



SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT

CHESHIRE LIFE

JUNE
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There is incredible enthusiasm in the choir
and over the years their performance has
become more and more satisfying'

Nantwich Choral Society

We spotlight Nantwich
where the choral society
is celebrating 21 singing
years

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52

IT all began, said Jean Atkin, 'as a group of people who enjoyed a good sing'.

Deputy Head of Malbank School she is also the Chairman ('Madam Chairman that is - not the Chair') of the Nantwich Choral Society which is currently enjoying its twenty-first season and a firm reputation as one of the finest choirs in the North West.

The ninety-strong choir evolved from a highly successful WEA course in September 1972 and from small beginnings they have now developed a wide-ranging repertoire including works by composers as diverse as Bach, Vivaldi and Britten. Their

concerts are usually accompanied by an orchestra of professional musicians and young professional soloists on the threshold of their careers.

Members come from all parts of South Cheshire and even beyond and their conductor for the past ten years, Stephen Buckman, thinks so highly of them that he is happy to travel up from London every week for rehearsals. But members say categorically that all credit for their musical attainments is due to Stephen's exceptional skill and the rapport he has developed with the choir.

Stephen Buckman was trained as a conductor at the Royal Academy of

Music and spent some time in Paris where he studied under Messiaen. After graduating he went into show business - as musical director of many popular West End musicals. He worked for Andrew Lloyd Webber and conducted performances of *Evita*, *Les Miserables*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Phantom of the Opera*. He also wielded the baton for *My Fair Lady*, *Side by Side* by Sondheim and *Sweeney Todd* - to name but a few.

Unforeseen circumstances (a euphemism for lack of regular employment) forced him to seek a salaried occupation leaving music to his spare time. And by a happy

circumstance he found himself in Cheshire as a registrar of births, marriages and deaths in Crewe.

It was there he heard about the Choral Society which he promptly joined - as a singer. When the previous conductor retired he immediately stepped into his shoes. That was in January 1983 and this season is his tenth in charge.

In the meantime his occupation has changed again and now he works for British Rail as a training and personnel officer involved with preparations for the Channel Tunnel link.

The Society's achievements are impressive. In 1987 it was the first

British choir to take part in the Advent Celebrations in Vienna. In 1988 it sang in the first Elgar Choral Festival in Worcester Cathedral and later in that same year it gave the world premiere performance of 'Sky Walk' by Steve Marland. They have performed in both of Nantwich's twin towns - Macon in France and Bischofheim in Germany and in 1991 took part in the BBC Radio 2 'Voices for Hospices' event which involved choirs from all over the country. Nantwich had the distinction of having its entire concert broadcast live by BBC Radio Stoke and it is likely that their *Messiah* in November will also be broadcast.

The Society's next concert takes place in Nantwich Parish Church on the 11th of this month when they will sing Finzi's 'Lo! the full final Sacrifice' and Tippett's 'A Child of our Time'. This will be followed on the 22nd June by a belated celebrations of Mozart's bicentenary with a performance of his *Requiem*.



Nantwich