts and rehearsals to use in new CD production and it can be made available to other organisations for recording / copying / printing to generate further income for the Choir. John Sherring, [Top Tenor], will tell you more if you ask him.

THE KING'S SINGERS



The Felling Male Voice Choir is delighted to announce the King's Singers as their guests for the 2007 Celebrity Concert at The Sage Gateshead. It is many years since this internationally famous group of six singers performed in the North East but their reputation has not diminished. The Felling is proud to be bringing them to Gateshead; to perform for people who remain their fans and to introduce them to a new audience.

Able to trace their origins to the weeks following England winning the World Cup; the King's Singers have, for nearly forty years, been delighting audiences around the world with their charm, wit, and incomparable musicianship. Above all it is their simple enjoyment of what they do that has captured the imagination of the public all over the world and kept the King's Singers at the top of their game. With an enviably wide repertoire they take the view that nothing that can be sung in 6 parts should be ignored.



Since 1968 there have been only 19 members. The current line up is: David Hurley and Robin Tyson, Countertenors; Paul Phoenix, Tenor; Philip Lawson and Christopher Gabbitas, Baritones, and; Stephen Connolly, Bass

As The London Times put it, they are "still unmatched for their musicality and sheer ability to entertain.

Make sure you've got the date of Saturday 19th May in your diary and be ready for a fantastic night of male singing.

ASHINGTON MALE VOICE CHOIR

It's never easy being the second oldest child in a family. All the responsibility of seniority comes with being second but none of the privileges of the oldest. However, in celebrating the 90th anniversary of its founding the Ashington Male Voice Choir can be justifiably proud of keeping the art of male voice singing very much alive in the northern part of the Region. Our congratulations from FMVC to AMVC. And oh! by the way reader, do you know which is the oldest MVC in the North East, having been formed in 1903? Answers on a postcard.

PATRONS

The Treasurer reports that income from Patrons has increased during the past year due to the generosity of Patrons rather than an increase in numbers. Patrons evening gives the Choir an opportunity to renew acquaintances and to perform before an audience. These occasions are enjoyable but numbers attending are fewer each year. Do we need to change the format? Your suggestions, [from member, patron or friend], will be appreciated. Watch out for an announcement about the designated Patrons concert for 2007.

John Sherring, Patrons Secretary

NEW BOYS

Hello Jim

A rather belated welcome to Jim Handy, Second Tenor, [Felling lad], who's been with us now for a year. His Dad was a jazz pianist in the '20s who also got the family of four brothers and a sister, round the piano at home to sing for their pocket money. If you went to the Gilbert and Sullivan performances at Felling Methodists fifty years ago you'd have seen Jim as a Pirate or a Gondolier with his proud parents watching from the front row. Jim's first concert with the Felling, after he'd, 'got his eye in', was at Stokesley and this time the proud relative was his wife Margaret. Jim's second outing was the, 'Big One,' at the Sage Gateshead with Lemington, and this time the entire Handy clan turned out, brothers, sister, Margaret, children, grandchildren! With Jim's ability to attract an ever larger group of supporters the Choir should make sure he's always in the line up. Well done Jim.

GWYNNE MORRIS

MD of the Teesside Apollo MVC for the best part of 50 years Gwynne Morris died on 5th December a few days from his 78th birthday. His funeral at the Avenue Methodist Church in Middlesbrough on December 11th was a celebration of his life in music and the Choir he led for so long did him proud with its singing. They sang, Be Still My Soul; Morte Christe, and; Blaenwern.

