



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



www.meva-choir.co.uk
Registered Charity No:298985

Our first newsletter since February! But then it has been a slow news period!

No: 42



Normal service will (hopefully) be resumed in 2021!

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO
ALL OUR FRIENDS!**

Yes, we're still here! We've not been able to sing together since our practice at St Andrews on Monday 9th March and there was so much that we were looking forward to this year, but we've been determined not to let this wretched virus beat us.

We hoped initially that we'd be up and running again in time for Feast Week in June, then for the Quay Concerts in August, but by the time the summer holiday period was here, we were writing off Christmas. And so it has proved.

But.... for the past couple of months, thanks to the tireless efforts of MD Graham Willcocks, Accompanist Matthew Fox, and Baritone Mike Tate's partner, Jane Stubberfield, we have been getting together on Zoom to run through some of our favourites and to remind ourselves, not only of the tunes and words, but also of what we all look like!

It's not quite the same, of course, as we are singing in our own homes, muted so nobody else can hear, to our recordings, teach tracks, and, occasionally, Matt's piano. Many of us have been astonished to learn from the teach tracks how much we'd forgotten – or, more likely, never learned properly!

We're still unable to say, of course, how long it will be before we can perform in public again. Obviously, we are not going to be able to sing together again for a little while yet, but if we all behave ourselves and the vaccine arrives, who knows, it may not be as long as you think. What we have decided, however, is that we may need up to three months' practising before we're ready to 'go on the road'. Rest assured, we will keep you posted, by email and via the website.

So, what has been happening since our last concert, in Truro with the Red River Singers on 22nd February? The past year has not been entirely wasted, as you will see.



We're not quite as bored as we look! We are waiting for Graham to 'send' us to our section breakout rooms.

Keeping a part at Eden (*geddit?*)

Perhaps the biggest event began with a call from the BBC in August. Their 'Songs of Praise' production team, which had recorded us two years previously for their Christmas specials in 2018 and 2019, were going to be filming in Cornwall and wanted us to sing for them again. They gave us three weeks' notice!

More to the point, how would did they envisage getting round the Covid restrictions. Well, it seems, they (the tv crew) had been living together in a bubble for weeks, working throughout Wales and the west country, i.e. they'd done it all before. Fill in the forms, do what we say, and we'll look after the protocols, they said.

So it was that, on 22nd August, 20 of us (they couldn't accommodate more) gathered, all in uniform, suitably masked and socially distanced, in the Gallery Room alongside Eden's entrance hall, where we were registered by the programme makers.



Queuing for the thermometer

When the time came, we were marched down, single file, and two metres apart, to the pavilion outside the Biomes where, for those familiar with Eden, the ice skating takes place in winter. This is at the foot of a broad, tree-lined avenue of shallow steps that lead back to the entrance, and it was here that we were positioned, in appropriately spaced rows.

Four tracks from our old CDs had earlier been chosen by the 'Songs of Praise' people – 'Gwahoddiad', 'Jesus Shall Reign', 'The Lord's Prayer' and 'Morte Christe' and the idea was that we would mime in turn to each of them.

Unfortunately ... very few of us had ever sung more than a couple of the pieces. The tracks had been recorded many years before, primarily by our predecessors. Even those who were familiar with them had largely forgotten how they went! A lot of brushing up had had to be done before our 'performance'. Luckily, of course, precision with the tune was not particularly important – but we had to get the words right, and the intro's and exits.

But it all went well on the night, as they say. There we stood, well spread beneath the Eden trees, awaiting the film director's signal. On her command, the dulcet tones of the Mevagissey Male Choir, 2003 vintage, boomed out across Eden's open spaces, startling many of the visitors, many of whom stopped to watch as 20 uniformed men began mouthing '*When I survey the wondrous cross*' - the opening line to '*Morte Christe*'.



A forest of choristers



Filming them filming us

Poor Graham Willcocks, who valiantly attempted to direct us throughout, had forgotten that one of the other pieces had been recorded before his time, with a slightly different arrangement, and his initial puzzlement caused considerable merriment among his disciples.

All in all, it was a somewhat eerie experience, but a whole lot of fun, which also gave most of us a chance to see each other for the first time in months. The first of the video recordings was shown on BBC1 a week or so later. We have yet to hear when, and if, the remainder will be screened.

BACK TO THE '60S SUPPORT FOR CORNWALL HOSPICE

The first of the only two concerts were able to give in 2020 was on behalf of Cornwall Hospice Care. We had been asked to launch their 40th Anniversary year, for which many exciting events had been planned. Of course, we all know what happened. Instead of a year of celebration, CHC faced a year of desperation, with their fund-raising plans in tatters and their vital shops forced to close.



