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# BMYC Friends Newsletter



Issue 1 - May 2001

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## Welcome!



To the new newsletter for the Friends of the British Methodist Youth Choir.

My name is Naomi Whittaker and I have volunteered to be the new secretary for the Friends of the British Methodist Youth Choir.

I hope to involve other choir members in making this newsletter and that it will become a souvenir of our time in the choir, as well as informing our friends of who we are and what we get up to.

My aim is to produce two newsletters a year: one in May and the other in November. These will include a message from Gilbert Jones, the choir administrator, reviews of the choir events written by choir members, introductions to some of the choir members and information about future choir events.

One of the reasons why I've taken on this job, is that I'd like to keep in contact with the choir when I leave in July (due to old age!). More about me in the next issue, as I hope to include profiles of all new and leaving choir members in the 6 months between issues.

If you wish to contact me, e.g. to inform me of a change of address, please use the contact details on the back page.

## **Harrogate Weekend**

**23 - 25 February 2001**

This weekend was based at two churches in Harrogate, with accommodation being provided by members from the whole circuit.

We arrived, in the snow, at Trinity Methodist Church and were well fed prior to a initial rehearsal. On Saturday we were based at Wesley Methodist Church, in the middle of the town. As usual, we rehearsed in the morning, followed by lunch and a couple of hours exploring the town. We were lucky with our time off, as the snow did not start (again) until later that evening. A few more hours rehearsal was had before tea.

The concert started at 7.30pm, with an introduction by Rev Alan Bolton, a change from the plan as the other minister was held up in snow somewhere. Alan Bolton is the Youth Minister for the Harrogate Circuit, a special appointment to encourage work amongst young people. That day he was also taking part in a sponsored sing all the way through Songs of Fellowship in another church, this was completed around 10pm and raised several hundred pounds.

Despite the weather, the concert was well attended with about 150 people in the audience. The planned program of music was altered slightly with the addition of two improvisations by Ashley on the grand piano. These were very much appreciated, especially by the choir as they gave us a break from singing. The two new pieces of music for this concert were both from Ashley's re-writing of Vivaldi's Gloria and went down well (even the one in 7/8 time!). Due to the snow, the usual social evening (in a local pub) was abandoned and we went to our hosts homes after the concert.

On the Sunday, we were back at Trinity Methodist Church to take part in the morning service. We sang 4 pieces, including "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" - not the usual piece for the middle of the service! It became apparent to the choir that we need to have BMYC sweat shirts (as well as our polo-shirts) if we are to continue performing in winter. The congregation were all wrapped up in coats and hats, whilst most of the choir froze (except those who'd smuggled in coats!). After the service (with only 2 points in the sermon, so that some people would not be late for trains!), we had another good meal, before departing for home.

There were 22 members attending this weekend: 8 sopranos, 10 altos, 2 tenors and 2 bass. There was one new member of the choir this weekend: Mark Rowland, from Aberystwyth, who sang Bass.

**Naomi Whittaker**

**Programme for the Harrogate Concert**

Eriskay Love Lilt - Trad

Among The Leaves - Trad  
Dashing Away With The Smoothing Iron - Trad

Come Live With Me - Sterndale Bennett  
When Daisies Pied - Mc Farren  
Full Fathom Five - Wood

Hymn 548 Give To Me Lord

Over The Rainbow - Arlen  
Blue Moon - Rogers

Geographical Fugue - Toch

**Interval**

Elijah Rock - Trad

Sing Joyfully - Byrd  
Cantique De Jean Racine - Faure

Les Miserables Medley - Schonberg

Hymn 408 The Right Hand Of God

*(from the new Gloria by Ashley Thompson)*

Qui Sedes  
Quoniam Tu Solus Sanctus  
Cum Sancto Spiritu

A Clare Benediction - Rutter

## Message From Gilbert Jones, the Choir Administrator



Gilbert and Marie Jones

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I am in the enviable position at the moment of having more requests for concerts than we can fit in to our programme schedule. This, for any group of performers (for that is what we are), is an enviable position to be in whether it be a pop group or a classical choir such as BMYC.

It has not always been like this. The success which has created this situation is due to the very hard work put into the rehearsals and performances by Ashley our Musical Director and the loyalty and dedication of choir members, who travel all over the UK to share their music with local congregations, often arriving very late on Friday evenings after a particularly arduous journey either by rail or road. I am staggered at the lengths of journey undertaken by some members, often after a days work either teaching or in commerce or university study. Some members, because of living in the South, regularly travel upwards of 200 miles on Fridays, to have the experience of making music with those of like mind and to experience that very special Christian Fellowship which is a regular feature of every weekend.

Rehearsals start on Saturday morning with a time of worship led by a choir member and the whole of what we do is given to God in prayer to do with as He wills.

