

# A History of Lancaster and District Male Voice Choir

From 1899 to 2013 this history is based on the writings of Roland Brooke and the first history contained in the original website (no longer operational). From 2013 it is the work of Dr Hugh Cutler sometime Chairman and subsequently Communications Officer and editor of the website.

## 1899-1950

The only indication of the year of foundation is that 1899 is mentioned in an article in the Lancaster Guardian dated 13th November 1926 regarding the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Mr. & Mrs. R.T. Grosse. In this article it states that he was 'for many years the Conductor of the Lancaster Male Voice Choir which was formed at the end of 1899'. The Guardian in February 1904 reported that 'the Lancaster Male Voice Choir, a new organisation in the Borough, are to be congratulated on the success of their first public concert'. The content of the concert was extensive with many guest artistes including a well-known soprano at that time, Madame Sadler-Fogg. In the audience were many honoured guests, including Lord Ashton, Colonel Foster, and Sir Frederick Bridge. In his speech, the latter urged the Choir to 'persevere and stick together'. Records state that the Choir were 'at their zenith' in 1906! This first public concert became an annual event, at varying venues, and their Sixth Annual Concert was held in the Ashton Hall in what was then known as 'The New Town Hall' in Lancaster. This was the first-ever concert held in 'The New Town Hall', and what would R.T. Grosse have said had he foreseen that his Choir was still going strong 120 years later. They also subsequently joined with others in a concert commemorating the Centenary of the Town Hall in 2010. The Choir closed down for the duration of the First World War, after which it was 'reconstructed'. Just how many of the members never returned to be part of that 'reconstructed' Choir is not recorded. Between the two wars, the Choir entered, and were successful, in many of the local Music Festivals. For example, they were awarded second prize in the Blackpool Music Festival of 1926. A photograph from the immediate pre-Second World War period in the archives shows the Choir to be about 40 members strong. It once more closed down for the duration of hostilities of the Second World War.

## 1950-59

By 1951, the President of the Choir was Brigadier McLean. Mr. F Yates was both Chairman and Conductor. The Choir was functioning then under the name of 'W & G Warisons' under the auspices of Waring & Gillow, Lancaster. The Choir had been approached by Lancaster C.W.S. with an offer to adopt them under the name of 'Lancaster C.W.S. Male Voice Choir'. On offer was a rehearsal room, money for the purchase of music, and travelling expenses. The only stipulation was for the Choir to enter the C.W.S. Music Festival, but records show that this was unanimously rejected by the members. However, in October 1951, Waring & Gillow gave notice that they required the rehearsal room for use as a Recreation Room and the Choir would have to find other accommodation. The Choir relinquished the name of Warisons and reverted to the Lancaster Male Voice Choir. Rehearsals were then held at the Cromwell Hall in Lancaster.

In 1954, a suggestion was made that the Choir should amalgamate with the Morecambe Male Voice Choir, but this was unanimously rejected. In February 1955, Mr. Norman Ferris was appointed as Conductor. In 1956, Brigadier McLean moved to Scotland and Councillor Mrs. CM Pickard was elected President of the Choir to replace him. She retained her association with the Choir for 55 years until her death in 2012. In 1957, the Choir took part in a pantomime in the Royal Albert Hospital, Lancaster organised by the BBC. In 1959 President Mrs. C.M. Pickard was elected Mayor of Lancaster and consequently the Choirs' Annual Dinner was held in the Banqueting Hall at Lancaster Town Hall. As a token of respect to the President, and to mark her year of Mayoralty, a Rose Bowl was presented to her from the Choir.

## **1960-69**

The Choir changed their rehearsal room again in 1963 from the Cromwell Hall to the Oddfellows Hall. A proposal that the rehearsal night be changed from Friday to Tuesday was defeated. It would be another twenty years before this change happened. In 1964 a proposal to change the name of the Choir to the City of Lancaster Male Voice Choir was defeated. 1964 also saw the election as Chairman of Norman Wilkinson. The Choir performed at the Conference Service of the Independent Order of Oddfellows in the Winter Gardens in Morecambe and gave their first-ever concert specifically held to raise money for Choir Funds. (The amount raised was £24.4s.4d). The Choir history is one that is not without its controversies. A special meeting was called in May 1967 to consider 'the Conductorship of the Choir'. A unanimous vote of 'no confidence' in Mr. F Trudgill was returned and he was asked to resign, although he did continue as a singing member. Norman Ferris was once more appointed as Conductor.

A combined concert with the Storey's Band at the Ashton Hall in aid of the Extensive Care Heart Unit at Royal Lancaster Infirmary was the highlight of 1969. The Choir also joined the National Association of Choirs and sang at their Annual Conference in Morecambe. This invitation would be repeated, and accepted, 22 years later. Albert Shaw, who had served as Treasurer for sixteen years resigned and Norman Hart took up the position.

## **1970-79**

In 1973, an emergency meeting was called to appoint a new Secretary. Tom Watson, after giving 22 years of loyal service, was forced to resign both that position and the Choir, because of ill-health. Harry Woodhouse was his successor. This appointment lasted until 1976 when he resigned, and Phil Slater took up the position. In 1978, after twelve years as Chairman, Norman Wilkinson resigned due to heavy commitments elsewhere, and Mr. H. Grosse, the son of the founder, was appointed. Clifford Midwinter took up the baton upon the death of Norman Ferris. A piano, in memory of Norman Ferris, was presented to the Choir by his widow, and an engraved plaque was affixed to the inside of the lid. It was in this year that honorariums ceased to be paid to the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and the Conductor. The only paid position from then was that of Accompanist, who was paid £15.00 per annum. Phil Slater resigned as Secretary and Harry Woodhouse once more took up the position.

## **1980-89**

Royal Blue bow ties became the official choir tie in 1980. Clifford Midwinter resigned as Conductor and David Townley took over. In 1981, the Rendsberg Male Voice Choir from Germany visited the city for the second time, and once more the Choir acted as hosts, and asked the Town Hall officials to make all the necessary arrangements, though the Ashton Hall was not available. The venue was then arranged for The Dome in Morecambe. The concert raised the sum of £271.44p which the Choir rounded up to £275.00. The President, Mrs. Pickard, presented a cheque for this amount to the local Secretary of the International Year of Disabled People (IYDP).

Due to 'misunderstandings' with the Conductor (who had by this time moved to the Blackpool area) and his regular 'non-appearances', which reduced the rehearsals to little more than 'sing-songs', the Accompanist, Mrs. Lowe, resigned because she said that she was not prepared to tolerate those conditions. In November, it was decided to postpone all further rehearsals until the AGM in December. At the AGM, the Choir renewed its membership of the National Association of Choirs and David Townley continued as Conductor with a £50.00 honorarium. Rehearsal nights were changed from Friday to Tuesday from December 7th, 1981. Concert fees were raised to £15.00.

The Conductor, David Townley, gave notice that he was resigning in February 1982, so a successor would be required. Elaine Kitchin and Irene Bell were still guest singers with the Choir, and Elaine was asked to become Deputy Conductor, to commence in May. These were apparently turbulent times for the Choir! Brian Hayes-Jones was appointed to the position of Conductor in January 1984, and the Deputy Accompanist, Barbara Young, was asked to become the official Accompanist. Norman Wilkinson was appointed to his second spell as Chairman of the Choir. An Octet was formed within the Choir, and whilst this was an asset to the Choir, complaints were made that they were 'poaching' certain items from the Choirs' repertoire. In 1984, the Choir changed their rehearsal room from the Oddfellows Hall to the Greaves Church. At the AGM in 1985, Mrs. Pickard indicated that after 28 years as President of the Choir, she would be willing to stand down if someone else was interested in taking her place. Jack Armitage was appointed to that position with Mrs. Pickard becoming Vice-president, a position she held until her death in 2012. Norman Hart resigned as Treasurer but continued as a singing member. John Berry was appointed in his place. Tom Manning resigned as Secretary and Tom Robinson was elected in his place. Subscriptions were raised to £6.00 but some members expressed the concern that this might prove prohibitive. Sixteen concerts were given during the year, with Elaine Kitchin and Irene Bell still appearing as guest soloists.

In 1986 the Choir took part in the Morecambe Carnival Concert at The Dome. August 1987 saw the start of the 'big sings' of Massed Male Voice Choirs, commencing with the G-Mex Hall in Manchester (1000 voices) and then in future years in venues as diverse as the Manchester Free Trade Hall; the Preston Guild Hall; the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall; the Opera House, Blackpool, and the magnificent Bridgewater Hall in Manchester in October 1998.

In 1989, the Choir sang at the funeral of Elaine Kitchin at St. John's Church, Heysham. Elaine had been associated with the Choir for well over twenty years as guest soloist and Deputy Conductor. In 1987, Elaine had presented to the Choir a set of music entitled 'Mr. Curwen'. This piece appeared regularly in the Choir's repertoire for many years afterwards. A concert, which never took place, should have been held in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester in November 1989. Unfortunately, it had to be cancelled, because of a group who threatened to set off an explosive device during the concert if it went ahead!

### **1990-1999 and the Choir Centenary**

At the AGM in 1991, Tom Robinson resigned as Secretary and Roland Brooke was elected in his place. Subscriptions were raised to £9.00 with concert fees going up to £20.00, with the addition of half the transport costs for engagements outside the City boundary. The highlight of 1991 was when, for the second time in its history, the Choir was invited to sing at the Dome in Morecambe for the Annual Conference of the National Association of Choirs. Jack Armitage resigned as President at the AGM in January 1992, and Tom Flanagan, who at that time oversaw tourism in the Lancaster area, was appointed in his place. Tom became only the fourth President in the second half-century of the Choir.