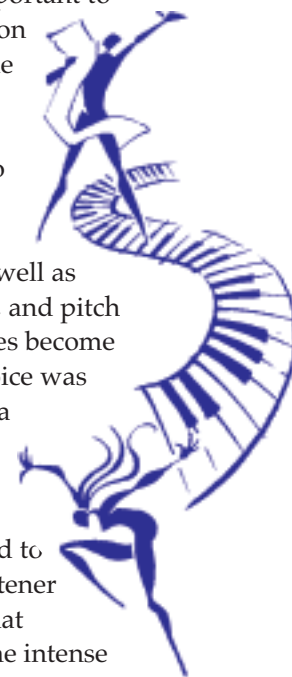
WANSBECK MUSIC FESTIVAL

Competing in Festivals is very important to the development of the choir and on 25th March 2006 Felling sang at the Wansbeck Festival. The test piece, Doris Arnold's arrangement of 'Arise o' Sun', allowed the choir to display its ability to produce a confident sound that depends on controlled volume and quality as well as requiring delicate light and shade, and pitch control as unaccompanied passages become accompanied again. Our own choice was 'In Nomine Jesu' by Jacob Handl, a monastic piece from the 16th century where tonal quality is crucial and tuning is paramount. During rehearsals we endeavoured to emphasise what the perceptive listener should be able to hear. It is this that competitive singing is all about: the intense preparation. Gareth Green the adjudicator was most impressed and gave us an overall mark of 89. He made positive comments about the choir's committed sound and good posture whilst giving helpful advice about maintaining pitch. As he is a respected member of the British Music Festival Association I welcome and value his advice.

Colin Short

AN AULD ALLIANCE

The Felling and the Lemington male voice choirs have a long history of collaborating in performances and Saturday 15th April 2006 saw the two choirs on the stage of the Sage Gateshead playing to a packed house of 1700 with Graham Danby and Valerie Reid. This was Lemington MD Paul Briggs' swansong as he prepared to hand the Baton on to his successor Simon Fidler. With this impressive line up the music performed covered a wide range of styles and influences. Graham Danby worked the audience in his inimitable way and Valerie Reid added an extra dimension to the sound of choir and soloists. A good old fashioned musical evening – and the audience loved it.



BARBADOS TO FELLING, A SMALL STEP

And another not so new boy is Ron Straughan now established in the Baritone line. Once upon a time Ron found himself in the company of the London Welsh MVC in Barbados, [the way you do!], while out there for his work. On showing an interest in the twin talents of every MVC, singing and drinking, he was given a stern warning by the MD that should he ever think about joining a Choir there was only one in the North of England to consider; The Felling. Fast forward a decade or so and Ron attended a practice to listen to FMVC but instead found himself apprenticed to David Conway, [now our MD]. His first concert came at Annfield Plain where the Felling were joined by Reading MVC, and since then he's not looked back. It turns out that Ron has quite a few personal connections with the Choir; he lived beside Margaret Short [Herron] when they were young; he went to school with Stan Wearmouth; he counts Hewson Taylor and John Holland as old friends and; he is indebted, [is that the right word], to Albert Hedley for introducing him to the choir. Ron's still trying to get to know everyone; talk to him, he wants to talk to you.

Choir Recordings

There are currently 4 CD offerings for sale all priced at £5.00.

- ☺ Keep Your Feet Still
- ☺ Chart Toppers
- ☺ Voices of the North
- ☺ Those Magnificent Men

See John Dixon at rehearsals or concerts for details of CD contents and, of course, purchase.



FELLING MALE VOICE CHOIR CONCERT PROGRAMME 2007

- 27.01.07** A Joint Concert with Felling Concert Choir St. Andrew's Church Leam Lane.
- 03.03.07** Sage Gateshead Hall 2 Mayor of Gateshead's Charity Concert
- 17.03.07** Birtley RC Church
- 24.03.07** NAC Spectacular City Hall. (Stage Stewards Only)
- 31.03.07** Barnard Castle, Glaxo Sports and \Social Club
- 14.04.07** Provisional. Wigton Cumbria (or 05.05.07)
- 28.04.07** Elsdon Avenue URC/Methodist Church Seaton Delaval.
- 05.05.07** Provisional. Wigton Cumbria (or 14.04.07)
- 19.05.07** Celebrity Concert. Gateshead Sage Hall 1. Guests: The King Singers
- 09.06.07** Wesley Memorial Methodist Church Low Fell for Arthritis Care.
- 15.06.07** READING VISIT
2.30pm first coach, Dryden Centre
- 16.06.07** 9am second coach. Dryden Centre
Visit to Reading MVC.
- 16.06.08** Evening Concert.
- 17.06.07** Afternoon Concert in St. Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane Ealing W5
2pm start.
- 28.09.07** Provisional. St. Peters Low Fell.
- 06.10.07** Bedlington Colliery Methodist Church
- 24.11.07** St John's Birtley. Memorial Concert for George Lister.
- 08.12.07** Provisional. Xmas Concert Wesley Memorial Church Low Fell
- 14.12.07** Provisional. Xmas. Concert Killingworth

