

Members will recall Janet as honest, friendly and supportive – always, considerate, willing to help and never afraid to say what she thought, even if it was unpopular. Janet also had fortitude. She survived one episode of breast cancer some years ago, only for it to occur more recently. Fortunately, she was successfully treated for a second time. Earlier this year, however, Janet was diagnosed with a type of blood cancer. In spite of knowing that treatment would mean a debilitating course of chemotherapy, Janet remained cheerful and optimistic. She joked to me one evening that if she needed a wig, she would wear a purple one. This was typical of Janet – defiant, bold and slightly irreverent, but always good humoured. We shall miss her.

We were further saddened to hear of the sudden death of Janet's husband Rob, the day after our second concert. A longstanding resident of Wootton, Rob was a quantity surveyor by profession. He and Janet had been married for over fifty years. Our thoughts are with their sons Stuart and Neil, and their three granddaughters.

Len Holder 1936-2014



The more I find out about Len Holder, the more I regret that I didn't know him better, for I'm sure it would have been very rewarding. There was far more to him than his modest, unassuming, and always courteous, manner might suggest. Len's formidable intelligence was apparent and we knew he had a seafaring past, but he never broadcast the extent of his achievements.

Len's family background and his childhood in Harwich prompted his lifelong association with the sea. A third-generation sailor, he served as an officer in the merchant navy from 1953-1963, working for the Blue Funnel and Glen Lines. Len then joined the lecturing staff of Liverpool Polytechnic, becoming Head of the Maritime Studies Department in 1977, then Director of the School of Engineering and Technology Management in 1988. In 1989, Len and Ann founded Videotel International – a training consultancy for the maritime industry, or, as Len once joked, 'a film company in Soho'. The company became very successful, helping clients across the globe.

Len was very committed to his profession and was a founder member of the Nautical Institute, of which he was president from 1993-1996. The Institute is dedicated to improving standards of seamanship and to representing maritime professionals at the highest level. He also served as Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners from 2001-2002. Len's service led to his being awarded the Merchant Navy Medal in 2012. Len's maritime exploits are recorded in two books he wrote, generously donating the profits to charity. His commitments often brought him into contact with prominent people, including members of the Royal family. As well as supporting mariners, Len was active in the Towcester Lions Club and raised large sums for many local charities.

Until recently, Len had enjoyed good health. He went into hospital in March, where he was diagnosed as suffering from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Unfortunately, he was unable to survive the course of treatment.

We were fortunate to have had Len with us for twelve years and privileged to have known him as a man. Our best wishes go to Ann, Katherine, David, Peter, Nick and Alison, and Ann and Len's eight grandchildren.

Margaret Hawkins

TCS joint concert with Northampton Concert Orchestra April 2014 – a personal view



I am in a unique position to comment on this concert as I am the only person in both groups! Our conductor in the orchestra, David Chambers is originally from Towcester and at one time sang with TCS, so he has been keen for years for us to have a joint concert, and after approaching TCS it was agreed to go ahead at Easter 2014. Elgar's 'Spirit of England' was settled on as a piece suitable for full choir and full orchestra and fitting in with a World War 1 commemoration theme. The choir and orchestra would also perform Stanford's 'Te Deum in B flat', and Parry's 'I was Glad', 'I vow to thee my country' and 'Jerusalem'. Also both groups would also perform some pieces by themselves under the general title of 'Spirit of England' (rather loosely interpreted in some cases!).

Rehearsals started – of course, I went to both sets of rehearsals and it was interesting to compare them and listen to people's reactions. Lots of people in both groups asked me if I would play or sing – I was undecided at first but then devel-

oped a wrist problem which made it painful to play, so I decided to sing with the choir and only play when the orchestra was playing on their own.

The choir may have been a bit out of their comfort zone with some of the music, but so was the orchestra as we usually play short 'light' classical pieces (nothing religious) and of course they had no idea what the choir would be singing in the joint pieces while they played the accompaniment. In some places, for example in the 'Te deum', there are several bars rest for the whole orchestra while the choir sings unaccompanied, so at the rehearsal s there was complete silence while everyone counted like mad before all coming in, hopefully together! 'I was Glad' proved to be particularly difficult too due to high notes and tricky rhythms (the orchestra, like the choir, is an amateur group with no auditions – or they wouldn't have let me in!) David invited me to sing 'Spirit of England' on my own with the full orchestra at rehearsals to help them as they didn't have any of the words and had only the sketchiest idea of what it was about! I told him a) I'm an alto b) I didn't know it well enough yet and c) I could never make myself heard above the orchestra. However, when Claire (the soloist) first came to sing with the orchestra she made herself heard without any problem at all and was applauded enthusiastically at the end – at last the music seemed to be making sense to the orchestra!

Then Helen announced to the choir one day that David would be conducting 'Spirit of England' which caused widespread consternation: 'Why aren't you conducting us? How will we manage?' People kept saying to me 'Is he used to conducting a choir?' (He is – he conducts Northampton Gilbert and Sullivan Society) 'Will he bring us in and mouth the words to us like Helen does?' (Yes, he did) 'Can he conduct a choir and orchestra together' (Yes – he does this at every Gilbert and Sullivan production as well as on other occasions!) David arrived at choir practice and put us through our paces – he seemed to stop us and correct us every few bars and we felt a bit deflated.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2014 Season

Saturday 11th October Workshop, Town Hall, Time TBC (will be all day)

Saturday 8th November WW1 Commemoration Concert with Towcester

Studio Band, St Lawrence Church TBC, Time Evening

Monday 8th December Christmas Dress Rehearsal, Towcester Town

Hall, 6:30pm

Tuesday 9th December Christmas Concert, Towcester Town Hall,

7:30pm

Friday 12th December Christmas Concert, Towcester Town Hall, 7:30pm

EXTRA dates for your diary

Saturday November 15th, Soups and Puds, 12pm—2pm at Towcester Methodist Church

Cynthia East

TOWCESTER CHORAL SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2013-2014

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