



The Quarterly Newsletter for Friends of KPMVC

On the Beat!

Who Are We?

The Choir was formed in 1978. It performs around fifteen concerts a year, singing at fund raising charity events around the County of Kent.

In its history, the Choir has appeared in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium as well as in the UK, appeared on national television in the UK and Canada and has helped numerous local charities to raise significant amounts of money.

The Choir is open to serving and retired police officers, civilian staff, those with links to the service and also members of the community. It is an ambassador for Kent Police and is supported by them, although it is self-financing.

The Choir rehearses weekly at Police HQ, Maidstone. Members meet at 7.15 p.m. on Thursday evenings and rehearsals conclude at 9.30 p.m. Please contact us through these pages for information about joining the Choir; you can be assured of a warm welcome.

A message from our Chairman

Over the past 48 years the Kent Police Male Voice Choir has performed over 600 concerts, rehearsing almost 2,500 times with over 350 singing voices joining the choir at some time - all in the pursuit of helping to raise much needed monies for charities and good causes in Kent; and entertaining audiences with our voices - this what we do.

So we very much look forward to seeing you during 2026 and hope you enjoy our concerts to help raise yet more funds for good causes - we are already booked up for the whole year at venues as far afield as Northiam, Lympe, Maidstone and Borden plus many more. All those years of singing at concerts and rehearsals should mean we are beginning to improve! You be the judge. We look forward to meeting you this year. **George Rogers**

Presentation to Catching Lives Charity of the Year 2025



Stewart Biggs and Adrian Keep present a cheque for £1257.00 to CEO Tamsin Maitland

CHOIR NEWS

The concert year got off the a grand start with our first concert at St Mary's Church Northiam. A full church gathered on Saturday 7th March to hear a programme of favourite songs including *Llanfair*, *The Wellerman*, *African Prayer*, *Bring Him Home* and *There is nothing like a Dame*. An overwhelming response from the men in the audience brought the best crowd ever to the front to join in with *A Policeman's Lot* which is proving to be a successful regular slot.



We said goodbye to some old friends.....

The New Year began with the sad news of the death of three members of the choir, two of whom were also retired police officers



Dennis Beer
25.12.1942 - 31.1.2026



Glen Peacock
22.4.1938 - 17.11.2025



Norman Sells
10.1.1944 - 30.1.2026

.....and welcomed some new members

The Open Evening in January brought along several new chaps who wanted to see if singing in a male voice choir was for them, and others have joined subsequently. John Gladwin, Louis Santer and Steve Brown (Baritones), Fred Butler, Rob Audsley and Richard Howlett (Second Tenor). Good to have you on board.



KPMVC's very own muppets Statler and Waldorf spotted at Borden Church!!

CHOIR AGM

The 47th AGM of the Choir was held on Thursday 26th February at Police HQ. In his report our Chairman, George Rogers, made reference to significant events over the past year – concerts, rehearsals, the garden party in July, many new members and those sadly lost – Glen Peacock, Dennis Beer and Norman Sells. He paid tribute to all those who work behind the scenes to keep the choir going and ensure that everything is where it needs to be week on week - electronic kit, football swindle, manning the doors at HQ, website, CD sales, ticket sales, visiting venues, charity collections, uniforms, welfare, finances, music library, publicity, recruitment and governance – all that before we get to sing!! Two Committee members were stepping down this year – Mick Pepper and Paul Barnes. Mick has served on the committee on and off since the choir formed in 1978 and Paul has plans to move away this year. Two new members were elected to serve on the committee; Chris Payne and Andy Tateson. In his report, MD Martin Rendle made reference to the increase in choir membership and the on-going benefits of the mental health programme in 2024 all of which was very encouraging. He paid tribute to all those who assist him with the music, not least our accompanist Karen and Chris Cole who manages the music library and recordings.

The charity of the year was agreed as the *League of Friends of Kent and Canterbury Hospital* who are hoping to meet a target of £800,000 for new cancer treating equipment.

MEET THE CHOIR

Paul Barnes or, as he is affectionately known, “tall Paul” joined KPMVC in January 2022. He has served on the Committee and is currently the go-to person for CDs at concerts. Sadly (for the choir) he and his partner Jo are moving to pastures new later this year; but before he goes we get to hear more about his love for music, playing the piano and especially singing with the choir.