The Choir received an invitation to travel to Germany to represent Lancaster at the 150th Anniversary celebration of the Rendsburg Male Voice Choir. This produced a further crisis for the Choir. Initially the Choir members were enthusiastic, but this enthusiasm evaporated, and the Choir cancelled. This led to the resignation of the Conductor and only after much persuasion was he convinced to stay. A new keyboard was purchased during the summer months, which would be used at venues which did not have a 'concert-pitch' piano. 1992 proved to be a financially sound year with £1,180.00 being raised for the Guide Dogs for the Blind and £800.00 for Choir Funds.

The suggestion that the Choir should host a Massed Male Voice Sing was raised at the AGM in 1993, and the idea was embraced enthusiastically. However, the Secretary, Roland Brooke, suffered a heart attack in February, and the idea fell through. When he had recovered sufficiently to return to the Choir, he resigned as

Secretary. During his indisposition, Arnold Diggle had overseen the secretarial work, but as he did not want the job permanently, Phil Slater was appointed.

The chosen Charity of the Year was Heart Concern at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. The Choir were joined by the pupils of Bowerham School in this, and by the end of the year a total of £688.00 had been raised for the organisation. The Choir were invited to take part in the Remembrance Concert at The Dome in Morecambe in November. To raise more money for charities, it was decided to hold 'bucket collections' at the close of every concert, always with permission of the organisation for which the Choir was singing. Another innovation was the purchase of twelve aerobic exercise steps to form a 'racked' platform during performances. These were purchased with a grant from the Lancaster City Arts & Events Council. The grant was for £350.00, but the cost of the steps was only £120.00, so £230.00 was returned to the Council!

At the 1995 AGM, the Conductor expressed his disappointment with the number of members who did not attend concerts. Norman Wilkinson, who had been Chairman of the Choir for 22 years (in two spells), retired from the position and was immediately appointed a Vice-President. Roland Brooke took up the vacancy as Chairman. Three noteworthy concerts were given during the year. The first one was given at the Grange Hotel in Grange-over-Sands, for the veterans of the prisoners-of-war on the Greek island of Leros during the Second World War. The second was a concert given with the Thornton Vocal Union, a mixed choir from the Bradford area of Yorkshire, and the joint choirs gave a successful concert at the Greaves Methodist Church in Lancaster. The third event brought about the end of an era. It was the last of the combined Male Voice Choir concerts to be held in the Manchester Free Trade Hall. At the end of the year, the building was to be demolished and a new Concert Hall built elsewhere in Manchester which would be called The Bridgewater Hall. The Choir were to sing there on future occasions.

At the 1996 AGM, Roland Brooke resigned as Chairman and was succeeded by John Christian, and Douglas Marsden was appointed Secretary to replace Phil Slater who had had to resign during 1995 due to ill-health. In 1997, John Christian resigned as Chairman, as did Brian Hayes-Jones as Conductor, although Brian stayed in the Baritone section of the Choir. In the interim period, the Deputy Conductor, Arthur Foster, took up the baton. In March 1997, Roland Brooke reluctantly took up the position of Chairman once more. A new Conductor, Susan Fielding, (henceforth to be called the Musical Director) was appointed. The sum of £1000.00 had been raised over the last two years for the Voluntary Vehicle Service in Lancaster.

The start of 1998 presented another crisis and was a disaster for the Choir! Before the AGM, on 6th January, no fewer than seven resignations were tendered. The positions of President, Treasurer, Chairman, Deputy Conductor, Deputy Accompanist, Publicity Officer and Auditor all became vacant. The Vice-President, as senior serving officer, took the Chair until the tea break, after which he too announced his resignation not only as Vice-President but from the Choir also. The Vice-Chairman was invited to take the Chair, but he declined on health grounds. Roland Brooke was then asked by the members to Chair the meeting which he did to its close. It was decided that an extended AGM would be held the following Tuesday. During the following week, the Musical Director resigned. Slowly but surely, most of the positions were filled. Arthur Foster agreed to lead the Choir. This continued until 17th February when Arthur made the Choir aware that he had only agreed to conduct temporarily and that he would take only two more rehearsals. In March, Eileen Pulver was appointed as Musical Director and took her first rehearsal on 10th March. Norman Wilkinson had a change of heart and resumed his position as Vice-President and choir member as before. During the summer months, Phil Slater resigned as Secretary and Roland Brooke was appointed to that position. The Choir were invited to take part in a concert of Massed Male Voice Choirs, entitled 'Autumn Harmony', to be held in the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester on 17th October 1998. This featured 25 Male Voice Choirs, totalling in the region of 540 voices.

The Charity of the Year was The Head Injuries Association because one of the members, David Banks, had been involved in a road accident in 1997. He had suffered severe head injuries and lay in a coma until regaining consciousness just prior to Christmas 1998. He had been born with the most gorgeous operatic

tenor voice and was studying at the Northern College of Music. Just prior to the accident, he had completed a 'Mario Lanza' tour of Malaysia. Shortly afterwards, the President of the Choir, Irene Bell, presented a cheque for £900.00 to The Head Injuries Association.

At the AGM on 5th January 1999, every single position was filled! It was the fervent wish that this Centenary year would see the revival of the Choir in terms of numbers and comradeship, and that it would continue for many years to come. The first edition of a Choir Newsletter, entitled the 'Male Voice Monthly', was launched under the editorship of Roland Brooke. The Choir was officially registered as a Charity on February 26<sup>th</sup> 1999, the registration number being 1074435. The big occasion was on 10th April when the Choir celebrated their Centenary in the Ashton Hall in Lancaster Town Hall. Joining them were the Aughton Male Voice Choir; The Blackpool Soundwaves - a female 'barber-shop' group of ladies; and two young ladies from the Lancaster Girls' Grammar School - Soprano, Heather Sutherland, and pianist and accompanist, Rachel Berry. About 400 attended the concert. The Mayoral party consisted of the Mayor, Councillor Abbot Bryning, and the Mayoress ; the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ivor Thompson, and the Deputy Mayoress ; the MP for Lancaster, Hilton Dawson and his wife; and the President of the Lancaster & District Male Voice Choir, Irene Bell. There was an overall profit from the evening of £1,562.79p. In April, Welwyn Garden City Male Voice Choir, who had an engagement to sing in Kirkby Lonsdale, invited the Choir to join them for a sail on Lake Windermere.

The Centenary Dinner was held at the Auckland Hotel in Morecambe on 13th December. As in previous years, the members were highly delighted with the seasonal food placed before them, thanks to the proprietors Lisa and Michael Wood, along with Valerie, Peter and Jason Bracken. A very talented young Soprano, Jane Maudley, and a magician, Martin Scott Price, provided the entertainment. The Christmas concert was held at Greaves Methodist Church on 11th December with the pupils from Carleton Green School, Blackpool. The Mayor of Lancaster, Sybil Rostron, and her consort, were present, as was the Treasurer of CancerCare, Mervin Bonnett. At the rehearsal on 13th December the President of the Choir, Irene Bell, presented Chris Ashbey, the Public Affairs Co-ordinator for CancerCare with a cheque for £2,260.00.

## **2000-2009**

At the AGM on 18th January 2000 (which was held at St. Paul's Church, Lancaster, because the rehearsal room was not available), several changes in the officers were made. Notably, the Chairman and Secretary, Peter Bell and Roland Brooke, were succeeded by David Johnson and Geoff Finney respectively. On 25th March the Choir took part in a 'Big Sing' at the Evening News Arena in Manchester with 16,000 people in the audience, and with the 2000 voices in the combined choirs. The Choir continued to give many concerts throughout the year and at the close of the year, the Charity of the Year, this time 'A Breath for Life', received a cheque for £1,072.93p.

At the 2001 AGM, the only new officers were Ken Robinson (Vice-chairman), Peter Bell (Treasurer), Arthur Foster (Deputy Conductor), and Margaret Sykes (Auditor). The Charity of the Year was The Parkinson's Society. After several concerts at local venues, the next Massed Male Voice Concert was held on 5th May 2001 at the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool.

One unique concert was when the choir sang at Hamilton House Farm on 22nd August. This was not a farm but a Caravan Park, and the concert was part of a series of concerts put on for the caravanners who go there and was a different type of concert entirely. It was held in a large barn, which had a small raised platform on which was an organ and an array of loudspeakers. One of the items performed was 'You'll Never Walk Alone', and when asked which piece they would like to hear again they opted for this to be the one. There must have been getting on for 100 people, all on their feet and waving their arms about. It was certainly the most exhilarating end to a concert. Buckets were passed around and the sum of £63.00 was collected for The Parkinson's Society. The last concert of the year was the Christmas Concert held at Lancaster Methodist

Church, again with the pupils of Carleton Green School, Blackpool. (Note the name of the church had been changed from Greaves Methodist Church to Lancaster Methodist Church).

At the AGM on 8th January 2002, the Charity of the year was named as The Alzheimer's Society. The Membership Fee was set at £35 and the Concert Fee at £50 negotiable. On the 13th January, Bob Garth died. He had been a member of the Choir for just over 15 years but had been in poor health. Nevertheless, he had retained his membership in the hope that one day he might be well enough to return. In his will he had asked for the Choir to sing 'Gwahoddiad' and 'Morte Criste' at his funeral, and the Choir carried out this wish on 21st January. On the 21st March, the Choir sang at another funeral. Tom Flanagan had been President of the Choir from 1992 to 1997 but had been suffering from Parkinson's Disease for many years and on 13th March he died. At the request of his wife, Brenda, the Choir sang 'Gwahoddiad' and the American Spiritual, 'Amen' at the funeral. On Sunday 2nd June at 7.30 pm, the Choir joined with seven other choirs in a Golden Jubilee Concert at the Opera House in Blackpool. The number of singing voices was 300, along with six items from the choir at Hall Park Primary School in Lytham, Blackpool. The Guest soloist was Joan Aitchison (Soprano). The Compere and Musical Director for the evening was Alan Herbert. The Organist and Accompanist was David Windle, the resident organist in the Tower Ballroom.

