

# Amici News

Issue no.41 June 2010

The newsletter of The Amici Singers  
The Amici Singers is a Registered Charity No.277766



Douglas Coombes

Greetings to everyone.

I hope that you did not think that I had stopped doing the newsletter. I have been so busy these last couple of months, especially on the composing and arranging front. I have just finished doing some work for the forth-coming *Battle Proms*, including arranging for Soprano, Flute and orchestra, the lovely folk song *The Sprig of Thyme*. I am now

working at a composition for Choir (700 children's voices), dancers and ensemble for a performance this November at the Royal Albert Hall in a Schools' Prom concert. I have a small window of opportunity to do a newsletter, which I have taken. I hope that you enjoy the contents.

## REMINDER

I do have a reminder about contacting your section leader if you cannot attend a rehearsal. I will repeat what I said in the last newsletter:

*I have been asked to point out that if you are unable to attend a rehearsal, you must let the section leader know and not me. I know that some of you do this as an act of courtesy, but it is the section leaders who keep a check on the membership. In a number of choirs, members are asked to let the conductor know but the organisation is different in the Amici Singers. I am often away during the week and any messages you send me could well be picked up late, as has often happened. It is the section leaders and the committee who run the choir. I just conduct. As I have said many times before, the Amici Singers is not my choir. I am delighted to call it our choir, but the membership run it. As has happened many times in the past, by going through the section leaders, we have picked up some problems and we have been able to help. This is not a moan – just information dissemination!*

## AMICI MINDSET

It is so important that everyone has the aim in making the choir as professional in attitude as

possible and to maintain and improve the standard and reputation of the Amici Singers. Among other things it means coming regularly to rehearsals. Oh I know that there are holidays, illnesses and family commitments that make some attendances impossible and that the majority of you are so loyal and committed. I just want everyone to have this aim and ambition.

The conducting day showed what you can do and the way that you concentrated, helped the conductors and maintained choral discipline and good humour was truly magnificent. The comments from some of the participants reflect this. I am still mystified how well you coped under some direction – quite remarkable.

So on to the Dunton concert with Maria Fidelis Gospel choir – that will be another experience.

*Douglas*

THE  
*Amici Singers*  
conductor – Douglas Coombes  
accompanist – Trevor Hughes

# SUMMER CONCERT

with guest choir  
Winners of the Senior section BBC TV Songs of Praise  
Choirs of the Year 2010

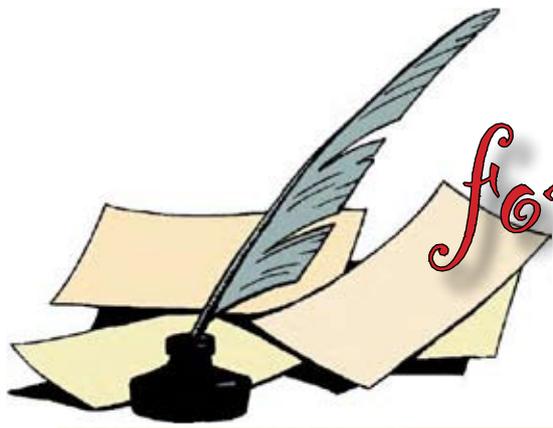
**The Gospel Choir of Maria  
Fidelis School, London**  
conductor – Karen Gibson  
accompanist – Emmanuel Waldron  
and compère

# PAM RHODES

**St Mary Magdalene Church, Dunton  
at 7:00pm  
Sat 26 June 2010**

Tickets £8 (£6 concessions - under 10 years FREE)  
available from choir members or by phoning Lindsay Music on  
01767-260815 or from 01767-260361

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# for your DIARY

## AMICI DIARY DATES

### 2010

**Saturday 26 June** - Summer Concert at  
Dunton Parish Church, Bedfordshire  
Rehearsal 2.00 – 5.00pm  
Bring and share tea at Dunton Village Hall  
Concert 7.00pm