Thank you
for making a difference

Mevagissey Male Voice Choir
by raising
£700.00



Cornwall Hospice Care
Caring for our community
Mount Edgcombe Hospice St. Julia's Hospice
Registered Charity No. 1113140

Before many weeks had passed it became clear that the January 2021 concert with which CHC had asked us to close their anniversary year, would also be lost, along with the potential fund-raising opportunity. However, one of our members came up with a brilliant alternative for replacing the takings that a concert might have generated. We would 'sell' one of the recorded tracks from our as yet unpublished CD (of which, more later) and donate the proceeds to CHC.

Our popular '*Back to the '60s*' medley, which alone runs to almost 12

minutes, was selected, and was subsequently made available as a CD or download via our website. It proved a huge success and has already earned well over £700 for CHC. The track is still available, at £2.50 – although feel free to add a donation! - simply by visiting www.meva-choir.co.uk and following the instructions.

A NEW CD FOR 2021!

Had Covid not struck, 'Back to the '60s' would have been available as a part of a new CD, which we had expected to launch in 2020. All the tracks have been recorded, the final two or three having been laid down in January. However, the final artwork has still to be completed. We haven't got a title yet, either, but we are hoping we can get it out in the new year. It will feature most of our recent favourites, among them 'California Dreaming', 'Every Time I feel the Spirit'; 'Let the River Run'; 'Mr Blue Sky'; 'Tears in Heaven', 'Tell My Father'; 'The Way We Were'; 'Pearl Fishers'; 'Softly as I Leave You'; 'You are so Beautiful', and 'We Rise Again'.

Meanwhile

Buy our Christmas CD and Support the Homeless



Inspired by our success with the 'Back to the '60s' idea, we thought we'd try something similar on behalf of St Petrocs, the Cornish charity for the homeless. At this time of year, we normally put on a fund-raising concert for them, but ... !

To help compensate, we have elected to give ALL proceeds from the sales of our Christmas CD, 'Sing for the Child', to St Petrocs. If you haven't got a copy already, please visit [our website](#) and buy one. You'll have the pleasure of hearing us sing this Yuletide and know that you've helped a very worthwhile charity.



A YOUNG OLD FRIEND SENDS A REMINDER

Early in 2016, we were contacted by a young student on a photography course at Falmouth University. She asked if she could feature Mevagissey Male Choir in a 'choirs and communities' project she had undertaken in return for taking some new photos of us. Naturally, we agreed to this excellent opportunity to update our photo library and, one Monday evening in the spring of that year, Amy Griffin duly turned up on the harbour where members had been asked to gather in uniform for some formal shots. She also popped into St Andrews on a couple of occasions,



Tenors in full voice



It's the Basses he's got his eye on!



Visiting masochists look in on a practice session



A new piece!

and even in the Fountain, – where she snapped away, rather less formally, at groups and individuals.



Feeding frenzy in the Fountain



It's so much easier with a pint in your hand!

And, in May, Amy was our guest at Minack where she captured us again, at a relaxed moment on this occasion (the photo on Page 1 is hers, too).

