



# NEWSLETTER

August 2018

**This is a new format newsletter about the choir, its people and ‘what’s going on’. The website remains the main fount of knowledge but the Editor invites choir members to submit interesting items or information about local musical events that might interest choir members – See ‘Miscellania’.**

## **DIARY UPCOMINGS:**

**New term starts on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 - 7 for 7.30p.m.**

WCS Quiz Night on Friday, 19 October, Wellington Rugby Club – details tba

Half –term break 31<sup>st</sup> October

**Concert** – Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November – Remembrance - 100 years, from WW1 to present day through word, music and song

**Christmas at the Wellesley**, Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December (info tba)

Spring term, Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2019

Half-term break 20<sup>th</sup> February,

**Concert** – Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> March – St. John’s Church – St Matthew Passion

## **CHRISTMAS diary add ons:**

‘CHRISTMAS STARTS AT WELLS’

**SING FOR SOMERSET CAROL SERVICE** rehearsals at The Temple Methodist, Taunton.  
Start:

Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 7.30-9.30pm

Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 10 am- 12 noon

Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 7.30-9.30p.m

Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> December 7 p.m. Carol service

Registration forms and information will be issued in due course.

## **“GETTING TO KNOW YOU”**

with apologies to Rogers and Hammerstein

This will be an opportunity for members of the choir to introduce themselves (or say goodbye) to WCS members new and old. It would be great to feature members from all four voices in coming issues so please don’t be shy and step up to the “mike” and let us in to your life, and your journey with WCS and/or music of any and all genre. Interested: Contact the Editor, Liz McDowell.

We start this new series with our current Chair, Mike Maddock, who at the end of this season in May 2019 will be stepping down from this vital role.

## **No. 1 – the Chairman – Mike Maddock**

My wife and I moved to this lovely part of the country five years ago and for four of those years I have been a member of Wellington Choral Society.

I spent my working life in the manufacturing industry. A mix of qualifications in Mechanical and Production Engineering and in Metallurgy and the fact that I always worked in either US or UK based Multinational Companies, led me into running various diverse and internationally spread groups of manufacturing and service companies; so overseas travel was very much part of my working life. Extended periods spent with my family in Singapore (5 years) and Holland 2 (years), particularly stand out.

By the time we finally settled back in the UK, in the mid 80's in Leicester, manufacturing in the UK was in rapid decline and large UK organisations like the one I joined, were disposing of that aspect of their holdings. As more opportunities came my way, I moved into the area of management buy outs, acquisitions and disposals and eventually was able to take early retirement.

As a lad in south Devon, I sang in the local church choir, which is where I developed my love of choral music. Though, I must admit the singing part lay dormant from the day my voice broke until I took it up again when I retired, some 14 years ago now.

I've always had an eclectic taste in the music I listened to. As a teenager in the 50's and early 60's, rock and roll played its part, of course, but I spent much time listening to the jazz that was being created at that time. These days, when there is music playing at home, and there usually is, it's more likely to be classical in nature, but I often get out the old vinyls - Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra et al and even the odd Fats Domino and Gene Vincent 78 occasionally gets a play.

## **No. 2 - Reflections of a Librarian - Chris Widdows**

At the recent AGM I was astonished and humbled at the presentation of a book token, in recognition of some ten years of committee service first as Secretary and then as Librarian. Taken by surprise as I was, my expression of gratitude, though heartfelt, seemed on reflection to be somewhat underwhelming when later I opened the envelope and discovered the extremely generous value of the contents. Accordingly, I felt the least I could do in appreciation of this gift was to give a brief outline of the joys and sorrows encountered in fulfilling this behind-the-scenes responsibility.

Although some members will have their own scores, most depend on the Society to obtain and provide them. Scores for a September term will be ordered from the County Music Library in the previous May, and for January in October; normally eighty are hired (there is a discount for multiples of twenty), but there is always the nagging worry that more than that number of members will sign-up at the start of term. Usually Yeovil has to acquire copies from other counties to make up numbers, resulting in a variation in standards of copies and in expectations regarding their return; it can be galling to receive stern warnings about erasing pencil markings when scores delivered to us are littered with annotations and instructions, not to mention ribald comments about the conductor or basses. Collection of scores has to be effected within the brief window (about twenty minutes) at the end of a concert, and inevitably there will be a shortfall – absenteeism or forgetfulness being the main culprits. In most cases retrieval is straightforward, although I have had to doorstep the odd member in best reality-TV 'bailiff' mode.

Occasionally the Music Director will decide to include multiple scores in a programme, entailing photocopying unavailable material or using private libraries as sources. Issues of copyright I was happy to leave to the MD, but private libraries can be tricky. One particular establishment insisted that a copy had been returned with a coffee-cup stain on the cover, when I was convinced I had checked them all forensically. That was the only replacement charge incurred on my watch; the system inherited from Nick Milton and Helen Dingley is a well-oiled machine.

As I said to Kate Lambert, at the AGM, 'being Librarian is a doddle'!

## **SADLY MISSED**

### **Peter Ayre** (WCS 2004-2018)

On Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, a packed St. John's, Wellington, celebrated the life of Peter Ayre, long-serving Treasurer of the Society, who has died aged seventy-two. Although Peter had suffered ill-health for the last few years his death came as a shock to those who knew him. Proud of his local roots, Peter was born in Tiverton where his father was a prominent businessman, and attended Blundell's School where he excelled at cross-country and rugby, and went on to pursue the latter sport with vigour at Cambridge. After university he joined Barclay's Bank's Colonial Division and was posted to Kenya, where he met and married Caro. Returning to England to help run the family business, he and Caro joined his parents at Greenham Hall, taking on a restoration project that continues to this day.