What has KPMVC done for me...?



I ‘joined’ the Choir in January 2022 having been unable to quickly vacate the KPMVC 2021 Christmas concert due to being on crutches following a very recent knee replacement. My partner, Jo, was very forthcoming with providing my details to Stewart. By the time I’d crutched it to the Maypole pub opposite the church, all the Borden choir regulars were already aware of my conscription, so there was no turning back. ‘Wait until the MD hears me sing – I’ll be asked not to come back’ or so I thought.

Skip a few months to 26 March 2022 – the joint concert with the Orpheus Choir at Fulston Manor School, Sittingbourne. In for a penny as the saying goes, and I’d learnt the words and tunes to every song so I jumped in and did my first and full concert - all without crutches! I remembered the Orpheus Choir accompanist playing ‘Speed Your Journey’ and thinking I wish I could play like that. More on that later.

As time went by, I was hooked on learning each song – each piece was new to me and a joy to learn with Martin doing his utmost to keep us all in check and in tune whilst testing his sanity. Singing in the Choir with the banter and good humour is a wonderful environment to be in. Karen became an inspiration to me with her incredible talented piano skills. I was fortunate to play piano and have lessons as a youngster but stopped when cars and other expensive things became important! Since joining the choir, I began playing the piano again (badly) at home, asking Chris for any songs with the piano accompaniment so that I could at least have a go at home. So where am I going with this ramble along Memory Lane? The answer is our Choir and what it’s done for me.

My background is telecommunications. I ‘retired’ after 35 years as I had become a worn down, anxious, stressed shell of my former self. Self-confidence all but destroyed. Not a good place to be. I still had my Jo to support me and I could still cycle pretty well (I’m a keen cyclist) to keep me going. I knew time and a different lifestyle would see me right. Fast forward many concerts, much song learning and a lot of {bad} piano playing behind the scenes, I was elected to the Committee and I have tried to do my bit to keep us on the straight and narrow. A challenge for me, having sank so low, but little by little confidence and self-belief were coming back.

Holidays are mostly walking/cycling activities and we both enjoy visiting churches trying to make sense of the architecture and marvel at the wonders that most hold. I started to carry sheet music

as most churches have a piano and I thought a little tinkle here and there would do me good and give my (bad) piano playing a boost. Strangers would occasionally enter the church whilst I played, listen and say thank you. Then a beautiful grand piano at Diss church availed itself in 2024 whilst we took a short break. A lady came into that church whilst I played. She was a little suspicious of me as the church had become prone to vandalism of late and she was part of the regulars who attend and worship there keeping the building intact and open. She lamented that her choir had since ceased to be since COVID and she missed singing and the camaraderie. Something special 'happened' that day. I offered to play piano and sing with her. Jo (a good Alto voice) joined us and we sung for around twenty minutes finishing with 'An American Trilogy'. I don't know why it felt so special, but the three of us went away better people for it.

My Dad's health was failing fast and late July 2024 found us at the hospital with the consultant informing us cancer treatment was no longer an option and his time now limited. That was hard. I then had to tell the family as we came to terms with the news. Interestingly, throughout his last few months, I recognised and understood singing with the Choir had become much more important to me and my piano playing more focussed. I determined I would learn 'Speed Your Journey' to the best of my ability, just as that guy had played it at my first concert. It was challenging, but nothing compared to how Dad faced his last chapter. In fact, I learnt it and a good number of other pieces in quick succession. Inevitably Dad passed in January 2025. I was there with my family at his home as he breathed his last. Mum has heart failure but continues to battle on and deal with life as a widow. Both are an inspiration to me and both got to hear me sing with you all. Thank you all for making that happen.

I'm 60 at the end of this month – and I was asked what I wanted to celebrate the occasion. I've chosen a new piano. And that's because of you, the Choir, and how being part of that Choir has got me back to a good place in my life. A new chapter now begins for Jo and me as we look to relocate elsewhere in the country with Mum either coming with us or being close to my brother on the East Yorkshire coast. It'll be tough without you guys but thank you all for what you've helped me achieve.

PS I ain't gone yet and there's still a few CDs left to sell...

