

Autumn 2002

No. 41



ROLLESTON MUSIC CIRCLE & CHORAL SOCIETY

CIRCLE NEWS

President's Letter

Dear Members,

First of all, I would like to thank you for asking me once again to be your President for the next two years. As you can well image, I am delighted that I will be able to serve in this position for the time leading up to, and covering the 40th Anniversary of the first concert given by the society on Ascension Day, 7th May 1964. I well remember that day ~ so many pessimistic 'noises' coming from other music groups in the area telling me that it was impossible for a small group to 'put on' a full performance of Messiah, (with orchestra) in the country. How wrong they were, not only did it pay off but St. Mary's Church was full.

Over the next two years I will be producing several editions of '**CIRCLE NEWS**', a magazine I produced for 18 years and which ran to 40 issues. I hope over this period to be able to give you all an outline history of the Society, together with articles about some of the specific events we enjoyed. I will also include photos ~ so some of you be prepared to see yourselves in somewhat strange surroundings.....!

Happy Music Making,

The seed of an Idea, and how it grew

The seeds of the Rolleston Music Circle were first sown about five years before the gramophone concerts started in 1962. Over the previous years I arranged about 30 concert trips to many venues in the Midlands and London. As a direct consequence of these, and repeated requests from my concert-going companions, I decided to form the Rolleston Music Circle, which continued to give recorded concerts twice a month throughout the winter, until early 1980. The formation of the Circle took place at a Dinner in the Spread Eagle in September 1962 when our first President ~ Mrs Mary MacNab of Croft House was elected. The first concert was held in my parents' home on 8th November of that year. The 'demand' for the music was so great, that it soon became evident that the programme would have to be repeated twice every month. We had 60 paid-up members in the first year, and according to the National Federation of Gramophone Societies (of which we were a member), we were the second largest gramophone society outside the main towns, in the whole of the U.K.!

Now back to the plot! Of course, the Circle was initially just a record appreciation society, but it became obvious that just listening to music was not enough for the members, and in November 1963 the first rehearsals of the Rolleston and District Choral Society were held ~ later to be amalgamated with the Music Circle to become the Rolleston Music Circle and Choral Society. Throughout the 18 or so years, the Music Circle met on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month ~ for the first three years at my parents' home and then from 1965 onwards at our home in Burnside.

At first the Choral Society met in St. Mary's Church Room on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Thursdays of the month with a subscription of 6d per week! The first accompanist to the Society was Roger Lander, who was soon superseded by Ruth Smith, wife of the Society's orchestral adviser. Early in 1964 members started rehearsing in St. Mary's Church itself, and in February moved rehearsals from every fortnight to every Wednesday evening, and these first practices culminated in the first concert on Ascension Day, 1964. The Church was packed to hear, what was thought to be the first performance of Messiah heard in Rolleston. The chorus of about 30 was joined by a small orchestra led by Elizabeth Godlee with Leon Coates at the organ and the piano continuo provided by Hartley Mallinson (who had recently taken over from Ruth Smith as accompanist).

Right from the start in 1962, I edited and produced a magazine for the Society, called 'CIRCLE NEWS' and this contained many musical articles on works to be performed, cross words and quizzes, and later, photographs of artists etc.. Though the magazine in later years did not appear very regularly, 40 issues in total were circulated to members.

Once the Music Circle and Choral Society were established, a new venture started ~ The Rolleston Festivals ~ and these achieved national and international acclaim. The first Festival in 1966 started a series which continued unbroken every two years until 1980. In the years between Festivals the society held Light Music Weekends when the choral members would sing works such as "Merrie England" on the Saturday, and a well-known brass band would give a concert on the Sunday evening.

In the mid-70s a further section was formed to promote monthly recitals in the Forest of Needwood School ~ and this series became known as "Music at the Forest", again with many international artists such as The Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. Myung Wun Chung, John Heddle Nash and many others.

At the height of it's popularity the society attracted attention from not only local, but the national press. The B.B.C. provided and broadcast concerts on Radio 3 in a series called 'From the Festivals' and many firms became regular patrons of the Festivals. In addition we had 68 individual patrons, and in the early days substantial grants were given by Tutbury R.D.C., Repton R.D.C., Burton County Borough Council, both Staffordshire and Derbyshire County Councils, The Arts Council of Great Britain and West and East Midlands Arts Associations also gave generously. Many other organisations and individuals gave 'one-off' contributions. However, finances and support did not only come from these 'outside' sources, but from a very hard working and dedicated Fund Raising Committee which organised Social and Fund Raising events on a regular basis.

