

---

# BMYC Friends Newsletter

Issue 2 - November 2001

---



## Message from the BMYC Friends Secretary

Thank you for the responses to the first edition of this newsletter, sent in May. As promised, this edition is being sent in November and will be followed by another next May. It has been a very busy 6 months for the choir, hence a longer newsletter, with four weekends instead of the usual two.

This newsletter includes write ups of all four weekends, introductions to three new choir members and farewells from two others. Suzie also describes her role as worship co-ordinator for the choir and Ashley, our Musical Director, reviews the year.

### 2002 Programme

8 - 10 February 2002  
Sunderland Methodist Church

15 - 17 March 2002  
Haxby & Wiggington Methodist  
Church, York

14 - 16 June 2002  
Barry Methodist Church,  
South Glamorgan

1 - 3 November 2002  
With Methodist Youth Brass  
Band at Grimsby Central Hall

Thank you to those of you who have already sent donations to the choir this year. We'll request donations only once a year (with the November issue - see green insert) but are happy to receive your help all year round.

The money donated by the BMYC Friends last year has been spent on new music for the choir, including music by John Rutter purchased after the masterclass with him in October.

**Naomi Whittaker**

## Ipswich - British Methodist Conference 22 - 24 June 2001

This was a slightly different weekend to normal, being involved in the British Methodist Conference meant we were helping with the worship during the service on the Sunday to 400 people in the centre of Ipswich town. As normal, the weekend started on Friday night where we met in Felixstowe Methodist Church. We were made very welcome and it was good to spend time with all from the choir finding out all that is going on in their lives. The weekend this time involved sleeping in the church, so we set up mildly comfortable camp beds and headed off to bed, as Saturday would be a full day learning what pieces we would sing.



On Saturday we got up had breakfast and began to rehearse in the morning – including being recorded by Radio Suffolk, and also time to learn all the new pieces and learning more about what the service involved on the Sunday morning. A stop for lunch and



*Taking a break at the seaside*

back to the rehearsals. We rehearsed most of the afternoon then had a break to recover before tea. After tea we headed to a n o t h e r church (that

even had showers in it!) which was the church that the National Methodist Youth Brass Band were sleeping at. They were doing a concert so we went to listen and to join in by having a small slot to sing in the concert. It was a good opportunity to meet the brass band, that was excellent, and also a good chance to let people hear the choir. All went well and it was a fantastic night. We headed back to Felixstowe where we did a mixture of things from sleeping to writing reports for school!

The Sunday morning started early with sun shining into the church hall at 4 am - just what we needed as an alarm clock! We had breakfast, which was quickly followed by heading to Ipswich town centre where a stage was placed right in between a load of high street shops. The street soon became packed with many Christians all there to share in the service and worship God. The service went well and it was a good opportunity to share in God's love with many different people.

Singing with the choir on this weekend and all the rest, always sends me away thanking God for the musical talent we have all been given in the choir. A personal highlight for me was showing Pam Rhodes where the toilets were – that little touch with a celebrity! But altogether a fantastic opportunity and I loved every minute of the weekend.



## Message From the Musical Director



*Ashley with John Rutter*

You will all be well aware of the amazingly varied year that the choir have enjoyed this year. We have been asked to sing in some strange places in our time, but to get such a wide range of venues in one year created some memorable moments.

The variety also impacted on the choir's ongoing repertoire and recruitment programmes. Rather than begin an entirely new programme each weekend (as has been the case in the past) we maintain a rolling programme, introducing a small number of items each weekend and losing a similar number. This should ensure that the majority of the choir knows the majority of the music. The only problem is if the same audience comes to consecutive concerts - and we do welcome groupies!

Singing at the British Methodist Conference and the World Methodist Conference we were bound to meet some of the same audience. No matter; the President gently requested certain items and the USA organisers (of the World, you understand) suggested others. So, two high profile events with less than a day to rehearse - and a service or two thrown in to keep us in good voice! Very little of the material was in our current repertoire.

The President, Christina Le Moignan, was requesting an original response to be used throughout the outdoor worship in Ipswich. If she was willing to be my Bernie I was happy to be her Elton. We produced The Rainbow's Response which continues to echo in my ears to this day; there is now talk of making this available to the church as a resource.

The BBC were also involved in Brighton. They were recording a number of events for a variety of uses. We were pleased to be asked to contribute to the Sunday Half Hour. You may have heard

the broadcast - I'm afraid I hope you missed it! The programme did the choir no good at all. Much of the singing sounded out of tune, some out of time and most unbalanced. I could not believe what I was hearing. My recollection was that we were, admittedly, tired, but that we sang tunefully and as one. I have since been sent a recording from the BBC verifying this, but with no explanation of the poor broadcast; I intend to follow it up.

