



FRIENDS NEWS

Issue 8 June 2019



FROM THE CO- CHAIRS

Dear Friends

Since the last Newsletter we have met with the Friends Secretary, Carolyn, and discussed plans to expand the Friends Group. A number of ideas are being explored, including the introduction of an optional HCS Season Ticket at a reduced, advance purchase price for Friends. More on this will follow.

In the meantime, we can report on two very successful events, the Lincoln choir trip and the Ripon Cathedral concert. Both were great fun, and the spirit engendered by the former, the sense of shared enjoyment, certainly carried forward in to the performance of the latter. We were also afforded the opportunity of catching up with some of you at the informal drinks reception held in the Cathedral library prior to the concert.



Amy and I used the AGM forum to emphasise the forthcoming review of all of our members' thoughts and ideas in relation to the choir's musical ambition. Where do we see ourselves in five, ten years time? In what direction should we travel? We would very much welcome your input too in this regard. A questionnaire will be coming to you during the summer break.

Enjoy the summer. We will look forward to seeing you all in the autumn for the start of our 2019/2020 season.

Thank you very much, as ever, for your support. It is valued greatly.

Best Wishes
Amy and Paul

PLANNED CONCERT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Venue	Work / notes
9 November 19	Royal Hall	An Evening of Elgar - Spirit of England with Samantha Hay, Music Makers with Gaynor Keeble and Gaynor will also be singing Sea Pictures
Sunday (!) 8 December 19	Tennants Garden Rooms, Leyburn	Handel – Messiah
28 March 20	Royal Hall	Rossini – Stabat Mater and Puccini – Messa di Gloria
27 June 20	Harrogate Convention Centre	Collaborative concert with HSO and other local choirs

This Newsletter

If there is more you would like to read in this newsletter then do let us know by getting in touch with Carolyn, the Friends Secretary – email friends@harrogatechoral.org.uk
Perhaps a Friend might even like to take over as editor!

COMMITTEE REPORT

The following is a summary of items discussed by the Executive and full Committee - the last full Committee meeting took place on 17 May 2019, we are due to meet again in September so if there is anything you think we should be discussing please let Ruth know.

New Trustee

Dee Walsh was welcomed as the latest Trustee, she will be helping with various membership and recruitment matters.

Artistic and Concert Planning

Unfortunately Guy Johnson who was to have played the Elgar Cello Concerto in November has given backward as he cannot be released from another work engagement. After some discussion the committee agreed to his release and instead Gaynor Keeble will be singing Sea Pictures.

Meetings have been held with Harrogate Symphony Orchestra in respect of the joint concert in June 2020 and a press release is expected before the end of the summer. This concert will be raising funds for "The Harrogate District Hospital Trust" with a specific target of raising money for the new breast cancer care unit. This charity will also be our charity for the whole season, as it will for HSO.

Membership Fees

After some discussion it was agreed they should increase slightly – the first such increase since 2015. Friends Subs will remain unchanged for the forthcoming season. Information about subs can be found, together with all sorts of other information (including the draft AGM minutes if you missed it) on the members page of the website – to view them all just go to the "members" tab on the top line of the home page, www.harrogatechoral.org.uk.

Ticket Prices

It was agreed that generally they will remain unchanged for the 2019-20 season, with the exception of the Christmas Concert where tickets will go up by £1 which is the first increase in over 6 years and is needed to ensure the concert breaks even. For our own concerts we are extending the area to which the £5 ticket for students and those in receipt of unemployment benefits applies to include the back of the Grand Circle. Also it has been agreed to match similar offers from other organisations and make tickets for under 16s free (when accompanied by at least one paying adult). It is hoped this will make our concerts more attractive to families.



Harrogate Choral Society
An Evening of Elgar
Spirit of England
with Samantha Hay
Music Makers
& *Sea Pictures*
with Gaynor Keeble
Conducted by
Andrew Padmore
with The Amici Ensemble
Royal Hall, Harrogate
9 November 2019, 7.30 pm
Tickets £15 to £20
Students or IBA £5
Under 16s free when accompanied by an adult
from Harrogate Box Office 01423 502116
or online at www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk
www.harrogatechoral.org.uk | Registered Charity 1164776 | Twitter.com/HgateChoralSoc

Concert Booking for Future Concerts

Tickets for An Evening of Elgar
in the Royal Hall, Harrogate on 9th November 2019

are available from 1st July
via the box office at Harrogate Theatre
tel 01423 502116
or online at www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk

or by contacting the HCS ticket team
at tickets@harrogatechoral.org.uk

Two of our Friends – A Choral Romance

In the last newsletter we asked if any of our friends would like to contribute by telling us a bit about themselves. Thank you very much to Paul and Denise Dyson, for being the first volunteers to be interviewed for our Newsletter . It was a great pleasure to chat to them in their home in Knaresborough. They have memories of the Choral Society going back to the early 1970s . In fact, Denise remembers Beryl Pankhurst's audition in 1976!

