



# NEWSLETTER

Winter 2006

*A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS*

## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

The last twelve months have certainly been eventful in the life of Kentwood, to say the least. In many ways, it has been a difficult year, a year of change, but musically, another very successful, varied and productive year.

2006 began quietly with the concert at Hungerford being the only major concert before Easter. The May Show was musically another great success, although ticket sales gave some cause for concern. Concerts at Hereford, Littlecote House, the Hilton Hotel, Holburne and Chippenham as well as the production of a Christmas CD highlight the varied nature of the year, which was enhanced by the excellent Kentwood Juniors Show at the Arts Centre in September.

For me personally, 2006 has been a year of taking stock. Since 1966, when I first started accompanying the choir, except for a period in the 1970's when I had a young family, Kentwood has always been first in my musical diary and I have never once let the choir down in all those years. However, now well into my sixties, my priorities have inevitably changed with my growing family now clearly and rightfully taking precedence in my life. I have always stressed to Sheila the need for a deputy and with my reluctance to give up Sundays for rehearsing and to commit to concerts, sometimes over a year ahead, we agreed that the best way forward was to have a bank of accompanists as we now have with percussion and bass guitar.

The well-publicised problems at the Wyvern Theatre have obviously had repercussions on the choir this year, and even though Sheila had already planned a reduction in the number of performances for the 2007 May Show, with the Wyvern unlikely to be operational until July, the Spring will be very different without the choir performing there. Another sadness for the choir and myself is the planned closure next July of Burton Hill School at Malmesbury. Sheila and the choir have supported the school so generously in recent years and the future for these very special pupils is now very uncertain.

So, with these thoughts in mind, can I thank everyone who has been involved with the choir for their continued hard work, commitment and support throughout this year and, of course, to Sheila for her remarkable enthusiasm and leadership. Swindon can be rightly proud of what she has achieved and what she continues to achieve.

May I wish you all a very enjoyable Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.

*Geoff*



## LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

My Dear Friends,

What a Christmas Cracker we had this year! What a lot of people and generally what a lot of very patient and happy people who supported us at the Oasis to have a good start to the Christmas season. I hope that the choir, juniors, band and the marvellous Louise achieved this for you all.

You all know by now that I can be quite a grumpy old woman at Christmas with all the endless spending and pushing and shoving etc but the true spirit of Christmas will always shine through with seeing good friends, remembering the birth of Jesus, giving out hugs, loving our animals, doing kindnesses, remembering lonely people and attending Kentwood's Christmas Cracker! Incidentally, wouldn't it be wonderful if we did these things all the year round?

Another year nearly over. Happy memories, sad memories but generally another wonderful year for Kentwood.

I hope you all have a lovely Christmas and a peaceful and healthy new year.

Much love,

*Sheila*

PS: See you all in 2007! Watch out for details of our May concert.



## 'A COLLECTION FOR CHRISTMAS'

At last the long awaited CD is now available selling at £12 each. We held the launch on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2006 at Borders, The Orbital Shopping Centre, West Swindon in the presence of the Mayor of Swindon, Councillor Mike Bawden and the Mayoress. The Show Choir performed tracks from the CD to passers by for about half an hour from 2 o'clock. Photographs were taken by the Swindon Advertiser and one appeared in the paper the following week with a write-up and publicity for the forthcoming Christmas Cracker.

We are indebted to Borders for assisting with the launch and for selling the CDs in store at no profit to themselves. As well as at Borders, you can arrange purchase of the CD by getting in touch with either Dave Parsons (Tel: 527372) or Chris Harrod (Tel: 725863) and of course they will be available at our concerts.

*Yvonne*



## **WORKSHOP AT KIDDERMINSTER - GROUP 23 OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHOIRS - 15 OCTOBER 2006**

Sheila presented a workshop to around seventy members of Group 23 which was organised by the Kidderminster Valentines. As you know Sheila is very passionate about her subject of music. Straight away she demands your attention by her very presence in front of you. After the introductions it was down to business. A few physical warm-ups and then how to warm-up the larynx - the tried and tested 'siren' was demonstrated and soon we were all doing it. We learnt about constriction in the throat and how to avoid it - silent laughter came into play here. We soon realised that even a simple realignment of the head and neck made all the difference. Then the visualisation of the oranges under the upper arms - squeeze them and it's amazing how the tone becomes fuller with no extra effort on the throat. Shall we ever forget the 'comedy' act which followed - Sheila taking a rather nasty tumble off a chair (standing on a chair in the first place is not a good idea at your age!!) and then bouncing back as though nothing had happened - in true professional style, 'the show must go on'.

Lunch followed, and what a lunch! There was also a raffle and an auction for a unique painted porcelain dish, artistically done by one of the ladies.

The afternoon session was about presentation, uniformity and professionalism in performance. Sheila also demonstrated that, by positioning singers with different vocal qualities in varying positions in a line, how the tone quality of the group changed. Eight very brave 'volunteers' took part in this, including me. As you can imagine there were lots of questions throughout the day and the afternoon was rounded off with us all having a good sing. I'm sure all those attended had a really informative and entertaining time.

From my point of view it was so nice to be able to meet fellow singers from different parts of the country and it certainly brings it home to you how very lucky we are in Kentwood to have such an inspiration as Sheila. At the end of the workshop I had three ladies speak to me about the day and who were very envious of the fact we had such a great person as Sheila directing us. 'You must have such great fun and enjoyment at your rehearsals', they said.

