



The Quarterly Newsletter for Friends of KPMVC

# On the Beat!

LOCKDOWN EDITION

## Who Are We?

*The Choir was formed in 1978. It performs around fifteen concerts a year, singing at fund raising charity events around the County of Kent.*

*In its history, the Choir has appeared in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium as well as in the UK, appeared on national television in the UK and Canada and has helped numerous local charities to raise significant amounts of money.*

*The Choir is open to serving and retired police officers, civilian staff, those with links to the service and also members of the community. It is an ambassador for Kent Police and is supported by them, although it is self-financing.*

*The Choir rehearses weekly at Kent Police Headquarters, Sutton Road, Maidstone. Members meet at 7.15 p.m. on Thursday evenings and rehearsals conclude at 9.30 p.m. Please contact us through these pages for information about joining the Choir; you can be assured of a warm welcome.*

A very warm welcome to this special edition of ***On the Beat***. Back at the beginning of March we didn't envisage producing another newsletter for some time, but our chaps have risen to the challenge and by popular request, and grateful thanks to the contributors, here we are ...

## We've started so... ... we'll finish



**Members of the choir gathered at St Edmunds Catholic School in Dover early in March for the first recording session for the new CD. Plans are obviously on hold but the intention is to get back to recording as soon as it is safe to do so.**

# Down Memory Lane Roy Waller

## Roy continues his series of reflections on times gone by

During this period of inactivity that our politicians have called “Lockdown”, I have found it difficult to write about those characters who helped to make our Choir what it is today. So, with (or without) your permission I will try to give you some idea of why I love this Choir and all of its members past and present.

At our first few meetings all those years ago I, and I guess many others, had no idea what the future held. I felt at that time that although I couldn’t sing (who said, “You still can’t?”), I could perhaps hide amongst those who could hold a tune. In those early days little did I realise that these men were to become lifelong mates.

I recall that a certain member of the bass section used to drive us to Maidstone in his little NSU – quite a squash with four of us! Another chap in the tenors had a novel way of getting his petrol cap off. Low on juice he pulled into a petrol station only to find he couldn’t unlock the darned thing – no problem, lever it off with a screwdriver! Four blokes levering off a petrol cap – time for the police to have a look methinks. A fourth member of our group felt the cold and regularly used the phrase “throw another log on the fire mother!” At this stage I used to drive a little Micra and because of my boasts about my mpg, he would accuse me of watering down my petrol.



Our trips away should be mentioned. Especially the time our Choir became the backing group for Shirley Bassey – well us and about 10,000 others – Cardiff Arms Park. Some of you will remember that marvellous evening with the World Choir with Miss Bassey playing havoc with most of the men’s emotions. It rained! NO, it poured! The expensive seats were on the playing turf in the open – our ladies were under cover in the stands. A magic evening.



On other occasions the rowdy group would invariably be seen playing cards (on a table specially designed by yours truly). One member would insist on playing right to the last minute and I recall a phrase used by one of that group shouting “It’s gone, it’s gone!” He was referring to the kitty/jackpot in the middle of the table and to the fact that he had a great winning hand – good old Bill Chiswell.

Who could forget our trips to Canada? Only a few of us went but another magic event. I recall just three episodes: the first was at one of the airports when a member, who shall be nameless, needed a luggage trolley. No problem – there are plenty of them. But said member decided that he wanted one of two that were obviously stuck together. Try as he might they were not coming apart and then some wag shouted, “throw a bucket of water over them”. I can also remember one member of the group deciding that he didn’t need his return ticket – he tore it up and threw it away – whoops. Another episode involved a bottle of whisky. Passing through customs to board our flight one member had a part bottle of whisky (biggest part). As it was open it was confiscated. No problem, we’ll get another one the other side of the barrier. Oh no we won’t, the bars were all shut so no drinkie-poos. Then, wait a minute, our intrepid friend goes back to the desk and asks “if we drink it all **before** we get on the plane, can we have it back?” “Yes” says the man on the desk. You see, nothing ventured, nothing gained.



I think that’s enough wandering for now, but I hope you can see why I love this Choir. This bunch of blokes not only make a reasonable noise, but they help to make life so much brighter!

# Musings on Disaster

## **Paul Aspin shares his experience of responding to an unforeseen crisis**

'Hope for the best, but plan for the worst' is attributed to Winston Churchill and has been oft quoted recently as we all face up to unprecedented challenges. The word disaster has been used frequently of late, and with good reason. Most of us, even at our ages, have been fortunate enough not to be confronted by a real disaster and so to a degree we are all in uncharted waters. Hopefully we will come through it and in so doing we and successive generations will learn things about themselves which will be of benefit.

I had an experience in 2004 which exposed me to the aftermath of a disaster and from which I learned several new lessons. I had been persuaded to forsake early retirement to go to the Caribbean and run the telecoms operation for a number of the islands (which many of my erstwhile colleagues referred to as a hardship posting). I had been there rather less than a year when on 9<sup>th</sup> September hurricane IVAN struck Grenada which was the southernmost of my islands. Hurricanes are not uncommon in the area, though usually make landfall further north. Ahead of 'the season' which starts around August citizens in the islands usually at risk are constantly advised to stock up on water, dried foodstuffs, batteries, medicines and other essentials, and also to make sure they are aware of their nearest 'safe building'. Many of the houses are insubstantial and therefore at risk in a major storm. Inevitably the safest homes tend to be built on the islands most likely to be affected.