Paul and Denise met in 1971 in Harrogate. Paul was finishing his teaching practice at Harrogate High School, which he had not only survived but enjoyed, and he had decided to do an extra week so as to finish the term and it was, fortuitously, during this week that fate intervened. Denise had friends who taught at the High School and she and Paul both went separately to a performance at the school and the group met afterwards in the Empress. Some of these friends sang with the Choral Society. She invited them to tea at her flat which was close to the Old Swan so they could change before their forthcoming concert at St Wilfrid's (May 7th, 1971) and Paul asked if he could come too! Denise remembers wearing her red trouser suit, considerably more stylish than the turquoise crimplene dresses that lady choir members had to wear in those days. Paul remembers taking the score of a work by Buxtehude, which the choir were performing, to the concert and holding it so that Denise could also follow it, not knowing at that point that Denise did not read music. She did not let on and the following day - their fifth meeting - they decided to be married!



The joy of auditions and other fraught singing-related moments .

Denise remembers her first audition with the then conductor Joseph Nicholson in 1969. Terrifyingly, it was in front of the whole Committee, including Joan Gibson, and she failed to be admitted, JN informing her that she was an 'young, underdeveloped mezzo-soprano'... Two years later she decided to try again and join with her fiance under new conductor Ian Linford. Paul patiently helped her prepare the set hymn " Lord thy word abideth " but felt that she might well suffer a repeat of the same experience. Consequently, as he was being auditioned the same evening he set off without her. However, on the spur of the moment and thinking 'Blow him!' Denise decided that she would go for it and jumped in a taxi getting to the auditions before him, and succeeded in gaining a place in the first alto section. She remembers her first rehearsal was, alarmingly, the Demons' Chorus from the Dream of Gerontius. She thinks that the art of developing your singing is to sit next to a good singer and always sat next to Joan Gibson! (Secretary Beth Watmough sat on the other side and the then chairman, Dennis Woods, always made sure he was sitting next to Paul!) He remembered singing the Sea Symphony by Vaughan Williams in the Royal Hall in 1972. He was the only bass who came in at a certain entry and was hearty congratulated afterwards in true Yorkshire fashion: " Well done, lad. You keep going..."

Paul also remembers the deep suffering of male members of the choir when a performance of the Monteverdi Vespers in 1973 clashed with the F.A. Cup final on May 5th 1973 (Leeds United 0, Sunderland 1). Fortunately a curate from St Wilfrid's understood their plight and let them watch in his cottage during the rehearsal-break. Another of Denise's memories was in the final rehearsal for the Verdi 'Requiem' when she was rendered voiceless by the emotional impact made by the sheer drama of the orchestra's playing in the Dies Irae.

The Social Dimension.

Paul and Denise were both on the choir's committee; Denise was responsible for collecting the money for the dresses, under Pat Firth who was in charge of the highly unpopular uniform. Paul was social secretary and remembers organising a tennis tournament as well as walks and trips to such as Malham and the Hambleton Hills. Separately, the Choral Society were invited to sing in Huddersfield Town Hall by courtesy of a choral society from that part of Yorkshire. On that particular occasion the promised refreshments between rehearsal and performance ran only to tea and biscuits! Fortunately committee-member Victor Wild, the then owner of Bettys, was a member of the choir at that time and a quick phone call to an extremely useful contact produced a welcome delivery of trays of suitable sustenance for the starving singers.

