

STAFFORD & DISTRICT CHORAL SOCIETY

HISTORY

Presidents

The Lady Nelson of Stafford
Alderman John F. Amery
Lady Nicholls
Mr W.O. Burgess
Dr. G. Ramage
Mr T. Broughton Nowell
Mr C. Stafford Northcote
Alderman Michael Poulter MBE (current President)

Conductors

Dr. Henry Coleman 1946
Mr Gerald Trodd 1947
Dr. W.L. Smoldon 1947-1948
Miss Mary Higgs 1949 - 1974
Mr. John W.R. Taylor 1974-1981
Mr John C.P. Taylor 1982-1985
Mr Leslie Smith 1986 – present day

Former Soloists include:-

Ada Alsopp	Ian Partridge	Marjorie Thomas
Alfred Deller	Jane Eaglen	Michael Rippon
Barry Banks	Jean Rigby	Monica Sinclair
David Galliver	Jennifer Vyvyan	Nancy Evans
Elizabeth Harwood	John Cameron	Nancy Thomas
Elizabeth Simon	John Carol Case	Peter Bronder
Ena Mitchell	John Heddle-Nash	Peter Pears
Forbes Robinson	John Mitchinson	Philip Langridge
Gerald English	John Shirley Quirk	Richard Lewis
Gladys Ripley	Josephine Veasey	Yvonne Howard
Harvey Allen	Kenneth Bowen	
Heather Harper	Marian Nowakowski	

History of the Society

The Society was formed in 1946 and gave its first concert in December that year performing 'Messiah' under the direction of Dr. Coleman. The aim of the Society was to perform oratorios once or twice a year and over the following few years it continued under the leadership of Gerald E. Todd and Dr. W. L. Smoldon.

In 1949 Mary Higgs began an association with the Society as its Conductor which was to continue for twenty five years. She soon persuaded the choir to break away from

the 'Messiah' pattern and during her reign she broadened the choir's repertoire, performing works by Britten, Smetana, Elgar, Dvorak, Holst, Honeggar, Stravinski, Walton, Orff and Borodin - to mention a few. She also made it her policy to engage soloists of national and international repute, a policy which has continued up to the present day.

Following Miss Higgs' sudden and untimely death in 1974, the Director of Music for Staffordshire, John W. R. Taylor, took over as the Society's Music Director and continued to rehearse and perform a wide repertoire of large scale choral works including works by Rossini, Kodaly, Elgar, Verdi and Ralph Vaughan-Williams amongst others. John Taylor died suddenly in 1981 a few days after conducting one of the Society's most ambitious undertakings - a performance of Malcolm Williamson's Mass of Christ the King in Stychfields Hall in Stafford.

From 1981 to 1985 John C. P. Taylor succeeded his father at the helm prior to taking a teaching post in the Middle East. He conducted performances of Vaughan-Williams 'A Sea Symphony' and 'The Kingdom' by Elgar amongst others.

Our present Musical Director Leslie Smith took over in 1986 and as we celebrate our Diamond Jubilee Season we also mark his 20th year in charge of the Society. During his tenure Leslie has conducted amongst many other concerts notable performances of Elgar's 'The Dream of Gerontius' in Stychfields Hall in Stafford, Verdi's 'Requiem' in Lichfield Cathedral to mark the Society's Golden Jubilee and the performance of Mendelssohn's 'Elijah', also in Lichfield Cathedral to celebrate the millennium.

In December 2001 the Society performed 'Last night of the Proms' in the prestigious Symphony Hall Birmingham with the British Police Symphony Orchestra.

The Society performs Handel's Messiah in December each year, with half of the proceeds going to the John W. R. Taylor Memorial Trust which was established in the early 1980's to raise funds for the support of young Staffordshire musicians and the other half going towards the upkeep of St. Michael & All Angels church in Colwich where the oratorio is performed.

Since 2002 the Society has also participated in the Stafford Music Festival joining with other local choirs in the Festival's closing concert.

On 28 April 2007 the Society gave it's Diamond Jubilee performances of Elgar's 'The Music Makers' and Ralph Vaughan-Williams 'A Sea Symphony' in Lichfield Cathedral, on that occasion we were joined by other Staffordshire singers in our celebrations: Burntwood Singers, Stone Choral Society and Cantemus Chamber Choir from Stafford.

To be continued

The Society is indebted to the many friends who, by their interest and financial support, are ensuring its continuance.