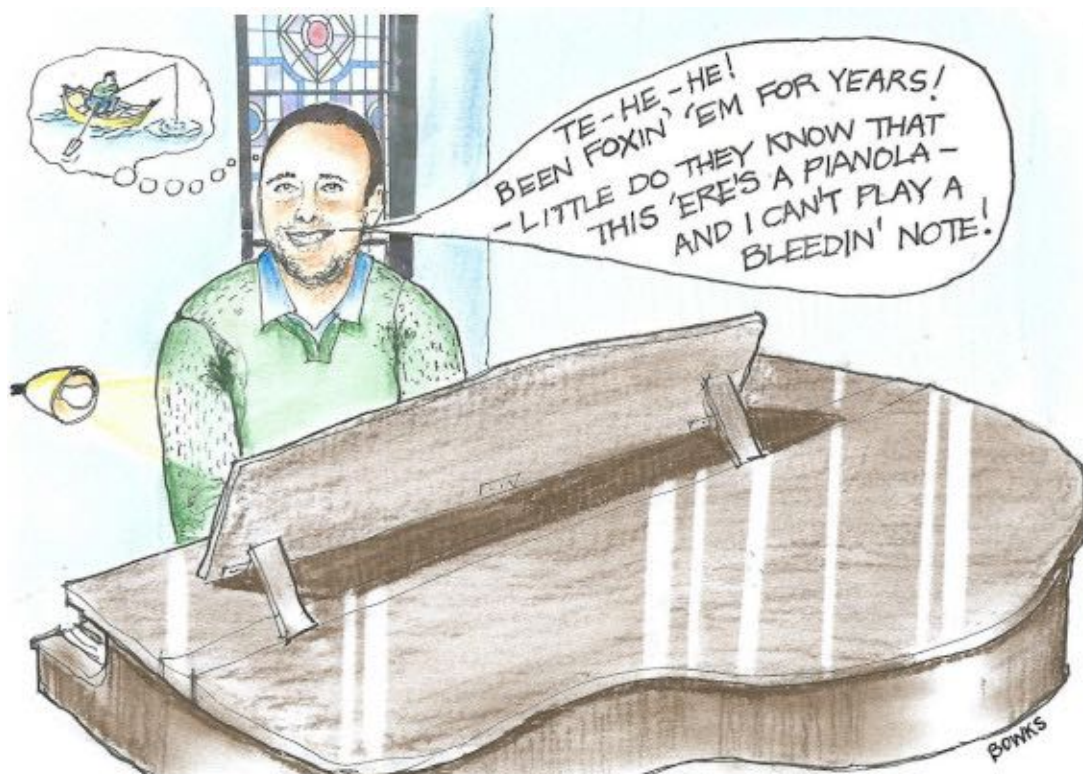
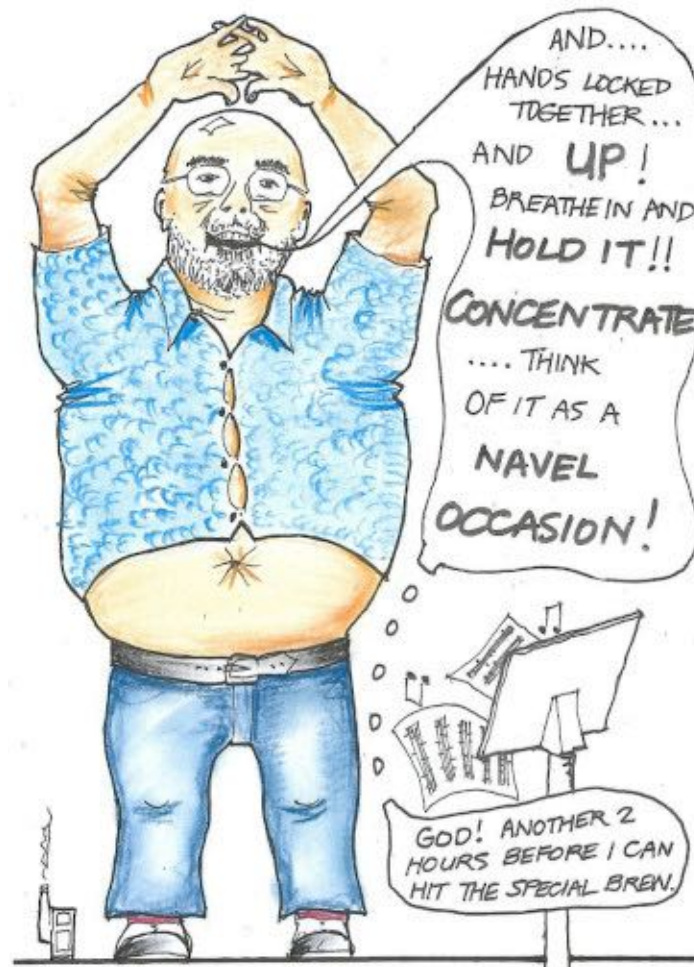


