

Undeterred by the exciting events of the 1996 visit, the Choir journeyed to Caen and Ouistreham in 2003 to perform alongside La Chorale Arioso de Caen and Strohgausinfonieorchester Schwieberdingen.

## Presidents, Patrons and Musical Directors

One of Britain's most famous modern composers, Ralph Vaughan Williams, was the Society's President from 1952 to 1958, taking over from the Bishop of Coventry. And in 2013 the Choir invited Roger Coull, founder of the Coull Quartet, to be its Patron in its 70th Anniversary year.

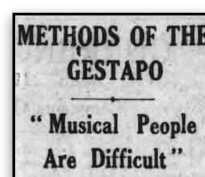
### Presidents

Dr. Neville Gordon, Bishop of Coventry, Dr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, Dr. Alan Hawthorne-Baker, Dr. A. H. Marshall

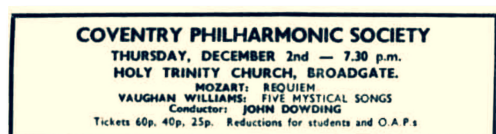
### Musical Directors

Vincent Fleming (1945-1964), John Strickson (1964-1968), Barrie Grayson (1968-1969), Timothy Reynish (1970-1971), John Dowding (1971-2002), Steven Russell (2002-present) and Matthew Sandy (2015-2017).

Orchestral Conductor / Violinist & Broadcaster, Vincent Fleming, conducted 49 concerts in his 20 years as Musical Director, despite an unflattering article in the local press in 1945 describing his actions as "*smacking of the methods of the Gestapo*"! After his retirement from the Society in 1964, he became conductor of the British Concert Orchestra. He also conducted the Midland Symphony Orchestra and helped form the Welsh National Opera Company. In 1958 he received the Freedom of the City of London, joining an elite group of musicians including Sir Malcolm Sargent and Sir Adrian Boult.



Victor Fleming was followed by John Strickson, and then, in quick succession, Barrie Grayson and Timothy Reynish.



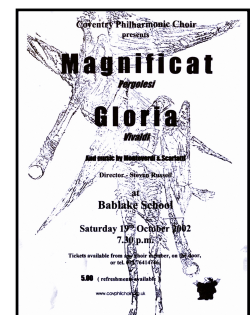
In 1971 a 'young' tenor, John Dowding, was engaged to sing the part of Aeneas in the Choir's production of Purcell's 'Dido & Aeneas' on 5 June. Six months later he conducted his

first concert as Musical Director, a post he held for 30 years. John had studied voice, oboe and school music teaching at the Colchester Institute and soon focused his attention on training choirs and directing operatic performances. By

the 1970s he was a senior lecturer at the Coventry School of Music and, when the Coventry Centre for the Performing Arts was established in 1983, he was appointed Head of the School of Music. John plainly never relinquished his love of singing. He delivered a performance of "Olim lacus colueram (the Roasted Swan)" during a production of Orff's 'Carmina Burana', much to the surprise of the Choir who were unaware of the identity of the tenor soloist for the concert.

On 21 June 2002, John conducted his last concert with the Choir, appropriately entitled "A Night at the Opera". After the concert, John remarked "*If I stay on as Musical Director the Choir will die*" - a few days later he duly resigned. His baton was passed to Steven Russell, also an alumnus of the Colchester Institute.

Steven studied composition under Alan Bullard, and voice and choral conducting under Ian Ray. He is a music specialist teacher at the RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning, as well as teaching singing and preparing pupils for Oxbridge choral scholarships and Music Colleges. Under his enthusiastic and inspired leadership, the Choir has grown in numbers, going from strength to strength. Steven took a sabbatical from 2015 to 2017 and the post of Musical Director was temporarily filled by Matthew Sandy, who joined the Choir at the age of 15 as a Student Conductor and is a professional tenor soloist.