Earlier in the year we were involved in the production of material for the Local Preachers Training. We recorded a number of hymns and songs for a CD to be used in the training course. This is due to be circulated next spring so, if you are training to be or already are a local preacher, listen out!

Because of the diverse nature of this years events I was determined that our final event would be a little more relaxed. Whilst at the MCMS conference we enjoyed our master class from John Rutter and I enjoyed been given a few more tips to improve my conducting before preparing for our first joint concert with the National Methodist Brass Band. The concert was a sell out and both groups complemented each other wonderfully; we are now planning our next joint venture - next November (2002) at The Central Hall, Grimsby.

**Ashley Thompson**

## **BYMC Members Changes**

There have been quite a few changes in the choir in the past 6 months. As well as those people detailed in this issue, we have also welcomed as new members:

- Sian Heyes from Welshampton
- Heidi Upham from Cornwall

and said goodbye to:

- Helen Robinson from Huddersfield

We hope to include articles about them in the next issue.

## Eastbourne and Brighton The World Methodist Conference 26 – 30 July 2001

BMYC travel arrangements are never easy and by the time I'd made it from Newark to Eastbourne via the centre of Bedford and Cranfield to pick up my passengers, I was well and truly ready for a nice long sleep. Sadly the hard church floor (Ah!), the revellers on the streets of Eastbourne and the seagulls had other ideas! Therefore it was a tired choir who got up to sing joyfully on a bright and sunny Friday morning. We were preparing for a concert in Eastbourne that evening and, despite the fact that it was such a hot day and we were all suffering from sleep deprivation, the concert went well.

Saturday was more relaxed. We had a better night's sleep and we managed to sneak in a last look at some of Eastbourne's sights before packing up and heading off to Brighton to locate our second base camp for the weekend - Hollingbury Methodist Church. This was probably the most basic church I have ever stayed at in many years of sleeping on church floors. However, the welcome from the small community was huge and Saturday afternoon saw us rehearsing once again; this time preparing pieces that we would be singing to our biggest audience ever - at the World Methodist Conference and via Radio 2's Sunday Half Hour. Eventually Ashley decided that we had worked hard enough and there was just time for a picnic on the beach before we headed of to see the last ever

professional production of 'Hopes and Dreams'. It was nice to have an evening off. This is something that we don't normally enjoy - we are usually travelling, rehearsing, performing or departing on the evenings we spend together.



*Outdoor rehearsal at Brighton*

On Sunday we sung to the smallest BYMC audience I have ever seen in the morning service at Hollingbury. The afternoon saw us head off to the Brighton Centre once again for our date with the BBC. We recorded our two pieces for them before heading out into the sunshine for a quick meal break. Finally it was time for the big one - we took our places on the stage in front of three thousand Methodists



*Singing at the World Methodist Conference*

from around the world to lead the singing in an ecumenical service. This was an amazing experience - all those faces staring back at you and most of them taking pictures of us too!! It was an uplifting end to a tiring weekend and it was a high-spirited group who headed back to Hollingbury for our last night

together.

So, what else can I say? I have, of course, covered the events, but a BYMC weekend is made up of so much more than that. There were many 'moments' that will make this weekend special. I could tell you about a brush with fame in the shape of BBC Radio 2's Roger Royle; maybe you would prefer to hear about the impromptu sing song that took place at about midnight on Sunday; there was the only landlord in Eastbourne not to want custom; I could tell you about suitcases on wheels; and then there were the American Methodists who thought we were royalty! We are finally managing to raise our profile within Methodism (we now officially have fans in Wisconsin). Yet for me it is these moments that make BYMC so special. We are working hard to praise God through our music, but we are having a lot of fun whilst we are doing it!

**Helen Cook**





## Co-ordinating Worship

I've been in BMYC for ten years, so have seen the choir develop over this time. A few years ago there were rumblings about the choir's worship life, and our involvement in Sunday morning worship at churches we visit. We felt this worship needed a bit of organisation, as there was a tendency for our involvement to be a bit "hit and miss"! We wanted to use our other gifts as well as singing in the worship. For the last couple of years I've been trying to do something about this; I like to think it's a bit more structured now, although you'll have ask others if they agree!



When we are due to visit a church, I contact the Sunday morning preacher and offer our services. Hopefully, this aids the preacher's planning, rather than worrying what to do with us! Our contributions are varied, including singing items from our concert, talking about our faith, and doing the Bible

readings. On occasions we've been asked to do the whole service. So far, I've not taken anyone up on that, but you never know what'll happen in the future - watch this space! It's important to ensure choir members are happy with their contributions, so I have a little blue book where I ask members to write down what they are happy to do. I also get people to indicate things they wouldn't feel comfortable doing, so as not to embarrass anyone.

