



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.

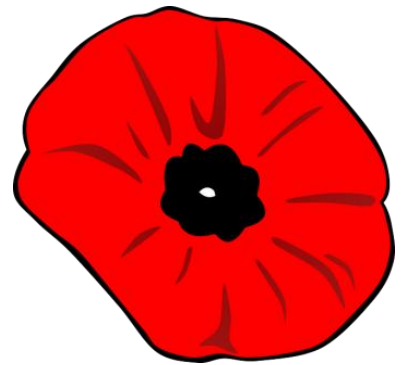
In its history, the Choir has appeared in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium as well as in the UK, appeared on national television in the UK and Canada and has helped numerous local charities to raise significant amounts of money.

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.

We Will Remember

11.11.2025



MARKING REMEMBRANCE DAY at the Kent Police College, Maidstone

25 members of the choir joined Senior Police Officers, the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Police cadets and College staff at the Remembrance service at Kent Police College. The service particularly honours those officers who lost their lives in active service, from the beginning of the First World War to the present day.



**A HUGE THANK YOU TO ALL
OUR CONTRIBUTORS FOR THIS
EDITION. Sally Biggs Editor**

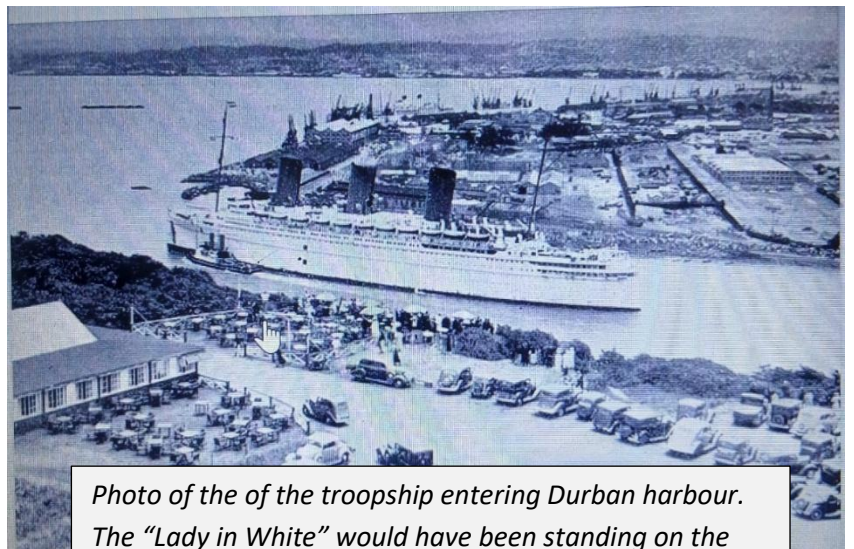
Patrick Burrows shares a World War 2 musical recollection from his time in Durban

We Remember Them ... But They Also Remembered

Remembrance Day has brought a thought of happenings in Durban during WW2 and this is one I would like to relate.

During the war Durban was a major port for the ship repair, R & R for troops, medical care and was visited by many troopships for replenishing on the way to the different theatres of operations. As each of these ships entered or left harbour they were greeted or despatched by the “Lady in White”, Mrs Perla Siedle-Gibson, no matter what time of day or night, with songs. She would be dressed all in white including a very large brimmed hat and stand on the quayside at the closest point to the harbour entrance and serenaded the troops as they passed by using a large hand held megaphone for amplification. She was also involved with troop entertainment, along with many others, putting on concerts, dances, afternoon teas etc.

Fast forward to 1968. I was still involved with the Scouting Movement and helping with annual productions of the “Gang Show” using Sir Ralph Reader’s material and that year we had a visit from the great man himself. One evening before curtain - up Sir R was called to front of house as there was an elderly lady who wanted to talk to him – none other than our “Lady in White”. He related to us later that some years earlier he had been preparing a variety show for ex-servicemen at, I think, the London Palladium when a lady came and told him that she wanted to be in the show. He asked what she did and her reply was that she sang. One presumes that she would have had an audition and some rehearsal with the orchestra but he said that at the performance she stepped out from the wings dressed all in white, stood just onstage and using her megaphone and called out “Cooeeee” and was greeted by what Sir R said was the loudest and longest round of cheering and applause that he had ever heard. This was from a full house of servicemen who had experienced, or had heard, what happened when arriving in or leaving Durban during the war. I should imagine that many a tear was also shed.