The first concert after the summer break, on 21st September, was at a new venue for the Choir. This was at Cartmel Priory, Cumbria which became an annual booking for the next few years. On the 19th October, a charity concert in aid of our Charity of the Year was held at Sefton Road Church, Heysham. The Mayor and Mayoress of Lancaster were invited guests. The amount raised that evening was £427.00. The annual Christmas Concert was performed once more with the pupils of Carleton Green School, Blackpool, and was held at Lancaster Methodist Church on the 9th December. The amount made on the night was £505.58p bringing the total for the year for The Alzheimer's Society to £1,533.00p. The presentation of the cheque for this amount was made by Norman Hart, a member of the Bass section, at the last rehearsal on 10th December. Norman was chosen because his wife suffered from the disease.

The deaths of two former members of the Choir were announced in December. The first was that of Jack Armitage who was well known in the area for his work in raising money for various Charities and had been President of the Choir from 1984 to 1991 inclusively. The second was that of Tom Gardner who had been with the Choir for over 20 years. His funeral service was held at Skerton Methodist Church, and the Choir sang 'Gwahoddiad'.

The AGM on the 6th January 2003, was held in the rehearsal room at Lancaster Methodist Church. The Officers of the Choir remained unchanged with the exception that Douglas Marsden was appointed as Publicity Officer, and Martin Mellowdew as Deputy Accompanist. Two other changes made and accepted were that the summer break would be for three months and the month of April be kept free of bookings and be devoted to the learning of 'new music'. The committee reviewed the arrangement of the 'Male Voice Monthly' Newsletter. They decided that members should continue to receive a free copy each month, and that the concert fee of £35.00 should remain unchanged. Heart Concern was chosen as Charity of the Year.

Mrs. C.M.Pickard, who had been President from 1957 to 1989 inclusive and Vice-President from then until the present day, was to be approached with the suggestion that she become an honorary Life Member. She subsequently accepted the position, which she described as 'a great honour'. Norman Wilkinson, now in his 92nd year, felt that it was time to retire as 'a singing member' of the Choir, but wished to continue his membership in all other ways. Norman had been a Vice-President since 1993, and when invited to continue in this position, he expressed a wish to do so. He had joined the Choir on 15th October 1950.

On the 25th March another landmark in the history of the Choir occurred. This was the introduction of a 'second uniform', which consisted of a V-necked maroon jumper embroidered with the choir logo and a tie with a navy-blue background and gold diagonal stripes. For the visit to Cartmel Priory that year, on 17th May, the guest artistes were Warren and Gareth Brookfield, pupils at Cartmel Priory C of E School and violinists. The

first concert after the summer break was a return to Hamilton House Farm, the Caravan Park after the success of the concert the previous year. The Charity concert in aid of Children in Need was held at Christ Church, Broadway, Morecambe on Saturday 15th November. It was a successful evening with £300.00 being raised for the Charity. The Choir wore their new uniforms for the first time.

The AGM for 2004 was held in the rehearsal room at Lancaster Methodist Church on 6th January. The changes in Officers were :- Ken Robinson became Chairman; John Christian became Vice-Chairman; and Mr. M. Machin (the treasurer for Lancaster Methodist Church) became the Auditor. It was decided that the monthly Newsletter should continue and that the subscription fee should stay unchanged. The concert with the pupils of Carleton Green School in Blackpool which had been cancelled from Christmas 2003, was now held at their school on 10th March. It was at Torrisholme Methodist Church, at which two of our members were regular worshippers, that the next concert was held on 27th March. The guest artiste was Wendy Sharrock, who was also a member of that church.

The Choir lost another long-serving member when, on the 13th February, Norman Hart died in the Royal Lancaster Infirmary from the effects of a stroke. Norman had been in the Bass section of the Choir for 40 years, fifteen of them as Treasurer. In the weeks prior to his death, Norman had arranged for the Choir to give a concert at St. Peter's Church, Quernmore, the church which both he and his wife attended. However, between arranging the concert and the actual event both he and his wife had died. The proceeds from the concert at Skerton Methodist Church was in aid of the on-going Charity of the Year, Heart Concern. This was held on Wednesday 12th May. The items in the programme were in memory of Tom Gardner who had been in the Choir for over twenty years and, as already mentioned, died in December 2002.

The first concert after the summer break was held at Cartmel Priory on 18th September. The Guest Artiste was saxophonist John Woodhouse. The day before this concert, Mrs. Pickard, who had been President of the Choir from 1957 to 1983, and a Vice-President ever since, celebrated her 90th birthday. As she had also been a past Mayor of Lancaster, she held her birthday celebrations in the Banqueting Suite at Lancaster Town Hall. The invited guests from the Choir were Norman Wilkinson (Vice-President), Irene Bell (President), and Roland Brooke. The Choir gave a concert in aid of the Children in Need organisation, at Christ Church, Broadway, Morecambe and just over £270.00 was raised. The Christmas Concert was held at Lancaster Methodist Church on 4th December, again with the pupils of Carleton Green School, Blackpool. The sum of £556.80 was raised on the night.

The 2005 AGM was held on 4th January in the rehearsal room. Several changes were made regarding the Officers of the Choir. These were Chairman from Ken Robinson to Tim McCann, Vice-Chairman from John Christian to David Ross, Welfare Officer from Arthur Foster to Roland Brooke, Publicity Officer to Roland Brooke and Arnie Diggle became the sole Librarian. It was decided that the Charity of the Year for 2005 would be the 'Home for the Hover' appeal for the RNLI.

On 1st February a concert was held at St. Thomas's, Lancaster, in aid of Heart Concern. During the interval, the President of the Choir, Irene Bell, presented a cheque for £1,135. 00p to a representative of the Charity. This, added to the £250.00 already presented at an earlier date, brought the total amount raised to £1,385.00p. The choir sent a donation of £250.00 to the South East Asia Tsunami Disaster Appeal. On Tuesday 18th January Mary Foster died and Arthur, who had been absent from the Choir, felt able to return at the end of February. Roland Brooke relinquished the position of Welfare Officer and handed it back to him. At the Lifeboat House on Morecambe promenade, several Choir members assembled to present a cheque for £800.00p in aid of the 'Home for the Hover' Appeal.

At the rehearsal on 27th September, the Musical Director, Eileen Pulver and the Accompanist, Barbara Young gave notice that they would be relinquishing their positions at Christmas. At the next rehearsal it was decided that the concerts which were booked up until Christmas would be honoured, but anything being planned for 2006 would be cancelled until the future of the Choir had been fully discussed. The Annual 'Children in Need'

concert was held again at Christ Church, Broadway on 19th November. The final 'ordinary concert' of the year, and the last one at which Eileen Pulver and Barbara Young officiated, was performed at the Holy Trinity Church, Bolton-le-Sands on 7th December. Two weeks later the Choir performed live on Radio Lancashire outside ASDA in Preston, and this was Eileen and Barbara's farewell appearance with the Choir. So ended the singing year for 2005, leaving the Choir without a Musical Director and without an Accompanist.

The AGM for 2006 was held in the rehearsal room at Lancaster Methodist Church. The only changes in the Officers, (apart from the MD and the Accompanist who had yet to be appointed), were Geoff Boulton, who became a Librarian alongside Arnold Diggle, and Roland Brooke, who once again took over the position of Welfare Officer in place of Arthur Foster. The position of Minute Secretary was filled by recruit Hugh Cutler. A previous Conductor of the Choir, Brian Hayes-Jones, and a young lady called Helen Morley were asked to take rehearsals until such time that new appointments were made. The Membership Fee was raised to £40 per annum.

In answer to an advertisement in the Lancaster Guardian for the position of Musical Director, three applicants came forward. They were Colin Parsons, Ed Venn and Fredrick Holm. They were asked to audition on 17th January when each would be interviewed by the committee for 15 minutes before they, in turn, were to conduct the Choir in a piece of their choosing. The successful candidate was Dr Ed Venn, Lecturer of Music and Undergraduate Admissions Tutor at Lancaster University, and it was agreed that he would take his first rehearsal on 14th February. At the rehearsal on 7th February, three young people were interviewed for the position of Accompanist. They were Nicola, Richard and William, each of them first-year students at Lancaster University. William Smith-Daye was appointed. It was decided in committee that the positions of both the MD and the Accompanist should carry a remuneration of £10.00 per rehearsal and the same figure for each concert.

At the beginning of February, a member of the Choir, Jack Clapham, died, and on Wednesday 8th February, the Choir sang at his funeral service at Sefton Road Church, Heysham with Barbara Young as accompanist. Because of the increased expenditure the Choir now faced, it was decided that a raffle should be held at each rehearsal with the membership providing a raffle prize in turn. The first one took place on 21st February, and a total of £7.50p was raised. The weekly raffle has been a regular feature ever since.

Ed Venn was not available for the concert at Bare Methodist on Saturday 6th May 2006, but Frances Chiasson was able to appear with us as guest Conductor. Will Smith-Daye was the Accompanist and he did very well at his first concert. The soloists were Roland Brooke, who sang 'The Hippopotamus Song' and 'Ten Thousand Angels', Geoff Finney, who sang 'Mary of Argyle', and David Ross, who sang 'Where e'er you Walk' and 'Ombra Mai Fu'. The first concert at which Ed and Will performed together with the Choir was at Cartmel Priory on 13th May. The guest artistes on this occasion were four pupils from Lancaster Royal Grammar School - 'The Veg'. They were Shaun Pirttjarvi (piano & organ) ; James Yule (violin) ; Jonathan O'Flaherty (guitar) ; and John Bowker (violin). Will Smith-Daye showed off his expertise as a solo pianist also.

