

GOING DUTCHIt's tough work but someone has to do it! And so it was, with fear and trepidation Messrs. Gifford and Reed, with wives in tow, set out to explore Rotterdam and to meet the choir who would be hosting us in May this year. How would they describe Christelijk Mannenkoor Prins Alexander? It was just like looking in a mirror (Basses abundant, Baritones wistful, second tenors looking lost, and first tenors gone for a lie-down). But all extremely welcoming and lots of banter. They sound like us and they look like us (sadly). Their sub-committee responsible for planning our visit have really put the effort in to ensure a great visit. And whilst there will be plenty of singing there will also be much of interest to see and do. Choir members are reminded that their passports must have at least 6 months



extant when they travel and to take out appropriate holiday insurance to cover the four days. And don't forget your clogs! Our picture shows Messrs Gifford and Reed with the host choir's MD, the much celebrated Arjan Breukhoven.

Tony Slavin.

It was ten years ago this month that the choir sang without copy for the first time at our regular February concert at Creech St Michael.

It was ten years ago that the Mayor of Taunton Deane became the Patron of our choir and the first Mayor's concert in that capacity was held in the Temple Methodist Church on Saturday 20th March 2009 with Barnstaple MVC our guest choir.

SELFIE

Jeremy Corke T1

" I joined the choir a couple of years ago, then left for a while before re-joining in late 2018. I'm a chartered tax adviser and I run a small accountancy office from my home near Musgrove Park Hospital. We moved to Somerset from London 30 years ago when I was working for a large practice in the city however the environment didn't suit me so I opted for a quieter life in the sticks. I'm married to Paula, she teaches at Kings College and we have four children, all now flown the nest ! My hobbies include playing cello in the Somerset County Orchestra, I play regular string quartets at home, I love cycling and long distance walking, jogging and playing tennis. For the past ten years I have hiked annually in the Alps with a rucksack, staying in mountain huts and small guest houses whilst listening on my iPod to music. I'm a member of a business network group called Bob Club. We meet fortnightly and discuss business networking and how to enhance business relationships. Working alone has it's ups and downs. One becomes a bit of a recluse but, on the plus side, one gets so much work done without the hassle of office politics and admin".



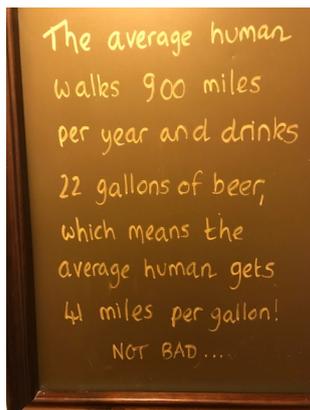
How many of these 1981 singers can you name?



THE MENIN GATE

Ypres was a central point for a great deal of fighting during the First World War. The First Battle of Ypres, in October-November 1914, secured the town for the Allied side, but it stood in an exposed position, in a salient surrounded on 3 sides by German positions. The Second Battle of Ypres in April- May 1915 involved considerable use of poison gas; my own grandfather was gassed so severely that he was invalided out of the War. Third Ypres, better known as the Battle of Passchendaele took place in July- November 1917. There were further battles in 1918. The defence of this part of the front line was mainly carried out by troops from Britain and the British Empire (or Commonwealth). As a result, many thousands of British and Commonwealth, and indeed German, servicemen lost their lives in the area. Many are buried in the cemeteries that are a feature of the landscape, but because of the confused nature of warfare generally, the muddy conditions, and the effect of shelling in particular, many were not found, or were not identifiable. Of the 300,000 on the Allied side who died around Ypres, some 90,000 have no known graves. It was decided to build a memorial to the missing on the eastern side of the ruined town of Ypres, on the road to Menin, the road that the troops would have used on their way to the battlefields. It was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield in 1921, in the form of a large arch straddling the road, and unveiled in 1924 by Field Marshal Viscount Plumer. Panels on the monument are inscribed with the names of 54,395 servicemen, including 9 recipients of the Victoria Cross. Despite the huge size, it turned out to be too small. An arbitrary date in August 1917 was selected, and all those killed later are commemorated elsewhere, as are all Newfoundland and New Zealand casualties. It has been a focal point for memorials ever since. In 1928, the local fire brigade began a tradition of sounding the Last Post at 8pm every evening; this has continued ever since. During the German occupation in the Second World War, the ceremony took place at Brookwood in Surrey, and was revived immediately at the Menin Gate by Polish forces on the very day they retook Ypres in the later stages of the war. It will be a

great privilege for us to sing there, but we are by no means alone. The Last Post ceremony is extended on many evenings to accommodate choirs from around the world, and for other acts of remembrance. I was present myself in July 2014 at a ceremony where a wreath was laid to commemorate those who died from Somerset. "When we perform there on Thursday 9th I am sure it will be a moving occasion for all of us". *Barry Havenhand*