**Thursdays, 2 September – 2 December**  
Rehearsals at Trinity Methodist

**Saturday 9 October** – CD recording  
1.30-6.00pm at Trinity Methodist

**Saturday, 4 December** - Christmas concert  
Venue to be confirmed.

### 2011

**Thursdays, 13 January – 14 April**  
Rehearsals at Trinity Methodist

**Thursday 21 April – Sunday 1 May**  
10<sup>th</sup> tour of USA

**Thursdays, 5 May – 30 June**  
Rehearsals at Trinity Methodist

**Thursday 19 May** – AGM then rehearsal  
at Trinity Methodist – Start time will be  
7.30pm

**Saturday 25 June**  
Summer Concert – venue t.b.a.

**Thursdays, 1 September – 1 December**  
Rehearsals at Trinity Methodist

**Saturday, 3 December** - Christmas concert  
Venue tba.

## OTHER EVENTS IN 2010

**Friday and Saturday 2 & 3 July**  
7.30pm St Mary's Singer's Summer  
Concert. Programme will include the  
first performance of *A Bedfordshire Folk  
Song Suite* by Douglas Coombes

**Wednesday 14 July** St Swithun's Singers  
Summer Concert – 7.30pm at Sandy  
Parish Church. Programme to include a new  
work by Douglas Coombes based on poems  
about birds.

**Friday and Saturday 10 & 11 December**  
St Mary's Singer's Christmas Concerts  
7.00pm at Dunton Parish Church



The Amici Chorale 2008 pictured at the rehearsal day in  
February 2008



Cramped conditions at our previous 'choir home'  
(part of the first soprano section)

(part of the alto section)



# Chairman's Report for the AGM 20/05/10

It seems a bit of a cliché, but where has the time gone? I can hardly believe it was a year ago that I became the 6<sup>th</sup> Amici Chairman. I felt very anxious taking over the reins from Elizabeth, and especially when I reflected back on the work of the other previous chairmen, all of whom are still active singers in the choir after more than 30 years! I was reassured that the committee managed to run itself quite well, and that the committee members would support the function. On reflection a year later this has turned out to be reality. I have been most impressed at the way actions just become completed, often before they actually become actions. People have a good intuition for what needs to be done to keep the machine of the choir well oiled and rolling along.

September saw us move to our new venue at Trinity Methodist Church in Biggleswade, and with the new venue came new members! Again the oiling can came out and before we knew it we had a robust process in place, utilised most weeks to welcome the new members and inform them of how the choir functions. Margaret Prosser especially, has performed a quiet efficient role in this process to ensure prompt information and support is given. We were especially pleased to have our new President, Pam Rhodes join us for a while, and look forward to her singing in the ranks again soon.

As a good wine takes time to settle to become an outstanding vintage, the Amicis mirrored this by taking time to settle into the position we have currently for rehearsals. It is difficult to put into words the gratitude and enormous respect we all have for the nurturing and guidance we have had from Douglas in this process. He has been very patient with us, but I can't help feeling he has had some revenge with *'Chatter with the Angels'*!

We have missed some of the closeness the choir experienced at Brook House over the years, but have been able to bring the comradeship and caring for one another with us, whilst enjoying the growth of the choir, and more leg room.

This comradeship has been tested over the past year, and it has been uplifting to see how we have responded at such times. Several choir members have needed support with their mobility and health issues, and Amicis haven't hesitated to offer help. Never was this tested more than when one choir member even escorted another to casualty on a Saturday night to Bedford A&E following an injury sustained at an Amici social event. Not only were they very late home to bed, but a whole 'new world' had been experienced! Never say life with the Amicis won't enable you to broaden your horizons.

This comradeship was also demonstrated by the support that was given to sing at the funeral of Maggie Wright by so many whom were able to attend. Although Maggie had been a choir member for a relatively short period she had contributed much to the 'oil can' in that time, and for a while the wheels didn't run quite as smoothly.