2006 was a year of low choir numbers. The week prior to these new appointments, an emergency meeting had been called to discuss the future of the Choir. Numbers had been falling steadily, with no new members joining. It was decided to run a feature and recruitment appeal in the Lancaster Guardian. There would be an official statement that if no new members had joined by the end of the year the 106-year-old Choir would have to disband.

It was decided that a concert in memory of Jack Clapham, who had died in February, should be held at Sefton Road Church, Heysham on Sunday 8th October at 3.00 pm. Janet Hoyle (contralto) agreed to be the guest artiste and Barbara Young was the accompanist. On Saturday 9th September, the Choir were invited to appear in Market Square, Lancaster, to sing live on Radio Lancashire. Only a few members were available,



but they acquitted themselves very well - Brian Hayes-Jones was the Conductor. On the 8<sup>th</sup> December the Christmas Concert was held in Lancaster Methodist Church with Scotforth St Paul's C of E Primary School. Ed Venn led the Choir and Jane Guilfoyle was responsible for training the schoolchildren. All the proceeds were given to the school to pass on to the Olivia Project at the Bweyale Primary School in the Masindi District of Uganda. By this time four new members had been recruited. It was decided, therefore, that the Choir would not disband, but continue into 2007.

The AGM for 2007 was held at Lancaster Methodist Church. All the existing officers were re-appointed for the coming year except the Welfare Officer. Arthur Foster resigned, and the position remained vacant. The following week two more new members were recruited. The Choir returned to Cartmel Priory once more on 12th May when the guests were four Lancaster University students entitled the Recossa String Quartet - Diana Littlewood, Jennie Hazeldene, Flo Bishop, and Charlotte White.

In May, Jane Guilfoyle was appointed as Deputy Conductor and Matthew Leedal was appointed as Deputy Accompanist. Jane had her 'baptism of fire' when she conducted the concert at St. Peter's Church, Quernmore, when Ed Venn was unavailable. At the first rehearsal of the new season, 7th August, it was learned that Will Smith-Daye had resigned because the workload at the University. The deputy accompanist, Matthew Leedal informed us that he had applied for a job in Sussex, and if he was successful, it would leave the Choir without an accompanist once again. Also, at this rehearsal, Geoff Boulton took over as Publicity Officer and Roland Brooke reverted to the position of Welfare Officer.

With a concert at St. Peter's, Leck, due on 2nd November, Barbara Young once more agreed to play at this concert, and if Matthew was still in the area, would share the playing with him, which in the event, is what happened. The Choir was under Ed Venn and the soloists were Paul Baxter, Geoff Finney and David Ross. The Lady Shuttleworth gave the vote of thanks. Barbara Young agreed that she would play at the Christmas Concert on 4th December at Lancaster Methodist Church. That year, the pupils of St. Luke's Hest Bank Community Primary School were invited to join the choir in the annual concert. In attendance were the Mayor of Lancaster, Councillor Helen Helme, and the Mayoress, Patsy Cragg, as was Irene Bell, President of the Choir, who is also a governor at St. Luke's school.

As usual, the AGM for 2008 was held in the rehearsal room at Lancaster Methodist Church on Tuesday 8th January. In the week prior to this, the Musical Director, Ed Venn, gave notice that he would leave the Choir directly after the concert which had been arranged at Central Methodist Church, Morecambe, on 8th February. At the AGM, Tim McCann resigned as Chairman for health reasons. David Ross moved up from Vice-Chairman to Chairman and his position was taken by Hugh Cutler. Fortunately, the Choir was able to enlist the services of Pauline Atkinson Rigby (the wife of the minister at Lancaster Methodist Church) as the new Musical Director, but on a temporary basis only, because in September her husband would finish his ministry at the church and they would be returning to his native New Zealand. Roland Brooke announced that the Choir was on the internet with the website:- [www.lancasteranddistrictmalevoicechoir.org.uk](http://www.lancasteranddistrictmalevoicechoir.org.uk) and the subscriptions remained at £40.00 per annum.

At the concert at Central Methodist Church, Morecambe on 8th February, entitled 'Over the Sands II', the Choir would be on first, followed by the 'Central Singers' (the pupils from Central Lancaster High School), then the Morecambe Gospel Male Voice Praise, and finally, the Lancaster and District Choral Society. It was decided that ten new jumpers, ties and roses would be purchased for use by new members. The Lady Shuttleworth agreed to become the Patron of the Choir.

With a £200.00 grant from the City Council, five pieces of music were purchased from Alan Simmons. These were, 1) Easter Hymn from Cavalleria Rusticana; 2) Medley from The Pirates of Penzance; 3) Sinatra Medley; 4) Smoke gets in your Eyes; and 5) I will lift mine eyes unto the Hills. Numbers 1,2, and 5 were to be performed at the Cartmel Priory concert on 31st May. At this concert, three guest artistes supported the Choir. They were :- Frances Chiasson (Soprano), Helen McGregor (Mezzo Soprano), and Paul Baxter

(Organist). Pauline Atkinson Rigby was the MD and Matthew Leedal was the Accompanist. On the 6th of June, the Choir raised £350 plus for CancerCare in a concert given at St. John's Church, Lancaster. Pauline Atkinson Rigby was MD and Matthew Leedal Accompanist. The soloists were Paul Baxter (organ) and Roland Brooke (baritone). In view of the acoustics of the church, it was decided at a subsequent committee meeting that the Choir would hold an annual concert there for a stipulated Charity (though that has become a problem with the disrepair of the building). The final concert of the session was at Nazareth House, Lancaster, on 10th June. Pauline Atkinson Rigby was MD at her final concert and Matthew Leedal the Accompanist with Roland Brooke as soloist.

Efforts were made to acquire the services of a new MD, and after some fruitless advertising, David Ross informed the Choir that he had arranged for Hugh Smith, the Senior Lecturer in Music Education at the University of Cumbria, to take on the Choir for a trial period of six months starting in September.

The Choir undertook two bookings during the holiday period. The first was on June 28th, when they sang at the birthday party of 85-year-old Renwick MacArthur at the recently re-opened Midland Hotel in Morecambe, and the second at the wedding of Jenny, the daughter of Chairman David Ross, at the church of St. Mary the Virgin in Richmond, Yorkshire. As part of their programme at Renwick MacArthur's birthday concert, the Choir performed one of his compositions called 'The Waters O' Dryfe' with David Ross singing the verses. Brian Hayes-Jones conducted, and Barbara Young was the accompanist. The trip to Richmond on 8th August, to sing at the wedding of Jenny Ross and Michael Fenwick, was another first and another enjoyable experience. The bride's father, David Ross, sang Handel's Largo during the service. Brian Hayes-Jones conducted, and Barbara Young accompanied. Ten members of the choir were able to attend. A minibus was hired for the journey with Hugh Cutler as driver.

After the summer break, Hugh Smith took over as Music Director and Anna Wooton (one of Hugh's students at the University of Cumbria) became the accompanist, Matthew Leedal having resigned during the break. The Choir performed next at Christ Church, Lancaster on 1st November. This is the church where our founder, Richard Thomas Grosse, had been Organist and Choirmaster from 1906 until his retirement due to ill-health in 1925. This was the first concert for Hugh and Anna. The first solo spot was taken by Roland Brooke and the next two by Anna Wooton. The Christmas Concert was again given with pupils from St. Luke's Hest Bank Community Primary School on 2nd December. For several years, the Choir had rounded off the year with a Hot Pot Supper, and this year was no different, it being held on 9th December. The first item of the evening was the 'dedication' of the newly refurbished piano. Mark and Felicity Burrow from the Galbraith Trust, and Clive Horsford from the Lancaster Methodist Church were the invited guests, as representatives of the two bodies responsible for funding the refurbishment. After the piano ceremony, which was carried out on behalf of the Choir by Chairman David Ross, Anna Wooton played a piano solo which not only showed off the refurbishment of the instrument but also her expertise as a pianist. The choir members who did their 'party pieces' were Roland Brooke, Roger Masheder, Ken Robinson, David Ross and Jack Yates. Roger Masheder delivered another of his Stanley Holloway monologues.

As usual, the AGM for 2009 was held in the rehearsal room on Tuesday 6th January. The Treasurer, Peter Bell resigned after serving in that position since 2001, and Jack Yates was appointed in his place. The Secretary, Geoff Finney who had also served since 2001, resigned in favour of Roger Masheder. It was decided that subscriptions should remain at £40.00 but any shortfall from concert fees should be made up from a £5.00 levy on all members at the end of the year. In January, the Choir received a grant of £200.00 from the City Council Small Grants department, and it was decided to spend the money on new music and new folders for use at future concerts. Roger Masheder was to seek suppliers for the folders.

An Extraordinary Committee Meeting was called in February regarding the appointment of a new MD and a new Accompanist. Hugh Smith had decided not to extend his tenure beyond the agreed six months and Anna Wooton would be leaving the area on the 20th June upon the completion of her course at the University of Cumbria, but she kindly agreed to return for the concert at St. John's Church, Lancaster, on the 27th June.

Hugh also agreed to continue until the end of June. On the 25th April 2009, the Choir performed in the Arndale Centre in Morecambe. This was a new venture and was in aid of Choir Funds. The twin intentions of this venture were to publicise the Choir and hopefully attract new members, and a sum of £103.89 was collected in the buckets. Hugh Smith was the Conductor and Anna Wooton the Accompanist. During this performance, a person called Derek Walters approached Treasurer Jack Yates enquiring about the position of Accompanist. Jack explained that unfortunately Anna would be leaving us, and Derek expressed an interest. Two other applicants, Wesley Possible and Alex Phillips, both from Lancaster University, had already applied for the post, so all three were invited to come for audition on 12th May. Alex was offered the position and he accepted. Derek was offered the position of Deputy Accompanist and he also accepted. Both took up office in September.