*Photo of the of the troopship entering Durban harbour.
The “Lady in White” would have been standing on the
north pier off to the right of the picture*

Footnote:- A life-size statue of her was erected posthumously at a point close to where she would stand and sing at the harbour entrance. Probably now out of sight hidden in some corner or other.

MEET THE CHOIR

The March edition of “On the Beat” marked the arrival of nine new members to the choir. Now, not so new, three of these “newbies” tell us a bit about themselves and their experience of being part of KPMVC



From Sid Snot to KPMVC By Aidan Boulter

I began my singing career at the tender age of seven at Kings College School as a soprano in the Anthem Choir and continued it at London Nautical School where I sang at Southwark Cathedral. On leaving school I pursued a career initially in theatre, then later as a floor manager for Thames Television where I met my later-to-be band mates. In 1973 they were working on The Kenny Everett Video Cassette, and Kenny had a character called “Sid Snot”

who had a rock ‘n roll band similar to Showaddywaddy (a popular band in the day). My co-conspirators took a liking to the costumes worn on the show, succeeded in acquiring them and then promptly formed “Nark Drool & The Shudders” a band not dissimilar to Trigger’s new broom in that, over the years it had three drummers, four bass players, nine backing singers and three lead vocalists!



I was co-opted into the band at a funeral. In 2006 I attended the funeral of Dennis Kirkland the producer/director of “The Benny Hill Show” for whom I had worked for several years, and whilst singing hymns I was flanked on each side unknowingly to me, by the bass player and the lead guitarist who I knew as a video editor and the props chargehand for the “Sooty Show”. When we left the chapel, they asked me to join their band which I nervously agreed to, and after our first professional gig at a nightclub in Balham where my knees were knocking louder than the kick drum, I took to it and sang lead for the next eighteen years. We played working men’s clubs, festivals, weddings and golf clubs but our crowning glories were The Chelsea Arts Club New Years Eve Party three times, and as the house band on live television in 2013 for the BBC’s Children In Need where we played in a 5000 seat circus tent. We were to re-visit that tent for the fan zone for the Rugby World Cup in 2015. I played my last gig with the band in 2024 having made the hard decision to quit. Most of our gigs were in West London, I had made a new life in Kent, and the travelling and late nights were overwhelming.



My interest was piqued when I saw a poster for the Movember project for the KPMVC and with a little trepidation (I didn’t expect there to be much call for Roy Orbison or Buddy Holly covers) I went into one of the sessions at the Old Forge in Borden, my home village. Since then, I’ve joined the choir as a first tenor and I’m very proud to have been accepted.



My Journey to KPMVC

By Colin Watts

The world saw my arrival in September 1954 when my voice drifted across Parson's Green in Fulham. I was schooled in Redhill and then Purley after I passed the 11 plus without being told I was even taking it. 1972 saw me employed by a top London law firm in Lincoln's Inn as an 'outside clerk' issuing writs and summonses in the High Court in the Strand. I progressed to having my own caseload and one case in which I became involved was the Beatles litigation where my firm acted for John, George and Ringo. I met and spent the day with George Harrison. That evening I asked George for his autograph. He signed four. I gave one to my sister and promptly lost the other three. I also had to sue Keith Moon for repairs to a swimming pool after a Rolls went in it – urban legend. Not me, the story!

In 1977 I moved local to a Reigate law firm and in 1978 I was to marry Patricia Bailey. She remains Mrs. Watts to this day. We emigrated to Canada in 1981 where I worked for the biggest law firm. The biggest monetary case was for about CAN\$180 million. It was all about the tilting mechanism on the bottom of office chairs. Yeah, I know, I know.