And on the subject of CDs

Back in 2020 there was promise of a new choir CD. Well we all know what happened then and unfortunately COVID put an end to any plans for a new recording. The good news is that there will be a new CD later this year which will be a compilation of the "best of" tracks over the choir's 50 years of singing. With a working title of "In our Own Time" and in anticipation of the choir's 50th anniversary in 2028, it is planned to have the new CD available for Christmas 2026.

BE PART OF OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN 2028

If you would like the choir to sing for your charity, please contact Geoff Fisher, our Concert Liaison Manager, on 07963 412972 or email him at geoff.fisher@yahoo.co.uk

Shaun Ryles or, to give him his correct title, RAF Wing Commander Shaun Ryles, joined KPMVC in January 2025 having been “recruited” through the Workshop programme for Movember in the summer of 2024. Here he shares his reflections on that experience.

Musings Of A Young Chorister

“Those who wish to sing always find a song.”

Swedish Proverb

If someone had said to me 5 years ago, I would be described as a young chap I would have asked the barman to give me whatever they were serving the chap. However, here we are, I am now a proud member of a group of 8 ‘young’ choristers with a cumulative life tally of over 350 years between us, in a wider group with an eye-watering life tally of over 3000 years between them. Yet, ironically and factually, we are still the ‘young ones’. I guess we could create a ‘dog years’ analogy and just accept that being in our 40s and 50s still makes us young choristers (copyright Mickey). Either way I am just sad that I left it so long to find a hobby that sets my soul alight without the use of axes or alcohol. Axe throwing is the Tuesday night pursuit and throwing axes whilst practising my Rhythm of Life still has my friends bemused.



The power of song with friends is as old as the history of mankind and I am sure that way back then someone would make the caveman choir rearrange the boulders in the way they found them after the rehearsal. Graduating from enthusiastic pub singer to a novice baritone is still a highlight in my life that I am incredibly proud of. Baritone just sounds so much more sophisticated than Karaoke King. Most importantly the journey has been incredibly joyful and fantastically well structured. An exceptional induction like no other. Carefully nurtured from day one, we have felt included and warmly accepted into our new family of (way) older brothers. Nothing hits you harder than listening to *African Prayer* for the first time and having that sinking feeling of how on earth am I going to learn that? However, under careful supervision and gentle guidance, even the worst of us can get our head around something like *Viva Tutti*. However, I am still confused as to how complicated *Drunken Sailor* seems to be to learn, compared to the many hundreds of times I have rattled it off in my karaoke past life without any problems. I was obviously not doing it right!

Excellent induction, powerful welcomes and difficult foreign songs, what more do you need in a hobby that reduces your blood pressure better than any statin can. Where else can your induction include a defibrillator course? It still makes me laugh that we have tell each other where we put it at a concert so at least one of us might survive the heart attack to be able to use it on the others in that target rich environment. Or it might be that we just forget where we put it, I am still working that one out.

Even though we still feel like enthusiastic amateurs in the hallowed footsteps of our learned brethren, I think I can safely issue a unanimous and heartfelt thank you from the ‘Boys Brigade’ of the KPMVC for our well-planned induction and carefully designed welcome. Time to get back to learning the words for those Christmas songs I have never even heard of...

“Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life” *Aurbach*

Some Words of Encouragement

This year marks my 40th anniversary of singing in male voice choirs so I thought I'd try to offer a few morsels of encouragement to those chaps who have recently joined KPMVC.

Over the past year or so – or, indeed, over the past few weeks following our taster evening – I have spoken to a number of 'newbies' and some post-singing workshop members who have mentioned how difficult it sometimes is to learn new songs and absorb not only the words but also the musical notes. We all learn at different rates and have different learning strategies. Me, I'm a slow learner but once it's in my noggin it generally stays there ready for recall. Today's life is often hectic and there's always something else that needs doing rather than sitting down and note/word bashing.

