

July
2020

Choir News



Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir

The No News Letter!



As the consequences of the lockdown continue to drag on, the novelty of self isolation for many of us is beginning to wear a little thin. And yet the majority of us are wise enough to realise that the hasty relaxation of social distancing rules will herald a second spike of the pandemic which could be far worse than the awful death toll that the UK has already experienced. So for the time being we must continue to be patient and enjoy the sensible easing of lockdown without returning to singing just yet.

There are many people now asking the question when will singers and choirs be allowed to return to rehearsal and performance. Professional artists have lost their main source of income and there is a growing voice which is beginning to lobby government for a review and clarification of their guidance based on scientific fact and not anecdote. I have included an article on pages 3 and 4 which describes the current feeling and argument. In the meantime we have an excellent opportunity to review and polish up our own music in the comfort of our own homes

Over the last few years, Louise has recorded practice parts for nearly every song in our repertoire and Sean has done a sterling job in ensuring these are readily available through our website. So none of us have an excuse for not being note perfect upon our return to concert.

Furthermore, Louise and others have been instrumental in organising a series of Zoom rehearsals every Monday and Tuesday evening. These have provided us with an opportunity to introduce some new music and have been a vital point of contact between members of the choir. Given the effort that Louise is making it is incumbent on all of us to take part and maintain some momentum within the choir. So see you all next Monday or Tuesday!



In the hands of a craftsman

Like Michelangelo's David and Leonardo's Mona Lisa there is no mistaking the work of a master craftsman. And once those skills are acquired they are never forgotten as



demonstrated in the photos left. One of Michael's summer time jobs was to install a new stop tap so that the washing machine didn't have to be moved at the beginning and end of the season. The maestro of the copper pipe, blow lamp and pipe benders took less than two hours to install a new outside tap and associated isolating valves for winter isolation. Hands were quickly washed and tools returned to the man shed following a job well done. Whilst this trained craftsman might be good at his job please note he is set firmly in retirement and won't be taking on any further jobs for mates or otherwise.

**STAY AT
HOME** 

**PROTECT
THE NHS**

 **save
lives**

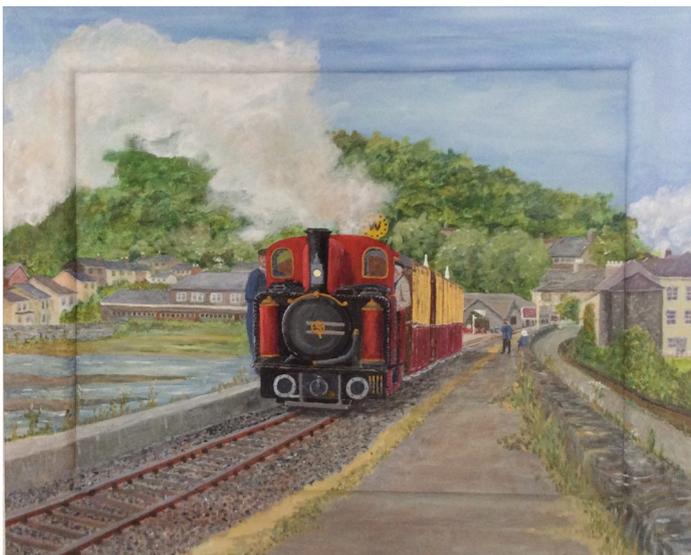


Ken's brushing up nicely

Another hobby to keep me occupied during lockdown. I have always been interested in art, but

had little time to devote to it until I retired, only completing two or three water colours, but when I was made redundant for the last time at the age of 57 I continued this interest when I became a picture framer and opened a small gallery also selling art materials. After

retirement I joined the Turnditch Art Group meeting at the village hall in the village of Turnditch joining a small group of amateur artists of varying abilities using the three main mediums, water colours, acrylics and oils, now being Treasurer of the group. I have learnt a great deal since joining, both from fellow painters and our resident professional who visits every third week. We meet every Monday from September to July excluding bank holidays from 9.30am to 11 am, which we will hopefully be able to do this year. I started with watercolours and still enjoy working in this medium but am now exploring acrylics and hope to try oils in the future. My choice of subject is mainly scenes but with the occasional out of the ordinary modern idiom subject, but I do not do figure or portraiture. I have recently painted two pictures of the Ffestiniog railway in acrylics from photographs. The one pictured here was taken by myself on our long distance walk along the Welsh Coast Path. My latest picture, again in acrylics of a stylised harbour scene has just been completed. I am now starting the third of the Ffestiniog paintings, all of which will be hung in my model railway shed, at present in progress.