## Coventry Singers

We couldn't celebrate this anniversary without mentioning the "Singers", formed in 2014 to mark the end of the 70th Anniversary of the Choir, under the musical direction of Steve Russell. Its current Musical Director is Seb Farrall, who writes:

"The first concert ever performed by the Singers I conducted with Steven (Russell) accompanying on piano in the Lime Tree Social club, joining forces with the Firebird Singers. Songs included *Africa* (Toto), *Play the Game* (Queen), *Pastime* (King Henry VIII) and *I Dreamed a Dream* (Schoenberg). Our next concert was supremely well attended and filled the slot for the Philharmonic Society's *Christmas with the Phil* - something we would do for a number of years. Christmas repertoire has included (as well as the *normal* Christmas carols one must include in a carol concert); *Gaudete* (trad.), *Glow* (Whitacre), *Carol of the Bells* (trad.), *A Merry Christmas* (Warrell), *The Lamb* (Tavener) & *Deck the Halls* (Wilberg).

We have a steady stream of people coming and going, but every Monday night is an enjoyable experience of between 20-30 singers. These are perhaps some of my

favourite songs we have sung: *Zadok the Priest* (Handel), *The Seal Lullaby* (Whitacre), *Hallelujah* (Cohen), *Bring Him Home* (Schoenberg), *Tears in Heaven* (Eric Clapton), *Oklahoma, Money Money Money* (ABBA), & *Over the Rainbow* (arr. Tina Chinn)."

## Plus ça change?

SATURDAY, APRIL 6th, 1963 at 7.0 p.m.  
THE CENTRAL HALL, COVENTRY.

COVENTRY PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY  
Present

**BACH : ST. MATTHEW PASSION**

ELIZABETH SIMON (Soprano) LILY KETTLEWELL (Mezzo Contralto)  
STEPHEN MANTON (Tenor) RANKEN BUSHBY (Baritone)

Organist : GEOFFREY PEIRSON, A.R.C.O.  
Continuo : JOHN DUCKETT

COVENTRY PHILHARMONIC CHOIR  
THE CAPRIOL ORCHESTRA OF LONDON  
(Leader : REGINALD MORLEY)  
Conductor : VICTOR FLEMING

RIPIENO CHOIR : PUPILS OF BARKERS BUTTS GIRLS' SCHOOL AND CALUDON CASTLE BOYS SCHOOL

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

COVENTRY Philharmonic Choir

J.S. BACH  
ST. MATTHEW PASSION

Micaela Haslam  
Kathryn Woodruff  
Simon Berridge  
Simon Birchall  
David Beavan

The Cotswold Sinfonietta  
Conductor John Dowling

SATURDAY 25th MARCH 1995 7.30pm  
CENTRAL HALL COVENTRY

£6.50 £4.50/£3.50

Tickets available on the door from Wesley's Coffee Bar at the Central Hall & from

COVENTRY PHILHARMONIC CHOIR  
Musical & Amicable Society

**ST. MATTHEW PASSION**  
J.S. BACH

Steven Russell Musical Director

**SATURDAY**  
**10th MARCH 2018**  
**7.30pm** doors open 6.45pm

St Mary's Collegiate Church  
21 Church Street, Warwick CV34 4RA

Tickets £15.00

Available from the church bookshop,  
or phone 07728 887349 and online at  
[www.wegotickets.com](http://www.wegotickets.com)  
[www.covphilchoir.org.uk](http://www.covphilchoir.org.uk)

Charity No. 806185

COVENTRY PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

PRESIDENT : DR. ALLAN HAWTHORNE-BAKER, M.Mus., F.R.C.O.  
VICE-PRESIDENTS : THE LORD BISHOP OF COVENTRY  
THE LORD ROOTES G.B.E. SIR STANLEY HAWLEY, B.Sc.  
Hon. GEOFFREY ROOTES A. DICK, Esq.

**CENTRAL HALL, COVENTRY**  
**SATURDAY, 10th MARCH, 1962**  
**AT 7 P.M.**

**"THE MESSIAH" (HANDEL)**

Iris Kells (Soprano) Sylvia Rowlands (Contralto)  
Gordon Pullin (Tenor) Owen Brannigan (Bass)

Coventry Philharmonic Choir  
The Capriol Orchestra  
(Leader : REGINALD MORLEY)  
Conductor : **VICTOR FLEMING**

MESSIAH  
A SACRED ORATORIO  
BY  
G. F. HANDEL  
THE WORDS SELECTED FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE BY  
CHARLES JENNINGS  
EDITED BY  
WATKINS SHAW

MAJORA CANAMIES (Sing, 18 Apr 19)  
*And without Ceremony, great in the mystery of Culture :  
God was manifested in the flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of  
Angels, heard of Nations, believed on in the world,  
received up in glory.  
In whose honour all the Powers of Heaven and Earth  
(p. Timothy II, 15; Colossians II, 1)*