We returned to UK in 1990 where I continued in legal for two more years and then entered classical music distribution. I enjoyed that for 13 years until I was made redundant. I then joined a large debt purchase and collection company, where I ran the legal department and carried out almost all of the advocacy in hundreds of cases before County Court judges nationwide. I retired in 2022 and in the same year we moved to Coxheath. For a while it was a relatively solitary life. Pat joined a number of local retirement groups and classes at the YMCA. However, I'm not known for my prowess in the gym as my waistline will testify. It was not until November 2024 that I encountered KPMVC and attended their concert at the Cornwallis Academy in Loose. This was to prove a godsend in my retirement by introducing me to the joys of being a part of something that can create beauty, joy and a real sense of belonging. The camaraderie is sincere and very welcome and it's an honour to be part of it. Now I cannot imagine life without the choir. It has been said that to sing in harmony is to know, deeply, that we are not alone. Indeed.



Observations of a Newbie

by Alex Dunnet

It was a chance conversation with John Theedom that led me in to joining the choir. First time he asked I was unable to make Thursday nights for practice but, like all dogged recruiters, he persisted and when things changed for me he was on hand to invite me to one of the 2024 singing workshops in Borden.

It was a really enjoyable experience. I was made to feel very welcome, but battered with questions about my voice. Was I tenor, bass, baritone? I didn't have a clue. Apart from school choir and singing nursery rhymes to my grandchildren my singing experience was zilch, but Martin had technique for sorting us newbies out, and I'm now sitting with the baritones. I really bought in to Martin's explanation of what a male voice choir was all about, and thoroughly enjoyed starting to learn the pieces selected for the workshops. I joined the choir in January this year. I think it was about this time that John dropped the bombshell that choir practice led to concerts, and that having music/words at concerts wasn't allowed! However Martin and Chris's recordings have helped tremendously. This successful approach is obviously quite new since I am now constantly teased by the old hands about how us newbies are being spoon fed, and that it was much tougher in the old days...

I really enjoy practice nights. I've had particular help from Roy Waller and Geoff Fisher, on the front row, I wasn't so sure when, early on, Roy said to me: "You know at the workshops, we really were to trying to encourage some younger men to join". Ouch! I particularly like the learning process where parts of a song are sung separately in the different voices, and then layered together. It's quite thrilling. However, I find it really hard when I know the tune of a song, but am required to learn and sing a harmony. I have also come to appreciate Bob Day trying to put a drag anchor on the cashless society by forcing me to find a coin or two for the football competition every week.

I enjoy the concerts. It is good to get the feedback from the audience especially when we sing a 'banger' like African Prayer. Learning the words and music has been tough but, to go back to Roy's comment, probably good for my aging brain. I would like to thank Martin, Karen and all the choir members for their kind, generous help and support in my first year. It's been a hugely enjoyable experience and I'm looking forward to more of the same in the future.

Young Artists Programme

Meet Jack Bull

In 2018 the Choir introduced a Young Artists Programme whereby young musicians are invited to perform at one of our concerts. This gives them a platform to perform and encourages them in their musical skills. Since its launch we have had performances from vocalists, a harpist, a recorder player, cellist, pianists and many more. The most recent performance was from Jack Bull (pictured above and below with his family and Karen Barton-Holman); an amazing pianist and protegee of our accompanianist Karen Barton-Holman. We look forward to welcoming other young artists to share the stage in the future, bringing variety and youth (!) to the concert programmes.



Firstly, tell us a bit about yourself – where you live, your family members, where you go to school.

I live in Cambridge with my parents, brother, and three cats. I go to school at Stephen Perse, and am studying History, Music, Maths, and Further Maths A levels.

What was your introduction to music and to playing the piano? Do you play other instruments?

I've been playing piano for most of my life, but really started to get interested in music and began to dedicate more time to it around 2022. As well as piano, I play clarinet and electric guitar. Having such a broad range allows me to play all kinds of music that I'm passionate about and enables me to join lots of different music making groups.

Do you get many opportunities for “public” performances

Outside of school concerts (both solo and with ensembles) I've played gigs with a band at local venues.

You are obviously very accomplished at what you do – how much practice do you have to do?

The amount of practice I do varies a lot depending on how much music I did that day at school. If I had lots of rehearsals I will maybe do an hour to make sure I'm keeping warm, but if I have upcoming music exams or have lots of free time on my hands, I can do up to eight hours a day between my instruments.

What type of music do you enjoy both playing and listening to?

I love all kinds of music, but my current favourites are the Swedish death metal band Opeth, the 20th century composer Alban Berg, and Radiohead.

What do you see as being the benefits of being involved in the choir's Young Artists Programme?