On Saturday mornings we have a devotional time for the choir, and I arrange people to lead these sessions as well. All those able to contribute have differing approaches, which results in a wide variety of devotions. I find it very refreshing to receive choir members' gifts in this way, and it's a helpful start to what is often a long day of rehearsing.

### Thank you!

To all those who have helped with this issue of the newsletter. Including article authors, photographers and Elaine for organising people since I left the choir. - *Naomi*

It can be frustrating trying to co-ordinate the Sunday morning worship, and you can feel you're holding on by the skin of your teeth. For example, once, the preacher was out of the country in the weeks preceding our arrival - but it usually works out OK in the end. A recent highlight was during our visit to the World Methodist Conference, where we shared worship with a very small congregation at Hollingbury Methodist church. It was a joy to be with them, as we felt we were offering something not normally available to such a small chapel. It's been good to help the choir develop in this way, and I hope we will continue to move forward over the next couple of years.

**Suzie Kitchin**

## **New Choir Member**

**Carolyn Allen**



*Rehearsal*

Carolyn Allen is 23 and lives on Hayling Island in Hampshire with her husband Luke. At the moment she is at Sussex University in Brighton doing

secondary music teacher training. She has been working part time as a singing teacher at Stagecoach Theatre Arts School for about two and a half years. It is a great job, hard work but very rewarding at the same time.

Carolyn's musical background is quite varied, as well as singing she plays flute and piano and has recently finished a music degree at University College Chichester. She has been a member of the Portsmouth Methodist Youth Choir for ten years and has recently taken over as their accompanist. Carolyn was also a member of the MAYC Orchestra and Singers for seven years which was brilliant and

where she met her husband too! At university she was part of the chamber choir and had the opportunity to sing in some amazing places around the country.

When time allows, Carolyn loves travelling and hopes to move abroad in the next few years. She enjoyed her first BMYC concert at Bridgwater and looks forward to many more.

## **Bridgwater Weekend 21 - 23 September 2001**



We were very lucky in three ways at Bridgwater:

- The people were lovely
- The food was delicious
- The church owned many spanners

The significance of all of these should become apparent if you read on.

We arrived rather exhausted (some more than others) on Friday evening to be greeted by very kind people with various sorts of food. After fellowship and prayers we were whisked off to have the privilege of sleeping in beds in the homes of our hosts.

Saturday saw us worshipping and rehearsing in the morning, followed by a wonderful lunch. I heard a rumour that some choir members had spent their journey the previous day placing bets on what we were to be served. However, as I don't listen to rumours, I didn't know that it was 3 to 1 on jacket potatoes, or that Methodists only bet with jelly babies, never money.

After lunch I caught up with Carolyn Allen who was joining the choir for the first time that weekend. One of the few married choir members, Carolyn hails from Hayling Island in Hampshire. She has

## New Choir Members

### Andrew Cottrell



Andrew is just beginning his fourth, and possibly final year at Merton college in Oxford, where he is studying Physics. He thinks this is a good and entertaining thing to do, and so if he decides to carry on at university it will not solely be because he wants some more free time to improve his squash.

Andrew worships at a Methodist church at home, in Wimborne, and has been a fairly active member of the John Wesley Society (what the Oxford students call their Methsoc) during term time. Although (fairly) committed to the Methodist tradition he enjoys the incense of his college chapel, and the action songs of certain other of the Oxford churches.

He enjoys singing at every possible opportunity, including for his chapel choir and choral society. He is still beginning to learn the organ, and annoys his family with incessant piano playing when at home.

### Emma Hosking



Emma joined the choir on the Brighton weekend in August. She is twenty years old and is currently in her third and final year at Manchester Met University studying hard for a BA (Joint Honours) in English with Drama. Next year she hopes to do a PGCE in English and Drama at Manchester University to become a secondary school Drama Teacher.

Emma heard of the BMYC at the MAYC weekend last year and it sounded like her sort of thing, so thought that she would give it a go - and she has not been disappointed yet. She is already in two other choirs: the Holmes Chapel singers and one at her local

church.

Emma has already made so many friends in the choir and loves the wide range of music that we have sung. She hopes that she will be in the choir for many years to come and make lots of friends for life.

## Retiring Choir Member

### Naomi Whittaker



Naomi joined BMYC about 6 years ago at the previous MCMS conference which we took part in. She was asked to join BMYC by Gilbert, the choir administrator, who saw her in a show at Cambridge. She has since finished being a student (6 years was enough) and now works for Corus (formerly British Steel) as a Metallurgist. She now lives in Doncaster with husband David.

At her final concert (Eastbourne) she decided to perform a Flanders and Swan song called "Misalliance" - what else could she do but a F&Swan song as her "Swan Song"?

Naomi has enjoyed being in the choir and will miss the quality of singing (and being one of so many altos). She has made many friends in the choir, some of whom took part in her wedding service last year. She will stay in contact with BMYC as she is now the Secretary of the BMYC Friends.