*Yvonne*

(who accompanied Sheila to the workshop)



## **SWINDON MUSIC FESTIVAL 2007**

May I make a quick reminder that the closing date for entries for next year's Festival is Friday 12 January 2007. Syllabus and entry forms are available from the website at [www.swindonmusicfestival.co.uk](http://www.swindonmusicfestival.co.uk)

*Yvonne Walker, Secretary*



## THE SHOW CHOIR'S ANNUAL DINNER

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November we all met up once again at the lovely Chiseldon House Hotel. This has now become an annual event enjoyed by all. The evening started with drinks in the bar and everyone catching up with each other's news – something we don't always get the chance to do at choir. Once seated we were treated to a scrumptious three course meal, with everyone eyeing up the choices they hadn't made! The food was beautiful as usual.

This year the entertainment actually involved the entire choir. Each table was given an envelope prior to dining and we were told to rehearse the named song during the meal, as we were expected to perform the song later in the evening. You can imagine the reaction that ensued! Some tables took this very seriously and started planning their performance straight away. Others were not quite so bothered – this showed during the performances! The groups had chosen names, including Santa's Bells, Noddy's Back Row, The Young Ones, Icicles (who incidentally won – well done!) and Why Bother? The judges were from the famous Y-Factor, a show that is currently running on ITV, their names being Terri Osbourne, Clarry Cowell and Robert Walsh. We were honoured to have such stars among us, just a group of humble singers from Swindon. Having said that, their comments were unkind, to say the least! But it was great fun! The Chain Gang group showed us all how it should be done, but at least they got to rehearse beforehand!

Next, Robert took to the stage and sang If You Love Me Please Don't Feed Me, very apt for an evening of over-indulgence, and My Simple Wish, a complete contrast with a beautiful message for us all. As the evening drew to a close, we were presented with a gift from Sheila. The girls received a scented Pomander, ideal for the Christmas Tree, and the men were given little square packages. I've still yet to discover their contents...! Thank you to Mary for displaying our gifts so beautifully.

It was great that Geoff, our President, and his wife Hilary were there to share in such a fun evening. Also, Andy Hill was guest of honour and even took part in one of the performances. A truly memorable evening, enjoyed by all. Special thanks to those who helped organise the event (you know who you are), you did a marvellous job once again.

*Sharon*

PS: Mr Harrod, have you thought about auditioning for the young men? I'm sure you'd be snapped up!



## THE CHRISTMAS CRACKER AT THE OASIS - 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2006

Amazingly 1485 people (so my brother David said) packed into the Oasis for the Christmas Cracker. My memory of that night was singing carols at the bottom of the stairs as hundreds of people filed by into the auditorium. We were being told regularly that just another 15 minutes and that should do it .....and another 15 minutes!! It took 50 minutes in all to get everyone seated. Obviously it was going to be very difficult at the Oasis but as the true troupers we are, with assistance from the Aldbourne Band and with the expertise of David Wicks and with the help from the Wyvern Theatre Director and staff, we made the best of it. I think we pulled off a magnificent start to the Christmas season.

Ros Hollands reported in the Swindon Advertiser that the 'Kentwood Choir concert makes waves at Oasis'. She wrote "she joined a queue of more than a thousand people for a special night in Kentwood Choir's Christmas calendar. With the closure of the Wyvern Theatre, Sheila Harrod and her Kentwood Choir took to the stage at the Oasis Leisure Centre for this year's Christmas Cracker. As usual, Sheila and her choir gave a fabulous performance.

They were joined on stage by the Aldbourne Band, who helped the carols along and played some wonderful numbers of their own. Louise Lloyd, a former member of the choir joined the choir as a guest. The younger members of Kentwood also sang beautifully, as did the old favourites, Graham Davison-Smith, Clary Bean and Kathy Hobson. We also had some panto fun too with Kathy donning her wellies and fairy costume.

David Wicks' clever display of Christmas images showed on the big screen and really set the scene. My Christmas always starts here".

*Yvonne*



### **THANKS FOR SUPPORTING OUR HOSPICE (A letter from Maggie Gill, Community Fundraiser to the Swindon Advertiser)**

On behalf of everyone at Prospect Hospice, I would like to say a huge thank you to Mrs Sheila Harrod and all at the Kentwood Choir together with members of the Swindon Rotary for their generosity in once again supporting Prospect through the raffle at the Kentwood Choir's Christmas Cracker on 3 December.

We were delighted to hear that the concert had gone so well despite the change of venue. The raffle raised an amazing £507.50 for the Prospect Hospice and our thanks also go to those companies and individuals who generously donated prizes.

Each and every day Prospect has about 250 patients within our care. As you may know, we need to find the majority of our funds from voluntary sources and the local community so every single bit of support really will count towards the care Prospect provides.

Once again, many thanks and kindest regards.



## FUTURE CONCERTS

### 2006

21 December Roves Farm (01793 763939)

### 2007

27 January Two Sopranos and a Piano, with the Aldbourne Band,  
Immanuel Church, Upham Road

3 February St Peter's Church, Penhill. Mr Saunders (01380 724369)

27 April Oliver Tomkins School

4/5 May May Show - To be decided

1 June St Mary's Church, Akers Way. Don Hodges (01793 536829)

9 June The Bean's Show at the Arts Centre

6 July Aldbourne Methodist Church

5 August Macmillan at the Hilton Hotel

21/22 September Junior Show at the Arts Centre

6 October St Augustines Church, Rodbourne

19 October St Margarets Church, Stratton

4 November Remembrance Service at Wyvern Theatre

2 December Christmas Cracker

15 December Debenhams

Contact details for tickets will be in the next Newsletter

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