



Choir News

February 2020



Diary Dates

- 7 Feb St Swithun Belper
- 22 Feb CD Recording
- 29 Feb Matlock Methodist
- 13 Mar Walton Primary
- 28 Mar Umbrella Concert
- 3 Apr St Michael Alvaston
- 17 Apr Chester Trip
- 1 May Derby Deanery
- 9 May Annual Concert
- 22 May Mansfield MVC
- 5 Jun joint concert with Dalesmen MVC
- 27 Jun Annual Dinner



Nia injects new life into Denbigh and District MVC

DCMVC chairman, Kevin Griffiths, took the opportunity of congratulating Nia Wyn Jones on her recent appointment as Musical Director of Denbigh and District MVC. Kevin met Nia and other members of the Denbigh choir at a recent meeting to plan the joint concert to be held on 17th April 2020 in Denbigh. On the following evening DCMVC will share a concert with Flint Ladies Choir.

A game of two halves for Ken

Second tenor, Ken Levasseur demonstrated his versatility on Friday 24th January when he performed with both DCMVC and Alfreton MVC in our joint concert. His speed and dexterity in changing from one uniform to another beggared belief and astounded the assembled audience. It was seamless Ken, in fact, you can hardly see the join! Full concert report on following page.



This season so far, we've helped to raise

£3632

for local charities

Lucky Numbers

- 6 Jan Chris Lamb
- 13 Jan Geoff Ball
- 20 Jan Peter Bradley
- 27 Jan Mark Kohrs

Interested in joining the choir?

E-mail : robkevg59@outlook.com or call 01332 829934



New year kicks off with Alfreton MVC

After the disappointment of a cancelled concert in early January it was very evident that the choir were “chomping at the bit” to perform on Friday 24th January at Christ the King Church in Alfreton. Responding to the kind invitation of Alfreton Male Voice Choir we were delighted to share a programme of music to entertain the assembled audience. Under the direction of MD Terry Clay, Alfreton MVC are a very competent group with a traditional offering of Male Voice Choir standards. Their confident delivery is interspersed with a light coating of humour which involves the flying of flags and the “odd” choir member dressing up during performances. Originally formed in 1903, the Alfreton choir has a strong sense of history and maintain with pride many of the traditions of yesteryear in their performances. The chief jester amongst the green blazers is undoubtedly Mick Mullarkey who was instrumental in the formation of the “Saga Louts”. Whilst we were not privileged to witness the “Louts” in their full glory,

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Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir

Mick delivered a cameo performance giving us all an insight into his unique style of entertainment. The concert illustrated quite clearly the contrast in styles between the two experienced and competent choirs. Since discarding our police tunics the newly named DCMVC continue to develop a more contemporary approach in both our image and choice of music. The highlight of the evening for DCMVC was the debut performance of "We rise again". Soon to be recorded as the title track of our latest CD; our first public performance of the song was very encouraging and put a smile on the face of MD, Chris Hare. The rest of our programme was also delivered with great energy and certainly dislodged any rustiness that may have developed since our last concert performance. Tom Fleming performed "Tell my Father" as a solo and both choirs assembled together for a joint finale singing "You raise me up" and "American Trilogy".



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Changing sounds for changing times

During a recent concert, and based upon very little factual evidence, I commented to the assembled audience that the average age of the songs that the choir performs has gradually reduced over the last decade. Having made this bold claim I decided to conduct a bit of research and used our previous two CD recordings and our planned CD recording as the basis for some comparison. Some of the findings of the study are shown on the following page and it does suggest that my claim was broadly correct.

In 2011 our CD "On the Beat" contained tracks with an average age of 94 years with almost two-thirds of the music composed before 1960. By 2015, the average age of the tracks contained on "Let all men sing" had reduced slightly to 86 years but again the majority of songs were written before 1960. Our planned CD for 2020 which we intend to call "We rise again" will have an average age of 58 years with only a little over a quarter composed before 1960.