The Dunton Angels once again hovered over us as we performed our Christmas concert. This year we were joined by the singing of the Barbershop quartet from Potton, 'Time after time', playing of the oboe by Bryan Shaw – always a favourite with us girls - and the concert was further complemented by our wonderful accompanist, Trevor Hughes. We also sang Christmas Carols at 'Simply Oak' followed by roasting chestnuts by the fire.



Snow and ice permitting we continued to rehearse into the New Year, concentrating on the work for the summer concert, and the Conducting day on 8 May. What a day that was. I feel I can comment for all of us to say that we learnt so much that day. Not only did we learn that we had quite good stamina, and that we can all easily see how the feeding of the 5,000 was achieved, but also that we had some pretty accomplished conductors in our ranks. Our skills at concentration were stretched, as were our lung capacities at times. It was an honour to be able to support those wishing to improve their skills under the talent of Douglas' experience and knowledge, and yet again I realised how privileged we are to have him as our musical director. He can even control us with his little finger – and eyebrows! - as he demonstrated to the audience that night.

As I began with a cliché, I will end with one or two also. A big thank you to the committee members for contributing so well to the 'oil can' over the past year, especially those new to it, and those in new roles. Their support to the choir and especially to me is greatly appreciated. Although it is stated every year, a special thank you needs to be acknowledged to Douglas. This choir is very special to us, and his leadership makes it not only a place to come and learn how to sing new pieces of music, but how to make them come alive with the passion of it in such a supportive environment.

Sometimes there are people who quietly give a quick surreptitious squirt of oil to keep things going; Carole is one of these. Every week she assists with setting up the equipment in the church, and quietly scurries about at the end loading up the car. She has organised us all to sign for our music, set up a new register, and has even brought us all light with arranging the purchase of the torches (with research by Anne Bunker). These are just a few of the things she does to keep us rolling along so well, and we are very grateful for this.

So as this year as chairman ends, I feel I should open a good bottle of red, ensure it breathes properly – as all good Amicis should do – and raise my glass to toast yet another successful year of the choir completed. I look forward to the coming year and the tenth USA trip!

Beverly Goater

# Musical Director's Report at Amici AGM 20-05-10

I started my report last year by saying that we were at the threshold of a new era in the 31 years of Amici history. This was a reference to leaving Brook House and coming here, to Trinity Methodist. For those of you who are relatively new, it is hard to describe the change that took place – and you don't know what you missed! The previous rehearsal room was in reality quite hopeless - the closeness of the chairs, the proximity of bodies, the lack of air-conditioning, the heat that quickly built up during the rehearsal no matter the time of year, the unusual acoustics, the thrill as someone pulled on the fan cord – (will it break or not?), the cool refreshing air of the fan that hit you, the way that the air did not get to you, the interesting way you had to adapt when you did physical warm ups, the general lighting, the space you did not have for holding up copies when you stood, the chats you had when queuing up for the toilet, the discomfort of the chairs, especially the wooden ones (but they were better than the home-made benches that we had at the very beginning – I know some of you will remember that), nowhere to place wet coats on inclement nights, the way some could see me while others couldn't, the sound of the keyboard depending on where you sat, the difficulty of moving around into a different seating plan, the cramped space you had when you tried to get your new music out of your folders in the boxes in the back door entrance, and the interesting parking arrangements. But the thing was, that it was home.



The walls were full of mementos of concerts, photos and gifts. Interestingly, though that room is now a fully working office for Lindsay Music, Carole and I still refer to it as the Amici Room.

As I said last year, buildings and rooms do not make the Amicis. It is all of us together that make the Amicis. And after almost a year at Trinity, we have settled in and so have the new members.