We must also pay tribute to those churches who act as hosts for each weekend, faithfully feeding and nurturing us, providing beds and friendship, all part of the sharing of ourselves with them as we take our mission to the churches.

Already next year is booked up and I have requests for 2004 in my files. I try not to make bookings more than 1 year ahead, at the same time realising that in our Methodist system, it takes about a year to bring a visit to fruition from the time it is agreed.

In June we shall be at the Methodist Conference at Ipswich where, with the Methodist Youth Brass Band, we shall sing for the opening service on the Sunday morning, this year for the first time in the open air! This will be hosted by Pam Rhodes from BBC Songs of Praise. Later we sing for the evening service of the World Methodist Conference at Brighton in late July, this will probably be our largest ever audience as I understand there are some 4000 delegates attending. Who could have imagined in the early 1980's when the choir was formed that such privileges as these would come our way. We seek ever to remain faithful to our calling and wherever we go to take with us our "Mission in Song" Hallelujah.

**Gilbert Jones**

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### **Mark Rowland New Choir Member**



Mark Rowland is 19, and is currently a second year undergraduate reading Chemical Engineering at Peterhouse, Cambridge. He is also an Organ Scholar of the college and so takes a role in the running of the Chapel Choir and in playing the organ at Chapel services. This post has given him such experiences as conducting Evensong at Ely Cathedral and touring with the choir to Italy and singing Mass in the Duomo at Florence. Plans are afoot for a further tour to Spain this summer. Coming from a

Methodist background into a very liturgical Anglican chapel has been as very interesting experience for him and he likes to think that it has broadened his views.

He remains actively involved in Methodism, and for Easter term 2001 holds the Presidency of Cambridge MethSoc, where he hopes through the term to examine the theme of Holy Communion across the Church of Christ.

Mark enjoys singing, and in addition to the British Methodist Youth Choir sings in the Three Counties Youth Choir (Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, & Carmarthenshire) and takes an active role in Church Choirs both at Wesley Church, Cambridge and at St. Paul's Methodist Centre, Aberystwyth

## **Erdington Weekend 23 - 25 March 2001**

The weekend was based at Erdington Methodist Church in the West Midlands, where we all enjoyed the comfort of member homes each night.

We arrived at varying times on Friday evening from our different corners of the country and rehearsed briefly (some more briefly than others depending on the time of arrival!) before heading off with our hosts.

Saturday began early with a worship session led by Helen Cook followed by our usual rehearsal. The programme was changed little from the Harrogate weekend, with a wide variety of music from Tudor Anthems to the New Gloria, and English Folk Songs to the spoken Geographical Fugue.

After lunch was our AGM, and a number of changes were made. David Peck resigned the chairmanship to Neil Thompson, Elaine Allen took over from Helen Cook as choir rep, and the new position of Associate Musical Director was discussed, with Andrew Hornsby indicating he might be willing to take this up once the details are finalised. We also discussed publicity for the choir, with Amber Semple requesting new ideas for promotional materials. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we considered the balance of the choir. Whilst we now have a waiting list for female choir members, and the arrivals of Kevin and Mark have doubled the bass section, we are still in desperate need of new tenors and have all come away with instructions to enlist any we can find!

Following the AGM we had our first taste of a recording session. This consisted of singing excerpts of hymns that were recorded for use in a new training pack for local preachers. This went far more smoothly than most of us anticipated, even leaving us with a little free time to wander around Erdington before returning to the church for the afternoon rehearsal.

The concert was well attended with the church almost full to capacity, and was well received with much positive feedback. Even Ashley seemed to be impressed by our performance! After the concert we descended upon a local pub, taking over an entire area in the usual BMYC fashion and bringing our exhausting day to a relaxing close

We were up early again on Sunday, the effects more keenly felt as a result of the mysteries of English Summer Time, to return to church to participate in the morning worship. The choir sang two pieces during the service, and learnt some new songs for the service, during which a baptism took place. It was a welcome relief when the baptismal party arrived as during the Choir's last visit to Erdington two baptismal parties failed to arrive for the service! The choir also participated in the prayers and readings, and the hymns and songs were accompanied by a select band of BMYC musicians.

As it was Mothering Sunday the usual lunch was not provided. Instead most of us headed for the nearest MacDonalds before making our separate ways home.

The weekend was attended by 20 choir members; 6 Soprano, 8 Alto, 2 Tenor and 4 Bass, as well as Ashley and Gilbert.



The Erdington Concert

**Rev. Neil Thompson**  
**The New BMYC Chairman**



Neil Thompson is Superintendent Minister of the Aldershot, Farnborough & Camberley Methodist Circuit in the London South West District. He has been in the ministry for the last twenty years but before that was trained as a musician and worked as a peripatetic music teacher in Manchester, teaching keyboards, guitar and singing. He has written musicals for use in churches and has had one of his songs published in "Songs for the New Millennium". Neil finds his musical skills in demand locally with the

circuit choir, worship bands and the occasional lecture/recital.