On the 9th June, a concert at another new venue was given. This was at St. Mary's and St. Michael's R.C. Church in Garstang and was in aid of Preston and Garstang CancerHelp. The soloists were Anna Wooton (piano), Paul Baxter (tenor) and Hugh Smith (Music Director). Present at this concert were Lord and Lady Shuttleworth and the Mayor and Mayoress of Wyre. On the 25th June when the Choir were asked to sing at the surprise 60th birthday party for Ken Robinson, which members of his family had organised at the Midland Hotel, Morecambe. Unbelievably, both the family and the Choir managed to keep any knowledge of the party from Ken! Little did we know that one month later, on 6th August, we would be singing at Ken's funeral service at St. Patrick's RC Church, Heysham. The concert at St. John's Church, Lancaster, on 27th June, was the last one at which Hugh Smith and Anna Wooton led the Choir. The instrumental soloists were Anna Wooton (piano) and Paul Baxter (organ), and the vocal soloists were Hugh Smith and Roland Brooke. At the end of the concert, the audience demanded encores, and 'Steal Away' and 'When the Saints go marching in' were sung.

At the end June the Music Director, Hugh Smith, left the Choir, and subsequently obtained a post as Senior Lecturer in Music Education at the University of West Scotland. At the same time the Accompanist, Anna Wooton, who had successfully completed her course at the University of Cumbria and obtained a post as a Lecturer in Music at South Cheshire College, Crewe, left the area. The Choir were sad to lose the services of Hugh and Anna and both were presented with booklets containing the history of the Choir.

The summer break was a catalogue of horrors for some of the members. At the beginning of August, Roland Brooke contracted swine flu fever (from which it took the whole of August to recover). At the same time, Jack Yate's wife, Jen, broke her leg. Then came the sad news that Geoff Finney's mother had died in Liverpool. John Berry was slowly recovering from his stomach problems. Peter Bell's wife, Jean, had an operation on her toes and her leg was encased in plaster for weeks. Just as we hoped that was the end of the bad news, Brian Hayes-Jones brother, Jack, died in Liverpool. The break seemed to be ending on a more joyful note when the Choir sang at the wedding of Polly Rigby and Tony Armstrong at St. Paul's Church, Lancaster, on Saturday 22nd August, ..... but then came the tragic news that Andrew Neal's wife, Jessica, had died relatively young in hospital in Leicester. When the Choir re-convened on the 1st September, Derek Walters took up the post as Musical Director and Alex Phillips as Accompanist.

On 1st October, Hugh Cutler and Roland Brooke attended the Freshers' Fair at the University of Cumbria and attracted three new student members, Owen Dilling (tenor), Phil Mumford (tenor), and Stuart Birse (bass). A little time later they brought along one of their friends, Ryan Otley, also a tenor. Since then four more men have joined the Choir - Tony Armstrong, Nick Gill, Pip Riley and Frank Ledwith.

The next performance was in St. Nicholas Arcade in Lancaster on Saturday 3rd October. This went very well, the acoustics being very good. A bucket collection amounted to £132.10 for Choir Funds. A concert in aid of the Charity 'Action for Children' was given on 17th October at Lancaster Methodist Church. The Musical Director was Derek Walters and the Accompanist was Barbara Young. The instrumental soloists were Derek Walters (piano) and Paul Baxter (organ). The Vote of Thanks was given by the minister at Lancaster Methodist Church, Rev. Juliette Wriglesworth. £380.00 was raised for the Charity. At the rehearsal on 27th

October, an Extraordinary General Meeting was called to elevate Hugh Cutler from Vice-Chairman to Chairman following the resignation and departure from the Choir of David Ross. This meant that the position of Vice-Chairman had become vacant. The Annual Christmas Concert was held at Lancaster Methodist Church on 1st December. The pupils of Slyne-with-Hest St. Luke's CE Primary School joined us once again, as, on this occasion, did The Regent Singers. The Mayor and Mayoress of Lancaster, Councillor Roger Sherlock and Mrs. Ethel Sherlock attended the concert and £285.00 was raised for a Charity nominated by the school. The Choir sang again in St. Nicholas Arcade in Lancaster on 10th December, this time to entertain the shoppers with Christmas Carols. The bucket collection amounted to £67.00 for Choir Funds.

## **2010 to Present**

It was reaffirmed in committee that the positions of both the MD and the Accompanist should carry a remuneration of £10.00 per rehearsal and the same figure for each concert. The AGM for 2010 was postponed from the usual first Tuesday in January of the New Year to 2nd February, so that an extra rehearsal could be held on 5th January in readiness for the Centenary Concert at the Town Hall on 29th January. In the event, this rehearsal was not held due to the worst snowfalls experienced in Lancaster (and, in fact, in the whole of the country) for many years. This set-back meant that the Choir had only three rehearsals before the concert.

The Town Hall Centenary Concert, on the 29th January, was an outstanding success. The age range of the participants, (eight decades!), and the range of music covered during the evening was vast. The composition 'It's Oh! to be a Wild Wind' by Sir Edward Elgar was performed as at the original dedicating concert 100 years previously. The 'Polonaise in A Major' by Frederick Chopin was played as a solo piece, while 'The Lost Chord' by Sir Arthur Sullivan, 'Any Dream Will Do' by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, 'With Cat-like Tread' from *The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert and Sullivan and music by many other composers including Irving Berlin, Johnny Dankworth, Bert Bacharach was rounded off with all the choirs and audience singing William Blake & Hubert Parry's 'Jerusalem'. The organisation for the concert was a collaboration between the Town Hall and the Choir. The participating organisations were:- The Regent Singers (a ladies choir), The Rainbow Singers (mixed voices), both from Morecambe, pupils from St. Wilfrid's CE Primary School in Halton (Choir & Jazz Band), Ripley School Jazz Band, Colin Parsons (organist) from The Ashton Hall Organ Restoration Fund, Philip Fawcett (piano), and the Lancaster and District Male Voice Choir. The stewarding duties (sale of tickets, programmes, etc.) were carried out by members of the 13th Lancaster Scouts. The Mayoral party included the Mayor & Mayoress of Lancaster, Councillor Roger Sherlock and Mrs. Ethel Sherlock; the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, Lord Shuttleworth; the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, Lady Shuttleworth; the High Sheriff of Lancashire, Mrs. Suzie Reynolds; Geraldine Smith, MP; the Headteacher of Ripley St. Thomas School, Lancaster, Mrs. E. Nichols; Irene Bell, President, and Norman Wilkinson, Vice-President of The Lancaster and District Male Voice Choir. The compere for the evening was Dr Hugh Cutler, Chairman of the Choir.

At the AGM in February, all the officers remained with the exceptions of Chas Matthews who took over as Secretary from Roger Masheder, and Jack Yates who added the role of Minuting Secretary. The position of Vice Chairman remained vacant. A 'Music Group' with one member from each section was introduced with a view to supporting Derek Walters in his music choices for concerts. The Membership Fee was reviewed and raised to £60 per annum with the Concert Fee set at £100 negotiable. The Choir next performed in a concert in aid of Royal National Lifeboat Institution at the Lancaster Methodist Church on Saturday 27th February. This was in association with The Monday Meeting Point. The Vote of Thanks was given by Mr. Raymond Hirst of the RNLI. The sum of £317.50 was raised for the Charity. Nazareth House in Lancaster held their Annual Fair on 5th June and the Choir were invited to entertain. The Annual Summer Concert at St. John's Church, Lancaster was on 19th June. Alex Phillips could not accompany the Choir on this occasion due to examination commitments, so Barbara Young kindly stepped in. The soloists were Roland Brooke who sang 'Tommy Lad' and 'When a maiden takes your Fancy' from the opera 'Il Seraglio' and Derek Walters who played his own arrangement of 'A Lancashire Folk-song Suite' on the keyboard. He was to have played 'The

Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' on the church organ but a malfunction of the organ stops, which produced a whining noise, made this impossible. A copy of the Choir booklet '100 years Not Out' was presented to Barbara Young as a token of our thanks and esteem at the rehearsal prior to the concert. The Choir was invited back to St. Peter's Church, Quernmore on 10th September. Unfortunately, now that Alex Phillips had graduated, he had left the Choir and, despite advertising in the Lancaster Guardian, the Choir were without an Accompanist. Hugh Cutler took over the 'baton' and Derek Walters accompanied on the keyboard. The guest soloist was Barbara O'Donnell from Heysham who sang 'I Dreamed a Dream' and 'Wishing you were somehow here again'. The other soloist was Derek Walters who played 'The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' demonstrating the unique feature of the church's two organs. Under the umbrella of the Lancaster Music Festival, the Choir sang in St. Nicholas Arcade in Lancaster on 9th October. £70.04 was collected. Since the last concert, a new electronic keyboard had been purchased from a grant of £950.00 from the 'Grass Roots' organisation. This was a P155 Yamaha. The cost of the keyboard, stand and stool came to £970.00, leaving the Choir with only an extra £20.00 to find for a very impressive instrument.

Our visit to Leighton Hall on 14th October was a huge success. We are grateful to our Patron, Lady Shuttleworth, for making the approach to Mrs. Suzie Reynolds, and to Suzie herself for allowing us to sing in this historic Music Room. The invited guests consisted of Lady Shuttleworth, Patron of the Choir, Mr. Pendleton Campbell from London, Irene Bell, President of the Choir, and Vice-President of the Choir, Norman Wilkinson. The soloists were Barbara O'Donnell from Heysham (Soprano) and Geoff Finney (a top tenor in the choir). Alex Phillips and Derek Walters played a violin/piano duet, and the Accompanist was Barbara Young. During the concert, Pendleton Campbell presented Suzie Reynolds with a copy of a music Encyclopaedia of which he and Derek Walters had been co-editors many years ago. Mrs. Reynolds invited the audience to look round all the rooms on the ground floor of the Hall during the interval if they so wished.