*Pause for thought – can we or should we ?
Time is relentless as it drives forward tick tick tick ...
How does that song go
“ If I only had time , only time
So much to do , if I only had time
Time like the wind goes a hurrying by
Where to begin, there are mountains I'd climb if I had
time ..”
Time is a strange dimension
It can hang over us almost stationary and oppressive
as in circumstances where troops wait before they
“ Go over the top “
Or it can impose a pressure such as in a newsroom
where reporters and editors struggle to meet a deadline .
Happily time can also be something to look forward to
Such as a holiday, be it long or short.
This is a time to relax and enjoy
being somewhere nice with friends and relatives.
Tick tick tick ... soon be time to do something ...
John Hudson (T2)*

73 ½ years and counting ...it may seem a long way away still, but the season starting in September 2020 - 21 will be when the choir celebrates 75 years! Starting in Rowbarton in 1946 at the offices of the District Labour Party our choir was originally called The Wessex Male Singers. By 1955 membership was down to 15 members, but by 2005-06 for the Diamond Jubilee the choir was 60 strong. For both the Golden Jubilee in 1995 – 96 and the Diamond Jubilee Celebration Programmes were produced sponsored by many local firms. David Gill succeeded his father as President in 1980 – that's 39 years! In the same 2020 – 21 season David will be celebrating 40 years as our President..... We must now start working on celebrating our 75 year anniversary in a suitable manner. I am going to ask Chris Evans to upload the souvenir programmes from the two major anniversaries as an incentive for us to do something similar or even better. The advent of online technology will make the process different I suspect, but that should not stop us celebrating in a manner that will persist as the historical archives I now look after. The Gazette in 1956 reported that the Wessex Male Singers were going to perform at the Rural Community Council Singing Festival in Wells Cathedral in 1957. There were vacancies, particularly in the Tenor section and any interested should contact Dennis Attrill. The choir roll for 1995 included David Gill, John Blackmore (Concert Secretary), Brian Reynolds, Tony West, Stuart Gifford, Trevor Davies, Bill Honeyman and Life member Valerie Hill and boasted over 50 singers. We are embarking on a number of workshops funded by the Somerset Community Foundation, and we will sing with the massed Somerset choirs at Wells Cathedral in 2021. To celebrate our origins we have arranged a concert on April 24th 2021 at St Andrew's Church Rowbarton .

“Can you all do two things for me – firstly dig out ANYTHING you have, or remember, about the choir from earlier days – and second, consider who you can recommend we contact to support our Celebration Programme for our 75th Anniversary – which is actually the original Diamond Anniversary (Queen Victoria's 60th anniversary was called Diamond and it stuck. Sapphire is the alternate - what do you think ??? “Paull Robathan, Chairman



Rotterdam is not a typical tourist destination, but that doesn't mean it won't be an interesting place to visit. It is the second largest city in the Netherlands, with a population of 633,000 (for comparison, Bristol is 459,000), and part of a bigger conurbation including The Hague. It occupies a position where the Nieuwe Maas channel, part of the Rhine/Meuse/Scheldt delta meets the North Sea. It is this location, giving easy access to a wide hinterland, that has led to it becoming the largest port in Europe. It has a history going back to 1270, when a dam was first constructed along the river, and it grew steadily, especially in the late 19th century, when a new waterway was constructed. Unfortunately it suffered the fate of many port facilities in World War II, when the city centre, together with the dock area, was completely destroyed by German bombing in May 1940. The objective was to force a Dutch surrender, or else other cities were to suffer a similar fate. Since then it has, of course, been rebuilt, so this means it comprises a mix of modern architecture, interesting, unusual, good, and bad. Landmarks include the Erasmus Bridge, a huge cable stayed bridge, the Markthal, with many stalls selling all sorts of food (not just cheese) and the famous Cube Houses. Try to think of a cube, tilted at 45%, and perched on top of a hexagonal pylon- that should whet your appetite for seeing them, which I hope we can do! The Maeslant Barrier, which protects the city against storm surges, is one of the largest moving structures on earth, and I believe a visit is on our itinerary. Rotterdam has a young demographic, by European standards, and it is a multi-ethnic and multicultural city. 50% of the population is either of non-Dutch origin, or has at least one parent who was not born in the Netherlands. The current Mayor, Ahmed Aboutaleb is of Moroccan descent. Famous residents have included Erasmus, and "Colonel" Tom Parker, Elvis's manager, who lived in Rotterdam in his teens. In terms of sport, there is Feyenoord for top class football. As for music and culture, we already know there is a male voice choir, but there is also an orchestra, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and several theatres and museums, including a tax museum. I'm sure Steve will organise a visit for us; it sounds unmissable. Tourists flock to Amsterdam, only 43 miles away, and Amsterdam is certainly a fantastic city, as many of you will know, but they rarely bother to make the journey to this less picturesque but nevertheless interesting destination. I have driven through Rotterdam, in particular through the tunnel under the river, but never stopped there. Whilst I am certainly looking forward to the singing, and