Whilst all this was taking place, I was elected onto the Executive Committee of West Midlands Arts as the council representative for all the Arts Organisations in the Burton area. I was also appointed to the West Midland's Arts Music Advisory Panel. I was then elected by the West Midlands Arts onto a seven man committee chaired by Richard Butt (Head of B.B.C. Radio 3 in Birmingham), charged with the setting up of the Arts Shop in Birmingham. All this involvement helped a great deal when I returned to working on the various events and projects of the Society in Rolleston.

Aside from the musical events in Rolleston, I decided to provide for 'non-music' lovers, a club which would present monthly events on a wide ranging list of subjects ~ and with this the 'Thursday Club' came into being. Meeting once a month in the clubroom of the Spread Eagle, speakers and guests ranged from Robert Holland-Ford who talked about Victorian and Edwardian Variety Theatre ~ through Eli Prins (Curator) from the Rembrandt Museum in Amsterdam; Captain Charles Wylie and his 16mm film of his pre-war ascent of Annapurna in the Himalayas (he was also on the first successful expedition to climb Mount Everest in 1953); Douglas Arnold from N.A.S.A. who gave an illustrated talk on the American Moon Programme and Cyril Fletcher with his 'odd odes' ~ the list is long and mention may be made of the Thursday Club in a future issue.

Newer residents in Rolleston will probably be somewhat surprised to learn that for much of the 60s and 70s, the village was a centre of music and the allied arts which was envied by many towns ten times it's size, and I hope during my third term as president to give some detailed descriptions in 'CIRCLE NEWS' of some of the events which took place.

If any member would like me to include an article or notification of an event in the next copy of the 'CIRCLE NEWS' please send it to me at:-
31 Burnside
Rolleston DE13 9DN
or d.a.h.yates@ntlworld.com

On the next page are details of a few of the 30 or more concert visits made prior to the formation of the Music Circle in 1962. Some of these were arranged by Les Hardy of Burton who was a leading light in promoting music amongst young people in the area and bringing music to a much wider audience.

Some pre-1962 Concert Visits

15th January 1958 ~ De Montfort Hall, Leicester

HALLE ORCHESTRA cond. **Sir John Barbirolli**
Meistersinger Overture.....Wagner
St. Anthony Variations.....Brahms
Symphony No. 2 in D.....Sibelius

11th March 1958 ~ De Montfort Hall, Leicester

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
cond. **Sir Adrian Boult**
Midsummer Night's Dream Overture.....Mendelssohn
Symphony No. 35 in D.....Mozart
Don Juan.....R. Strauss
Symphony No. 4 in E minor.....Brahms

29th April 1958 ~ De Montfort Hall, Leicester

LEIPZIG GEWANDHAUS ORCHESTRA
cond. **Franz Konwitschny**
Lilian Kallir ~ piano
Ruy Blas Overture.....Mendelssohn
Piano Concerto in A minor.....Schumann
Till Eulenspiegel.....R. Strauss
Symphony No. 5 in C minor.....Beethoven
(encore) *Bartered Bride Overture*.....Smetana

14th May 1958 ~ Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA cond. **Eugene Ormandy**
Egmont Overture.....Beethoven
Symphony in D minor.....Franck
Variations, Chaconne & Finale.....Norman Dello Joio
Bacchus et Ariane ~ Ballet Suite No. 2.....Roussel

6th May 1959 ~ De Montfort Hall, Leicester

AMSTERDAM CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA
cond. **Eugen Jochum**
Midsummer Night's Dream ~ Incidental Music.....Mendelssohn
Symphony No. 8 in B minor 'The Unfinished'.....Schubert
Symphony No. 2 in D.....Brahms

18th September 1959 ~ Royal Albert Hall, London

BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
BBC CHORAL SOCIETY
ROYAL CHORAL SOCIETY
cond. **Sir Malcolm Sargent & Maurice Miles**
Elsie Morison ~ soprano
Nancy Thomas ~ Contralto
John Mitchinson ~ tenor
David Ward ~ bass
Prelude to Lohengrin.....Wagner
Symphony No. 9 in D minor 'The Choral'.....Beethoven
Ritual Dances from 'Midsummer Marriage'.....Tippett
Suite from 'Damnation of Faust'.....Berlioz

29th November 1959 ~ Royal Albert Hall, London

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
cond. **Sir Thomas Beecham**
Symphony No. 104 in D.....Haydn
Symphony No. 39 in E flat.....Mozart
Symphony No. 4 in F minor.....Tchaikovsky
(encore) *Trojan March*.....Berlioz
(encore) *Cortege & Dance*.....Debussy