Apart from Greenham, Peter's passions were collecting and selling books on East Africa ('Kenya had got under his skin', says Caro), sport and music; as Chairman of In Ecclesia and Treasurer of Wellington Choral Society his contribution to singing in the area was outstanding. As Treasurer of WCS he was quietly efficient, totally in charge of his remit, unfussy but always wise in his comments and judgment, while as a Chairman of In Ecclesia he specialised in the 'soft touch' approach, a good and attentive listener who somehow always managed to get his way without anyone quite realising how he'd done it. Above all, Peter was a gentleman and a gentle man, who is remembered with tremendous love and affection by family, friends and fellow singers. (*Chris Widdows*)

### **Gillian Mary Curtis** (1956 – 2018) (WCS 2001-2017)

Gillie joined Wellington Choral Society soon after she and Peter moved to Wellington in 1999.

Having graduated from St Hugh's College, Oxford (B Ed with double distinction) she started her teaching career in Oxfordshire and got to know an Anglican community of Nuns off the Cowley Road. In due course she became a postulant and joined the Novitiate. Recognising Gillie's diverse interests and skills, she was asked to take on many varied responsibilities: Chaplain at St Hilda's, assistant at Magdalen, helping in the embroidery department and other work in the colleges and the community. This was somewhat overwhelming and Gillie explored the idea of a contemplative order, but she was too young for this.

She then spent some time with her parents in Crewkerne where Peter Curtis was the Rector, and Gillie started saying the daily office with him. Their relationship deepened until Peter, encouraged by the Bishop, eventually plucked up courage to ask Gillie to marry him.

Gillie enjoyed being a 'traditional' clergy wife but also taught in Crewkerne and later in various schools in Wellington, Wiveliscombe and further afield. She taught many subjects included Italian, German and Spanish and is fondly remembered by many of her pupils as their 'best teacher ever'. Many remember that she always had a vase of fresh flowers on her desk and dressed carefully, always with polished shoes!

She loved playing the boudoir grand piano which her grandmother had given her. This, together with singing and listening to music, was a very important part of her life and the friends she met through choirs were a tremendous source of strength and support, especially through the last difficult years of her life. Her strong faith remained the cornerstone of her life. (*Rosie Clark-Lowes*)

## **John Owen** (WCS early 1990s-2017)

Was a local man born and bred. His National Service was spent in the Navy after which he joined a steel company spending a year in Persia, now Iran. Once home he decided to change tack (note nautical expression) and went as a mature student to the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester, now the Royal Agriculture University and ultimately farmed near Stawley. If his love of sailing was kindled in the navy, his love of singing was evident earlier as a choir boy with a Taunton church.

In the early 1990s He joined Wellington Choral Society as a bass helping also with the transport and storage of staging and in the choir for Stawley church. His love of traditional jazz went alongside his passion and participation for choral music. In his funeral service sheet, Julia Wells wrote of John that 'It was his enthusiasm and encouragement that kept the Village Festival Choir going and made sure that it continues to flourish. But it was not until his funeral that I could really appreciate the wide variety of interests he enjoyed. Neither did I know how often he had carried people along with him to share his passions, even if his little brother, Roger, remembers with less enthusiasm getting wet and cold on many occasions walking, camping, cycling, boating and farming. (*Julia Swan*)

## **David Stutfield** (WCS 2007-2012)

David who sang Bass in the WCS for about 6 years sadly died in June aged 76.

David came from a musical family, and loved music from an early age. He was a very good treble, and once sang in St Georges Chapel, Windsor.

He was passionate about cricket and played for the Essex seconds. His enthusiasm for becoming a professional cricketer was not shared by his father who sent him off to be articled as a chartered accountant. Having qualified he moved to Spain to work for an English firm of accountants in Madrid. It was here that he met his lovely wife Diana.

They moved to London where he worked for a merchant bank, but his heart was not in it, so after 4 years, he left to pursue his love of plants. After a year as a trainee in a large houseplant nursery, a horticultural training and a year working in Holland, David started his own nursery in the UK, and became a very successful grower of house plants, bedding plants and shrubs supplying local retailers and the general public.

To his pride and joy and after 10 years of hard work, David produced a new Pelargonium based on the Victorian variety 'Apple Blossom' but with gold variegated leaves. He named it 'Stuts Dream' and was granted Breeders Rights.

When stopping life as a grower, David resumed his work as an accountant, helping individuals with their accounts and taxation challenges with skill and kind support.

Music always remained a great source of joy; he loved to sing, enjoyed the camaraderie of the WCS, and participating in the Wells carol service.

As well as the classics, he was enthusiastic about jazz, and the beautiful Celebration of his Life finished with a spirited rendition of 'It's a Wonderful World'.

David was a great family man and will be sorely missed by Diana, his children and grand-children who loved him dearly. (*Miranda Bevis*)

## **MISCELLANIA:**

St.Michael's Church, Milverton will be celebrating on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, (09.30) the Centenary of Women's Suffrage with a special service, a flower festival and an exhibition. All welcome but if any one wishes to join the choir for this service, with music chosen by the choir, then please contact Elizabeth McDowell 01823 400149

## **CONTACT AND COMMENTS:**

Having taken on the Editorship of the Newsletter, I'd like to have your comments: likes and dislikes and suggestions for other items, preferably by email.

Elizabeth McDowell – Editor

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## **AND FINALLY:**

Seen at WAITROSE: Two WCS members at cash desk, one proudly sporting black T-shirt with outline of the US President with the wording 'Bad Hombre'.....

Looking forward to seeing everyone in September for what looks like an interesting and challenging programme. Ed