



# NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2007

## LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

My Dear Friends

What a wonderful September we are having!! Everyone appears brighter and happier when the sun shines. Anyhow, I hope you have all enjoyed your holidays and are feeling fairly refreshed to face the winter season!

Everyone is working hard for the Christmas Cracker and what a Cracker it promises to be! I am personally very pleased that we will be back in our newly refurbished theatre. I have viewed the new theatre - quite different - but I like it! Tickets are now on sale and selling fast. Don't be disappointed - book now.

Last Saturday saw the wedding of choir member Nicola Parsons to Dr Neil Carpenter. A good choir sang at the service and Nicola herself looked radiant! A great time was had by all. Neil and Nicola are having their honeymoon in Canada, I believe. We are also singing at Victoria Merritt's wedding this month. Victoria is the daughter of choir member Terri Rhind. Another great day I feel sure.

The Junior School are all very excited as it is their own show at the Arts Centre this Friday and Saturday (21/22 September). As usual it promises to be a great evening.

Well, back to the studio to do some teaching. Take care of yourselves.

Love

**Sheila**

PS: See you at the Cracker



## THE KENTWOOD SHOW CHOIR ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please note that the AGM will be held on TUESDAY 23 October 2007 at the St Margaret's Centre, Kenwin Road, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, Wilts commencing at 7.30pm. Refreshments will be available following the meeting.



## WISTFUL IN WAVENDON!

There is a little place in Buckinghamshire called Wavendon, a typical English village with a church and a pub. It has a big brash neighbour called Milton Keynes, which used to be a typical English village, just like Wavendon, but has metamorphosed into a sprawling city of some 200,000 souls which has almost swallowed up little Wavendon. Almost, but not quite. Wavendon is within the Milton Keynes city boundary, but is still approached through open fields - for the time being, at least.

Milton Keynes, like Swindon, has a poor national image and an equally bad press. Just as Swindon is famous - or should that be infamous? - for its roundabouts, so too is Milton Keynes. There are concrete cows in Milton Keynes, and there is just concrete in Swindon. Another accusation fired at both towns is of their lack of soul.

But last Friday, something special and rather wonderful happened in Milton Keynes - or, to be precise, in Wavendon. I was there, and I'll never forget it. The Kentwood Show Choir, from a place with no soul, went to another place with no soul, and made music. Magic music, amazing music. Critics, cynics, and spiteful tongues, be silent! There is soul in Milton Keynes, soul enough to make the angels weep.

There is a special, a very special place called The Stables, the brainchild of an elderly married couple who are each a music legend in their own right, Cleo Laine and John Dankworth. Perhaps younger generations will say "Who?". But, standing on a stage in a garden somewhere in Buckinghamshire, on a damp evening in June, I was transported into heaven.

Let me explain. On Friday 15 June 2007, Kentwood opened the Wavendon Festival 2007, entitled "Music in the Garden". The "garden" is that of The Rectory, Wavendon, the home of the Dankworths, who have built a wonderfully intimate open-air theatre, with fully equipped stage, on their back lawn. It is open-air only in name, as the auditorium and stage are covered by a "tent" reminiscent of Swindon's rather daring market building. "Backstage" comprises a wooden chalet, dedicated to the memory of Bob Monkhouse, a good friend of the Dankworths. It is fitted out as a proper dressing room, with mirrors (and the ubiquitous lights around them), a kettle and ample supplies of tea, coffee and biscuits. A plaque outside the chalet, fittingly named "The Monkhouse" states *"This building, in summer an artistes' dressing room and in winter a stage storing area, is dedicated to the much loved, and much missed, British comedian Bob Monkhouse, a lover of good music, who donated a charity performance at the new auditorium on May 21, 2000."* The space "backstage" being rather limited, the majority of the choir made their temporary home in the adjoining swimming pool. Not "in" the pool, you understand, which in any case was covered with a tarpaulin, but in the building which houses the pool. The facilities there were rather rudimentary. Sheila, liking her creature comforts, was not in the pool.....

The thrill of walking on stage in the presence of two lovely, unassuming people, who just happen to be world-class musicians and jazz legends, was at times simply overwhelming. Later, on that stage, with Sharon so ably and effortlessly taking the lead in "Tuxedo Junction" to the amazing and utterly impromptu accompaniment of John Dankworth on his sax, I thought, "It doesn't get much better than this".

**Mike Enright**



## **LIFE IN THE BAHAMAS**

I thought I'd just send you a quick line to tell you how things are in the tropics. We have had an incredible heat wave reaching the 90s, so, too hot to sit in the sun. Our house is lovely with its own pool in the garden, which is a must in this climate we are living in. With a cold beer in one hand and a good book in the other this is just what the doctor recommended.

We have done the Atlantis water park and seen most of the island as we are touring around for schools for the boys. Our plans for this weekend and the next are snorkelling the reef and diving with the sharks. We are taking a ferry trip to another island called Eluthea which is supposed to be more beautiful than this one. It has powdery pink sand and great conditions for snorkelling. Sounds idyllic.

As school starts here in a matter of two weeks and we are having problems getting places for the boys, we could be looking at returning to the UK. This is not good as we are beginning to settle in now and our things will be out to us in a few weeks. So tell Sheila I could be back for the Christmas Show after all. I hope that you are all well and not getting too wet with all that horrible cold rain. Love from

**Sarah Bowd**

*Since receiving the above email from Sarah, I hear that they have managed to find all three boys places in school so they continue to live the dream. Good for her!!!*

## **LOUISE LLOYD (since her time with Kentwood)**

Louise has just achieved a first class honours Bachelor of Music in Opera & Vocal Studies at Birmingham Conservatoire. Upon completion of her course she was awarded the St Clare Barfield Memorial Bowl for Operatic Distinction by the University Principal. This month she will commence post-graduate studies at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, under the tutelage of John Evans.