It's not just about age - it's about quality, context and other factors

The three pie charts show that as the pre 1960 light blue sector reduces; the sectors representing the 1970's and beyond gradually increase. So it would appear that the songs we perform are more "modern" from where we were some 10 years ago.

But does it matter how old a song is? Not entirely. There are many classic pieces of music that transcend the passage of time and we all enjoy singing them and hopefully our audiences enjoy listening to them. The music we sing has to satisfy a number of criteria. We ourselves need to feel pleasure when singing a piece and it needs to be sufficiently challenging to make it worthwhile to rehearse and master. The song must also be entertaining to the audience and this perhaps is where our problem and future dilemma lies?

Who and what will our audience look like in 10 years from now? The continuing trend of falling church congregations and affiliations to various membership groups such as Women's Institutes, Rotary and Lions Clubs will take away a large proportion of our current "fan base". We will therefore need to find new audiences who may be younger and seeking a more contemporary sound than that provided by traditional male voice choirs.

Consideration must also be given to where from and how we will attract future choir members. People are more likely to want to join our choir if they hear us singing songs that they themselves would like to sing - the greater-



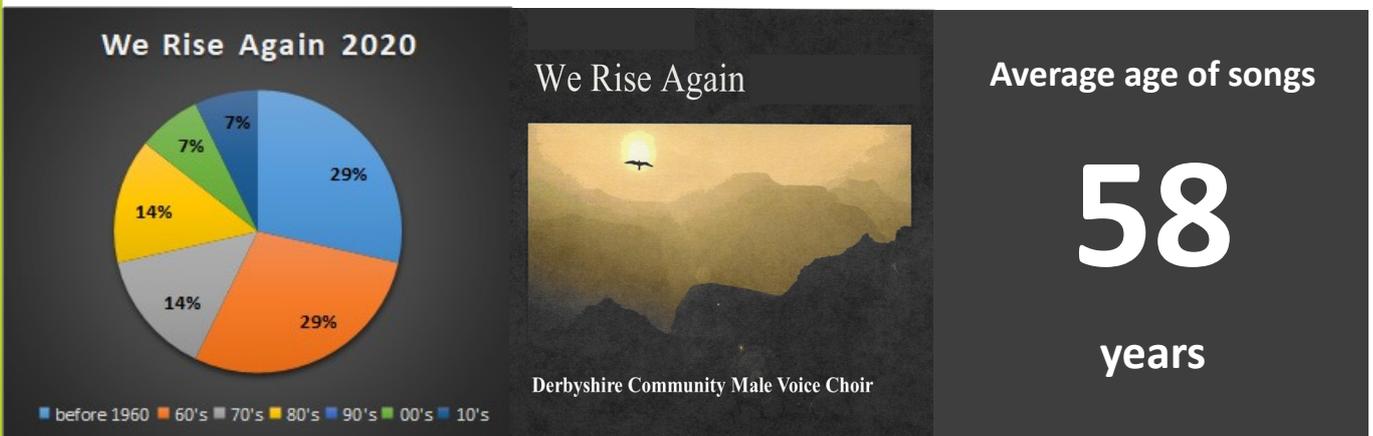
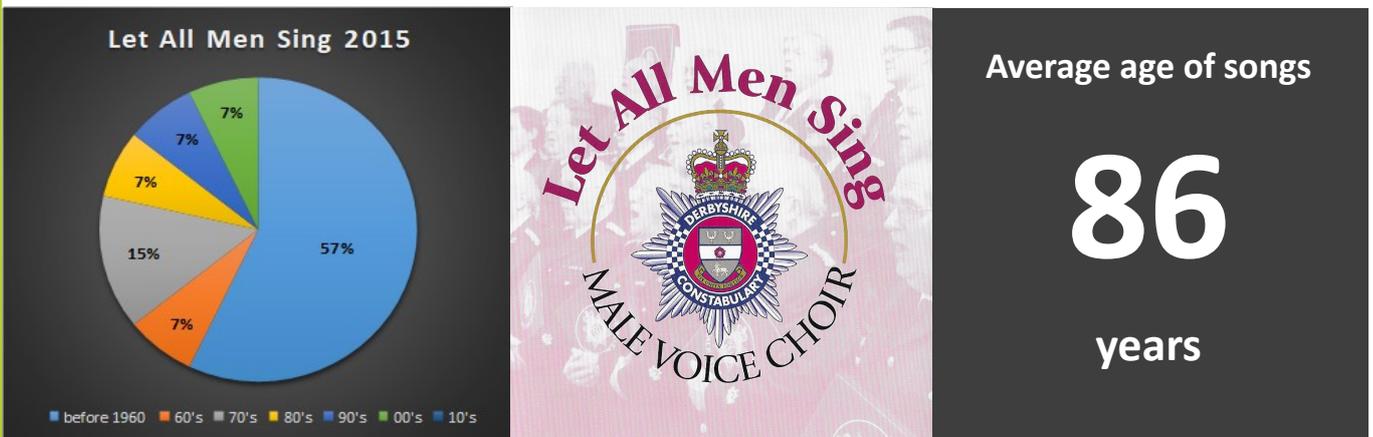
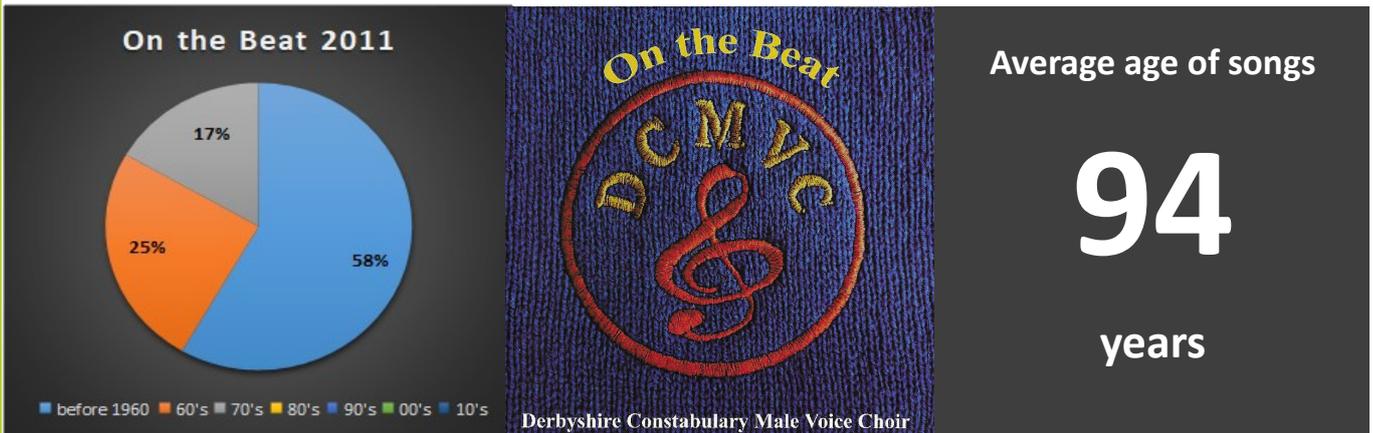
Chris has been instrumental in modernising our programme of music and creating a more contemporary sound



Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir

likelyhood is that most of these songs will be contemporary and composed within their lifetimes. So much food for thought as we move forward into the next decade and face a range of challenges created by changing demographics and changes in taste. What is beyond doubt is that when we stand in front of an audience we possess the skills, energy and passion to deliver a thoroughly entertaining performance. Equally if we can find the mechanisms by which to attract new members we possess the warmth, friendship and good humour to make them feel part of something very worthwhile.

The oldest song we sing was composed in 1707 and the most recent written in 2017



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Fit to sing?

The choir are delighted to receive financial sponsorship and support from a wide range of local and national business organisations. This year we are particularly fortunate to be receiving support from three separate organisations who operate in the field of health, fitness and well being. Two of these sponsors operate health and fitness clubs at Allestree, Raynesway and Castle Donington whilst the third sponsor is a major partner to the NHS throughout the Midlands.