*The choir and  
Youth Brass  
Band at  
Hoddesdon  
Parish Church  
(see page 14)*

## **Hoddeston – MCMS Conference 26 – 28 October 2001**

The choir experience in Hoddeston was a weekend with a difference. We were very fortunate to meet so many people during our stay and to be involved in such exciting events. On the Friday evening, we could not have imagined the number of people we would meet during the weekend!

It was good to catch up with old friends and this time we slept on a church floor, meaning that we were able to see Helen's new air bed, as well as learning how many people can safely fit in a church kitchen! Also, we enjoyed using various maps and instructions to orientate our way around new areas. It was really good to have two new members, Heidi and Sian, who joined us this weekend.

Despite these exciting events, the highlight of the weekend had to be meeting John Rutter and being conducted by him at the MCMS (Methodist Church Music Society) conference. We were advised on the way to improve our singing ready for the evening performance. John Rutter generated a lot of enthusiasm and it was good to be with a large group of individuals who enjoyed singing so much. I am looking forward to singing the new music that the choir purchased.

Although I have taken part in many concerts with the choir, the atmosphere of the evening's concert was quite special. The church was full, with over 400 people listening to the National Methodist Youth Brass Band and us. We performed some pieces with the band, which was great fun, although next time I think we should do more exercises to develop the strength of our voices! During the evening, we performed a wide variety of pieces, religious and secular. We enjoyed meeting with the Brass Band for pizza following the concert.

On Sunday morning, we took part in a service held in a local school, after which there was the biggest 'bring and share' meal

ever!

This was a very special weekend, and we are grateful for all the many people who helped us and joined with us in our music. I hope that they enjoyed it as much as we did.

**Helen Heyes**

## **Retiring Choir Member**

### **Andrew Roberts**



It seems like only yesterday that I joined the choir, well, truthfully some 13½ years! It all began way back in the summer of 1987 when my family and I joined the choir on their tour of Ireland. The time spent listening to the choir in the Emerald Isle impressed me so much that I decided I wanted to be a part of this unique

choir.

Some 8 months later I decided to take the plunge and journey with Pam and Philip Carter (the first managers of the choir) to a small Methodist church in Gillingham Dorset. I was only 14 at the time and started off by singing tenor. Back in those days Martin Ellis was the conductor and had his own style of conducting, making sweeping shapes in the air to keep us all focused on the piece in hand.

The trendy and comfortable uniform that we wear now is so different from the suits and bow ties, not to mention the exclusive BMYC tie which I still treasure! The ladies of course had their own uniform too. Could we ever forget those blue sashes and did anyone ever check to see if they were wearing stockings?

In 1991 I went on the German tour. Only about 12 of us went but we had a wonderful time travelling around in the infamous white and red minibuses! Concert venues were numerous and rather obscure including an Eel Farm! The memory of singing *Locus Iste* will always remain with me with accompaniments of splashes and electric charges from the residents!

Food has always been a very important part of choir weekends. The

host churches always seem to use the same recipe books with very appetising shepherd's pie, lasagne and who could forget those jacket potatoes?

Musical programmes have changed so much too. With the choir now on to its third conductor that is only inevitable. Mind you it's still great to still sing things that I originally learnt so long ago. The choir repertoire has included everything from Bach Motets to Beatles Medleys; Requiems to Rock around the Clock and Sourwood Mountain to Somewhere over the Rainbow.

This has been a fantastic year full of big events for the choir and meeting many famous people. We appeared alongside Pam Rhodes in June at the Methodist Conference in Ipswich. Only a month later we were recorded by the BBC for Sunday half hour and met Roger Royle. As a real finale for me the October invitation by the M.C.M.S to sing with John Rutter for a masterclass was a wonderful end to my BMYC Career.

I have met so many people; slept in so many different beds; enjoyed or should that be endured, church floors; played lots of church organs and made so many good friends through the choir. It's also very strange that I was once called 'the baby of the choir' to be now referred to as Granddad and asked 'do you need a chair?!'

Well, it's been a really fantastic 13½ years but alas, all good things must come to an end. In light of this I've decided to say 'Thank you for the music' and let the basses try and reach those bottom Fs without me .

## **BMYC Contact Details**

### **BMYC Friends Secretary:**

Naomi Whittaker  
11 Queens Road  
Doncaster  
South Yorks  
DN1 2NQ  
Tel: (01302) 739 994  
Email: N.A.Chester.91@cantab.net

### **BMYC Administrator:**

Gilbert Jones  
35 Westwood Road  
Sutton Coldfield  
West Midlands  
B73 6UP  
Tel: (0121) 605 8766  
Email: gilbert.jones@blueyonder.co.uk