

# TOWCESTER

## CHORAL SOCIETY

February 2011



Towcester Choral Society livened up the Leisure Centre in one of our pre-Christmas “meet-the-public” appearances, inviting the audience to join in on the day and if they enjoy singing, *join the choir!!!!*

Other appearances surprised race goers at the December Towcester Race Meeting

*..... more details inside.*



### A Few Words from our Musical Director:

Singing has always been an integral part of my life from my very earliest memories. Singing in the church choir at my local Methodist Church in Liverpool was an activity that I relished and looked forward to every week. From there I've sung in many choirs and worked as a soloist in lots of places with some wonderful people which has left me in the fortunate position of being able to do something I love every day.

I have been delighted at how well the voice tests are going each week at Towcester. Many people are coming along (nervously) and discovering that they have much bigger voices and abilities than they give themselves credit for, so I just wanted to pass on a quote from Ristad that I often forget myself and need to remember. Everyone has an intuitive “knowing” and they need to learn to trust themselves. He writes “How often we are robbed of our ecstasy by trusting implicitly in external authority and negating our internal wisdom... We yield our wills and our imagination to experts, both visible and invisible, and pretend that only the experts have god-given powers of perception. We forget the legitimacy of our own knowing”. To that I say, get singing in the shower, in the car... in the garage. Enjoy yourselves and don't be afraid to really use your voice.

Helen. February 2011



Helen Swift, Tim Dolan and Rosemary Bromwich with the new keyboard



Helen Swift's Mum Wendy helping us to raise funds.



Christmas Concert in the Town Hall.  
Audience participation!

Helen with three of the soloists at the Christmas Concert, Royston King, Ruth King and Alison Mead



After the concert.  
Time to celebrate!



## MARGARET'S MUTTERINGS

Before we look forward to this year, let's reflect for a moment on our first term under Helen's leadership. As far as I can see, things are going very well. Many members have commented on how enjoyable and how rewarding rehearsals are. I can only agree – our autumn sessions were lots of fun, if exhausting. Helen has established a good rapport with the choir and we look forward to great things under her leadership.

We should congratulate Helen on the success of our Town Hall concert, which was very well received. It seemed to go well, in spite of some missing aahs and a few other imperfections, so we can be pleased with ourselves. I think the procession, with piano and percussion accompaniment, was effective, so thanks to Tim and Pam. However, we must brush up our processing skills as we were rather ragged, perhaps partly due to the lack of space. If we do it again in the spring, we shall have to line up in the market place. The concert also saw the debut of our new keyboard and we were pleased that Cllr. Rosemary Bromwich was able to come and see what we had spent her money on. She was very complimentary and I don't think she was just being polite. Helen must have been extremely relieved how things went, following our dismal dress rehearsal at Paulerspury. Let's put that down to the extreme cold and vow not to go there again unless the temperature is higher than 60°F.

I'd be interested to hear any feedback about moving the refreshments to the middle of the concert. Personally, I had always found it mildly embarrassing to break in the middle for no obvious reason and then keep everyone hanging around afterwards for their mince pies. Unless we hear anything to make us change our minds, we shall probably stick to the new arrangement. I also liked the post concert party. Helen works us very hard at rehearsals, so it's good to have an opportunity to socialise. Perhaps we should make this a regular feature. Before leaving the concert, we must also thank Helen's mum, Wendy, for helping out with the refreshments. I understand she was dragged all the way down from Liverpool for the purpose. I'm sure admiring her grandson had nothing to do with her visit.

We also made efforts during the autumn to spread the word in the community, with appearances at Towcester Leisure Centre (twice), Bell Plantation and Towcester Racecourse. Further thanks are due to Helen's mum who handed out fliers, shook a bucket and collected over £100 in donations.

We shall be performing in St. Lawrence's church on Palm Sunday as usual. Our second Easter concert will be a return visit to Holy Cross church at Milton Malsor, who are keen to have us. Our second spring concert will be in Whittlebury, by special request. I believe the village has recently started a small choir, so perhaps they want to see what they can aspire to. You will find dates for the rest of the season elsewhere in this newsletter. Please note that the AGM will be on 21<sup>st</sup> June. It is a little later this year to avoid holding a concert during half term week.

Helen is exploring the feasibility of some Saturday workshops to explore some of the things you have brought up during your one to one sessions with her. We might try one out in the spring term, if we can sort out the practicalities. It might even be feasible to open it up to other choirs, which should bring in a little income. More on this in due course.

Thanks to those of you who gave up your time to sing at the recent funeral of Mrs Janet Grant. Even though we only sang a couple of hymns, it was greatly appreciated by the family who gave us a welcome donation.

Your committee has not had to deal with anything too momentous lately, so that's all for this issue.

Margaret

## ABCD SINGING DAY 2011 at TAMWORTH

Many members of Towcester Choral Society are looking forward to our usual visit to the Association of British Choral Director's Tamworth Singing Day.

