



# NEWSLETTER

Winter 2008

*A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL*

## LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear All,

Can you believe that the festive season is upon us? There are lots of things about Christmas that I feel are going the wrong way. All the dashing about, stress, over-spending and buying gifts that are not really wanted! Where has the true meaning of Christmas gone wrong? However, there are always positives to every negative.

Christmas starts for most of us with the wonderful Christmas Cracker at the Wyvern. This year was no exception and a marvellous time was had by all! It is great to sing in the sheltered accommodation homes and take our music to some people who can't get out. Then there is the pure simplicity of Roves Farm where we are re-living the true Christmas story. We end the year with a grand concert at Cheltenham with the Gloucester Flowers Band. I always get a buzz singing to people who have never heard us before.

I like to see a warm smile, a handshake, people helping each other, meeting people we haven't seen for a while, families together and of course wonderful Christmas music. In these troubled times we need our music more than ever.

Can I thank everyone reading this letter for your love and support either as a choir member or member of the audience. I love you all. I will make special mention of my husband Chris who works tirelessly for me and also Yvonne who patiently and diligently puts this newsletter together.

I wish you all a fabulous Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. Much love,

*Sheila*



***There have been a number of concerts of note since the last newsletter and here are the reports of some of them.***

**THOSE KENTWOOD KIDS: OLIVER AND MORE  
ARTS CENTRE 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> NOVEMBER**

I have just spent an uplifting Sunday evening at the Arts Centre with those Kentwood Kids. Sheila Harrod once again put together a programme of musical theatre numbers that would leave some adults wanting. Having worked with children for many years myself she has my utmost admiration. They are rehearsed to perfection and nothing is left to chance. The concert was staged to perfection too by Pollyann Tanner. Good costumes and lighting helped it along.

Sheila uses adults in some of the more difficult numbers or in those where young voices are just not capable of singing in the keys written, but that does not detract from the children and young people - it just enhances a truly wonderful performance from all those concerned.

I have a knack for spotting talent and on this occasion the stand-out adult guest was Rachel Sparrow. I later learned that her wonderful voice was indeed been featured in a West End professional production.

Now, what about those kids? What can I say? We heard beautiful voices spanning all genres of singing. Could I single one out? That would be unfair to all those I can't mention in the review due to space. So I'll just say, well done to you all. I thoroughly enjoyed your singing. Some voices were as pure as the driven snow and others sang with a chest register to die for at such a young age. Daniel Woodward has quite a voice for one so young. What a future this youngster has.

Once again a great band, with Sheila at the helm, made this concert special. No backing tracks or wrong keys and a helping hand for the young singers should they need it. They didn't.

Sheila's motto is 'Music is a fair and glorious gift from God'. I couldn't agree more.

***Ros Hollands  
Swindon Advertiser***



## **CHRISTMAS CRACKER, SWINDON'S WYVERN THEATRE SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER**

It's another cracker. I look forward to Kentwood's Christmas Cracker every year. This is when my Christmas begins, especially so this year as I've been home with the dreaded flu.

Sheila Harrod and her Kentwood Show Choir filled the Wyvern for two shows raising the roof with a sound that is synonymous with them. Perfection. When I hear them sing I am transfixed on the sound of their voices. It is quite stunning; as I'm sure the rest of the audience will agree. I am never nervous in Kentwood's company. I never hear a bum note or a piece of music that doesn't give me tingles down my spine. This year was no exception.

Piece of the night for me was undoubtedly 'The Three Kings'. This technically difficult song held me quite spellbound. The intricacies of the score, blending beautifully with the lyrics, and sung superbly by three of the gentlemen and three of the ladies from Kentwood, was truly wonderful.

As always we had the serious and the comedy. To sing way out of tune when you can sing really well is one of the most difficult things to do. Well done Kathy. The little ones, who show just how to behave on a stage, have a cute factor to die for and sang their little hearts out with Mr Frosty.

The audience joined in with the Carols, raising the roof as well. I missed being able to join in this year because of a voice that had only just come back.

The simple, but impressive stage set, a great band and sparkle from the costumes all helped to give a real festive feel. The usual mince pies and a little of what does you good is always a nice touch.