Easingwold and back again

For four and half years Paul taught at St Aidan's; he was only the school's third music teacher but, more importantly, the first to run a cricket team there. In 1976 he started a new job as Director of Music at Easingwold School and the pair relocated to the small market town, However they continued to take an interest in HCS and occasionally returned to Harrogate for concerts. Once their two children had left home they relocated back to the area and Denise rejoined the choir in 2001 under the baton of Jeffrey Wynn Davies. After a brief return to live in Easingwold the pair settled in Harrogate in 2007 and from that time Paul wrote reviews of HCS concerts for about six years. He always endeavoured to give a professionally balanced critique which would end on a positive note (sometimes scuppered by reckless editing). He has known Andrew Padmore for quite some time (certainly prior to his appointment as HCS's MD) and was moved to email him after our recent performance of Creation which he felt was utterly outstanding and will remain one of the great highlights of his 60-years worth of concert-going experiences. He felt that singing without copies made a unprecedented improvement to the performance. He appreciates, however, from his own experience as a pianist, that the highly skilled sight reader may be the most unwilling and unable to rely on memory so repeats of this monumental effort would have to be chosen with care but the opportunity is now there to build on that success and make the most of the choir's new-found confidence.

Looking to the future



Paul and Denise enjoy receiving the newsletter. Concert dates are immediately transferred into the diary and they always like to sit on the back row in the Grand Hall section of the Royal Hall - the position where the acoustics are at their best. They enjoy reading the resume of committee minutes and like being invited to choir events and outings. They value the contribution the Choral Society makes to culture in Harrogate and wish it were better supported by our local authorities . Choirs provide the camaraderie of musical activity to those who may not play an instrument, as Denise firmly believes. They note that the choir does now have a fair proportion of younger singers and think that targeting 22-30-year old new arrivals to the area would be a good next step.

I finished off by asking what they would like to hear us sing in the near future and what advice they would give to the choir. Both agreed the works they enjoyed most are the standard choices such as by Bach (B minor Mass), Beethoven (Missa Solemnis), Brahms (Requiem), Dvorak (Stabat Mater), Verdi (Requiem) and Elgar (Gerontius).

Paul's advice to the choir and, especially, the committee, was " Support your conductor 100% ".

Carolyn Johnston, Friends Secretary

Ps I would love to hear more stories from other Friends so please get in touch

REVIEW OF “FAURE – REQUIEM & RUTTER – FEEL THE SPIRIT”

Here is the review of the Ripon concert, Faure *Requiem* & Rutter *Feel the Spirit*. The photo below is Andrew conducting (or should that be bull fighting!?) with Anna Burford singing in *Feel the Spirit*.



‘Atmosphere of Pure Joy at choir’s cathedral concert’

The magnificent interior of Ripon Cathedral was the venue for the final concert of this season given by Harrogate Choral Society under its Conductor and Musical Director, Andrew Padmore with the Amici Ensemble and Thomas Moore at the organ. A large and appreciative audience which almost filled the Nave greeted the performers.

The programme for the evening comprised works by John Rutter and Gabriel Faure and began with three anthems, *I Will Sing With The Spirit*, *Look At The World* and *For The Beauty Of The World*, composed by John Rutter and robustly accompanied at the organ by Thomas Moore, Society Accompanist. This just stayed within acceptable balance between singers and organ, the singers singing with their hearts and voices producing beautiful well-produced and focussed tone. Thomas Moore followed this with a brilliant and spirited performance of Rutter’s *Toccata in 7* for organ, demonstrating his excellent command of the instrument.

Following the interval, the second half comprised just one work, Faure’s *Requiem Op 48*. This popular and intimate piece received a calm and attractive performance, the Amici Ensemble playing beautifully throughout. Isobel Rose, Soprano sang *Pie Jesu* with warm sincerity and Miles Taylor, Bass sang *Hostias* and *Libera me* very well with clear and expressive tone. As an encore the Choral Society sang Faure’s *Cantique de Jean Racine*.

The third item in the first part of the programme had however been the popular and quite unique setting of spirituals, *Feel The Spirit*, by Rutter and featured the beautiful voice of Anna Burford, Mezzo-soprano whose warm and inviting voice filled the nave with delicious tone while the Choral Society sang with incredible sensitivity. What a pity the programme and evening didn’t end with *Feel the Spirit*, then the audience could have gone home clicking their fingers and tapping their toes! The work was accompanied by the Amici Ensemble, the whole producing a wonderful atmosphere of sheer joy.

Adrian Selway

HCS CONTINUING TO HELP OTHERS

Our Charitable donations have continued and the final charity to benefit was Dementia Forward <http://www.dementiaforward.org.uk/> who received a cheque for £250 just before our final rehearsal / AGM on 19th June

Here is their representative Ceri Thomas receiving the cheque from Co-Chair Amy Wall.