INSPIRING CHORAL LEADERSHIP  
**abcd**  
FOR 25 YEARS

Association of British Choral Directors  
**MIDLANDS REGION**

25th Anniversary Celebration Weekend  
**SINGING DAY 2011**  
for  
**Singers, Conductors, Teachers, Singing  
Leaders, Students, Pupils**  
in association with 'Sing Up'

**SATURDAY 5 March 2011**  
10.00am – 4.30pm  
The Coton Centre,  
Tamworth, Staffordshire  
with guest leaders  
**David Lawrence**  
**Amy Bebbington and Ula Weber**

and **SUNDAY 6 March 2011**  
10.30am – 6.00pm  
Birmingham Town Hall  
with **Bob Chilcott**  
and featuring **Massed Youth Choirs**

A partnership event : ABCD, Sing Up and Staffordshire Performing Arts

President: Sir David Willcocks CBE MC  
Vice Presidents:  
Brian Kay, Pamela Cook MBE and John Rutter CBE

**sing up** 'A singing school is a happy school: Sing Up - the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, produced by Youth Music with AMV, BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government.'  
help kids find their voice  
abcd registered charity no: 1085226

### PRESENTERS this year are:

**David Lawrence:** is one of the UK's most versatile conductors, working with orchestras, symphony choruses and national youth choirs. He currently holds the Guinness World Record for conducting the UK's largest choir—6,846 singers! David's work has taken him to Singapore, Colombia, Canada, the United States, India, throughout Europe, and since 2005 he has worked regularly in Australia. His positive and engaging manner makes him a popular guest conductor, and he is an experienced and respected trainer of choral conductors. David has adjudicated at international choral festivals as well as for the BBC Choir of the Year and Young Musician of the Year competitions. He conducts for BBC Television's 'Songs of Praise' and directed 'The People's Chorus.' As Principal Conductor of Young Voices, David directs massed choirs in an annual series of concerts incorporating more than 8,000 singers.

**Amy Bebbington** has a First Class Honours Degree and a Masters Degree in Piano Performance. She also became a Doctor of Musical Arts, specialising in Choral Conducting, having studied with Dr. John Dickson at Texas Tech University. Amy currently works as a teacher trainer for Trinity/Open University on their CPD course in Key Stage 2 Music, and for the Sing Up Initiative to establish quality singing in Primary Schools.

**Urszula Weber (Ula)** is a freelance choral animateur, singer, teacher trainer and classroom music specialist whose work has taken her as far afield as Ukraine and Bangkok. Formerly a primary school teacher, she is now Vocal Projects Manager with Sandwell Youth Music and Arts. As well as singing with the renowned choir Ex Cathedra, Ula is also Project Leader for Ex Cathedra Education's internationally acclaimed Singing Playgrounds project. She runs summer schools for gifted and talented young singers in Derby and is a conducting tutor for the national choral organization Sing for Pleasure. Ula currently conducts the Sandwell Youth Choir and the Kent Teachers' Choir, and is often invited to guest conduct at choral events across the country.

### Welcome to new members

We welcome to the Choral Society Pam Curtis and Barbara Phillips (Altos) and Mary Andrew (Soprano). We hope they are enjoy singing with us.

## Messiah at the Albert Hall: November 2010

It isn't every Sunday in November that one gets to have a picnic on a motorway! Len, Ann and daughters Katherine and Alison set off at 2.40 pm from Towcester in plenty of time for doors opening at 6.15 pm at the Albert Hall, and by 3.10 pm we were well and truly stuck between junctions 13 and 12 on the M1! Listening on the car radio we heard that a coach had overturned and there was only one lane open Southbound. This news eventually changed to motorway closed, and for the next 3 hrs we crawled in a stop-start way the very short distance to the next Junction. Our driver, Len, kept his patience well, and it was a pity that we didn't have the Messiah CD to listen to. The younger passengers read their books until even they couldn't see, and we decided to eat our sandwiches in case we arrived in London too late to have time. We didn't know at this point that we would be 3 hours in this traffic jam! By the time we reached Junction 12 the road was miraculously re-opened and we went from 0 to 70 mph very quickly! At 6.15 pm we were wending our way from Staples Corner to Kensington, which took 50 minutes in darkness and in heavy traffic [too many early Christmas shoppers!] We arrived just after the performance had started but were allowed in with no trouble or surprise! After listening to the solos "Comfort Ye, and Every Valley" from the wrong side of the door, we three girls took our seats, much to the surprise of Margaret and Ruth whom we had to push past as they were in full voice singing "And the Glory of the Lord". Len, having stopped to park the car, spent the first half listening among the Altos, and enjoyed the sound so much, he would have liked to stay there! The atmosphere was as great as always, and there seemed to be more singers than ever, but the female soloists were a little disappointing. Our journey home, by a different route was trouble free and considerably quicker, only 1hr 40 minutes.

We worried all afternoon about the overturned coach, and the probable serious injuries of the passengers, only to find that it was an empty coach, and the driver was not seriously injured, and was treated 'in situ'. How can it take so long to clear a major road? .....Ann Holder

### A Poem sent in by Barbara Millard:

Sung to St. Denio - otherwise known as 'Immortal, Invisible'  
and written by The Reverend Gordon Giles, Succentor, St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

Immoral, impossible, God only knows  
How tenors and basses, sopranos, altos  
At service on Sunday are rarely the same  
As those who on Thursday to choir practice came.