The concert at the Visitor Centre at Carnforth Railway Station was a new venue for the Choir. The guest accompanist was Barbara Young and the vocal soloists were Barbara O'Donnell and Roland Brooke. Derek Walters played themes from 'Brief Encounter' on the new keyboard. During the concert, a cheque for £150.00 was presented to Eric Wilkinson JP, who is the County Volunteer for the Charity 'Help for Heroes' (North Lancashire). During his acceptance speech, he revealed that his father had sung with the Lancaster and District Male Voice Choir many years before. The final concert for the year was the Annual Christmas Concert at Lancaster Methodist Church on 7th December. As in the previous year, The Regent Singers and the pupils from Slyne-with-Hest St. Luke's CE Primary School joined the Choir in this festive event. The Mayor of Lancaster, Councillor Tony Wade and his daughter attended, but because of the inclement weather (lots of snow) our Patron was unable to get through to Lancaster.

The AGM for 2011 was held on Tuesday 12th January. All the officers retained their positions, the only vacant one being that of Accompanist, but at the following rehearsal, Shaun Pirttijarvi, (he of 'The Veg' at Cartmel Priory 2006), was appointed to this position. Ian Marshal was added to the Committee as Minute Secretary and Assistant Librarian and the Music Group members continued. At the beginning of February, notice was given that an Extraordinary General Meeting would be held on 29th March. At this meeting the 'Rules and Constitution' of the Choir were updated, with the title being reduced to just 'The Constitution'. Ian Barbour now aged 91, and who had been a member of the Bass section for 32 years, gave notice that due to ill-health he was leaving the Choir. It was immediately agreed that he become a Vice-President.

The first concert of the year was given at Nazareth House, Lancaster on 12th April. The MD was Derek Walters and the accompanist was Shaun Pirttijarvi, making his first appearance with the Choir. Derek Walters played 'The Entertainer' by Scott Joplin and Roland Brooke sang 'Tit Willow' from the 'Mikado' and 'The Sentry's Song' from 'Iolanthe'. It had been decided that the Choir would help to celebrate the 100th birthday of our Vice-President, Norman Wilkinson, with a concert/buffet at Rowley Court, Lancaster, on 27th May. One hundred people made up from choir members and their families, Norman's family, his many personal friends and numerous Masonic friends, were there to extend their best wishes to him. Among the guests attending were the Mayoral party, consisting of the Mayor and Mayoress of Lancaster, Councillor Paul and Mrs Dee

Woodruff, Lady Shuttleworth, (Patron of the Choir); Mrs. Suzie Reynolds (of Leighton Hall); Irene Bell (President of the Choir); and Ian Barbour (Vice-President of the Choir). It was an enjoyable experience to have Brian Hayes-Jones and Barbara Young leading the Choir. They had been Conductor and Accompanist, respectively, for 25 of the 50 or so years that Norman had been a singing member of the Choir. We were also very pleased when past members of the Choir who were in the audience, along with Norman's stepson John Waud, accepted the invitation to join with the Choir for the three pieces which Brian conducted. The solo spots were taken by Derek Walters and Roland Brooke, Derek played 'Andaluz' by Granados on the keyboard and Roland sang 'The Hippopotamus Song' and 'The Garden Where the Praties Grow'.

On 21st June the Choir gave a concert at St. Peter's Church, Leck, arranged for us by our Patron, Lady Shuttleworth. We were pleased to welcome Ann Wodeman as our guest soloist, who sang 'Che Faro' from 'Orpheus' by Gluck and 'The Sun Whose Rays' from the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta 'The Mikado'. Ann was accompanied on the keyboard by her husband Peter. Derek Walters and Roland Brooke were again the other soloists. Derek played Handel's 'The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' on the church organ and Roland sang 'How Great Thou Art' and 'When a maiden takes your Fancy' from Mozart's 'Il Seraglio'. Lord Shuttleworth was very gracious with his compliments at the close of the concert. On 2nd July, a concert was given at St. John's Church, Lancaster, and again we had a guest soloist. This time it was Hazel Brown, a pupil at Lancaster Girls' Grammar School and at the age of 14 was already a very accomplished pianist. On the keyboard she played 'Song without Words No.2' by Mendelssohn and 'Valse in A Minor' by Chopin. On this occasion, Derek played his own arrangement of 'Adagio' from 'Concierto da Aranjuez' by Rodrigo on the keyboard. Roland sang 'Calon Lan' arranged by John Hughes and 'A Bachelor Gay Am I' by Harris and Valentine. This was the last concert before the summer break and, sadly, the last time that Shaun Pirttijarvi would appear as our Accompanist. Shaun commenced a course at the University of Cumbria in the autumn, and the volume of work involved, meant that he could not commit the time necessary to play for the Choir. The Choir again would be seeking a new Accompanist. On 29th July Eveline, the wife of our Vice-President Ian Barbour, had died in the Royal Lancaster Infirmary from the effects of a stroke she had suffered earlier in the month. The funeral service was held at the Lancaster & Morecambe Crematorium on the 11th August, and the Choir sang 'Calon Lan' and 'Goin' Home' during the service. A few weeks later, Ian decided to return to the Bass section of the Choir. Towards the end of the summer break, on 3rd September, the Choir were asked at very short notice to step in to cover for an act that had had to pull out of a charity concert in aid of 'Help for Heroes' at the Grand Theatre in Lancaster. The next performance was at The Winter Gardens in Morecambe on 10th September. The inside still resembled a building site, but the Choir gave a good account of themselves if the comments of the passing audience were anything to go by. On this occasion Alex Phillips kindly stepped in to help as accompanist.

On the 13th September Robert Krug became Accompanist. Robert was in the 6th form at Ripley St. Thomas Academy in Lancaster. Another new venue on 29th September was at St. Paul's Church Centre in Hala, Lancaster where we sang for the Hala Over 60s Thursday Club. The Choir sang nine items and Roland Brooke sang 'I'll Walk Beside You'. Barbara Young once more accompanied the choir. The concert at St. Oswald's Church in Warton on 15th October was arranged for us by a past member and Chairman, David Ross. The soloists on this occasion were Derek Walters who played 'Air and Variations' from 'The Harmonious Blacksmith' by G.F. Handel, Pip Riley, who sang 'Country Roads' by John Denver, Geoff Finney, who sang 'Bring Him Home' from Les Miserables and Roland Brooke, who sang 'The Garden Where the Praties Grow' and 'Ten Thousand Angels'. Barbara Young once more kindly accompanied the choir and the soloists. Our second visit to Leighton Hall on 17th November was equally as successful as the previous year, particularly as our hostess, Suzie Reynolds, had graciously accepted our invitation to become Executive President of the Choir. The soloists at this concert were Alex Phillips, who played 'The Warsaw Concerto' by Richard Adinsell, on the grand piano and in the second half played his own composition 'Konzerstuck in A dur' on the violin, choir member Andrew Easton (tenor), sang 'Panis Angelicus' by Cesar Franck, and Roland Brooke (baritone), sang 'The Sentry's Song' from Iolanthe by Gilbert and Sullivan, and 'Tommy Lad' by Teschemacher / Margetson. Rangers from the Warton Scout Group acted as Stewards, helping with the Raffle Prize table, selling raffle tickets, collecting tickets, issuing programmes at the door, and directing

members of the audience around the Hall. The Vote of Thanks was given by the Patron of the Choir Lady Shuttleworth, who was very pleased that the Choir had sung Derek Walters Male Voice arrangement of one of her compositions, 'And the greatest of these is Love'. Derek Walters conducted, and Barbara Young accompanied the Choir and the soloists. On the following Sunday, 20th November, some of the members went to Nazareth house in Lancaster to entertain at a 90th birthday party for one of the residents, Eve Whitaker, at the request of her daughter, Mary. On this occasion, because Derek Walters was unavailable, Stuart Birse, one of the students from the University of Cumbria conducted. This was the first time that Robert Krug had accompanied the choir at a concert, and he came through with flying colours. Another first for the Choir came next when we sang at the Farmers' Market in the Institute in Hornby on Saturday 6th November. Neither Derek nor Robert were able to be with us, so Hugh Cutler conducted, and Alex Philips accompanied the Choir on the keyboard.

The Christmas Concert was given with the pupils of St. Wilfrid's CE Primary School in Halton on Tuesday 6th December. Rather than transporting the children into Lancaster and conscious of the fact that they had to be in school the following morning, it was decided to hold the concert in the School Hall. Special mention must go to Charlotte Connell, who sang the first verse of the opening carol, 'Once in Royal David's City', faultlessly. The Mayoral party consisted of the Mayor and Mayoress of Lancaster, Councillor Paul and Mrs. Dee Woodruff; Lady Shuttleworth, Patron of the Choir; Vice-Presidents of the Choir, Norman Wilkinson and Ian Barbour; Mrs. Mary Stoneham, Chair of School Governors; and Mrs. Claire Weymouth, Headteacher of the school. On this occasion Derek Walters accompanied the choir and Hugh Cutler conducted. The final performance of the year was singing Christmas Carols in the Arndale Centre in Morecambe on the 17th December.

At the AGM 2012 many posts remained unchanged though Roland Brooke was elected as Vice Chairman, and Ian Marshall became Librarian. The only position left unfilled was that of Welfare Officer.

The first event of the new year was a concert given by the Massed Male Voice Choirs of the North of England and held in the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester on Saturday 25th February 2012. Over 300 male voices were conducted by Alan Herbert, who had conducted many of these massed concerts in the past. The guest vocalist was Lynne Williams (Soprano) and the guest instrumentalist was the internationally famous Nigel Ogden. The Choir next performed at the Lancaster House Hotel. The occasion was the Annual Convention of The Lions held on Sunday 4th March. Derek Walters conducted the Choir and Robert Krug was the Accompanist. Two of the students, (Philip Mumford and Stuart Birse) from the University of Cumbria who sang regularly with the Male Voice Choir were also members of the Chapel Choir there and Stuart was their conductor. On 17th March the two choirs gave a joint concert in the St. Martin's Chapel on the University campus. Derek Walters conducted and on this occasion the Accompanist was Marion Bettsworth.