3rd April 1960 ~ Coventry Theatre

LEIPZIG GEWANDHAUS ORCHESTRA
Cond. **Franz Konwitschny**
Julius Katchen ~ piano
Don Juan.....R. Strauss
Concerto No. 2 in B flat.....Brahms
Symphony No. 9 in E minor 'The New World'.....Dvorak

26th May 1960 ~ De Montfort Hall, Leicester

HAGUE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
Cond. **Willem van Otterloo**
Mindru Katz ~ piano
Egmont Overture.....Beethoven
Piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor.....Tchaikovsky
Symphonie Fantastique.....Berlioz

30th October 1960 ~ Royal Festival Hall, London

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA cond. **Jascha Horenstein**
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau ~ baritone
Kindertotenlieder.....Mahler
Symphony No. 5 in C sharp minor.....Mahler

21st February 1961 ~ Burton Town Hall

LONDON MOZART PLAYERS cond. **Harry Blech**
Eine Kleine Nachtmusik.....Mozart
Symphony No. 85 in B flat.....Haydn
Divertimento in D, K251.....Mozart
Symphony No. 5 in B flat.....Schubert

4th March 1962 ~ Royal Festival Hall, London

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA & CHORUS
cond. **Otto Klemperer**
Heather Harper & Janet Baker
Masonic Funeral Music.....Mozart
Symphony No 2 'The Resurrection'.....Mahler

After this concert it was announced that Bruno Walter, the great conductor and friend of Gustav Mahler, had died that day, and there followed several musical tributes to him. Unfortunately I did not make a note of these at the time and am unable to list them, but I well remember that the concert was a highly emotional event and will be always remembered by the people who had the good fortune to attend.

Space does not allow me to list all the wonderful concerts we enjoyed during the five years before the Music Circle officially came into being, but this will give you an idea of the great time we had travelling the country to attend top class music events.

Our second President - Steve Race

At the 1965 A.G.M. it was agreed that we should ask the author, broadcaster and musician Steve Race to be our second President and to take us into the first festival. He had for some time been supplying light hearted articles for '**CIRCLE NEWS**' and readily had agreed to serve. He attended the 1966 A.G.M. and was presented with a miniature set of polished horse-shoes made by Frank Topley in the village forge. Steve, who came from 'rural stock' in Lincolnshire, visited the forge to watch a pony being shod and stayed in the village for a couple of days. He remained President for many years, and in 1970 composed a special choral piece for the society called 'Song of Praise' which was published by Boosey and Hawkes. Some photos of his visit to the village are shown below.



'Doc' Yates

Steve Race - President

Hartley Mallinson
accompanist

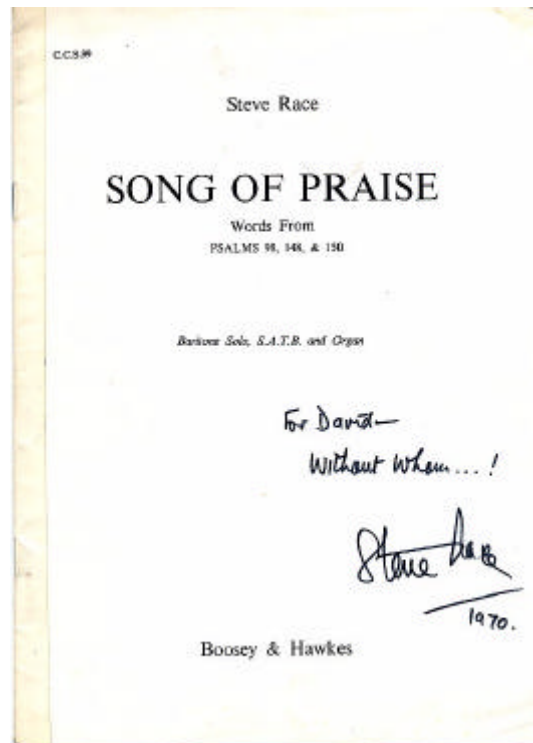
Colin Greenhalgh

Bill Pitt
asst. conductor

Graham Smith
orchestral adviser



Steve Race with Frank Topley in the village forge of Topley & Fisher in Blacksmith's Yard.



The front cover of the choral piece that Steve Race wrote for the Choral Society.

The next '**CIRCLE NEWS**' will appear early in the New Year and if anyone wants me to include an article or information of forthcoming events, please send the details to me by the beginning of January.