



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.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

It is no secret that Martin Rendle our musical director is receiving a course of treatment that will necessitate his absence from our choir for the foreseeable future. Martin continued conducting rehearsals and concerts right up until his treatment commenced. We all wish Martin and his family every good wish for a full recovery back to health and a return to the front of the choir.



Of course the choir would be in great difficulty without the talents of our honorary secretary Stewart Biggs who has taken over the role of Musical Director in Martin's absence. His first concert at Lympne in June was described as



'an outstanding success' with the choir responding to the challenge in fine voice and extreme attention to Stewart's direction from the front. It is no mean feat to be the choir front man with oodles of energy, confidence and accuracy (and a dry towel to wipe away the nervous energy). We thank Stewart for his loyalty and professionalism to our choir and look forward to the remainder of this year's concerts with him 'waving his arms'.

George Rogers, Chairman

If Music Be the Food of Love...

Martin's daughter, Charlotte marries Sam Dyer, a relationship that began at school through their shared love of music.

Most of you will remember Martin's daughter Charlotte who, for a number of years, page turned at concerts for Karen. She also played her cello as a soloist. Charlotte has very much grown up and has since gained her BA (Hons) in History at Kings College London and her MA in History of Design at the Royal College of Art in conjunction with the Victoria and Albert Museum. Having concluded her studies she has now taken the plunge and married her long term boyfriend Samuel Dyer.

Charlotte and Samuel met at a school orchestra and have been together since Charlotte was fourteen.



Samuel played trombone at one of our concerts. Their special day was Sunday 3 May where they celebrated their wedding at St Mary's Church Minster-in-Thamet. A lovely event with string quartet and Charlotte walked down the aisle to an arrangement written by her dad of Tchaikovsky's Par de Deux from the Nutcracker (Charlotte's favourite piece of music). After the ceremony Samuel and Charlotte left the church and made their way to the reception at Chapel House Estate on a vintage Fordson Tractor that has been in Sam's family for over 80 years. A novel form of transport which may well have caused amusement and a little frustration from other drivers as it negotiated the country lanes at a very slow speed. At one point there was a brief moment of rain and Charlotte could be seen in her full bridal gown holding an umbrella above both their heads as the tractor trundled on. Charlotte and Sam had a wonderful honeymoon spending two weeks on a driving tour of France, Italy and Switzerland in Sam's Aston Martin DB9.

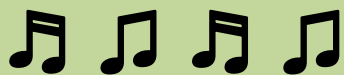
They would both like to thank the choir for their wedding gift.

Maybe we can persuade Charlotte to play the Cello again one day.

Charlotte and Sam performing at a special Young Musicians concert back in February 2019



THE POWER OF SONG

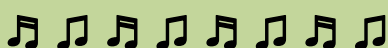


We have all heard, and believe, Martin's exhortation to our audiences to 'get involved in music'. Here follows one classic example.

Late in 2025 the Maypole Minstrels, a number of whom are KPMVC colleagues, entertained a packed pub with an evening of sea shanties. Our numbers were enhanced by a number of our police choir colleagues and their partners. During the course of the evening a gentleman unknown to any of us was joining in with gusto and obviously enjoying himself. Our own Mick Pepper standing next to said gentleman remarked on his good voice and encouraged him to get involved in singing on a regular basis.....as per our mantra. Telephone numbers were exchanged with the secretary of the Minstrels. Early in the new year he was called and invited to come along and sit in with the Minstrels on a trial basis. He came, joined in with enthusiasm, and four weeks later was inducted into our number. A few days later he was asked via a text message if he was enjoying the experience or was it all a bit full on. His verbatim reply was 'Overwhelmed, are you kidding ; I loved it! I never ever felt like I belonged anywhere before. Lots of songs, but I will learn'. One more proof point of what we all know to be true.

Keep spreading the gospel Martin!

Paul Aspin



*So long, farewell, auf
wiederschen, adieu...*



At the concert at St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst on Saturday 25th July, we said our final "goodbyes" to Tall Paul and his partner Jo who are moving from Kent in the very near future.

Paul shared with us in the last edition of OTB how, since joining KPMVC, he has rediscovered his love of playing the piano. He played a solo piece for us all to enjoy at the Sandhurst concert. He and Jo will be sorely missed by the choir. We wish you well and keep in touch!!