Not just the domain of the elderly

There is a generally held misconception that choir singing is the pastime of older people but in recent years we have been fortunate to attract several more youthful members to our ranks and we hope to attract more younger men over the next few seasons.



Following the Christmas break it seemed like the perfect opportunity to visit one of our sponsors, Choices Health Clubs, to help some of the younger members tone up in readiness for the second half of our concert season. So on Saturday 11th January 2020, nine members of the choir visited Choices in Allestree to undertake a light training session under the watchful eye of Gym Manager, James Parratt. James and his colleagues are all qualified personal trainers and are able to tailor individual programmes for all. Although we only took along some of the choir's younger members to this first session, James was keen to stress that gym membership is available to people of all ages and that there are many members at the Allestree gym in their seventies and early eighties!



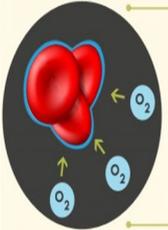
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Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir

The health benefits of singing are both physical and psychological.



Singing has physical benefits because it is an aerobic activity that increases **oxygenation in the blood stream** and **exercises major muscle groups in the upper body**, even while sitting.

Your body produces 'feel good' hormones called **Endorphins**, which rush around your body when you sing which is linked to our **sense of emotional well-being**.

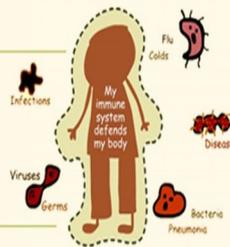


when people sing together they feel increased **Sense of Community, Belonging and Shared Endeavour.**



Increases lung capacity, improves posture. Clears respiratory tubes and sinuses. Increases mental alertness through greater oxygenation.

Boosts **Immunity** by promoting healthy lymphatic system.



KEEP CALM AND SING FOR JOY

Lowers **Blood Pressure.**



As members of a choir we were keen to investigate how our singing could be improved through exercise and James suggested a series of exercises to improve posture and aerobic capacity. Control of breathing is a key factor when singing particularly when the conductor decides to extend that final note for a further twelve bars!!

So whilst we all enjoyed the light workout at the gym, we should also note that some researchers have now begun to refer to singing itself as a new form of exercise. There are many within the medical profession who advocate prescribing light exercise and / or singing as a very effective alternative to a bottle of pills.

Physical benefits

The synergy between singing, exercise and well being has been widely reported in recent years and the increasing number of research projects extolling the benefits of choral singing cannot be ignored. Studies show that singing - particularly as part of a group - can improve aerobic capacity by encouraging you to breathe more deeply. It will also help to release muscle tension, reduce blood pressure and relieve symptoms of asthma, emphysema and pulmonary fibrosis. Singing is also effective in improving posture and toning the body. Whilst singing; your chest expands and your shoulders straighten; abdominal and intercostal muscles are also toned.

A further benefit that your partners may value is that singing can improve muscle tone in the face and larynx thus helping to combat insomnia and snoring!



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Cognitive and psychological benefits

So whilst we have listed a number of physical benefits that can be achieved by light exercise or singing, there is an even longer list of psychological and emotional benefits that can also be experienced. Ask any member of a choir why they initially joined a choir and they will probably express the wish to sing. Ask them why they remain and what benefits they experience and they are likely to reel off some of the following positive reasons.

A number of cognitive benefits such as an improvement in mental alertness, improvement in the ability to multitask and improvement in listening and reading skills. There



is a sense of relaxation, the release of tension and a distraction from any mental stress. Singing often increases the production of endorphins which create a sense of happiness, fulfilment and contentment. Singers often experience a boost in self-confidence and awareness through creative self expression. Singing can provide a stimulating challenge and can expand our minds into the world of poetry. Singing in other languages can also increase our appreciation for diversity and different cultures.