Saturday, March 8th, 1975

COVENTRY PHILHARMONIC CHOIR PRESENTS

**CHRISTMAS**  
with the Phil

Enjoy a feast of seasonal music  
Including carols and  
Handel's Messiah (part 1)

**SATURDAY 16th**  
**DECEMBER 2017**  
**7.30pm** doors open 6.45pm

St Mary's Collegiate Church  
21 Church Street  
Warwick CV34 4RA

Tickets £14.00 early booking advised

Available from the church  
bookshop, or phone  
07728 887349 and online at  
[www.wegotickets.com](http://www.wegotickets.com)  
[www.covphilchoir.org.uk](http://www.covphilchoir.org.uk)

ORIFLAMME ORCHESTRA  
Director  
ANTOINETTE MITCHELL  
Chair Director  
STEVEN RUSSELL

Charity No. 806185

COVENTRY Philharmonic Choir

**Samson**  
G.E. Handel

SATURDAY 28th  
NOVEMBER 1987  
7.15 p.m.

THIRTY PENCE

cp Coventry Philharmonic Choir  
Musical Director : Steven Russell  
Accompanist : David Baxter

Presents

**Handel - Samson**

Deborah Norman (Soprano)  
Timothy Travers-Brown (Counter Tenor)  
Mark Stanley (Tenor)  
Matthew Sandy (Tenor)  
James Oldfield (Bass)

The Musical & Amicable Society  
(Director : Martin Perkins)

**Saturday 3rd. November 7.00pm**  
**Methodist Central Hall Coventry**

Tickets: £10 (No Concessions). For details: [tickets/cov-phil-choir](http://tickets/cov-phil-choir)  
Why not join us? For details: [www.covphilchoir.org.uk](http://www.covphilchoir.org.uk)

Coventry Philharmonic Choir

**SAMSON**  
G. F. Handel

**SATURDAY**  
**MAY 16, 2015**  
**7.30pm**

ST. MARY'S COLLEGIATE CHURCH,  
21 Church Street,  
Warwick CV34 4AB

MUSICAL & AMICABLE SOCIETY

STEVEN RUSSELL  
musical director

TICKETS £14 (£12)  
Available at the door & from  
the Church Bookshop  
Reserve:  
[www.covphilchoir.org.uk](http://www.covphilchoir.org.uk)  
or phone: 07437 178877

The Choir now presents most of its concerts in the Collegiate Church of St Mary in Warwick instead of the Methodist Central Hall in Coventry. Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings in Quinton Park Baptist Church Hall instead of Wednesday evenings at various school and church halls. There is a fairly stable membership of around 140, including a healthy number of tenors and basses, bucking the usual trend of male under-representation in choirs.

Whilst we still have a tea rota for serving up tea, coffee and biscuits at rehearsals, we no longer need the Villa Road car park rota which required members to patrol the car park for 20 minutes at a time to deter "ne'er do wells".

For many years the Choir was supported by grants and other aid from the Arts Council and Coventry City Council. Nevertheless, fundraising by members has always provided a welcome addition to the coffers. In the past, the favoured way of raising cash was through regular "jumble sales". Nowadays, our enterprising members raise substantial contributions through quiz and skittles evenings (organised by our tireless Social Committee), plant sales, and sales of handicrafts (courtesy of our Knit and Stitch group).

We don't have much information about the Choir's social activities in the past, other than members' evenings, where individuals gave performances, humorous or otherwise, in front of the other members. However nowadays Choir members enjoy weekly organised walks which replace the Thursday evening rehearsals over the Summer break, an annual Summer lunch, the aforementioned quiz and skittles evenings, and occasional revivals of the members' evenings.

What hasn't changed over the 75 years is the quality of the Choir's delivery of the greatest choral masterpieces, and its ability to attract talented orchestras and soloists to perform alongside one of the best non audition amateur choirs in the country.

**So, in conclusion, many congratulations to the Coventry Philharmonic for the last 75 years and best wishes for the next three-quarters of a century.**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Newspaper clippings are reproduced courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive. Images of programmes, posters and photographs have been kindly provided by Choir members past and present. Compiled and edited by Rachael Bermingham.