Not a lot of people know that...

John Longley, Choir Treasurer and Baritone, shares some memories of his time with Maidstone United FC back in the 1970s



MAIDSTONE UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

Season 1972-73 **Back Row** L-R Jimmy Muir, Alex Sheridan, John Charman & Kevin Evans.

Middle Row L-R Tom May (Trainer), Bobby Evans, Graham Mackman, Billy Dunbar, **John Longley**, Alan Barker, Alan Walker & Robin Stepney (Coach). **Front Row** L-R Andy Kalinka, Peter Tough, Ernie Morgan (Manager), Alan Lillis, Jim Thompson (Chairman), Phil Basey & Tommy Watson.

The Athletic Ground, London Road, Maidstone

As can be seen on the team photo for 1972/73 (above), I was an active squad member of the original Maidstone United and one of the 14 or 15 squad that achieved a significant milestone in its semi-professional history by winning the Southern Football Division One South Championship. The victory earned the club automatic promotion to the Southern League Premier Division. The stats were: games played 42, wins 25, draws 12, goals for 90, against 38. Following that season the club achieved 5th position in the Premier, and the familiar name Of Bill Williams joined from Gillingham as Club Captain.

At the end of the 1970's Maidstone United were instrumental in forming the Professional Gola League that eventually went on and became the National Conference League. Maidstone achieved League status themselves in 1989. My own membership in the club ended around 1976/77.



MAIDSTONE United's new boss, Ernie Morgan has a tactical talk with goalkeeper John Longley and Billy Dunbar (right). And the tactics are those on which the manager bases his pledge to take the Stones into the Premier Division of the Southern League this season.

Whilst at Maidstone I had been a goalkeeper with MALGO FC, a team in the Maidstone Saturday Premier Division. We achieved the feat of splitting Maidstone Rangers and Eccles for the first time in 7 years of not finishing 1st and 2nd in the league positions. I also played for Maidstone Colts whilst at school and through the 1970's in the Maidstone Sunday League and represented the League Team.

At much the same time I had musical interest and played drums in two or three bands: one named "Mosaic" toured Germany for 6 months and one named Chicory Tip had a hit record in the '70s. I personally flipped between drumming/vocalist and football most of the 1970s and 80s.

And Now For Something Completely Different!

by Roy Waller

Another phase in a Chorister's life, although goodness only knows what this has to do with the Kent Police Male Voice Choir!

Many moons ago, and way back beyond my Police career, I worked on the land for about 10 years, and what a wonderful life it turned out to be. I gained so much knowledge about crops, fruit, hay making and animal husbandry. Nobody knows everything about farming, but I had a fair knowledge of the workings of a general farm. About this time the well-known society called the YMCA had a scheme going named British Boys for British Farms, with three centres for the scheme in Somerset, Sussex and Derbyshire. The idea was to take boys from town and city life and show them the basics of farming, before placing them on farms in the area where they could further their education in rural life and give them a worthwhile career.

I applied for the job of lecturer at the Derbyshire Centre in a village called Egginton, just outside of Derby. Our recruits came from the big cities of the north, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham to name but a few. The reader will appreciate that most of the lads were "streetwise" and some were a real handful. On their days off the boys were given a lift in the Centre's personnel carrier to Derby to go to the cinema, and we soon learned that it was not only for the pictures! On return a staff member would stand either side of the entrance to the hostel to relieve the rascals of the many bottles of beer that were being smuggled into their dormitories.

There were few complaints from the boys, but I do remember one occasion when they went on "strike." All staff had to assist in the kitchens, as the YMCA could only afford one chef for 50 boys — some task! One staff member was a bigger rogue than all the students put together and one morning all hell was let loose with the boys complaining that the breakfast toast was burnt on one side and not cooked on the other. The staff member explained that the toast being burnt on one side and not done on the other equalled things out. Despite this explanation the fellows still went on strike.

The firm Kellogg's (yes Cornflakes) helped me tremendously by providing us with a tractor (second hand) for the boys to hone their machinery skills, and local farmers provided me with rough cut wood for the lads to make five bar gates, and I have to say most of them turned their hands to carpentry quite well.