I vividly recall the Thursday evening in 1986 when, accompanied by the gent who recruited me (sounds a bit FBI-ish!) into the Royal Tunbridge Wells Orpheus Male Voice Choir. It was a chilly November and the fogg of 50-odd packed chaps, Bovril and stale tobacco (this was 1986, remember) was thick enough to cut with a knife. Feeling somewhat out of place, I was introduced to Bill, the MD, a distinguished ex-Kneller Hall graduate, who listened to me croak a few notes and immediately placed me in the front row of the baritone section next to a grizzled ex-Royal Navy matelot with a fine voice and a massive fund of dubious stories of the sea. We, or rather they, launched into a thrilling rendition of *A Roman War Song* which hugely impressed me despite my total inability to join in.

But I persevered and, in time, managed to make a vocal contribution to the choir. It was hard work. I knew very few of the songs apart from *Some Enchanted Evening* which my youngest lad impressed his teachers no end by singing it word

perfect in the toilet of his infant school – it's amazing what kids pick up from their parents! I knew nothing of musical notation and, for the first year or so, I was all at sea to coin a phrase. The help and support I received from the other blokes in my section was freely given and was hugely appreciated by me. Without that support I would have called it a day and walked out after the first two weeks. I'm glad I didn't, although after my first concert at the Adeline Genee theatre in East Grinstead I may have been persuaded to throw in the towel – it was daunting to say the least. But the smell of the crowd and the roar of the greasepaint became addictive!

Since then, I have been hooked. My knowledge of musical notation still leaves a lot to be desired but it's far better than it was forty years ago and I can tell what a dotted note means or what 'pp' means. My absorption of words has improved which, I believe, is good for the brain and keeps the grey matter agile enough to get on with life. Back in the 80s there were no websites or You Tubes to help with learning so the KPMVC website Martin's vocal parts is a great aid to learning and we should all be grateful to him for putting in the time and effort to create those vital aids.

Over the years I have spoken to many members of choirs at home and abroad. Male voice choirs often abound with good fellowship, energy, humour and camaraderie. This, combined with the pleasure – and often hard work - of making music with like-minded individuals, makes male voice choirs unique. I have belonged to many societies and clubs and the like where that special 'chutzpah' is absent and it shows. To quote Chairman George's words during our recent AGM – 'we care about each other'.

So, choir newbies, take heart and persevere. You have discovered a pastime which will benefit you for the rest of your lives.

Stick with it! **Geoff Fisher**

Regular contributors Roy Waller and Bob Day recall more tales from their time “on the beat”

Caught Out Again!

I read somewhere recently about the odd "Teaspots" where "Beat Bobbies" could get a little light refreshment. I wasn't really surprised at the ingenuity of some of the old codgers, because the inner man needs replenishing occasionally, and the ladies and gents of those "Teaspots" could have a wealth of information valuable in the detection of crime. This got me thinking of my own time as a copper, and I will relate to you just a few activities that come to mind.

My first incident happened on the town beat, close to a fish and chip shop. It was common knowledge that at closing time the chips, and sometimes fish, which had been cooked, but not sold, would be given to the lucky fellow who had the town. I and a colleague, who shall remain nameless, met up close to said shop where a small bag of hot chips would be presented to us. In a darkened doorway we prepared to tuck in to our supper, just as our radios sprang into life! It was the Night Duty Sergeant asking for our location - he wanted what coppers called "A Point" with us. Having only recently come out of my probation period I started to think, "I've been caught red (or hot in this case) handed!" My mate had other ideas - "Quick, put 'em in your helmet!" What a great notion. So, when the sergeant arrived - guess what? Not a chip in sight. However, there is always a problem, isn't there. Our problem was the length of time he would stay talking.



Have you ever tried putting a piping hot bag of chips on your head and leaving them there for twenty minutes or so? I don't recommend it. By the time our senior officer left we both had rivers of sweat running down our faces, and as he finally left us his parting comment was something like - "You can eat your chips now chaps." How on earth did he know? I bet he had been in our position sometime in the past.

