

Harleston Choral Society - New year Letter 2020

Dear Fellow Choir Members,

I hope it is not too late to hope you all had a good Christmas and to wish you all a Happy and Musical New Year.

We have another challenging and interesting year ahead of us and, with Janette encouraging and quietly pushing us, we will attain even higher levels of enjoyment and musicality. I know I continually feel amazed at Janette's ability to enable choir members to overcome a difficult passage of music without realising they have done so! Thank you also to Karen for bringing her sense of humour and musical ability to assist Janette, even when she wasn't feeling 100%.

Our year started with the initial rehearsals for "Dido and Aeneas". Janette so helpfully put the story on our website, otherwise I think those of us who had never come across the piece before would not have had a clue what was going on! The anthems gave us so much training in correct breathing.

We held another really enjoyable quiz evening in March at St. James' Village Hall and, just for once, it wasn't raining. The food was wonderful and our brain cells worked overtime. Thank you to everyone who helped in any way, the teamwork was amazing. (Sorry, I've used that word again!)

We continued with D & A until our wonderful concert in June. Everyone seemed to give of their very best; the anthems were so moving and I don't think anyone present that night will forget the support and encouragement we had from our solo witches and sailor!

Our next event was a wonderful garden party held in the garden of Julia and John Awty. The weather was sunny, some people even wore hats, and the food provided by members resulted in quite a few recipes being swapped. Once again, our grateful thanks go to Julia and John for lending us their garden for the afternoon.

Autumn term started on September 9th and we were being introduced to Bob Chilcott's extraordinary "Twelve days of Christmas" and "Behold that Star". Vaughan Williams' "The First Nowell" almost seemed a rest after tackling the "12 days". However, it really grew on everyone and we all got familiar with the condition of "earworms".

The AGM intervened on 23rd September with 4 members standing down from the committee. Jo Curry (chair) was handing over to me, Jenny Hyams (secretary) to both Kate Peacher (publicity secretary) and Sue Foster (minutes secretary), and Carol Hammond (friends' secretary) to Fiona Bartlett. John Formston also joined the committee as a member. I know we thanked all the leaving members at the time, but the Society owes them so much for their selfless contribution behind the scenes over the last few years. I would also like to thank the present committee for all their support during these last 3 months. We are certainly learning to work together. We have also been saddened by the death of Kate's husband, Joanna's mother and her partner's father.

We were invited to take part in the Harleston Town Christmas Concert and 14 members had the great pleasure of doing so on 10th December. It had been decided to sing "I saw three ships" unaccompanied, as it was going to be one of our contributions in our Christmas concert. Little did we know that 400 miniature paper ships had been made and hung from inside the church roof to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower sailing to America. I did try to point out to Canon Nigel that we could try to sing "I saw 400 ships come sailing in" but it wouldn't scan properly. It was a lovely evening with contributions from several societies in the town. We were treated to a performance from the Primary School, with whom we hope to sing in our Summer Concert, telling us that "All we want for Christmas is a Hippopotamus".

Finally, the Christmas concert was upon us. We had an enthusiastic and very appreciative audience - and quite a large one at that. I always feel it is a pity that Choral Societies only have the one performance; there is always something one would sing differently if given a second chance!

Our two soloists, Jo Westaway and Gary Griffiths, together with Janette's encouraging smiles, gave us the confidence we needed to pull it off. Well done everyone and thank you to all the people helping behind the scenes.

Some of us even had enough energy to get together for a coffee and eats at "The Broken Egg" just outside Harleston on the following Monday morning. Joanna had arranged this and it was such a warm and relaxed way of winding down and finishing of the Choral year.

During the year we were delighted to welcome several new members - Ron Dekker, Dorothy Frost, Nicola Hadingham, Susan Hall, Judy Jenkins, Gordon Lindsay, Jan Long and Ros Webster. John Buckmaster was also with us from January to June.

So, on to the New Year. Term starts 13th January, with a 7.00pm start to enable members to return their sparkly clean copies from the Christmas concert and pay subs. There is a wonderful new programme prepared by Janette and not a "gold ring" in sight!

Then on 20th January there is the Open Evening for prospective new members also starting at 7.00pm (to enable us to welcome them and settle in before we start singing)

Do look at the website for dates for your diary and I look forward to a fantastic year with you all in 2020.

Stella