Since the last AGM we have had some good concerts and events to which Beverly has referred – The summer concert in Baldock, Christmas at Dunton, The conducting day on 8 May and two social events. I find it fascinating and rewarding, hearing and reading the comments of those who have heard the choir, especially for the first time. This was summed up so well by John Stoddard who organised the concert we did in Letchworth when he wrote *“Thank-you for a truly great concert. The feed back from all has been of congratulations, appreciation and thanks. The choir certainly made a great impression in the Garden City. They are so professional.”* But as you know, I am never carried away by all this. In fact Carole and I often have moans about various things so you can rest assured that we will never sit on any laurels that come our way.

I am very appreciative of those of you who are good readers and quickly learn the music. I have to say a special thank-you to you for your support and willingness to share in what is still for me quite a musical adventure. You put the choir first and are so willing to share your talent. I am sure that you share the thrill I feel, when collectively the choir performs above themselves, which it often does. The way you performed on the conducting day is testimony to that. You are still an excellent 2<sup>nd</sup> division choir with occasional visits to the 1st division. If new members do not quite understand that, then have a chat – not now – with long standing members who will explain.

This year has seen some changes with key personnel

on the committee. Beverly has taken over the chairmanship from Elizabeth. In all my time with the Amicis when there is such a change, members often say that the retiring person will be a hard act to follow. Well a new act always appears – different but always excellent. Is it luck? I am more of a believer in Kismet, not luck. The Amicis make their own luck and as a result we have a chairman with another pair of safe hands – so thank-you Beverly – you have continued the well established lineage of good, hardworking chairman. Incidentally since our formation in 1978 we still have all the previous chairmen still singing with us. I wonder how many other organisations can claim this?

What I have just said regarding the lineage of the chairmanship applies to the secretary, Ann Sidney who unfortunately cannot be with us tonight. She has taken over so well from Jennifer Wilkinson, and has managed to carry on the tradition of Jennifer's succinct minutes. And what I have just said also applies to Pat Quickenden who took over the treasury office from Rita Cracknell. With Rita's training and Pat's follow-up I can now say with some confidence that I can pretty well understand the treasurer's reports. One member of the committee that I thankfully leave to her own devices is Margaret Webb who looks after the wardrobe. Members of the committee know that when the choir's apparel is discussed I glaze over. Yes it is good to see the choir dressed smartly and uniformly but I confess I am more interested in the sound.

Everybody knows how to do publicity. I know this because I hear such remarks everywhere I go. The reality is very different. We are lucky to have P.I.N. that's Prosser International News. Margaret and George do such a great job for the Amicis – nothing is too much trouble – and in a short time George has shown mastery of our web-site. Also thanks to Margaret for being our 'greeter.' This is a new post as it were, and it has worked well. We shall be losing our youngest member of the committee, Christina, who will be off to university in September. We wish you well Christina and don't forget, you will be always welcome back. And thanks to all the committee. Such a lot is packed into these meetings which take place now 3/4 times a year. A lot of work is also done in 'huddles' – and it seems to work well. Don't forget that the committee serves you so, do not hesitate to bring anything you feel needs airing to a committee member – and I can assure you that points raised are always discussed thoroughly and frankly.

I would like to thank is Lindsay Nicholson who sorts the music out when it is handed in. It's quite a job especially when she discovers music that should have been handed in, sometimes, years back. We now have a new system where you sign for the music and I am hoping that this will work and so ensures that music is handed back promptly. For now, the only music to be given back is the *Tapestry* and *The Christ Child's Lullaby*. This should be handed back directly to Carole who will tick you off – if you know what I mean.

Now, as always there is the future. Quite soon there will be our summer concert at Dunton with the Maria Fidelis Gospel Choir. This will be quite an experience, not least of all, singing together *Chatter with the Angels*. I have invited Karen Gibson, their conductor to lead that. Then there's the CD recording in October. I hope to record most of the music that you have now.