The renowned choir "Prince Alexander" was founded on October 20, 1966 and under the professional direction of conductor Arjan Breukhoven and commitment of the members obtained a great reputation far beyond the region. Regularly, appearances on radio and TV are cared for. Yearly an average of about twenty concerts and participation in church services are catered, this both at home and abroad. Since 1997 the choir has a friendship bond with a male choir from Germany: The AGV Sangerbund 1920 e.V Sandhausen at Heidelberg. Besides that the choir also maintains friendly relations with Mannerchor Rottluff 1839 e.V Chemnitz since 2011. "Prince Alexander" is a Christian men's choir and thus an important part of the repertoire of songs has a Christian background: They sing edited Psalms to exciting Negro Spirituals. Besides, beautiful classic and modern songs are also sung. The choir consists of nearly 90 members, and finds its home in the district of Prince Alexander of Rotterdam. The members live in the surrounding area of Rotterdam.

"Hallo prins Alexander. We kijken erg uit naar ons bezoek in mei vanaf de reisroute, het ziet ernaar uit dat we een geweldige tijd zullen hebben! De beste wensen, het Taunton Deane"

Mini-Choir trip saturday 11th. May 2019



Together with the Chr. Mannenkoor Prins Alexander we organise a Mini-Choir trip. We start at 9.30 at Comenius College, Lijstersingel 2 in Capelle a/d IJssel and travel by bus.



Half an hour later we arrive in Delft. We'll have coffee at the Hampshire Hotel.



The center of Delft is carfree. Therefore we take a short ride to the Oude Kerk, HH Geestkerkhof 25. It is a five minute walk.



At 11.30 we'll give a mini-concert with both choirs led by Arjan Breukhoven and Nick Thomas and accompanied by Matthijs Breukhoven on the beautiful major organ.

After the concert everyone is free to visit the centre of Delft and have a lunch. Culture, shops and restaurants in abundance!



At 14.30 everyone must be at the busstop. We drive to the Nieuwe Waterweg.



There we visit the Maeslantkering, the most recent part of the Deltaworks. In the visitorscenter we can see a film, a huge scale model, have a guided tour and of course a look at the kering itself.



At 17.00 we leave by bus to Capelle aan den IJssel. Round 17.30 we are expected in the Comenius College.

After a drink or two we can enjoy an Old-Dutch meal. If

necessary, you can pass on dietary requirements in advance so that this can be taken into account. Drinks are of course for your own account. TDMVC will bring a taste of Sheppys Somerset Cider.

We shall enjoy pleasant singing. The English call it 'afterglow'.

27th April 2019 An invitation to breakfast - out of this world !



Brian Jones enters the pressurised capsule of Orbiter 3

Up, Up and Away

Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones sailed into history when their Breitling Orbiter 3 completed the first nonstop balloon trip around the world, a 20-day voyage of aviation and personal discovery. Brian Jones says "When the Breitling Orbiter 3 touched down in Egypt, my life changed dramatically and it came as quite a shock to be referred to as one of history's 'aviation pioneers'.

"While we were drifting high above the earth in our small capsule, we became very aware of the fragility of our planet and of the people who inhabit it. The Charity

'Winds of Hope' aims to promote a more sensitive approach to our environment and to the future of mankind. In particular we seek to help children who are suffering in forgotten or unreported circumstances."

Brian Jones is our speaker at a choir breakfast on Saturday 27th April at Taunton & Pickeridge Golf Club at 9.00am. Brian has asked that by way of appreciation for his talk that we should make a donation to Winds of Hope on the day. For interest, Brian's web site is at www.orbiterballoon.com

The breakfast will be followed by a music workshop for the remainder of the morning.