Unready, unable to sight-read the notes,  
Nor counting, nor blending, they tighten their throats,  
The descant so piercing is soaring above  
A melody only a mother could love.

They have a director, but one wonders why:  
No one in the choir deigns to turn him an eye,  
It's clear by his flailing, he wants them to look,  
But each singer slouches with nose in the book.

Despite the offences, the music rings out.  
The folks in the pews are enraptured, no doubt.  
Their faces are blissful, their thoughts appear deep,  
But it is no wonder, for they are asleep!

## **Towcester Choral Society and the Internet**

This is an update on our web site and the online fundraising that has taken place.

For newer members and those who have gone online since my last update back in the June 2010 newsletter, our web site can be found at:

**<http://www.towcesterchoralsociety.org.uk>.**

I shall be adding news of events as the details become available. Photographs are most welcome. Any comments are appreciated too. However the template for our site is supplied and although it can be changed I don't have the knowledge to make any changes to the overall format to make it more exciting. There may well be someone amongst us who has the relevant knowledge to make a much better site. I would be happy to hand it over. There is also a 'blog' on the website so that anyone can add comments relevant to TCS.

## **Fundraising**

Do you purchase anything via the Internet? If you do then you can help us with our fundraising. Instead of shopping direct with your chosen supplier, you can go to them via <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/towcestercs>.

This selects Towcester Choral Society as your preferred 'cause'.

We will then receive a cash-back as a result of your purchase. There are some 2000+ shops who are registered with 'Easyfundraising', it includes people like 'Amazon', 'Argos', 'WHSmith' and 'Tesco'. Tell your friends too, anyone who buys on the internet can choose 'Towcester Choral Society' as their cause. Why not add <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/towcestercs> to your favourites NOW. You must register with them to ensure we get the cash.

We now have 12 members who have registered and hopefully all buying. Since our membership with Easyfundraising started in 2009, £37.99 has been raised by members. The money is paid to us quarterly and we will receive a further £28.83 around the end of March which covers purchases and searches for the last quarter of 2010. More details about searching are below.

Why not change your search engine too and help TCS?

Yes go to <http://towcestercs.easysearch.org.uk/> and save the entry and use it instead of 'Google' or any other search engine.

Every time you search you will also be supporting TCS. So far searching itself has raised £11.55.

Members who have advised us of an email address will be receiving regular emails from us. If you are not receiving anything, may be we don't have your email address. Please check with the treasurer on the details that he has.

Keep buying and even if you are not buying keep searching with Easysearch.

Royston

**TCS Dates for your diary: ;**

Tues 5th April Easter concert dress rehearsal Holy Cross Church Milton Malsor 7-30 pm

Tues 12 April Easter concert dress rehearsal St Lawrence Church 7-30 pm

Sun 17th April (Palm Sunday) Easter concert St Lawrence Church 6-00 pm

Tues 19th April Easter concert Holy Cross Church Milton Malsor 7-30 pm

Sat 7th May Keep this date free for a Call My Bluff / Wine Tasting Fund Raiser

Mon 6th June Spring concert dress rehearsal Towcester Town Hall 7-30 pm

Tues 7th June Spring concert Towcester Town Hall 7-30 pm

Mon 13th June Spring concert dress rehearsal Whittlebury 7-30 pm (to be confirmed)

Tues 14th June Spring concert Whittlebury 7-30 pm (to be confirmed)

Tues 21st June Towcester Choral Society AGM 7-30 pm

**Tickets** TCS do not sell the tickets for the concert at Easter and probably will not for Milton Malsor. Carol Coppock will be organizing ticket sales for our Spring concert. Telephone 01604 859646 or visit the society website. Tickets available from mid April. Choir ticket booking forms/envelopes will be issued in the usual way at that time.

**Help with your homework:**

Try [www.cyberbass.com](http://www.cyberbass.com) Select 'Major Works' then the work, and then the appropriate voice part. Each voice part is played clearly and is easy to follow. Sadly the site no longer allows free downloads but you can listen as long as you want to. They sell practice CDs too!

Another useful site for music scores, rehearsal CDs, tapes etc is:

[www.musicdynamics.co.uk](http://www.musicdynamics.co.uk) Telephone 01242 679379

**From the Editors:**

Once again at the beginning of another year which we are sure will entail a lot of hard work for Helen and Tim, and even more for the choir if we are to maintain and improve upon the standards being set for us! Our Christmas concerts were well received, and the innovation of mulled wine and mince pies during the interval at the Town Hall seemed a jolly good idea. We think that the post concert party was a real success with the delicious food provided by choir members and the chance to relax and chat among ourselves, and to friends who support us. Thank you to our contributors, and keep singing!

**The Editors: Ann and Len Holder, Phone 01327 352647 or Email: [len@holder7.co.uk](mailto:len@holder7.co.uk)**

**Website: [www.towcesterchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.towcesterchoralsociety.org.uk) Webmaster: Royston King**

**Quote: ..and the night shall be filled with music. ...and the cares that infest the day shall fold their tents like Arabs ...and as silently steal away..... Long-fellow**