A new venture for the Choir took place on 24th March in the Arndale Shopping Centre in Morecambe. This was named the Youth(!) Forum and several organisations were involved. The Choir's contribution consisted of acting as a 'backing group' for a song by the very talented Molly Wilson, a 14-year-old pupil from Morecambe High School. The song was 'Give Me Hope' and had been composed jointly by the Morecambe MP David Morris and Nannette Welmans and her husband. This was performed twice, once at the beginning of the evening and again near the end. In between, the Choir sang 'Cavatina', to which Molly performed a very graceful dance routine. A Charity concert was held in aid of 'Action for Children' on 21st April at the Lancaster Methodist Church. The Deputy Mayor & Mayoress of Lancaster, Councillor Keith Sowden and his wife Monica, attended the concert, and the Charity raised £230.00 for their organisation. On the 11th May the Choir were once more invited to join The Ripley St. Thomas Choristers, The Kirkby Lonsdale Choral Society and The Red Rosettes Ladies Harmony Chorus (Leyland) in the 'Over the Sands' concert which was held at St. John's Church, Lancaster in aid of the RNLI. The next concert was held on 29th June in the Lancaster Central Library, a new venue for the Choir. Joining the Choir as soloists on this occasion were Sue Parish (Jazz Singer) and Molly Wilson (the pupil from Morecambe High School who sang at the Arndale Centre, Morecambe).

The death of one of the longest associates of the Choir occurred on Friday 27th July 2012 at the age of 97. Mrs. C.M. Pickard became President to the Choir in 1957. Her involvement with the Choir totalled 56 years. Her funeral service was held at St. Paul's Church, Lancaster, on Monday 6th August 2012, and the Choir sang 'Morte Criste' and 'Speed your Journey' during the service. Next came the annual visit to Leighton Hall on the 17th October. The soloists on this occasion were Roland Brooke, who sang 'Ombra Mai Fu' by Handel and 'When A Maiden Takes Your Fancy' by Mozart, Robert Krug, who played 'Prelude in Db (Raindrops)' by Chopin and Alex Phillips, who played, firstly, the violin solo, 'Ashokan Farewell' by Jay Hungar and secondly, a piano solo.

Choir Vice-President Ian Barbour died at the end of 2012. Ian had been a very popular and dedicated member of the Bass section of the Choir for 28 years. At his funeral, the Choir sang 'Gwahoddiad' and 'Goodnight'. Paul Woodruff became a Vice-President. Paul was a City Councillor, and the previous year was Mayor of the City. Next came a plethora of Christmas events. Firstly, was the Hornby Institute on 24th November, then Huntleys Country Store on 1st December, then Hala Over 60's Club on 6th December, then the Ashton Memorial, Williamson Park, on 14th December featuring the 'Sandpipers' ladies' choir, culminating with the Arndale Centre in Morecambe on 22nd December.

2013 began with a concert at the Grand Theatre on 25th January supporting CancerCare. This was organised by the Choir and 'Ladies of Note', The Millennium Choir, and a group called 'Vocalese' were invited to join us. The AGM was delayed until 29th January in the rehearsal room. There was no change in Committee positions, though Hugh Cutler took over the editorship of the Newsletter from Roland Brooke with a view to simplifying it. The next concert was on 22nd March at St. John's Church, Pilling, when we were invited by the Radcliffe-upon-Trent Male Voice Choir to join them in a concert in aid of Macmillan Cancer Care. A balanced choir of 12 attended and gave a very good account of themselves. This was followed on 13th April by a recruitment mini concert appearance at the Vale of Lune Rugby Club and by a concert in aid of church funds at Lancaster Methodist Church on 27th April.

On 12th May, Roland Brooke, a staunch member of the Choir for 26 years, died. A member of the Baritone section, he had been responsible for many of the Choir's activities including generating the first website and had been a soloist at many concerts during his time with the Choir. The Choir sang at his funeral at the Crematorium.

On 16th May the joint concert with the University of Cumbria Chapel Choir was repeated and we returned to Lancaster Library for our Summer Concert on 21st June. We had a request to be involved with the Garstang Arts and Music Festival and gave a concert at the Methodist Church in Garstang on 22nd August with Derek Walters as MD and Robert Krug as Accompanist. This was one of the most successful concerts that the Choir has given in recent years and produced the immortal line "we need more chairs" as the church became packed for the event. The Choir's 'Autumn Soiree', as it became known, took place at Leighton Hall in the Music Room with Gill Allen as accompanist on 15th October. It was through an invitation from K Shoes MVC Kendal that representatives of the Choir were involved in 'Music for Heroes', a selection of music and songs supporting 'Help for Heroes'. The concert was held in the Kendal Sports Hall on 2nd November and featured the Band of the King's Division conducted by Captain James Marshall and supported by guest male voice choirs from Blackpool, Dumfries, Lancaster, Stockton-on-Tees and Whitehaven. The event was led by Ian Allen, K Shoes MD, with soloist Tracie Penwarden and presented by Harry King. Each choir's MD led all the choirs in one piece each and Derek conducted an unaccompanied performance of 'My Lord! What a Morning'. The Choir then undertook an unusual couple of events on 30th November singing in Morecambe Library immediately followed by a second event in Morecambe Festival Market. Both were a collection of Christmas Songs and was the first appearance of Tetiana Kolosova (known as Tanya) as Accompanist. We were again led by Derek and accompanied by Tanya for our annual outing into the Arndale Centre for Christmas Songs on 14th December. This was followed by a brief appearance singing Carols at the Dukes theatre in which we gave Tanya the challenge of essentially playing in the dark! The, by now, annual Christmas Concert as part



of the series arranged through the City Council took place in the Ashton Memorial in Williamson Park, Lancaster on 18<sup>th</sup> December. Derek and Tanya led the Choir and our guests were 'Ladies of Note'.

2014 opened with the AGM taking place on 7<sup>th</sup> January in the rehearsal room. Geoff Boulton resigned from the Committee and the External Relations position was left vacant. It would be filled in a number of ways going forward. Paul Rasmussen, a relatively recent recruit to the Choir, took on the role of Membership Secretary.

The first major concert was at the Platform, Morecambe supporting the RNLI. The Choir numbered 24 and were led by Derek Walters and Tanya Kolosova was the accompanist. Supporting soloists were Patricia Chambers and Jenny Gilpin. About £300 was raised for the RNLI. A mini concert in Nazareth House on 27<sup>th</sup> May was followed by a Summer Concert at Lancaster Library on 20<sup>th</sup> June when we were supported by soloist Susan Barnes. We sang 'Gwahoddiad' and 'Speed Your Journey' at the funeral service of former mezzo tenor member, John Berry, at Trinity URC, Lancaster on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. We were invited back to be involved with the Garstang Music and Arts Festival on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, though the Methodist Church was not as full this time! A wedding at St Peter's Church, Quernmore on 26<sup>th</sup> September was followed by the Autumn Soiree in the Music Room of Leighton Hall on 8<sup>th</sup> October. We were joined by previous soloists Patricia Chambers and Jenny Gilpin. Derek Walters had approached the estate of Benjamin Britten for permission to arrange a Male Voice version of the Ballad of Heroes. This was approved and was performed at a WW1 Memorial Concert 'For Peace' with Jude Glendenning as the soloist, Gill Allen on keyboard and Tanya on piano in St Martin's Chapel on the Bowerham Campus of The University of Cumbria. We returned to Morecambe Library for Christmas Songs on 27<sup>th</sup> November and gave our major Christmas Concert with guests Lancaster City Brass on 17<sup>th</sup> December in the Ashton Memorial, Williamson Park, Lancaster. The year finished with an Arndale sing of Christmas Songs on 20<sup>th</sup> December.

2015 began with two mini concerts one each side of the AGM. The first was a visit to Castle Head Centre, Grange-over-Sands to entertain the annual meeting of the Field Studies Officers (NAFSO) on 5<sup>th</sup> January. The second was to entertain the Hala Over 60s Club on the afternoon of 19<sup>th</sup> March. The AGM took place in the rehearsal room on 13<sup>th</sup> January. It was noted that Hugh Cutler had updated the website and renewed it with a new address: [www.ldmvc.org.uk](http://www.ldmvc.org.uk) and Paul Rasmussen had taken over the Choir's Facebook page that had been introduced earlier by Ian Marshall. The Choir were considering the introduction of a new tie and it was also proposed that the Choir pursue an Isle of Man visit the following year. The Music Group was set aside. The Choir Hot Pot Supper had been in the week before Christmas for several years. This was now beginning to become a busy time and it was agreed to transfer the Hot Pot Supper to the middle of February as a break in what was becoming a rehearsal period.

The first Spring Concert of the year was at Warton Methodist Church on 28 March where we were joined by Stephan Rasmussen as soloist on his guitar and the audience were entertained by a Tanya and Derek keyboard duet. On the 10<sup>th</sup> April we had a second Spring Concert in Lancaster Library with Stephan Rasmussen and his guitar again as soloist and there was a repeat of the Tanya/Derek duet. On 30<sup>th</sup> May the Choir sang in the afternoon at the renewal of vows of the Robinson's in St Martin's Chapel, University of Cumbria followed by a buffet and evening performance of a concert in the new Gateway Building on the campus. A mini concert at Nazareth House on 9<sup>th</sup> June was followed by a Summer Concert at the Platform, Morecambe on 4<sup>th</sup> July supporting Cancercare. At this concert, Miranda Barty-Taylor joined us as soloist on the Clarsach (Welsh harp) and Tanya/Derek performed one of their (by now legendary) duets. Although £380 was raised for Cancercare the Choir made a loss on the venture and will consider carefully using the venue again. No sooner than this concert was over than we lost two mezzo tenor members. We sang at the funeral of Peter Thomas at the Lancaster Crematorium on 27<sup>th</sup> July and the funeral of Roy Kitchen at the Methodist Church, Bare. A mini concert entertaining the members of the Hala Over 60s Club was held on 24<sup>th</sup> September followed by a Memorial Service for John Berry in the Hall at Trinity URC, Lancaster. The Choir wore new ties for this occasion purchased from a donation from the estate of John Berry. We were joined by

Martin Yule as violin soloist, Jack Yates performed a solo on the keyboard and Tanya/Derek performed a much-appreciated keyboard duet.