The routine for most of our boys was to work on local farms four days a week and one day with me in my lecturer's role. Saturday was free (in to Derby for a few hours, but I have already spoken of that) and Sunday was obligatory chapel with a staff member (me included) playing the part of Minister or Vicar, without the dog collar I hasten to add.

MEET THE CHOIR

Stewart Biggs is Choir Secretary and usually sings in the Bass section. He is currently standing in for Martin as MD. Here he tells us something of his musical journey, growing up in Chatham and being trained as a church organist from an early age.

I was born in the late 1950's into a family in Chatham, which had some musical pedigree. My paternal grandfather had his own big band called the 'Arthur Biggs Band' which didn't really roam far from the Medway Towns, but regularly performed at what was known as the 'Rochester Casino' which was an entertainment venue, mostly dedicated to roller skating.



Rochester Casino (Date uncertain)

I never met my grandfather, Arthur, as he had left my grandmother, Amy, to raise the family of three (my two aunts and my dad) on her own, but my dad certainly had a flare for music and playing the piano by ear. There is no history of Arthur's life or achievements that can be found anywhere, and his existence is known to me only from anecdotal family conversations. However, my maternal grandfather was also a musician and I can trace his musical career with much more certainty, as he featured prominently in my life. By day, he worked in the Chatham Dockyard from 1913 until 1964, by weekend and on some evenings, he taught banjo and guitar as well as playing in local dance bands throughout the Medway Towns. I still have one of his banjos in my possession. He came from a well-known Rochester family (Wadhams) and never lived anywhere except the Medway Towns. He taught me to play the banjo at age eleven, and I played it publicly at a couple of concerts. I remember absolutely nothing about playing the banjo now!

My mother was keen for me to enjoy music (she played piano) so she persuaded me to take piano lessons which I did between the ages of 9 and 12. This was coupled with other events that took place around that time. First, I joined the local church choir both to sing and to earn money. Not only did we get paid to sing on Sundays, but the church inevitably had one, two or even three weddings on a Saturday and I was raking it in! Second, the organist and choirmaster (O & C) at the church (St Paul's, Chatham) was a very good succession planner. He saw potential in me and another chap in the choir and he therefore took time to teach us about choir training and organ playing. We were both encouraged, by the O & C, to take organ exams and I eventually stopped at grade 5 in July 1974 (age 16), mainly because he resigned from the post of O & C and it was up to my friend and I to assume the roles of organist and choirmaster for several years following.



Stewart circa 1962 aged 4

At this time, I was encouraged to play the organ at my annual school service in the local church (St Stephen's Chatham) for my school (Chatham Technical High School for boys— now Chatham Grammar School for boys).

I guess the rest just follows from those inauspicious beginnings. I continued to play the organ for Sunday services from that time and kept my hand in following my ordination in 2001. When eventually I retired from full-time parish ministry, I formally became organist at St Michael's Church, Offham, a post which I still hold alongside other duties.

I joined KPMVC in January 2008, following an invitation from a friend and past baritone chorister (Paul Cox), singing at my first concert at Highworth School, Ashford on 8th February 2008, the year of our 30th anniversary. I originally sang with the second tenors. At that time the seconds were quite a force to be reckoned with (there were some rather prominent voices) and our MD at the time, David Vening, felt I could do less damage if I sang with the basses. This was sometime during 2009. I've never looked back.

In the past 18 years, I have occasionally helped out either accompanying (badly) or directing (haphazardly), but I'm happy to step into whatever role is demanded of me.

I started serving on the Choir Committee (I can't remember exactly when) but became honorary secretary in June 2016. This has been a honour to serve in this way, alongside singing with such a fine bunch of chaps.

The Day I Nearly Became A Tiger's Breakfast

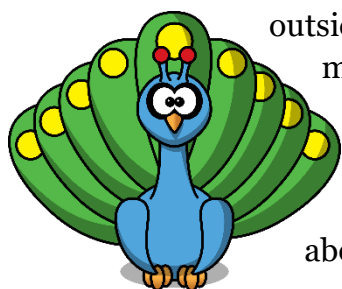
by John Grey



At the beginning of my career, I'd just qualified as an electrical engineer, working for S.W. Bligh, a firm in Canterbury. My first job out in the big wide world was at Howletts, in Bekesbourne, at that time the private residence of John Aspinall, later well-known as the founder and owner of Howletts Zoo. Back then he owned a small private collection of wild animals, whereby hangs my tale!