Helpers from the charity also ran the interval bar at the Cathedral and raised a further £340 for the charity. Dementia Forward was formed in 2012 by a group of enthusiastic and experienced people, with a passion for supporting people with dementia. Their mission is to deliver a comprehensive range of services that support and promote 'living well with dementia'. They offer a helpline, home visits, wellbeing activities, dementia specialist nurses and a

dementia hub, along with providing education, information and advice. Their services were initially aimed at meeting the needs of families affected by dementia in the Ripon and Harrogate area. They now (2019) have a fully-fledged team with 30 staff and over 200 volunteers, supporting thousands of people affected by dementia across the whole of North Yorkshire.



Shortly after our March concert (and also after the last newsletter was published) Amy met up with Barney Barnbrook and the then Mayor of Harrogate Bernard Bateman to present a cheque which resulted from our donations at Creation in March, ticket sales of 370, which when combined with their raffle and bucket collection raised a total of £789.92 for ABF (the The Soldiers' Charity which is the National Charity of the British Army, supporting soldiers and veterans from every conflict, and their immediate families), <https://soldierscharity.org/#> This is also the then Mayor's charity.

Since we started our charity donations at the start of the 2017-2018 season we have donated a total of £3295 to 8 charities and given them the opportunity to further fundraise and raise awareness of their work at our concerts.

Lincoln, A Personal Account.



Our choir trip to Lincoln on 1st June feels to have been an unqualified success, a lovely day out.

An early start in the sunshine set the scene and over 50 singers, plus supporters, were on very good form as we prepared to head eastwards to meet up with Andrew and Tom, together with his delightful family, further members of the choir and two YP First Tenors, Derek and Gary, who were assisting us.

I had started to make my way towards the back of our coach, where a disreputable element of the First Sopranos had gathered in force, but I was ushered by their Voice Rep, who was counting the choir in and checking lunch choices, into a front seat which did in the event afford me a clear insight into the considerable amount of organisational detail that our neighbours across the aisle, Ann and Chris, had gone into in preparing for this trip. Very well done both.

We broke our journey at Ferrybridge when the coach company replaced our driver, having realised presumably that he was indeed, as appeared, only thirteen. The latter part of the journey, across panoramic Lincolnshire countryside, as the towers of the Cathedral appeared over the horizon, was particularly pleasant.



On arrival we toured Lincoln Castle in smaller groups. The group I found myself in was guided by a very entertaining Welshman who demonstrated his singing voice at our request. He sounded suspiciously like a Tenor. Plots were hatched to seize him and bring him back to Yorkshire in the boot of the coach. I should mention that he was particularly enthusiastic when describing botched public hangings in gruesome detail. There's always something with Tenors isn't there....

There followed lunch, at long tables in the lovely conservatory of The Bakery restaurant. Excellent food, beautifully served, very good value and accompanied by much convivial conversation. A perfect choice by Ann, who is possessed of impeccable taste in these matters.

I did make the unfortunate mistake of sitting next to Charles, who sipped his table water ostentatiously in a fit of self-righteousness as I ordered a large glass of wine. Things got worse. The very charming Alto seated opposite, being over-faced by the quantity of her main course, and conscious of the fact that Charles and myself were watching her struggle, not entirely without self-interest, offered us both a not-insubstantial slab of meat. Charles accepted the kind offer on our joint behalf and then refused to share it with me. Well, that's the aristocracy for you. Revenge is now being served.

After our meal, and a suitable comfort break (Ann and Chris having even flagged up the locations of all local public conveniences, including one which was Grade 2 listed and the Gents section of which the First Soprano VR inspected rather hastily) we were sent out to go and play nicely together on our own for two or three hours. Some of us toured the cathedral. What a magnificent building it is. Shafts of afternoon sunlight were illuminating the glorious space via the upper windows. One former Chairman, last seen emerging from the Ladies toilet in the restaurant, had his sketch book out. Others marvelled at the Wren Library, which included some remarkable, elderly collections of plainsong and an odd little book that had the four harmonic parts, so far as I could see, printed in turn at the four edges of each page. One to ponder. We could make significant savings in music hire charges but we would have to perform our concerts in a double rugby scrum formation..

