



Back last June, at the A.G.M., it was suggested that a way be found to increase our practice time, three alternatives being put forward. One was to increase the length of our year; one to have practices on Bank Holiday Mondays and during school half terms and one to lengthen each practice session. Norma promised the committee would discuss these alternatives.

I'm pleased to be able to report that after a full and lively discussion our committee has decided to lengthen each practice by fifteen minutes. We shall continue to start at seven forty five but will now finish at ten o'clock instead of quarter to ten.

Why not the alternatives? Many members go away over bank holidays and have family commitments during school holidays so would not benefit if that approach had been adopted. Strangely the varying position of Easter makes lengthening the year less attractive than might first appear. We cannot move the date of the November Concert much or we won't have time to practice for the Christmas concert. We don't want to get rid of the Christmas concert as it makes money. We can't make the Spring Concert later or when we have an early Easter it will be in the Easter school holiday. So, lengthening the year would only benefit the Summer Concert. But an extra fifteen minutes on every practice will give us the equivalent of one and a half more practices before every major concert.

Chris Hackney.

Carmina Burana

carl orff

None of us knew, in September, how we would get on with Carl Orff's unique 'Carmina Burana'. The complex rhythms and the Latin and German words (so thoughtfully printed in wonky italics) proved a bit daunting at the outset.

But familiarity breeds performance was a going on a great for it by working very Carl Orff considered especially produced a pianos and percussion orchestration which remarkably well.

The 'warm up' acts excerpts from went down well with worked extremely hard to add drama to their vocal lines, and the dancers and lighting really contributed to the overall effect - a pity choir members could not see the full impact!



confidence (?) and the joyous event which was like shopping spree after saving up hard at every rehearsal!

Choral Societies when he version performable by two - a slimmed down I'm sure you will agree worked

featuring the young singers in 'Schulwerk' set the scene and the audience. Our soloists

Stollen Night

Hot mince pies, Christmas stollen and cheese, spiced mulled wine, coffee and orange squash, were all provided in the Parish Centre at Barnt Green for the Christmas Concert. The room was decorated with simple elegance by Andrea Wilkie and her team and provided the background for a most convivial social gathering giving an opportunity for the choir and their audience to meet in pleasant surroundings for conversation and refreshment.

The choir gave a very satisfying performance, their rendition of Stille Nacht being particularly impressive. For several years past the concert has been ably choreographed and narrated by Brian Jones whose readings have, in turn, amused and enthralled us. This year many members of the choir took leading parts, their readings, singing and acting adding another dimension to this annual festival. It would be invidious to pick individuals out from all those who contributed so ably. Suffice it to say, "I'm not sad. Alright!"

They Do That?

How are we organised? What does the committee do? Who makes decisions about concerts etc?

Have you been wondering about these issues, not knowing how to find the answers? Read on!

The B.G.C.S. is a registered charity. In order to obtain this status many years ago, a few of us framed a constitution which was submitted to the charity commissioners for their scrutiny, and in due course we were granted Charitable Status and given a registered number.

The constitution states that there shall be a Chairman, a Secretary and a Treasurer, the officers of the Society, and these officers are supported by a committee of ten full members. All these positions, officers and committee members are democratically elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Society. Each officer may serve for three consecutive years, as may each member of the committee. The three officers sign the bank mandate so that monies coming in and going out can be accounted for. The treasurer keeps the books and prepares financial statements which are presented at committee meetings and the A.G.M. and generally gives advice on levels of subscriptions, ticket prices and expenditure, but decisions on these issues rest with the committee.

It is the secretary's responsibility to prepare agendas and minutes of meetings, in collaboration with the Chairman, and some society correspondence.

The Chairman is responsible for seeing that all runs smoothly and that delegated jobs are fulfilled.

At the moment there is a small music sub-committee to discuss suitable music for concerts, venues and soloists. Their recommendations are then ratified at committee.

The Musical Director is employed by the Society and it becomes his responsibility to turn the agreed programme into a concert which will be enjoyed by Chair and audience alike.

Margaret Parry.

From the 50's Archives

As Secretary, I inherited a dusty box containing the old minute books of the Society and it occurred to me that some extracts from these early books might be of interest.

Most of you will know that the society is over 50 years old and indeed we celebrated our fiftieth birthday a couple of years ago.

The first officers and committee were elected on October 1st, 1951; Mr Leslie Armstrong Smith being appointed the first conductor and chairman. (The first woman chairman wasn't elected until 1967). Early balance sheets show that the subscription was 7/6d payable in two instalments if necessary.

The first rehearsal was a couple of weeks later at the home of the accompanist Mrs Grace Kendon in Fieri Hill Road and the choir were to rehearse here for the next 3 years. In the spring of 1952 the choir, by then consisting of 34 members, sang a concert version of Edward German's Tom Jones. Tickets were 2/6d and it cost 12/6 to tune the piano.