Being able to play a public performance is very rewarding, especially when so much performing I do is in a school setting. The Programme provides young artists with an opportunity to move outside their comfort zone.

What are your plans for future study and where do you hope that will take you in the future?

I plan to study music at university, hopefully at Oxford!



THOSE HAZY DAYS OF SUMMER

It seems a distant memory now, but back in July the choir, their partners and other guests enjoyed the hospitality of Paul and Gaynor Aspen at their home in Borden. Strawberries and cream were served and songs were sung....and it didn't rain!

Here's a bird's eye view with thanks to Chay Watts and his drone.



The abundance of this year's apple harvest reminds me of the 1950s when an abandoned US Airforce base was recommissioned for the RAF as part of the build-up of the Cold War.

A small contingent of serving personnel was stationed there and, not having much to do, they joined us in the orchard. One in particular had a fine singing voice and as we harvested the apples I remember his rendition of O Mein Papa which many will recall from the days of Eddie Calvert, the Man with the Golden Trumpet. Happy Days



George Hanlon

Thank you for your music

A message from Gail Pain following the memorial concert for her husband Barry Pain.

On Saturday 18th October, the choir was privileged to take part in a memorial concert for Barry in Ditton, sharing the stage with the police band. Over 150 were there to celebrate Barry's life and his contribution to establishing both the choir and police band. Barry was Chief Constable of Kent Police from 1974 to 1982. His wife, Gail, sent this message of thanks to all those involved.

"I wish to thank everyone in the choir for their wonderful contribution to the concert for my late husband Barry. From George Rogers, Chairman and all the singers and the wonderful conductor Martin Rendle. Barry would have loved every minute. Not only am I impressed by the wonderful harmonies but also your wonderful diction. For a short while my Church choir was lucky to have Grayston Ives helping us and he was always particular about diction and yours is always good. So many choirs one can never hear the words. So thank you again. You made what was a very emotional occasion for me very special. I look forward to coming to one of your concerts. With best wishes, Gail Pain"



CHARITY OF THE YEAR 2025

catching lives

Catching Lives is an independent charity based in Canterbury, supporting people who are homeless or insecurely housed in East Kent. Their vision is of a society where everyone has a safe place to live and the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life. The charity offers support to people at their Canterbury Day centre, providing essential facilities (food, laundry, showers etc) and individual support to improve housing, health, and social connection. They also offer access to computers at their Day centre and have an on-site Mental Health Specialist and a community Nurse. A truly worthwhile local charity which KPMVC is pleased to support as its Charity of the Year for 2025. You can find out more on their website www.catchinglives.org

CHRISTMAS CONCERTS For 2025



Sunday 7th December 2.00pm

Christmas Concert
Ss Peter & Paul Church, Pembury,
Tunbridge Wells

Saturday 13th December 7.30pm

Christmas Concert
Ss Peter & Paul Church, Borden

Saturday 20th December 2.30pm

Christmas Concert
*Supporting Kent and Canterbury Hospital
League of Friends*
The Great Hall, Kent College,
Canterbury

keep checking our website for updates
kpmvc.co.uk

CONCERTS For 2026

Saturday 7th March 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Northiam, Rye

Saturday 24th April 7.30pm
All Saints Church, Biddenden

Saturday 30th May 7.30pm
St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst

Saturday 20th June 7.30pm
St Stephen's Church, Lypne

Saturday 19th September 7.30pm
St John the Baptist Church, Wittersham

Saturday 17th October 7.30pm
St Barnabas Church, Istead Rise

Saturday 12th December 7.30pm
Christmas Concert
Ss Peter & Paul Church, Borden

keep checking our website for updates
kpmvc.co.uk

KENT POLICE
MALE VOICE CHOIR
with guests
THE HF SINGERS

Festive Concert

Saturday 20th December 2025

**The Great Hall, Kent College,
Whitstable Rd, Canterbury, CT2 9DT**

Doors open 2pm - 2.30pm start
Adult £10, under 18s £6 (plus booking fee)



FREE PARKING
All proceeds to
Kent & Canterbury Hospital



CHARITY NO 1155088

<https://canterburyfestival.ticketsolve.com/ticketbooth/shows/1173668125>

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*