# MARIA FIDELIS SCHOOL



**just a small part of the gospel choir**

The Maria Fidelis RC Convent School is a Roman Catholic secondary school in Camden London. It is an all girls school, for 11-16 year olds and has a mixed sixth form. The school was founded in 1830 by the Faithful Companions of Jesus, and was at first an industrial school financed by charitable appeals. The school then progressed to being a convent boarding school and then to a selective non-fee paying grammar school known as St. Aloysius. The school became a comprehensive establishment in 1974 with the merger of St. Aloysius with St. Vincent's Secondary School which was run by the Sisters of Charity. The name Maria Fidelis was chosen by the Sisters meaning Mary Most Faithful and the school motto is Fidelity. The school today stands on two sites at North Gower Street and Phoenix Road in the Somers Town area of Camden.

On the school's website there is the following about the Gospel Choir's successful performance in the BBC Songs of Praise Senior School Choir competition.

On its first competitive outing Maria Fidelis Gospel Choir beat St Aidan's CE High School, Harrogate, a previous winner and Rugby School, a third time finalist, to win this prestigious competition. The competition, which took place on 13 March at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank was screened on BBC1 on 18 April 2010. Choirs each sang a traditional hymn and a piece of inspirational music before a panel of judges including Howard Goodall, David Grant and Claire Sweeney.

Maria Fidelis Gospel Choir, led by Ms Karen Gibson and accompanied by Mr Emmanuel Waldron swept the judges away with its superb rendition of the traditional hymn, *As the Deer pants for the Water* with a moving solo by year 11 soprano Gloria Amponsah. The inspirational piece, *Oh Mary O Martha*, a spiritual, with a complex and technical arrangement by Ms Gibson, featured adlibs from altos, Mahalia Fontaine, year 11 and Courtney Lewin-Greaves of year 9.

The judges, in awarding the prize to Maria Fidelis praised the choir for its beautiful and soulful singing as well as its technical virtuosity.

The main item will be *Blow Away the Morning Dew*, the Somerset Folk Song Suite which will also be the main part of our concerts on the 10<sup>th</sup> Easter Tour of the USA in 2011. Regarding the USA tour, work is in hand. It will be more expensive because of the rise of tax on air fares and this leads to an interesting and important point. In the past these tours have been so cheap. Such tours arranged by specialist companies are at the least three times as much. When I have mentioned our prices to companies and to singers, they have really marvelled. For 2011, whatever price it will still be as cheap, but of course it will be expensive to those who will understandably compare it with previous prices. I know that I could easily fill up the places with outsiders, but I would not be happy unless the majority were Amicis. It would not be the same. Anyway that will be discussed in committee. The person doing all the work on this is Carole. As I said last year, and many times, the Amicis would not be the same without her; if it wasn't for Carole, whose idea it was in the first place, this choir may never have existed. So Carole many, many thanks for all your time, energy and expertise – and thank you looking after the table at the entrance at the start of rehearsals.

In the past I have had a hold on the choir when we rehearsed at home. I always said that if I was not elected as Musical Director, I would still let you use the rehearsal room – but I would lock the toilets. Now here in Trinity this has changed. But seriously, I would have it no other way.

I usually end with a quote. Here's one by John Ruskin the nineteenth century English Art Critic:

*If you have any soul worth expressing, it will show itself in your singing.*

Or to put it another way:-

*The Amicis have a soul worth expressing, and it shows in their singing.*

Douglas Coombes



**PROFILE OF KAREN GIBSON**  
**Conductor of Maria Fidelis School Gospel Choir**

Karen's music training began in 1973 at the age of ten, when she started the piano and the oboe. Between 1980 and 1982 she co-founded, with her sister, 2 groups for which she arranged and taught performance pieces. With these groups, *Windsong*, a wind quartet and *New Dawn*, an cappella sextet, Karen performed regularly all over England and the US and went on to sing for BBC's Songs Of Praise and for Radio 2's 'Gospel Train' with Gloria Gaynor.

In 1984 Karen began directing through her involvement with the District choir, a church choir with members from all over the South East. In 1994 Karen was approached by BBC Radio 2 to be the guest choir director for a Gospel Train broadcast.