During the early years the Secretary's role appears to have been all encompassing. The first Secretary, Mrs Daisy Terry stepped in to sing the soprano solo role when the soloist took ill, and the second Secretary Mrs Maud Corbett took over from the pianist (who also had been taken ill) to accompany the choir at that evening's performance of 'Cloches de Corneville'. (The present Secretary is not nearly as accomplished!)

In 1953, the Society presented a concert version of 'Merrie England' in honour of the Coronation. The hall was decorated with so much apple blossom it was thought that there would be no apples in Barnt Green that autumn. At this concert the tenor soloist would not accept a fee but was paid instead with a bottle of sherry! A donation of £5 5/- was given to the Barnt Green Coronation fund.

In the next newsletter I'll see how BGCS got on in the 'swinging sixties'

Fiona Brown.

Friends of B.G.C.S.

Would you like to become a 'friend' of Barnt Green Choral Society?

As a 'friend' you would get reduced price tickets for our two main concerts held in November and March and priority booking for our popular Christmas and summer concerts. You would also receive a copy of our newsletter, which we hope to produce twice a year.

Your contribution would be really appreciated and would help the society continue to produce enjoyable concerts using first class soloists and musicians.

If you would like to become a 'friend' of B.G.C.S. please send a cheque for £10 made payable to Barnt Green Choral Society, to The Secretary, Fiona Brown, Barnt Green Choral Society, Stable Door House, School Lane, Alvechurch, Birmingham B48 7SA.

Print it Here.

We want your stories, comments, gripes and articles to print in the Newsletter. Jokes too, if they're printable!!

So, come on, put pen to paper and help make this Newsletter belong to the whole choir.

Chair Chat.

I hope you will enjoy reading this first issue of our Newsletter which we hope will appear twice a year. It is intended to be informative and I hope may answer some of your questions, in particular, what does the committee do?

Most members of the committee will contribute and my thanks go to them. In this issue I have asked Lesley Penfold, our treasurer, to set out the facts and figures of just how much it cost the society to put on the very successful Carmina Burana Concert last November.

We are fortunate at B.G.C.S. to have at the present time a healthy Bank Balance. Not all Choral Societies fare as well, as I know from experience. But this situation does not just happen. One disaster and it would be a very different story. So, let us all work together to keep our finances strong. This is essential if for our concerts we are to have first class soloists and musicians.

You can help in various ways:

By supporting the weekly Raffle:

By asking your Partners and Friends to consider becoming "A Friend of the Society," details elsewhere in this issue:

And by supporting the occasional social events, which the committee hope to arrange during the year.

It is a wonderful gift to be able to sing and give pleasure to others. Under the direction of Steven Cowperthwaite we can. So, please give me and your committee your continuing support. Thank you.

Norma Hazell.

Extracts from the Treasurer's Red Book.

What an enjoyable experience I had singing in Carmina Burana. I hope you did too. But, as I stood on the blocks waiting to begin I looked with amazement at the number of percussionists ranged in front of us and £ signs began to float before my eyes. It was at that point I wondered, how much had all this cost. So, after the last notes had died away I went in search of Lesley Penfold, the Treasurer, and asked her to provide the following breakdown for this edition of the Newsletter.

Concert Expenses and Income November 2003 –*Carmina Burana*

<u>Expenses</u>	£	<u>Income</u>	£
Venue hire	200	Tickets	1260
Piano hire	295	Programmes	150
Scenery	25	Teas	30
Percussion players (6)	655		
Piano tuning	80		
Pianists (2)	300		
Dancers' expenses	20		
Conductor	225		
Soloists	370		
Printing	30		
Total	2,200		1,440

Above are shown the expenses and receipts for our November 2003 concert.

Despite entering the thousands, the expenses are fairly typical of all our "formal" events. Musicians, after all, need to be paid, and the incidentals add up. Our Musical Directors have always shown great skill in choosing programmes which are fairly economical to stage. Consider how much a full orchestra would cost, and it becomes obvious why we don't have one very often!

The receipts, however are not typical. With an audience of over 180, this is our best ever, financially – even better than *Messiah* in Bromsgrove School Chapel, which was the most memorable event in the Treasurer's Big Red Book. This is, of course, apart from Christmas and Summer concerts, which we rely upon to supplement our bank account.

We don't expect make a profit on these events – our *raison d'être* is to make music, not profit – but we should try to contain the loss. We can all help -every ticket sold contributes to the fund which goes towards future events, so please bear this in mind when persuading your friends and family to sign up to the next concert. It's also good to have lots of people to sing to!

Lesley Penfold.



