

A Choir Member Speaks

An Interview with Viv:

How many years have you been a member of Aylesbury Festival Choir?

I joined the choir in January 2009. It was my 60th year and I was determined to be brave and do something I'd always wanted to do.

Why did you choose Aylesbury Festival Choir?

I have always loved singing but not had the opportunity or courage to do anything about it. So I googled choirs in Aylesbury and of the two that came up AFC didn't say anything about auditions. I don't think I would have considered it if I'd had to be auditioned. I turned up for the first rehearsal of Handel's Messiah and was made very welcome. I had not realised it was a celebratory concert and the choir's last in the old Civic Centre.

Can you describe the benefit you find in choral singing?

I do love singing with the choir. I do not play an instrument and other than singing I don't consider myself to have any musical talent at all and cannot read music. I was very pleased to discover that although useful these things are not essential. Over the years I have improved and learned a lot about breathing, enunciation and the difference between a quaver and a crotchet. Singing releases tension and helps you to forget your worries. I absolutely love it and can't believe I waited so long before starting.

What are your most memorable moments, from rehearsals or concerts?

We do sing a wide variety of music and it is not all to my taste. I think my favourite was a selection of Opera Choruses. They were all quite well known and familiar to me and that performance was pure joy. The most memorable concert was The Armed Man by Karl Jenkins. I found this so difficult to sing as emotions took over. We sang this again at Waterside Theatre and it wasn't any easier but it is a quite wonderful piece of music. One of the scary moments was in an American themed concert where we sang a song with a very fast moving and difficult ending. It was touch and go whether we would all finish at the same time but luckily we did manage it.

How would you describe the atmosphere at Aylesbury Festival Choir rehearsals?

We are a friendly bunch and rehearsals are very relaxed. I felt totally overwhelmed at first and thought I would never be able to perform. I never thought of giving up though - each week I was expecting to be told that I wasn't good enough, sounded horrible and be told to leave! That did not happen and I managed to get through my first concert unscathed. After the initial sheer terror (I could hardly see my score my hands were shaking so much) I calmed down and thoroughly enjoyed it.

You are now on the choir Committee, so why did you volunteer to get involved?

I joined the committee a few years ago, there was a vacancy and being nosy I wanted to know what went on behind the scenes. Now, as the Treasurer I get to meet everyone when I take the subs and sell tickets. This has helped me to feel more useful and at home.

An Interview with Ann:

How many years have you been a member of Aylesbury Festival Choir?

I joined the December Festival Choir, as it then was, in January 1982 after the school choir I was teaching had taken part in the Carol Concert at the Civic Centre.

Why did you choose Aylesbury Festival Choir?

David Aylett, our founder, would invite local schools to participate in the concert each year. I enjoyed the occasion so much that I decided I would love to sing.

Can you describe the benefit you find in choral singing?

Singing has often been the most wonderful therapy during times of sadness or stress. It is a source of physical and mental well-being and is always an uplifting experience.

What are your most memorable moments, from rehearsals or concerts?

We have worked with wonderful conductors both amateur and professional. Each has brought their own skills and enthusiasms for the music.

The range of music, from Mass In Blue (Todd), Carmina Burana (Orff) and back through the ages has been, and is, inspirational!

How would you describe the atmosphere at Aylesbury Festival Choir rehearsals?

Being part of this friendly and hard-working group is both rewarding and extremely pleasurable.