

# Tone's Tidings

February 2017 Issue 18



St Edmundsbury Male Voice Choir

Patron: The Rt. Hon The Earl of Iveagh; President: Paul Deane

Vice Presidents: John Balaam, Dr John Meers and

The Very Reverend Dr Frances Ward

Registered Charity No. 1028123

Once again I feel it inappropriate to use an inane ditty to forward this month's Tidings. As you are all well aware, Robin lost his battle and we had our opportunity to bid him farewell when we sang at his funeral. We all have fond memories of Robin, recollections of his love of the Choir, of his fortitude in adversity, his astute financial management of our funds, his plain common sense and his abundant cheerfulness. God Bless Robin, and to Wendy and the family, all our love.



**Robin Richard Pott**  
**21 September 1949 – 19 January 2017**

From Simon Chrispin (Bass):

I met Robin via Corporal Mason when I joined the choir about 4 years ago. We did a lift-share to rehearsals. At that time it was not obvious that Robin had MND, other than it hurt his hand if you shook it too hard. So I have not known Robin for as long as other members of the choir, some of whom have known him for probably 20+ years, and in times of better health. He was Treasurer for 14 years and he still helped out and advised after that. Basically, I continued to do the lift share, Robin got worse but attended every rehearsal and concert that he could get to. The point of this note is that both Robin and Wendy should be a massive inspiration to all of us. It is very clear that Robin had a very strong spirit, incredible support from Wendy and his family and loved the choir.

Whenever asked "how he was" he was always "marvellous" even though, I found out later, that secretly he did not like being asked that question. I never heard him complain about his health once. Even when he was no longer able to eat and was fed by a tube he said to me "I can't eat, so what? There is no point in worrying about what you cannot change, you just have to move on". Clearly, he was not exactly happy about it, but THAT was strength.

He absolutely loved the choir. Singing = breathing = good health. Listen, no talking in the ranks and concentrate and all other problems go away. Marvellous.

Our thoughts are with Wendy and her family.

Memories of Robin from Alan Messem (Second Tenor):

As one of the few remaining "fairly long-standing" 2T lads, I was overawed to be asked by Tony to say a few reflective words on the happy days and friendship we have had with Robin. He first came to the fore when, as then Treasurer, he would enlighten us with many amazing statistics on our finances and, at a time when I was providing some mundane weather news in the choir's "High Notes" in 1996, he writes a feature on the good use of - as his title said - "Loo Rolls for next year's Runners". We would have thought this had some athletics connection, had there not been for a classic and amusing drawing by Paul Seymour of Runner BEANS climbing up canes! Robin's feature began with the words "Start saving those spent inner tubes now - then decide how many runners you require - ask your wife (partner, if that's more politically correct) how many loo rolls the household uses a month. Do the sums and identify a safe storage area". His text continues with enlightenment on how to handle the next set of procedures.

Robin was soon mentioned again just before a summer break in 1996 when he was one of four members who had missed only one practice out of the 46! Regarding another event later, our informative Nick said that the choir was indebted to Robin and his cunning plan for plane tickets to our next venture abroad. In Newsletter August 2003, he includes a feature of the cost and choir funds for our epic trip to Denmark. A year later, appraisal was given to several choir members for all their efforts in the planning and hosting of the Werdorf singers: Robin was quoted as "keeps cool despite great provocation!"

These are just a few of the many efforts he had provided - all at a time when he was still younger than me when I joined! It has all been a pleasure to bring these thoughts to mind over these last two decades - all preserved in some old Newsletters and pictures - and my old stats and slides! So the one I take from the pile is Robin and Wendy peacefully contemplating at an Afterglow table at Werdorf in May 2013.

**St Edmundsbury Male Voice Choir**

Performing at The Beeches, Isleham

\* With Guest Performers \*

Anglian Accents Ladies Harmony Chorus

**18<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

Doors open 7pm \* Concert Starts 7.30pm

Male voice singing started in the Welsh valleys but St Edmundsbury MVC will also be bringing a modern mix of music to the Beeches. From traditional songs to Robbie Williams, from spirituals to Burt Bacharach, from African songs to Bruno Mars this internationally renowned choir performs music for all

£10 a Ticket – Please call The Beeches on 01638 780097 to book.

32 Mill Street, Isleham, Cambs, CB7 5RY

Our first  
concert  
of 2017



Robin will always be remembered for his dedication and remarkable enthusiasm through to his sad and immense disability at the end. His many happy days with us will always be in our thoughts.

### **France '17**

Well, we are nearly there, the words are nearly learnt and the notes are coming along. The accents and the Gallic shrug are being practised. There is still some concern over the 4.15 a.m. start from the bus station, but remember, after the train is boarded you can sleep until we reach Avignon at about 2:00 p.m. To set your mind at rest, here is a brief timetable for the trip.

**M17** - 04.15 BSE bus station; 07.15 leave St Pancras; 14.08 arrive Avignon. Transfer to Hotel by coach.

**Tu18** - 10.00 depart; 11.00 approx arrive Nimes, rehearse with soloists. Free time; 18.30 warm up for concert; 20.30 concert.

**W19** - 10.00 depart for Uzes via Pont du Gard. Free time; 18.00 rehearse with Les Canard Sauvage; 20.00 concert.

**Th20** - 10.00 depart for the Camargue via Arles and Aigues Mortes; Return by 18.30; 19.45 stroll to the river for cruise and dinner.