Guests, The Aldbourne Band, joined the choir to add to the rousing Christmas sounds and also played some stirring stuff on their own, to the delight of the audience.

Over the last 20 years or so years, Sheila and her choir have raised more than £100,000 from profits from the Cracker shows for the Rotary Club in Swindon. With the snow falling on stage during the final numbers it was a perfect ending to a rather special night.

*Ros Hollands*  
*Swindon Advertiser*

### **ROVES FARM**

Never work with children and animals it has been said, but unfortunately the Kentwood Show Choir was not given the chance to do both this year as the performance at Roves Farm was unexpectedly cancelled by Rupert Burr due to lack of ticket sales. However, we are hoping to organise something for next year at a more convenient time so look out for the announcement.

*Yvonne Walker*



## YOUR VIEWS

Following the concert Kenwood gave at Melksham during October, I received a phone call from a Nancy Martin. She said that she loved having the Kentwood Show Choir come to Melksham on Saturday. She had followed the choir since we went to the Rachel Fowler Building many years ago. She said that we were so lucky to have the marvellous Sheila Harrod as our leader who is gifted in every way. Also, it was so lovely to meet one of the Juniors, Daniel. This lady owns 4000 sheets of music dated 1803 - 1972. She lends it out to various musical groups and has in the past sold to people from America, Belgium and France. She has numerous vocal scores and would be glad to show these to anyone who wishes to visit her. (address supplied)

I believe that Nancy has now become a patron and will be able to keep abreast of all the choir's activities.

*Yvonne Walker*

Reading the review by Ros Hollands of the Kentwood Christmas Cracker show, I had to fully agree with everything she said. What we have to remember is that the whole cast are amateurs with all the pressures of family and life. Sheila does such a splendid job keeping the whole thing moving that I hope that soon someone will have the notion of rewarding this stalwart lady with an award for superb achievement. I know she is a tough cookie, but her methods bring wonderful results. We are filled with admiration.

*Mervyn & Margaret Penny*

## OPERATION SHOEBOX

At the Christmas Cracker, Sheila made an appeal on behalf of Kleo and John Robinson concerning the plight of Richard (their son), a Swindon lad, and his colleagues from B Company of 1 Rifles, Chepstow serving on the front line in Helmand Province where there is always a threat of ambush and roadside bombs. Sheila gave a brief outline of what life was like serving in Afghanistan.

The choir wished to help Kleo with her cause of sending filled shoeboxes to Afghanistan by collecting various items which are not routinely available to soldiers such as toilet paper, sun cream, wet wipes, foot creams, shampoo, shower gel, chewing gum, tissues, flannels, biscuits, boiled sweets, cuppa soups, flavoured noodles and the list goes on. In addition, almost a £1000 was donated by the audience and this, as promised, has been spent on the items so much wanted by our troops. A big thank you to all who donated to this worthy cause.

*Yvonne Walker*



## FUTURE CONCERTS

21 December 2008 Bacon Theatre, Cheltenham (Guests of the Gloucester Flowers Band)  
- Ticket enquires: Laura Case, Band Secretary (07788140700)

## 2009

30 January St Mary's Church, Castle Eaton. S Theobald (01285 810403)  
27 February St Bartholomew's Church, Wootton Bassett. N Ashley (01793 765422)  
29 March Blunsdon House Hotel. C Ockwell (01793 832947)  
3 April St Mark's Church, Swindon. C Green (01793 721897)  
24 April Bromham Social Centre. M Lloyd-Evans (01380 850366)  
8 May St Mary's Church, Fairford. J Williams (01285 712127)  
12 & 13 June Kentwood Showcase 2009, Wyvern Theatre (01793 524481)  
17 July St Mary's Church, Purton. S Price (01793 770696)  
2 August Hilton Hotel. G Thornton (01367 252535)  
16 October St Mary's Church, Rodbourne Cheney. L White (01793 533475)  
29 November Christmas Cracker, Wyvern Theatre. (01793 524481)  
12 December Evesham Methodist Church. B Powney (01386 760323)

## SWINDON MUSIC FESTIVAL 2009

A quick reminder that the closing date for entries for next year's Festival is Friday 16 January 2009. Syllabus and entry forms are available from the website at [www.swindonmusicfestival.co.uk](http://www.swindonmusicfestival.co.uk)

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