"A trifling thing, Sir, we do declare.
'Tis just a matter of an amount of your gold!"

From a Back Seat.

You know, I never thought I'd manage Carmina Burana. It wasn't the notes so much as the rhythms. But we pulled it off. A most enjoyable performance. Mind you we had our share of agro from the sections to left and right during practices. Sight reading isn't a strong point for some of us in the back reaches of the choir, but then, F's and G's, especially the high ones, cause problems in other sections, don't they?

It doesn't help that the tenors sit in front of us with smug expressions on their faces, not only can they sight read well, but they can get the high notes too!

Still after that was over it was time to relax for the five weeks to the Christmas Concert. After all everyone knows the Christmas hymns and carols, don't they? So, its an easy matter to learn the fifteen pieces the choir will sing on its own, isn't it? We don't need to practice the audience participation bits as we all know them.

Well, hang on a bit, some of us, well, me anyway, don't belong to a church, let alone a church choir, we don't know them. Never mind, if someone'll just tell us what they are we'll look 'em up and learn them in our own time. When did we find out what they were? We found out at the last practice before the concert, that's when. A bit late for any learning. Still, I thought, 'As long as I get the breathing right and the mouth movements stay in time with the music nobody will know I'm miming.' The nice bit was many of the verses of community carols are in unison. Big sigh of relief!

A little bird told me we weren't going to have mince pies this year; new management and all that, new brooms sweeping old, stale ideas away. Funny, I got one, a mince pie I mean, and it was hot too! Well, tepid! I got a bit of that German Stollen stuff with a slice of cheese. I take my hat off to whoever cut that up, so thin it was transparent my bit was. The mulled wine was very good, spreading parfum of cinamon and good will over all.

Now we're on to Schubert and Britten, Smith and, Oh no, not Rutter again! We've had our first practice, practice at finding the right note, let alone the right time and right order. But, there was one shining highlight. Here on the back row we got something right. We became aware of those clear blue eyes on us. "Wonderful," he said. "They've got it right." Not the notes, not the timing, you understand, but that crescendo and diminuendo, perfect! We basked in the glory of the moment. And that's why we all keep on doing it, really, isn't it? That glorious moment when we get it right.

Spring Concert.

The Spring concert will take place on Saturday March 20th at 7:30 p.m. in St Andrew's Church, Sandill's Lane, Barnt Green.

The programme will be Schubert's 'Mass in G Major', Britten's 'Hymn to 'St. Cecilia', Franz Schubert's 'The Lord is my shepherd', extracts from 'Psalmfest' by John Rutter, including his setting of the 23rd Psalm and local composer Eric Smith's 'Praise to the Holiest'.

Have you heard the one that goes....?

"The Great Bar"

Two men sit at a bar. The first one just slowly sips at his drink, studying the other man at the far end of the bar. Finally, the first man makes up his mind, and walks up the second man. He sits back down and continues nursing his drink. The second man, thinking nothing of it, continues his drinking in peace. After a while, the first man speaks up.

"This place is great, isn't it?" he asks. The second man, somewhat surprised at the stranger's remark, replies.

"Why do you say that?" The first man, in a low tone of voice, responds, "Follow me." The second man, well drawn up into this hush-hush secret attribute of the bar act, follows. They stop at the large window at one end of the room.

"Here's why." The first man thows open the window, and boldly steps out into--nothing. But he remains aloft!

"The air currents are great here!" he exclaims. "It's very relaxing." As his feet return to the bar-room floor, he invites the second man to try it. The second man, somewhat questioningly, looks over the windowsill--down to the pavement twelve stories below. He looks to either side, and finally up above, to see if there was anything holding the first man up. Convinced that it was no trickery, the second man swallows, closes his eyes, and steps out into--nothing. And promptly falls twelve stories to the pavement below.

The first man, with a slight grin on his face, gets his drink, returns to his original spot at the bar, and starts sipping again. Looking rather irritated, the barkeep comes over to the place where the man sits.

"You know," he says, disgusted. "You're a real jerk when you've had a few, Mr. Kent."

"Jesus Is Watching You"

One night a burglar is trying to break into a house. He's sneaking across the lawn when he hears a voice -

"Jesus is watching you!"

He jumps, turns around, but he doesn't see anything. So he starts creeping across the lawn again. "Jesus is watching you!"

He hears it again. So now the burglar is really looking around, and he sees a parrot in a cage by the side of the house. He says to the parrot,

"Did you say that?"

The parrot answers "Yes I did."

So the burglar says, "What's your name?"

The parrot says "Clarence." The burglar says "What kind of stupid idiot would name his parrot Clarence?"

The parrot laughs and says,

"The same stupid idiot that named his Rottweiler 'Jesus' "