In the meantime, a group of the First Sopranos, under the experienced leadership of my Co-Chair, had opted for a less improving, but doubtless uplifting, afternoon and settled down in a local hostelry for the duration. Their subsequent performance of *In Paradisum* was particularly fine. Others simply wandered the quaint, steep, streets of the medieval quarter in the warm sunshine. The Huttons were discovered gazing romantically up at the window of the very room in the Cathedral Close where they had spent the first night of their honeymoon.

At teatime we reassembled and re-boarded the choir charabanc for the short trip to St. Giles, where we were to perform. It is a Georgian church, albeit demolished, moved and rebuilt in the 1930s, and the aesthetic is one of simple elegance. A very bright, lofty church.

During a brief rehearsal the acoustics were deemed to be excellent, the organ likewise. Andrew and Tom brought their expertise to bear on the slightly tricky fact that the choir and the organ were a beat apart. I'm embarrassed to say that I hadn't noticed. A scientific solution was found in ensuring the audience sat towards the front. All enquiries to Andrew please, I still haven't worked it out.



We could not have been more warmly received by the Vicar, Curate and the rest of the church team. Tea and coffee were provided with a smile.

After a short break the concert began and what a lovely concert it was. Delightfully presented by Marilynne, elegantly attired as ever in one of her Chinese jackets (as to which more below) and expertly directed by Andrew, who opted as will be seen for an understated shirt. His chosen colour scheme matched the ambient palette of the stained glass windows and decorative metal fretwork. It's all in the planning.

Our audience numbered somewhere up to fifty, I rather lost count but then I was singing the Hallelujah chorus at the time. This might explain a momentary silence on the part of the Basses when silence there should not have been. No, I flatter myself. It was somebody else's fault.

We were warmly applauded throughout, as was Tom for his excellent organ pieces, and the audience sang the final part of *When The Saints* most enthusiastically.



There was a particularly good rapport between audience and choir, evidenced by the additional round of applause by the latter for the former at the end of the concert.



An uneventful but happy journey home was remarkable only for a particular incident on the motorway when we were overtaken at speed by a Porsche bearing personalised number plates, sounding its horn and flashing its lights at us. Typical. No idea who it was. One assumes that the driver was subsequently apprehended and spent the night in Scunthorpe nick, assisting the local Constabulary with their enquiries....

One of our number did, as we were retrieving our gear from the boot, attempt to swap her matching black suit bag for Marilynne's. Perhaps a stylish Chinese jacket in return for a T-shirt emblazoned with a representation of twinkly Doc Marten boots seemed like a good idea to her. The attempt was foiled, thankfully.

Thanks are due to Andrew for his concert leadership, to Marilynne and Tom. To Anna for delivering and collecting the clavinova, whilst looking as fresh as a daisy at 8.00am and at 10.45pm, having worked in between, how does she do it? Enormous thanks of course to the Shoveltons, a tour de force on their part. Thanks finally to all of you who came on the trip. To misquote Lou Reed, it was such a perfect day, I'm glad I spent it with you. All.

Some of the photos included were kindly provided by David C, others taken by me. The comments that follow were received from choir members and from our friends at St. Giles.

Paul

A wonderful day yesterday..... the restaurant was fantastic!

I really feel today that I've been away on holiday! The tour of the castle was very interesting, the restaurant and food were great..... And what can I say about the concert?! It was so enjoyable, engaging and moving.

I spoke to a few of the audience. Everybody was genuinely enjoying the concert – one lady went into raptures over the Rutter. I know that three came from the Lincoln Choral Society and a couple saw something in the paper.

It was a wonderful day & had a special significance for us as we spent our wedding night there, en route to our honeymoon destination.

I so enjoyed singing in the concert and it was great to have such an appreciative audience.

From Reverend Rachel

Many people were talking about the concert yesterday and were so impressed with the music and the quality of the singing. The range of music was fantastic and the sound amazing! The organ pieces were also superb. Lewis was very pleased to hear the organ played so well.

From Jenny, Verger

The concert was enjoyed by all those who attended, even the ones who were not keen on Choral music. It was a wonderful concert and was heard by the people living in the streets nearby. Thank you all for such a fantastic evening.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST – reminder about subscriptions!

A reminder that as we have now held our AGM subscriptions for the 2019-2020 season are now due.

Friends subs remain unchanged at £15 single, £20 household. Please get in touch with Carolyn to make sure you have rejoined for the new season.