We tried a recruitment 'sing-along' at the Lancaster City Museum on 17<sup>th</sup> October with various positional arrangements including singing outside with a speaker relaying Tanya looking through a window playing inside! Whatever we tried it was cold! The Autumn Soiree at Leighton Hall was held on 27<sup>th</sup> October with the solo support of violinist Martin Yule and soprano Louise Geatch. Gill Allen was the accompanist for the soloists. Patron Lady Shuttleworth, Executive President Suzie Reynolds and Vice-President Paul Woodruff were in attendance. A Christmas 'sing-along' in Lancaster Library with the support of 'Friends of the Library' on 12<sup>th</sup> December was followed by the, by now, regular Christmas Concert in the Ashton Memorial this time featuring Morecambe Brass Academy. Christmas Songs finished the year in the Arndale Centre, Morecambe on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

2016 opened with the AGM in the rehearsal room on 12th January. There were no major changes though the Choir agreed to drop the bow tie and to treat the new tie as part of the formal wear. The Summer Break would also be shifted forward to June and July. The main change was the increase of the concert charge to £150. A mini concert for Norman Wilkinson was held in Morecambe Bay Care Home to which he had now been transferred.

The Choir held its Spring Concert in the Shire Hall in Lancaster Castle. The occasion was spoilt by trouble with the keyboard, the cramped seating and the poor acoustics. Miranda Barty-Taylor accompanied the Choir for the singing of Gwahoddiad and was the soloist from the witness box(!) on the Clarsach (Welsh Harp). The Choir's first 'international' visit was to the Isle of Man for the weekend of the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> May. There we enjoyed a Joint Concert on the first evening with Lhon Doo MVC with Derek and accompanied by Gill Allen on the piano and we supported the congregation and held a mini concert at the Methodist Church in Onchan on the following morning. The occasion was considered a success for those in the party and it was agreed to explore options in North Wales the following year.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> August Norman Wilkinson died at the age of 105. The Choir supported the congregation at Torrisholme Church and sang Gwahoddiad and Speed Your Journey at Lancaster Crematorium. He was a member of the top tenors for 50 years, Chairman 1964-75 and again 1984-93 and became a Vice-President of the Choir from 1994. He was a regular attendee at our concerts, and it was a great pleasure for the Choir to sing at his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2011.

We were invited for a mini concert in St Wilfrid's Care Home in Halton on 13<sup>th</sup> September. We completed the Autumn Concert in Lancaster Library on 14<sup>th</sup> October. Our soloists on this occasion were Antonia Alum (a member of Lancaster City Brass) on the Flugelhorn and Kate Noble a mezzo soprano accompanied by Gill Allen. A mini concert for Hala Over 60s on 20<sup>th</sup> October was followed by a second visit of the year outside the district. We were invited for a Joint Concert with 'One Accord', a ladies choir from Thornton-Cleveleys. The Concert took place in Thornton Little Theatre on 12<sup>th</sup> November, but the ladies were disappointingly absent during our performance in the second half.

The Christmas season started with Carols at a mini concert for Nazareth House on 6<sup>th</sup> December. This was followed by an invitation from St Oswald's Church, Warton to open their 'Festival of Trees' on 10<sup>th</sup> December. A small Choir of 14 members was led by Derek and accompanied by Tanya. Jack Yates was a keyboard soloist. In another new venture the Choir took part in Garstang Victorian Christmas Fayre and sung outside under a gazebo on the evening of 12<sup>th</sup> December - a performance much appreciated by the passers-by. Because of ongoing repairs to the Ashton Memorial, the Christmas Concerts had been transferred by the City Council to the Storey Institute in Lancaster. The Choir sang there on 14th December with guests Lancaster City Brass. Representatives of the Choir closed a very busy year with the usual Christmas Songs performance in the Arndale Centre, Morecambe on 17<sup>th</sup> December. At this event there was an opportunity to

view a burgundy blazer as a potential new uniform for the Choir. A Christmas Lunch was organised in the Borough, Dalton Square, Lancaster

The AGM at the start of 2017 was in the Church Foyer on 10<sup>th</sup> January because of a prior booking of the rehearsal room. John Wilson (JBW) became the Librarian, replacing Ian Marshall, and John Metcalfe and John Willis joined the Committee as Ordinary Members. A new membership proforma was introduced based on John Metcalfe's idea and Paul Rasmussen became the designated First Aider.

The first concert was a successful joint venture with Lancaster City Brass on 1<sup>st</sup> April in Lancaster Methodist Church in aid of Church Funds and in recognition that both organisations use the rehearsal room and storage space. The Choir and Band joined together for a performance of part of Sibelius' Finlandia. The church was nearly full and approximately £700 was collected for the Church. A short while before this the Committee had reviewed the planned trip to join with Bettws-yn-Ros MVC in Llandudno, North Wales and determined that the proposed Choir was not big enough. Bettws-yn-Ros MVC was informed, and we reluctantly withdrew. On the 15<sup>th</sup> May the Choir attended Slyne Church and sang at the funeral of Irene Bell, President of the Choir from 1999-2017. As a replacement for the planned trip to North Wales the Choir performed a 'Summer Interlude' in Lancaster Library on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Joining as guest artistes were the Folk o'Lune Ceilidh band and Tanya/Derek performed one of their ever-popular keyboard duets.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> July the Choir attended the funeral of former member Peter Dixon at Lancaster Crematorium. We joined the Garstang Music and Arts Festival on 26<sup>th</sup> July in the new St Thomas's Community Hall. Choir members Chas Matthews, Geoff Finney and David Owen were the soloists along with a Tanya/Derek keyboard duet. The new membership proforma was introduced in September as was the new Choir Blazer for which members payed a deposit. The first concert at which the blazers were worn was St James the Less, Tatham on 14<sup>th</sup> October. This was a 'Last Night of the Proms' event and the audience was able to join in as appropriate of Britannia, Jerusalem and Land of Hope and Glory. Tanya/Derek's keyboard duet was wildly applauded.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December we tried singing carols for Morrisons' store followed by Sainsbury's store both in Morecambe. Both events were problematic. Morrisons' foyer was very cold, and Sainsbury's was rather cavernous. On 12<sup>th</sup> December we again graced Garstang Victorian Christmas Fayre in the early evening rain crowded under a gazebo. It was very cold, and it was subsequently determined that the Choir would not undertake any outside events between October and April. On 13<sup>th</sup> December we sang at noon for the 'Friends of the Library' at Lancaster Library and performed our usual Christmas sing in the Arndale Centre in Morecambe on 16<sup>th</sup> December. The busy Christmas season was rounded off with the annual Ashton Memorial Concert with 'Ladies of Note' in Williamson Park, Lancaster on 20<sup>th</sup> December. We finished off the year with a Christmas Dinner in the Borough on 22<sup>nd</sup> December preceded by a brief Christmas sing in the bar there.

The 2018 AGM was held on 9<sup>th</sup> January in the rehearsal room. Suzie Reynolds had agreed to become Choir President. The role of External Relations Officer (formerly Publicity Officer) was taken up by Paul Rasmussen and added to his Membership Secretary role. The Membership Fee was set at £80 and the Concert Fee was now set at £200 negotiable depending on the type of event. It was agreed to reduce the number of events during the year compared with 2017 and this was further reduced by family bereavement at Leighton Hall which cancelled the planned Spring Concert there.

A mini concert was held at Hala Over 60s Club on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. This was followed by a concert at Clarence Court, Bare, Morecambe on 27<sup>th</sup> March at which Chas Matthews and Jack Yates were soloists and Hugh Cutler and Geoff Finney sang a duet. The Spring Concert was held in Lancaster Methodist Church with soloists flautist Sian de Groot and Bare Folk. £476 was raised for Choir Funds. A mini concert was held at Hillcroft Care Home in Galgate on 27<sup>th</sup> September followed by involvement with the 'Big Sing' at the Platform, Morecambe on 10<sup>th</sup> October. The latter was considered unsuccessful organisationally but musically for the

Choir successful - it was agreed in Committee that we would not take part again until the organisational issues had been resolved. The major event for the year was the WW1 Armistice Centenary Concert held in St Martin's Chapel on the University of Cumbria's Bowerham Campus on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Here we reiterated the Chorale from the Britten Ballad of Heroes and sang 'The Soldier', a new composition by Lady Shuttleworth. We were entertained by Bare Folk who sang Mike Harding's Accrington Pals including a reading of the names included at the end of that song by Choir member Pip Riley whose grandfather was one of the named.

The Christmas events began with a Christmas Concert at the Neuro Drop-In Centre, Lancaster on 15<sup>th</sup> December. The poor weather produced a much-reduced audience. This was followed by the annual Aston Memorial Christmas Concert on 19<sup>th</sup> December. This year the chosen partners were '5 in a Bar' a Ladies a *capella* group who were musically excellent. The year closed with Christmas Songs at Arndale Centre in Morecambe (£150 was raised with £50 donated to Morecambe Food Bank) followed by a Christmas Lunch at the Grove Restaurant in Morecambe on 22<sup>nd</sup> December.