With her Kingdom Choir, she has performed with such pop luminaries as Elton John and with Gospel greats such as Andrae Crouch and Fred Hammond.

Currently Karen works part-time as a music teacher at Maria Fidelis. She also works for CM (formally known as Community Music), teaching on initiatives called 'Break-beat' and 'Sound Foundation' which mentor and develop skill in disaffected or excluded young people through music.

Karen is also on the Board of Directors for the Gospel and Arts Consortium who raise the profile of Gospel Music arts through the Gospel Arts and Music Academy.

**CONDUCTING DAY at TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH, BIGGLESWADE on Saturday 8 MAY 2010**

*The following write-up by Elizabeth Gammel will appear in the next Mastersinger, the magazine of the Association of British Choral Directors*



For the third time, Douglas organised a day for conductors to come together, share best practice and then put that into reality, working with 40 members of his upper-voice choir, The Amici Singers.

Nine conductors, plus two observers, from as far a field as Burnley, Salisbury, Nottingham, and London as well as closer to Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, met on a Saturday morning for a Masterclass with Douglas. The day was oversubscribed; some late-bookers had to be turned away because this course was intentionally kept to a small number of participating conductors to enable the greatest level of personal attention and time working with the choir in the afternoon.

The level of the participants' experience varied considerably, but all shared a great interest in developing their technique. Among the many aspects of conducting discussed in the morning session, the one which received most attention was the Upbeat. Douglas explained in fascinating detail the critical importance of this preparatory beat and how, in a split second, you can convey so much.

The participants had already learnt two different pieces of music from the repertoire of the Amici Singers and Douglas went over these for the benefit of the whole group. After a quick lunch it was time to go and meet the choir for a marathon rehearsal. Each conductor had at least twenty minutes to work with the choir and accompanist (lots were drawn to establish the order.) The choir were instructed to precisely follow the conductor in front of them – which meant the level of concentration was at sky-high level! Douglas observed and made suggestions.

Over a convivial bring-and-share tea everyone enjoyed the chance to chat and get to know each other better before getting ready for the third part of the day – the concert. This gave participants the opportunity to conduct their two pieces in front of an audience. The evening concluded with an open forum in which everyone explored some very interesting aspects of conducting and contributed their observations.

As one of the nine conductors and also a member of the Amici Singers I was in a dual role. I had a wonderful opportunity to really experience what it is like to be directed by such different musicians – and also to face my friends as a conductor. In the forum I was asked how hard this was, I replied that it was both an advantage (I know the choir and music very well) and also a considerable disadvantage (I know the choir and music very well – no pressure then!)

It has been my good fortune to attend a number of conducting courses; I always greatly enjoy watching my fellow participants and learning from them. This course, although only one day long, had an excellent mix of 'listening and doing', plus the invaluable experience of being able to conduct two pieces right the way though under proper concert conditions, which really was the icing on the cake.

Everyone who came on the course is now signed up to receive the electronic newsletters Douglas produces for

**Up Beat**, an association for conductors he founded in March 2009 – which now has 249 members.

At the end of a demanding and very intense day, everyone, choir and conductors alike, agreed they had thoroughly enjoyed such a fascinating experience, learnt a great deal...and would love to do it again some time.

Elizabeth Gammell

And now some comments from some of the participants.

What a pleasure it was to meet you and Carol on Saturday. It was such a busy day and I certainly went away full of enthusiasm and thinking of so many things to do in the future with my little choir.

It would be wonderful to pop along to an Amici rehearsal, many thanks for the invitation. At present I rehearse on Thursday nights down in London, but I shall be free in July if you have not broken up for the holidays.

Many thanks again for such a wonderful day and I shall be in touch asking for pointers in the future no doubt!

Best wishes,

Penny Manser - *Vocal Animateur*

Dear Douglas,

Thank-you for your e-mail and for your kind comments on my efforts. I had a great day on Saturday. It was a joy to work with your lovely choir; I need not have been so terrified after all! Everyone was so friendly welcoming, positive and encouraging. The model of the day was an excellent way to learn from others experiences as well as your own; thank-you very much for that opportunity. I had a good journey back home as I was travelling quite early.