His contact with BMYC came through MCMS, during the time he was part of their committee. A contact person was needed to join the BMYC team and link their work to that of MCMS. The energy and enthusiasm of the choir proved infectious and Neil has remained an enthusiastic supporter ever since. He is glad to see the choir growing both in numbers and status and is looking forward to their contributions to the British Methodist Conference and the World Methodist Conference this year.

Neil is married to Christine, who is also a musician. They have two sons, Paul and Andrew.

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\* **Wanted!** \*  
\* **New male choir members.** \*  
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\* To help the balance of the choir, we need some new men \*  
\* (especially tenors). Do you know any male singers aged 16 - 27 \*  
\* who can sight read music and may wish to join BMYC? If so, please \*  
\* ask them to send their contact details to Gilbert Jones (see back \*  
\* page for Gilbert's address). \*  
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## **Elaine Allen New BMYC Committee Member**



Elaine Allen has been a member of the BMYC for about five years. She was introduced to it by Gilbert Jones, the choir administrator, who was the leader of the youth group at Elaine's home church in Streetly, near Birmingham.

Having graduated from the University of Southampton with a degree in Physiology with Nutrition, she is currently training at Leeds Metropolitan University to be a State Registered Dietitian and is looking forward to spending next

year in a hospital putting her training into practice.

Elaine was introduced to music at an early age, as her father is the musical director of a local amateur operatic society. She has played piano for many years and has belonged to several choirs including her school choir and the University of Southampton Choral Society.

As well as her musical interests, Elaine is a winter sports enthusiast, her favourite being snowboarding which she learnt during her time as a member of Southampton University Ski and Snowboard Club.

She is delighted to have recently become choir representative on the BMYC Committee and looks forward to taking a more active role as the choir continues to flourish.

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Photo: Andrew Glendenning during "time off" at the Erdington weekend.



## **Dudley Weekend 11 - 13 May 2001**

The weekend of 11-13 May saw our return to the Midlands - this time to Dudley, in the heart of the Black Country. This was a convenient location for me, only forty minutes drive from my home.

Unfortunately, I had musical commitments of my own on Friday night and Sunday morning, so I was only there for Saturday's rehearsal and concert. Despite my attempts to coax interesting gossip from the choir members who arrived on Friday evening, I am led to believe that I didn't miss anything out of the ordinary. There were however, a couple of unusual features to the weekend. Firstly, the sun was shining. In fact, it was rather warm on Saturday and we consumed more orange juice than tea and coffee. Some even wore shorts! Secondly, Ashley was unable to be there, so we had a guest conductor, Nick Riley.



Rehearsals at Dudley

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Nick is the organist at Erdington Methodist Church (the venue of our previous concert) and a former BYMC member. He did an excellent job of keeping us all in order, as well as keeping us amused. After a morning of light hearted rehearsal, followed by a lunch of jacket potatoes and baked beans, we were let loose to explore downtown Dudley.

There are plenty of signs of Dudley's former prosperity, with a profusion of buildings with extravagant facades. The high street is dominated by a large stone "fountain" - though there didn't appear to be any water in it!

A more recent statue, of Dudley born footballer, Duncan Edwards stands nearby. (He was one of seven Manchester United players killed in the 1958 Munich plane crash). Of course, I could not write about Dudley without mentioning the castle and zoo, which stand next to each other. To add to my excitement, there was even a chair lift to carry you up the hill to the castle. Unfortunately, there wasn't time to take advantage of these facilities, though I was tempted to have a ride in a large plastic shoe for the bargain price of twenty pence.

Back in church in the afternoon, we got down to some serious rehearsing, with only a few hours to go until the concert. By tea time our concentration was waning and I was ready for a sleep - I must be getting old! Fortunately, most of the programme was familiar, with only one or two new items including "Smoke gets in your eyes". The good news about this weekend was that we acquired an additional tenor: Andrew Cottrell from Oxford - yes, that's four Andrews now! So in total, there were six men.

By the time of the concert at 7pm, I was wide awake again and I think we all sang well. The audience seemed to appreciate it anyway. Obviously one couple had not had enough of us, as rather a lot of us ended up at their house afterwards to watch the Eurovision Song Contest - essential viewing for all BMYC'ers. As you may gather, an enjoyable weekend was had by all, and we're already looking forward to our next concert.



**Andrew Glendenning**

## **BYMC Events for the Rest of 2001**

24th June 2001  
The Methodist Conference, Ipswich

27th July 2001  
Eastbourne Methodist Church

30th July 2001  
The World Methodist Conference, Brighton

21st - 23rd September 2001  
Bridgewater

26th - 28th October 2001  
MCMS Conference, High Leigh, Herts

### **BYMC Contact Details**

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