Over the summer Louise appeared in Opera Project's production of "The Magic Flute" and "Eugene Onegin" for Longborough Festival Opera. Later in the year she will be performing in "Carmina Burana" at the Beethoven Halle in Bonn, Germany with the orchestra of St John's, conducted by John Lubbock.

Louise would like to thank everyone for supporting her in her musical career.

## **Yvonne Walker**

(notes taken from the programme for 'Opera by Candlelight': an evening of popular songs and arias with dinner held on 21 July 2007 to raise money to help towards the futherance of Louise's musical career



## **CONCERT AT THE HILTON FOR MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT**

The Kentwood Concert at the Hilton is always a highlight of our fundraising year. We all feel it has a very special atmosphere and is hugely enjoyed by a highly appreciative audience. The Swindon Committee know what a very busy programme Sheila and the Choir undertake in a year and so we are immensely grateful for their commitment to this event. Many members we know organise holidays around the date! The concert raised £2,762 and over the years the total has risen to over an amazing £30,000!

The concert this year was outstanding! I really do not know how the singing can go on getting better but everyone left the Hilton feeling that it does! There was a great range of music for all tastes and the inclusion of a number of highly talented Junior Choir members was a real delight for us all. It is good to know that there is such super up and coming talent.

Once again Paul Maguire's solo spot was magical, as were his arrangements and accompaniment. The musicians provided a great backing and many of the audience remarked on their excellence.

As with so many of our Fundraising Events we have to rely on the wonderful generosity of many people to stage such a high profile event like our Hilton concert. The Committee are indebted to the Hilton, David Wicks, Matthew Davies and those donating raffle prizes for their very generous support. We were touched and very grateful to receive a magnificent decoupage picture for the raffle, the work of Pat Hocking in whose memory the Committee were very pleased to dedicate the concert.

Fundraising is never easy and we are so grateful to those who willingly give up time to sell tickets and to the public who buy them. The wonderful response we get from the concert enables us to raise funds for those living with cancer in this area. It is very important that people know where their money is being used. Macmillan will be supporting the following cancer services in Wiltshire: Six Macmillan clinical nurse specialists, one in each of the following; rare cancers, lung cancer, gastro-intestinal cancer, breast cancer, gynaecological cancers and urological cancers. There is also a Macmillan clinical psychologist, a Macmillan social worker and a Macmillan welfare benefits adviser, all of whom help people to cope with the effect a cancer diagnosis can have on every day life.

Our very sincere thanks to everyone for their support and we do hope we shall see you again next year on 3<sup>rd</sup> August for another evening of wonderful entertainment.

**Gillian Thornton and the Swindon Committee**



**'THOSE KENTWOOD KIDS'**  
**The Arts Centre - 21/21 September 2007**

Ros Hollands wrote for the 'Swindon Advertiser':

"I joined a full house at the Swindon Arts Centre for this year's offering from Sheila Harrod and her Kentwood Kids. The show started with the kids performing a selection of songs from the musical 'The Pyjama Game' - sung, I have to say, better than some adult renditions. Strong voices using chest register and excellent solos.

If I were to praise all these kids individually we would be here until next year's show, so I'm going to pick my favourite on the night. Take Daniel Woodward - what a star in the making! At seven he has a voice as pure as the driven snow. His solo, 'Ticket to Heaven' nearly brought the house down. I hope he continues to sing and I hope I'm still around when his name finally goes up in lights. As sure as eggs are eggs, that's entirely possible.

Sing-a-long-a-Disney was a piece that involved every child. The concentration was second to none and the logistics of putting this piece together ended in triumph. The spellbinding 'Can you hear me' from the young ladies, and the solo from Amanda Downes, Swindon Music Festival's Supreme Champion, were just a couple of the many excellent moments.

These kids are a testament to the talent that is ever emerging from Kentwood. Unfortunately, as always, Sheila has to lose some of the older girls to university. I'm sure they will be back and I wish them luck.

Once again these kids showed an excellence throughout. Concentration, dedication and discipline shone through. I teach kids myself and believe me, I know only too well what it takes to get this kind of performance out of them."



## FUTURE CONCERTS

### **2007**

6 October	St Augustines Church, Rodbourne. Chris Done (01793 693230)
19 October	St Margarets Church, Stratton. Victor Howlett (01793 822793)
28 October	St Bartholomew's Church, Wootton Bassett. Jean Crump (01793 848744)
4 November	Remembrance Service at Wyvern Theatre
18 November	Holy Trinity Church, Bradford on Avon
2 December	Christmas Cracker at Wyvern Theatre 5pm and 8pm
15 December	Debenhams, Swindon (Time to be advised)
20 December	Roves Farm

### **2008**

9 February	British Legion at Braydon Forest School
27 February	Ridgeway School - Date may be altered
1 March	Memorial Hall, Wootton Bassett
29 March	Corn Exchange, Devizes
23 April	St George's Day at Civic Offices, Swindon
27 April	St Luke's Church, Pinner
22 June	Wyvern Show - two performances
5 July	Corn Exchange, Hungerford
12 July	All Saint Church, Evesham
3 August	Macmillan, Hilton Hotel, Swindon
4 October	Assembly Hall, Melksham
31 October	Memorial Hall, Shrivenham
30 November	Christmas Cracker

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The 2008 Swindon Music Festival syllabus is now available in booklet form from John Holmes Music, Faringdon Road or The Secretary (Yvonne Walker at the above address) or why not visit the website [www.swindonmusicfestival.co.uk](http://www.swindonmusicfestival.co.uk) where the syllabus and entry form are readily available.