Well, I arrived, bent on doing a good job, thus justifying my employer's faith in my abilities. The keeper led me to his cottage at the rear of the property. As we went, he explained what was required. I walked into the cottage lounge, and there was confronted by a fully-grown tiger lying on the settee, with his tail gracefully draped over the edge of the sofa. I stood rooted to the spot, my hair on end. The tiger was all of two metres in length. It looked at me and growled. Have you ever heard a tiger growl? A deep, menacing roar that came from the depths. Finding my voice, I asked the keeper where the electrical wiring was that needed replacing. He pointed to the back wall, exactly where the tiger was reclining. It growled again, and the keeper promptly picked up a slipper and whacked him on the rump. I managed to say that I didn't have quite the right equipment with me, and would come back later. (I did return the next day, when fortunately the tiger was safely caged!)

Sometime later I was sent again to Howletts, this time to put in an alarm system. I was up a ladder outside when I was suddenly aware of a tiger ambling towards me. I have never moved so fast in my life...I ran towards my car and hurled myself inside. To add insult to injury, there was a huge peacock sitting on my car roof, so I had to wait for it to move before I could start the car.



Luckily, the rest of my career was quite tame by comparison with the above adventures!!

50 Anniversary Celebrations

to whet your appetite...

The choir committee has authorised and commissioned a brand new double cd of choir recordings. Yes I know you want one right now but you will have to wait! The 'best of KPMVC' will cover recordings over many years of our existence including some very much younger voices of more junior choir members all of whom are a tad older these days. The pieces will reflect the changing voices (and faces) of the choir yet promises to be our best CDs to date. The actual production and publication of the double CDs are under wraps but I can let you into a secret. Shhhh! We hope to release in time for this coming Christmas which will coincide with the forthcoming celebrations of our 50th anniversary in 2028 (yes it's a year early but being so popular we reckon on subsequent pressings). So get your calendars marked down for the expected date and purchase those wonderful gifts and mementos.

We will update you in due course.

The CDs are being produced in-house by the very technically minded and all round smart guy Chris Cole.

And there's more..

Efforts and much energy are going into updating and rewriting the KPMVC yearbook to reflect the choir's 50 years from 1978. Stories, photographs, programmes, memorabilia and more stories from our members and supporters are being articulated and recorded for posterity and your delight. A release date will be announced but is likely to be toward the end of next year. We thank Pressure Welding Machines Ltd for their support and financial help to enable this tome to be published.

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*

CONCERT PROGRAMME FOR 2026

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

Christmas Concerts

Sunday 6th December (time tbc)

Tonbridge Methodist Church, Higham Lane, Tonbridge TN10 4JG

Saturday 12th December 7.30pm

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

Sunday 20th December 2.30pm

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

East Kent Cancer Radiotherapy Treatment Appeal

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the way forward



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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.

Death Message with a Twist ...

A policeman's lot is not always a happy one. Bob Day shares another memory from his days on the beat in Ashford.

Being a Police officer you were involved with "death" which came in various forms. One of these was delivery a "death message". Ashford Police station – late turn. I am called in to the front office where I am given details of death message. I had only been at Ashford for a few weeks and fresh out of Teaching school. How would the person react? Thinking back to my Teaching school days, I would put into practice what I had learned.

I made my way to an address in South Ashford. Training school told us to get a neighbour to go with you when you broke the sad news. I went to both neighbours on either side of the address, but no replies. My heart was pumping. I knocked on the door and a middle-aged woman answered.

"Good afternoon, are you Mrs ****?"

"Yes," she replied.

"May I come in please?"

"Yes, of course."

"Would you please sit down," (following Teaching school instruction). "I am sorry to say, I have some sad news for you. We have had a message from the Police in ***** Germany informing us that your husband has passed away suddenly." After a brief pause, she smiled at me and said "Oh, that's alright, we've been separated for 20 years! Cup of tea, officer?"

"Yes please!"