The second episode occurred on a different beat, where I had a pedal cycle to cover a fairly large area. I made the effort of making myself known to as many people as possible in the area: shopkeepers, publicans etc. Not a bad job some might say. Well, one pub on my beat had a nicely covered back yard where I could leave my bike to go walkabout. Yes! I got to know the husband and wife quite well, so well in fact that they asked me to let them know when I was on my half night (1800 to 0200). They would then leave my supper on the wall at the back of the pub. No, not hot chips this time, but a lovely pork pie and a half pint of Guinness. I bet you have guessed the next bit! Yes! Radio starts ringing, Sgt ??? wants to meet me. "Where are you?." The answer from me was a spot about 100 yards from the pub. "See you there in two minutes." Crumbs, I'll have to shift a little swiftly. The Sergeant arrives, parks, and locks his car. Oh no, we are going walkabout together. Yes, I did show him a few shortcuts and where a few of the local villains lived, but it was sometime later when we arrived back at his car, he signed my pocketbook, point made. The parting comment by Sergeant ??? "OK Waller, you can get your supper now." Did he know what and where my supper was? Your guess is as good as mine.

The third and final incident for now was on the same beat as the previous escapade. I was in the habit of making the acquaintance of all the Ambulance chaps, they were not called paramedics in those days. I used the Ambulance Station as my Beat Office, where I could park my bike, make up my pocketbook, write reports etc. The kettle was always on the stove, so tea was plentiful and welcome on a cold night. The chaps on duty would either see or hear my arrival, and many was the time they would shout out, "Is that you Roy? Put the kettle on mate. "A real home from home. I even watched the first moon landing on their television. I wasn't caught out this time! How does that song go? "A Policeman's lot is not a happy one." You decide from my epistle!

God bless all our readers. **Roy Waller**



A Recorded Crime?

Ashford Police station in the early 90s. It's a Saturday morning and the start of the early turn. I am sent to a small industrial estate off the Godinton Road to follow up on an overnight burglary at one of the units. I duly complete the paperwork (crime sheet) and make a search for any clues (there was no CCTV in those days!) Being as there were several other units in the area, some of which are closed over the weekend, I decided to check them out. Sure enough! I found another property which had been broken-in to. On entering the building I was surprised at what I saw! There were 500 blank cassette tapes. In the corner of the building there was a stairway leading up to what appeared to be an office. There I found recording devices to record up to 6 tapes at a time, and multiple cassette inserts. I had come across a counterfeit recording studio. Time for C.I.D. and Trading Standards to take over! **Bob Day**

East Kent Cancer Radiotherapy Treatment Appeal

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Charity No: 1155088

*Retiring collections are taken
at most of our concerts which
contribute to the donation
made to the nominated
charity at the end of the year.*

Our Nominated Charity for 2026 League of Friends of the Kent & Canterbury Hospital

The League of Friends of the Kent & Canterbury Hospital have been supporting the patients, staff, visitors and the NHS for 72 years. During this time, they have raised over £9 million which has funded much-needed equipment such as MRI scanners and improved the facilities with the new Surgical Admissions Lounge and improved staff rooms to name just two projects. In 2025 they pledged £340k for more vital equipment. They have recently launched their East Kent Cancer Radiotherapy Appeal - they are aiming to raise £800,000 to implement Surface Guided Radiotherapy Technology which is an advanced localisation technique that allows treatment to be accurate, more comfortable and faster, enabling more patients to be processed and a wider range of cancers to be treated locally. They received a legacy of £400,000 which launched the appeal and they have raised another £120k to date. The appeal will continue until they reach their target of £800,000.

CONCERT DATES FOR 2026

Saturday 25th April 7.30pm

All Saints Church, High Street, Biddenden, Ashford TN27 8AJ

Saturday 30th May 7.30pm

St Nicholas' Church, Church Road, Sandhurst, Cranbrook TN18 5NS

Saturday 20th June 7.30pm

St Stephen's Church, Castle Close, Lympe CT21 4LQ

Saturday 19th September 7.30pm

St John The Baptist Church, The Street, Wittersham TN30 7EA

Saturday 17th October 7.30pm

St Barnabas' Church, Upper Avenue, Istead Rise DA13 9DA

Saturday 12th December 7.30pm

Christmas Concert

Ss Peter & Paul Church, The Street, Borden ME9 8JS

Sunday 20th December 2.30pm

Christmas Concert

**Kent College, Whitstable Road, Rough Common,
Canterbury CT2 9DT**

Keep up to date with the latest information at

www.kpmvc.co.uk

**A HUGE "THANK YOU" TO ALL THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS EDITION
OF "ON THE BEAT"**