I am looking forward to the bedtime reading you have sent and to trying to implement all that I learned with you at Wednesday's choir practice. Thanks again and best wishes to both you and Carole.

Olwyn Pearce (the lady from Burnley)

And an e-mail from Denise Gray – an Amici Soprano who sent this to me at 4.19, yes 4.19 on Sunday morning

I've woken up thinking about the day! It was interesting to observe the different conducting styles; pleasing to know we were playing a part in their real life, practical experience and to recognise how good we are at watching and responding;

I didn't stay for tea - came home instead - so I may have missed an opportunity to talk with the conductors, but I'm wondering if there was a 'feedback' session to them from the choir? (*I explained to Denise that I talked to the conductors for about half an hour after the rehearsal in the afternoon*). I'm sure this will have happened to some degree and I know that during the rehearsal, Carole made some comments to some of them.

I'm wondering if this idea might be useful on future days : Give each choir member a 'stick it' note for each conductor and after the rehearsal ask the choir to write a positive/constructive

Thank you both once again for a great day yesterday at Potton and Biggleswade. It was good to be in such esteemed company; there were several successful and well-honed lady conductors in action and your so-friendly and skilled Amici Singers were a pleasure to be with again. Your own experience, skills and energy were great to have on parade and your behind the scenes industry etc., Carole, indispensable again. Thank you both.  
John Collins

Dear Douglas

It was a privilege to be able to conduct *In Haven*, I dithered greatly over the choice, I think it is such a gem of a song that I was scared of the damage I could do it. *How Can I Keep From Singing* was a different challenge because it is actually not one of my favourites and I've been trying to work out why ever since we started singing it; but it was lovely to conduct and I'd now like to do it again - and get it right! I did really enjoy the day; it was stimulating, entertaining, terrifying and exhausting - more mentally than physically (though when I sang the descant in the first hymn this morning which had two top As, I realised I was feeling a tad vocally tired too!) I thought the choir coped magnificently with *The Nine*: for those who doubted your words, "Anything could happen..." - the first run through of *David of the White Rock* should have made them realise what you'd been talking about!

As ever, I found it utterly fascinating watching the other eight - the way they stood/moved greatly intrigued me, as well as the technicalities of gesture and beat. There is SO much to think about in a split fraction of time. I think where the group really started to feel the deep waters was when you spoke about the Upbeat in the morning session; but until they actually tried it in the afternoon, the reality of what you described showed who was going to sink or swim!

Elizabeth Gammell

comment about their conducting style. During the tea break, put up a piece of flip chart paper for each conductor and ask the choir to stick their notes on to it.

It would take a little bit of the rain forest stationery wise, but would provide an instant visual feedback to each individual conductor, and all of them would be able to read each others and maybe pick up tips/advice. They could either be handed their flip chart page to take away with them or, if you have the resources, the comments could be typed up and sent to them?

There might be a need to prime certain choir members to ensure there was some constructive comment for all conductors, particularly those who weren't very good to ensure they weren't too deflated!!

I'm finding it hard to comment on the male conductors - found it much easier to relate to all of the women!

Wendy - liked her animation and intensity - made me feel she knew what she wanted from the pieces and worked to get us to colour and shape words/phrases.

Elizabeth - fantastic, inclusive looking at whole choir; beautifully expressive face and of course that open mouth that wasn't going to let us close up too soon!

Penny - liked her encouraging twinkle in her eye and felt she knew what she wanted and with more confidence would get it. Loved her excitement at how she could 'control' us with minimal hand movement.

Ronnie - always know where I am; thorough and precise; great facial encouragement; felt ever so slightly left out as a 1st Soprano, but we all know where her allegiance lies!!

Olwyn - obviously a singer - very expressive facially and with body movement; felt she conveyed feeling in her pieces and made me feel involved.