Find us @ www.dcmvchoir.com





When will choirs sing again?

In conversation with many of you recently, the question of when we might resume rehearsals and performances has arisen. There is no answer at the moment but there is a growing concern throughout the UK for the government to seriously consider its advice and guidelines to choirs and singers. The following is a recent article which summarises the current feeling amongst choral groups.



LEADING figures from the world of choral music have warned the Government of “musical, cultural, and economic catastrophe” if the choirs and singers of the UK who have been brought to a complete standstill by the coronavirus pandemic are not protected.

In a report after a round-table conference on the choral sector at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on 9 June, they call for advice “based on scientific evidence and not on conjecture, anecdote, or supposition”.

They ask for the restrictions on singing to be reviewed, and urge the Government to involve them in the drawing up of future guidelines, in the light of expected DCMS advice restricting the number of singers in a fixed team to six, who would be required to stand more than two metres apart.

The letter to the Minister of State for Digital and Culture, Caroline Dinenage, comes from the Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, James O’Donnell. Its 27 signatories include directors of music from cathedrals and colleges in Oxford and Cambridge; symphony-orchestra chorus directors; and artistic directors of choirs such as the Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, the Bach Choir, and the Monteverdi Choirs and Orchestra, and the English National Opera.

Assessments of the possible risks of choral singing are based mainly on assumptions and not on science, they say. “A persistently negative narrative has developed around singing . . . triggered by reports of clusters of cases in a very small number of choirs around the world.”

They acknowledge the absence of definitive research into the nature of aerosol or droplet production, but point to emerging evidence about the dispersal rate and the contributing factors of the social and behavioural aspects of groups singing (News, 29 May, 5 June; Online Comment, 4 June).

Choral singing “remains one of the cultural beacons of the UK whose practices are admired and replicated globally”, they say. “The societal, personal welfare, and well-being benefits of groups singing have gone largely unacknowledged in the present crisis.” While they understand and support the reasons for the cessation of singing, they say, the longer the interruption, the greater the long-term damage.

Singing is intrinsically no different from any other form of vocalisation, they argue: in all cases, the vocal cords vibrate with varying intensities and frequencies. “Is it considered that a group of workers numbering more than six, at two-metre distance from each other in an unventilated office, poses less of a risk than a group of singers performing in a well-ventilated venue with the same social distancing?”

Professional singers are unable to work from home, but, with the overly stringent distancing regulations currently proposed by Public Health England, they cannot return to work, the report says. “Singing has not been scientifically proven to be more high risk than certain other activities and situations which are currently permissible, and we would ask for the restrictions on singing to be reviewed.”

Find us @ www.dcmvchoir.com





A section headed “The dangers of a moratorium” refers to the financial difficulties in which many professional singers and choral directors now find themselves. “There is no doubt that some high-profile ensembles will not survive this crisis.” The already acute situation of many freelance singers “will be compounded by continued inability to return to singing because of unworkable restrictions”.

They continue: “We are witnessing the educational impoverishment of thousands of children who sing in choirs, whether in schools or a variety of communities — including the world-famous choral foundations of our cathedrals, abbeys, and colleges, and the rich tapestry of multi-faith and secular groups up and down the country.”

They describe the potential loss of choral music as “a deeply unsettling and worrying prospect for the estimated two million people, professional and amateur, and those who enjoy and support it”. They warn, too, that the significant economic contribution of the professional singing sector should not be underestimated, including the significant contribution to tourism of the cathedral and college choirs.

They call urgently for guidance setting out sound general principles to be applied “sensibly and flexibly” and kept under constant review, to enable choirs and choruses to undertake their own detailed risk assessment. The advice needed to “counter the baseless prejudice that any singing is somehow too ‘risky’”. One-size-fits-all was not the answer: “What would be feasible for one group could be unworkable for another.”

Where advising singers to undertake social distancing was proportionate and reasonable, the expected restriction “could prove musically extremely problematic, seems to have no clear scientific basis, and would almost certainly prevent most choral ensembles from resuming working”.

They recommend that many choirs could, in the short term, function online behind closed doors, with there was full control of social distancing, hygiene, and testing arrangements. “A differentiation between the conditions required for public performance, as opposed to rehearsing, performing, and recording in a well-ventilated venue with no audience, should be considered.”

A staged process, in line with the Government’s handling of the virus, would mean that smaller groups would be able to return first, observing current stipulations on social distance and hygiene measures.

They conclude: “We believe it is eminently possible to avert disaster if the appropriate steps are taken now. We would very much like the opportunity to help inform the drawing up of future guidelines concerning choral singing. The survival of one of our nation’s cultural treasures could depend on it.”