Emotional benefits

Whilst most men are often reticent to discuss emotional issues, choir singing also provides a number of emotional benefits. Singing has the power to allow us to experience a range of emotions - from laughing to crying. It has the capacity to bring out our repressed emotions and feelings that we lock away for fear of emotional threat or risk. Singing can help people come to terms with grieving or loss and it can act as a natural painkiller





Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir



So with this extensive - yet not exhaustive - list of benefits it's hard to argue against choir singing being good for you. And many of these benefits are also the result of a sensible, age appropriate programme of exercise. In fact it would be hard to argue against including both choir singing and regular exercise as part of a weekly programme to improve your health and general well being.

But I can't sing

This excuse is the most common reason we come across whenever we attempt to canvass and recruit new male members to the choir. SINGING?! Oh no. Please no! Anything but that! I have the worst voice in the whole world!



And yet professional voice coaches all agree that everyone can sing - and should sing!

There's a reason why some people respond so negatively to the idea of singing. When you sing, you are the instrument. It is you. Your body. Your sound. Your soul. This is what makes singing so expressive and so personal. It is also what makes it so vulnerable and so intimidating. Singing is one of the most spiritual and emotionally



Benefits of Singing

Many research studies show benefits of singing:

- Relief of anxiety and depression
- Relaxation and calming effects
- Lowering of blood pressure
- Promotion of well being
- Mood improvement
- Boost of Confidence
- Stress reduction
- Pain Reduction



Go and sing today!

liberating acts in which one can ever participate. It doesn't matter whether it's done publicly or privately, on a stage or in the shower, with master precision or just with earnest intentions. Singing is something that is a vital part of our humanity.

We would argue that singing, even done in a small and humble way, is an essential part of living a rich and full human experience. Perhaps some may disagree, but we feel that most of us wouldn't want to leave earth without having sung at least one song in gratitude for this life or simply having experienced the joy of being able to make such noble sounds - whether glorious or modest to our own ears. We base this conclusion on the countless occasions where we have seen vocal growth correspond

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directly with spiritual and inner-growth in fellow singers. In fact, we have seen this with anyone who has been so bold as to start calling themselves a singer.

No one can argue against the fact that there are individuals who are simply more physically gifted than others. There are star athletes who were destined to perform at an elite level. The voice works the same way. Some people's voices, for whatever reason, just naturally have more capability than others. However, this does not mean that every other voice is useless! That's like saying that if you are not a top athlete you ought to pig out. Eat whatever you want. Never exercise. C'mon ... just let yourself go! Even if not everyone is a gifted athlete, everyone has the ability to stay in shape and to look their best. But, they have to believe they can and they have to try. Similarly, everyone has the ability to have a beautiful and skilful voice. The truth is, singing is just like any other instrument and needs to be studied and practiced over several years in order to master. This is the biggest reason that anyone can learn it.

The beauty of singing as part of a choir is you don't have to possess the best voice and be the star. There are many members within the choir who would claim to have fairly average voices - but when they sing together, the magic begins.

So be bold and take that first step of contacting the choir. We're a really friendly bunch and will help you progress at your own pace until you feel confident to contribute positively to that magnificent sound of male voices singing in harmony. For further details and a friendly chat contact either

Kevin 01332 928834 robkevg59@outlook.com
Dave 01332 881587 davecarvert2@gmail.com

THE POWER OF CHORAL SINGING

Singing has bountiful benefits which boost our wellbeing on many levels

- 7 FULFILMENT: Everything comes together and it sounds so beautiful. Harmonising together brings a sense of achievement, beauty and fulfilment.
6 BRAIN GYM: It's very good for your mental wellbeing. It's a good workout for the concentration. Singing focusses and clears the mind, regulating brain rhythms.
5 EXPRESSION: I've lost my inhibitions! Singing liberates self-expression and creative communication.
4 CONNECTION: It gives a sense of togetherness. Choral singing boosts oxytocin and synchronises heart rates, creating a sense of community.
3 CONFIDENCE: I thought singing was not something I would ever be able to do until I came to your workshop. Singing empowers and builds self-confidence.
2 EMOTIONAL RELEASE: It raises my mood. Singing is cathartic, enabling us to express our feelings.
1 WELLBEING: I always feel better - it's cleared the tubes! A gentle form of cardiovascular exercise, singing deepens the breath cycle.

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