**F21** - Free time in Avignon; 19.00 warm up at St Didier's Church; 20.00 concert.

**Sa22** - 09.30 depart for Pont St Esprit, visit market; 18.00 rehearse; 20.30 concert. Other details to be finalized.

**Su23** - Free time in Avignon.

**M24** - 14.30 transfer from hotel to Avignon TGV station; 22.15 arrive St Pancras, coach to BSE; 00.15 (Tu25) arrive BSE bus station and then home.

More details later. However, I asked my lovely translator, Florence, what the weather is like in April, she replied you need to pack T-shirts and an anorak, so be prepared for all sorts. I would strongly recommend that you have a good lunch and the 'top up' at tea time, rather than an early dinner and then singing on a full stomach. There are 'Afterglows' for each concert but at the moment I cannot say what form they will take, it may be drinks only or there could well be piles of food. I would further recommend that you use a travel money card, these can be loaded with any amount and will save you having to pay currency transfer fees and are safer than carrying a lot of cash.

### **Dates for your Diary**

**Sa 18 March** – Concert with Anglian Accents Harmony Chorus, The Beeches, Mill Street, Isleham, CB7 5RY.

**M 17-M 24 April** – French tour

**Sa 13 May** - Sing for your Supper, All Saints, BSE

**Su 21 May** – Concert with Amersfoort MVC from Holland, St Peter and St Paul Church, Clare CO10 8NY

**Sa 3 June** – King's Lynn MVC 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mass Choir, St Nicholas Chapel, King's Lynn PE30 1NH

**Sa 17 June** – Woolpit Festival with Lights Music Action

**Sa 8 July** – St Mary's Church, Redgrave, Diss IP22 1RJ

**Sa 30 September** – Concert at St Mary's Church, Stratford St Mary CO7 6LS in aid of church funds

**Sa 14 October** - Three Choirs Festival with The Dalesmen MVC and Mansfield and District MVC, Derby Cathedral Centre, 18-19 Iron Gate, Derby DE1 3GP

**Sa 18 November** - Concert with Leigh Orpheus MVC, St Peter's Church, Sudbury CO10 2EA, in aid of RAFA

**2018**

**Sa 24 February** - Concert with Downham Prep School

**Sa 24 March** - Concert St Botolph's Church, Colchester

**Sa 14 April** - Concert with Suffolk Constabulary MVC, venue tbc, Ipswich

**Sa 12 May** - Concert with MGV 1865 Werdorf e.v., venue tbc

**Th 12 July** - Elmswell Over 55s Club, Blackbourne Centre, Elmswell IP30 9GY

### **The Wonderful Second Tenor Section.**

A Male Voice Choir is like a four-storey house. It has a basement, a ground floor, a first floor and an attic. Each of these storeys is inhabited by a section of the choir.

Let's start with the basement. If a house has a weak basement it will quickly tumble under its own weight. This floor is inhabited by the **bass** section, who underpin the whole choir with their deep rounded tones. They are, of course where they should be; the lowest of the low!

Now let's go right to the top, the attic. It is inhabited by the **first, or top, tenors**. They sing the highest notes. So high in fact that most top tenors cannot hit these notes without the aid of tight thongs worn beneath their underpants, a secret currently only shared by their wives. Also top tenors can often be observed holding their legs tightly together, an action known to help extend the upper limit of the chromatic range. Top tenors usually sing the melody of a song. This is usually the easiest part to learn, a distinct advantage to them as many of them hail from Stowmarket. First tenors are at the top of the house, where they effectively prevent the lower sections from soaring to even greater heights.

On the ground floor we have the **baritones**. Everyone knows about baritones. Ernie Broom is a baritone. There's no more to be said!

Which brings us to the first floor, the home of the **second tenors**. Traditionally the first floor is reserved for bedrooms, and indeed second tenors can often be observed quietly nodding off, being tired of having to listen to the Musical Director repeating the same old things over and over every week to the other three sections. ("Sing through the vowels." "Don't breath there!" "Keep it flowing." "Your 'esses' are too early," etc, etc ad nauseam.)

Second tenors also often have the most difficult part to sing, their parts often containing lots of accidental flats and sharps. Indeed, many of the accidental flats are not actually written in the score, but second tenors still manage to fit them in. The difficulties are intensified by the fact that they are sandwiched between the two extremes of the choir. They have to put up with the distraction of the top tenors screaming in their right ears while the basses boom in the left. Such is the musical talent of the second tenors that often, when faced with a section of the score too difficult to understand, they will invent their own interpretation, a practice which enhances the overall musical effect of the piece considerably! This can be authenticated by the applause of the audience at the end of each song, obviously in appreciation of the musical versatility of the second tenors.

In the past, it has been known for members of other sections to become so impressed with the second tenors that they have forsaken their section and migrated to the seconds in order to advance their standing in the choir. The second tenor section that the choir now has is better than it has ever been since I joined the choir in 2008. As the section leader there is not a single member that I would prefer not to have. (In fact there are only three single members, the rest are married!) I feel proud to be the leader of such a musically talented section.

Perhaps in future newsletters we could hear from the other section leaders?

Den Cartwright. (Second Tenor Section Leader.)

*Reports and pictures for Tidings are welcome.*

*Please contact Chairman Tony Farr, 01440 704179,  
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