Find us @ www.dcmvchoir.com



It's small but beautifully formed - like it's owner!



David Bott writes that as much of his time as possible over recent months has been spent in the garden, communing with nature. Our garden although small, is perfectly formed (like it's owner). I attach a photo taken this morning. If truth be told Janet is the real gardener and seems to know the names of everything. I am just as likely to pull plants up thinking they are weeds! But at least it makes me feel useful. I look forward to seeing you all soonest.

Bowled out by Covid 19

Two of the choir's keenest bowlers have been frustrated by the current lockdown preventing them from demonstrating their skills at this game of oversized marbles. "I'm really itching for a game" commented Crusher Davenport, " you can almost smell the tension in the air as you're about to launch your next projectile." "Bend it like Becks" Ireland added, "I've spent hours perfecting my swerve on the carpet at home. I can't wait to feel that green baize under my feet again".



Find us @ www.dcmvchoir.com





Bake it so

Having recently received some deep space communication from the Kitchen quadrant, our communications team were able to decipher the signal as a message from bass singer and space fleet admiral, Jean-Len Picard (serial no SP 937 215).

It would appear that Jean Len is currently embarked on probably his most dangerous mission to date which I am sure many of us can sympathise with. Travelling deep into the Kitchen quadrant, Jean-Len has encountered a most beautiful alien named Jill. Jill is proving to

be a most dangerous encounter as she has taken to cooking with a vengeance. Her cakes are just sumptuous and the evidence is becoming visible.

Jean Len is an avid science fiction fan and enjoys reading and watching sci-fi. Jean-Len added "I indulge in the Star Trek Next Generation DVDs for a lot of the time - they never lose their interest for me (sad eh?) My reading revolves around fantasy too but these books are always marathon stories ie eight or more in sequence".



Who is this masked man?

During the month of June, Malcolm Richardson has celebrated his birthday and we are all delighted to join together in wishing him many happy returns of the day. Malcolm is seen left, wearing the new safety masks that all chorister will be issued with on their return to rehearsals - hopefully in the not too distant future. Ever resourceful, Malcolm is wearing the prototype mask where the small virus symbols immediately light up should you come into contact with anyone who is showing any symptoms of the covid 19 virus. He and his research team are busily working on a more enhanced version which will apply a 10,000 volt shock to the ear lobes of any chorister singing out of tune. Early trials have proved extremely successful and have been well received by the tenor and bass sections. Early trials involving the baritone section were less successful involving a number of burnt ears. Three members are said to be responding to treatment in hospital and should be released on Friday.

Find us @ www.dcmvchoir.com



Shed no tears



Like many of you, I have been using my enforced free time over the last three months to embark on lots of DIY and gardening projects. Over the past couple of weeks I am quite pleased with the fruits of my labour. We had an old shed to the side of our house which wasn't really being used and simply became a dumping ground for old junk. The decision was taken to throw



out the junk and dismantle the shed. Surprisingly, despite its age the majority of the shed timber was still in good condition and I was able to construct seven planters (above right) which have been positioned at various points on the patio. They are currently housing palms and other Mediterranean style plants which has given the garden a more exotic flavour.

In the space once occupied by the shed, I have begun the construction of a gazebo. I've made good progress



with this over the last week. The two remaining tasks are to slate the roof - with reclaimed welsh slate naturally - and to install a light.

The third task has been the creation of a new plant island within the lawn. In an effort to follow the contours of the lawn, I have ended up with something that roughly resembles an old fashioned telephone handset. It was at this point that the decision was taken to officially name the bed the "British Telecom" Island. It seemed quite appropriate in that whenever you need a BT engineer in

a hurry they always seem to be in bed! Upon completion, his loveliness and worshipfulness, the Lord Mayor of Great Bridgeford will be invited to cut the ribbon at the official opening ceremony where light refreshments will be served to all choir members.





Zoom rehearsals lift off !!!



Despite still suffering from the aftermath of the corona virus, Louise has played a central role in initiating and maintaining some semblance of a regular rehearsal each week. So far more than twenty choristers have been involved in these remote rehearsals. Whilst they are no substitute for a physical coming together as we experience at the Little Eaton church hall, these sessions have allowed us to practice a new part by section and provided a means of maintaining contact with other choristers. Whilst remote rehearsals have their limitations they are very easy to set up so long as you have access to e-mail, a microphone and webcam. These items are built in to most modern laptops and smart phones. Huge thanks to Louise for putting the time in over two nights each week. If you have not taken part so far please speak to Louise or a committee member to set it up for you.

Find us @ www.dcmvchoir.com