Yvonne - want her to look at me more and make me feel involved by using her facial expression - I know she was really concentrating though.

You must be exhausted - a long day, with huge amount of concentration on your part. Hoping I'll get back to sleep now I've vented!!  
Best wishes  
Denise Gray

*I hope that Denise managed to get back to sleep - but a nice idea and some excellent constructive comments!*

## BATTLE PROMS 2010

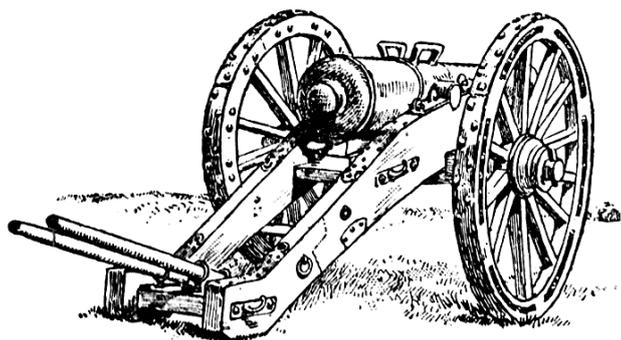
The venues and dates of this year's concerts are:

Burghley House - 10 July  
Blenheim Palace - 17 July  
Hatfield House - 24 July  
Highclere Castle - 21 July  
Borde Hill - 7 August  
Althorp - 14 August

You will find all the details on the website:

[www.battleproms.com](http://www.battleproms.com)

Also on the website is a short promo film which certainly captures the excitement and flavour of the event as well as an extensive photo gallery



## INFORMATION GIVEN TO SHANNON EXPRESS

For those of you who don't know, Shannon Express is a barbershop chorus of some 60 men, based in Potton, for whom I am their president. On the weekend of 28 - 30 May, the choir went to Harrogate to take part in the annual National Barbershop Convention and Competition. In the competition there were 37 choirs and Shannon Express came 7<sup>th</sup>. They received the highest mark since 1998 when they came first and received the Gold Medal. Before the choir left for the weekend they were given the following advice. Much of the advice has been given to you in previous newsletters but some new members may have missed this. I hope that you will find it interesting.

**Dehydration** can be a problem before and during the performance. The vocal folds (cords) need plenty of mucus for lubrication. This internal hydration needs time to build up so, during the week leading up to the competition, start drinking plenty of water (2 litres of water a day would be nice). You can tell when you are properly hydrated; your pee is clear, not yellow!

Sing something every day during the week before the Competition. Do some gentle warm up exercises, humming, sirening etc. Sing both songs through, preferably in front of a mirror. Get your face moving; it's the biggest contributor to your visual performance.

### In the system (Sat)

Once we are in the system on **Saturday** (meeting in Warm up Hall first), be attentive to any information being passed on by the **Chorus Manager**. (During free time, **hum, take in air**, remain at least 80% focussed. It is not the time to be telling jokes or talking to somebody who is most probably trying to stay with the plan).

### Performance

Expect the sensation of **singing on your own but be confident and sing as you have rehearsed**. A lot of choruses fail to achieve their expected performance due to members being totally surprised when they start to sing.

### Other things of importance before and during the weekend

Maintain good Riser discipline now and during Convention. When a pitch pipe sounds, it is the call to assemble to start singing so get to your place on the risers as quickly as possible and don't talk.

The make-up we will be wearing on stage is usually a foundation & blusher so you will need a towel and cleanser to remove it afterwards. Bald heads will get extra treatment.

Again, try to be first in the queue so as not to miss valuable warm up time.

This is your chance to sing all the Polecat songs!

Gang singing is encouraged (**after the Competition**) **Fifth wheeling is not acceptable** (Do not join in with a quartet). Some **Barbershoppers** get quite upset about **fifth wheeling**, so avoid this possibility!

You will have plenty of opportunities to sing in a quartet during Convention - just ask.