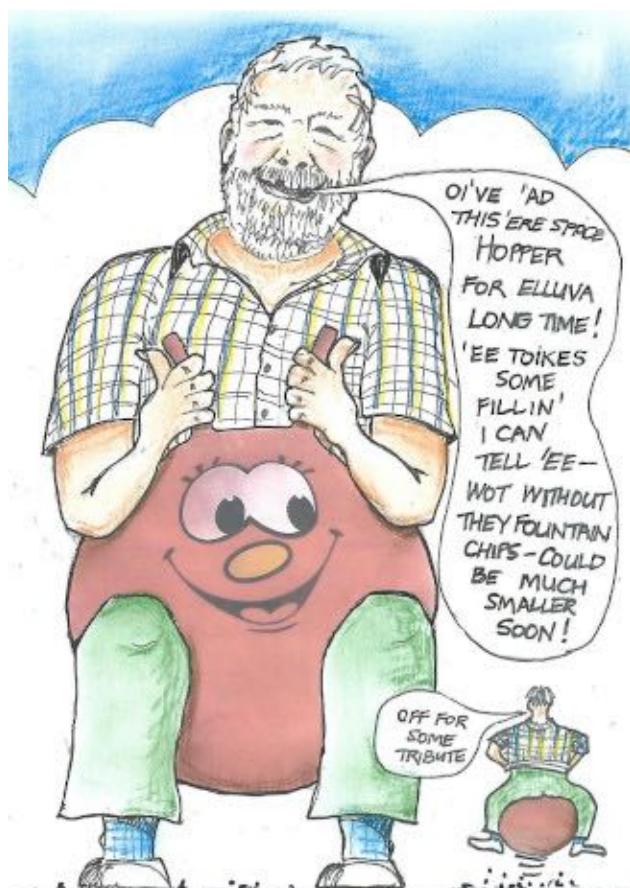
Waiting in the wings

The following year, her studies completed, left for Swansea. However, in October this year, she got in touch again to forward a few more photos she'd found in her files. A couple are reproduced here. The others will be uploaded to our website. It is important to remember, of course, that these photos were taken four years ago and, sadly, some of those featured are no longer with us. Interestingly, Amy tells us she is now back in Cornwall, working for Shelterbox, no less. I'm sure we all wish her every success. And, who knows, perhaps we can persuade her to pay us a visit with her camera again, once things return to normal.

Covid Unlocks Some Covert Skills

It is amazing the hidden talent that can be unearthed among our choir members - if only it were musical! 😊 Lockdown has given some an opportunity to display their skills, none more so than Bass Peter Bowker who has taken to creating a series of cartoons depicting various Choir colleagues. He obviously took some reassurance from the fact that his victims were housebound! Here we reproduce four of his efforts – our MD, Accompanist, Chairman and our contingent of motor-cycle enthusiasts – Graham Willcocks with Basses George Phillips, Mike W D Thompson, Chris Williams, Baritone Robin Murphy, and Tenors Paul Horsman, Nick Nicholls, and Paul Pearce.





Peter's Bass colleague, Mike Thompson – no, not that one – has also been showing us what he can do with pencil and paper. On holiday in the Galapagos a couple of years ago, he sketched some of the wildlife, and example of which can be seen here.



Galapagos Blue-footed Booby

Galapagos Yellow-Crowned Night Heron



GREAT NEWS FOR GUINEA PIG LES!

Les Hereward, one of our Basses, was featured in the Sunday Times this month. Read his story here!

'Tumour DNA test' paves way for tailored cancer care

Andrew Gregory
Health Editor

Les Hereward was about to undergo treatment for a heart condition when he discovered he had cancer.

The retired teacher from Cornwall was eventually told he had non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a blood cancer, but doctors had no idea what subtype it was. The lack of a precise diagnosis limited his treatment options and raised fears for his survival.

That is until Hereward, 71, from Mevagissey, near St Austell, became one of the first patients in the world to benefit from a pioneering DNA test, part of a rapidly expanding range of genomic tests revolutionising the way cancers are diagnosed and treated.

At the Royal Marsden Hospital in Chelsea, southwest London, researchers analysed his blood using a machine called the Illumina NovaSeq 6000, which is capable of sequencing dozens of human genomes at the same time.



Les Hereward, with wife Helen, is able to live a normal life

Less than 48 hours later, the results came back: Hereward had follicular lymphoma, a subtype of B-cell lymphoma. "That, for me, was like the sun suddenly coming out again," the former teacher said.

"It's been a game changer. I am now on a targeted treatment with a much better outlook and feel better than ever before. There is no cure,

but it is extremely manageable, and manageable for the long term. I can live my normal life."

Treating cancers based on their genes, rather than where they occur in the body, is increasingly thought to be one of the ways the world might finally beat the disease.

Sequencing an entire genome used to take years, but new technology means

researchers are able to extract tumour DNA from the samples to identify gene mutations in two days. This means doctors can give patients a more accurate diagnosis, and tailor their treatment accordingly.

The results of the trial, funded by the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, show that 12% of patients were given a refined diagnosis, and genetic abnormalities were detected in another 61%.

The next-generation DNA tests could eventually benefit thousands of cancer patients.

For Hereward, the next step is Christmas, by which time he will have completed his chemotherapy, and can safely be reunited with his grandson, Scott, 3.

He said. "I can walk eight miles now. When you think I'd got to the point where I could barely make it up to the [village] green, which must be 400 metres away, suddenly it's been turned around. I feel like I've got my life back."

@AndrewGregory

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR FRIENDS



The members and music team of Mevagissey Male Choir wish all our followers a merry Christmas and a better year in 2021. We just can't wait to sing for you again!



Christmas '19 fun. To be continued in 2021!