Hurricanes in that area hatch out in the Atlantic and weave their way over a few days' westwards, usually also drifting north. Ivan was at the southern end of the spectrum and looked to be en route for the southern tip of Barbados and then towards Grenada or St Lucia which was our home. A significant number of local wiseacres cautioned that it could drift as far south as Grenada. On 7<sup>th</sup> September the prime minister of Grenada went on the island media to reassure his people that despite the stories they may have heard Grenada had been hurricane free for 50 years and they could all relax.

When IVAN made landfall there the population was wholly unprepared. It was a category 5 storm which is the top of the range. Fortunately, it was dry which meant that there was no rain damage. The storm raged for about 12 hours, flattening most of the capital St George's. All public buildings were smashed including the prison and government house. The PM had belatedly taken refuge on a ship of the Royal Navy conveniently anchored offshore. We were around 200 miles north of the storm but had heavy winds and the black sky was like a low ceiling continuous above us.

Fortunately, I had installed as the local CEO a colleague from Dominica, the only one of my team who had ever lived through such an event. He also was, and still is, a lay preacher which reflected his values. I called him very early the following morning. To my great relief our phone system was working. He answered breathlessly that he was on his way to what was left of the HQ, picking his way through the debris. There was really no point in asking him for any details, I just asked him what he needed. The answer was medicines, water, and prayers.

Still trying to work out my next move I took a call from a neighbour, a local businessman who had family on Grenada. He was planning to charter a flight down to see what had happened. Around two hours later he and I, together with a crew from St Lucia TV were on a 10-seater and on our way. En route I had passed two pharmacies and each gave me their total inventory of what had been requested by my colleague. The rest of the plane we filled with water.

The flight took around an hour and as we approached the south of Grenada the devastation was stark. Villages flattened with houses and contents strewn across the landscape with just the footprint left to show where the houses had been. The airport had never been a grand affair, but now there were no buildings standing and our entry was monitored by a young lady sitting at a camping table on the edge of the runway. A junior member of the local team which numbered 120 took me to our depot where mercifully some rooms were still intact. Most of the leadership team were there in varying degrees of confusion. Three things happened in the next hour which made a big impression on me. Firstly, we prayed together. Faith is pervasive in that part of the world and without doubt played an important part in the competence to cope. Secondly, we were confronted by unprecedented chaos which was challenging personally as well as professionally. The management team I had in place was fit for purpose in the old world but to a significant degree was unable to provide the creative leadership needed in an unstructured world. Over the ensuing weeks there emerged a group of people, often quite junior, who demonstrated the energy and initiative the circumstances demanded. Their later careers were greatly enhanced by the talents which the disaster allowed them to demonstrate. Thirdly, I called my boss in London where it was by now around 9pm. He merely asked how bad it was and how our people were. In as few words as possible I tried to do justice to the challenge. His simple response was 'you have the chequebook, do what you think needs doing'.

Over the next 30 days we took in a flight each day, ferrying down medicines and relief supplies donated from neighbouring islands. The operator of the largest supermarket business on St Lucia had his staff bring what was needed to the airport each and any supplied it all at cost. My other five islands put in teams of engineers to work on anything that needed fixing. They

camped in a trashed hotel and when I stayed with them over a couple nights the esprit de corps they had established was extraordinary. That inter island team became a permanent resource, three engineers per island, suitably multiskilled and with a backpack to pick up at a moment's notice.

For me it was an overwhelming and somehow rewarding experience. To see people stretched to their limit and responding selflessly was inspiring. (Media reports in the developed world which spoke of looting angered me; is it really looting when your family has no food and the shops are trashed?). My freedom to operate based on what was before me was hugely motivational, and the same was true of those who responded in my teams. As I told my grandsons recently

challenging times bring out the best in most people. It took years for Grenada to recover but the nutmegs are now growing again and the cricket ground is restored.

*Footnote. In 1983 the USA invaded Grenada to overthrow a communist regime, much to Maggie's annoyance. The ringleaders were incarcerated in the local prison. On the morning after IVAN struck the leader of the revolutionaries called the PM to reassure him that although all the real villains had fled the revolutionaries were still in situ.*

## The Great Lift Shaft

*The following event took place some 40 plus years ago, so by now it's safe to tell the tale, but I shall not name the town to avoid embarrassment to individuals who may chance to read this.*

It had been a fairly busy night shift in this reasonably large town police station in Kent. Eventually in the early hours of the morning different patrols came in to take their refreshment breaks. Then came a call from a worried resident near the town centre that someone appeared to be in distress collapsed on his doorstep. An ambulance was called for and a patrol attended to find a middle-aged male having a job to breath and in a very dishevelled state. All he could mutter was: "the lift, the lift".

At this stage it was realised that this scene was taking place in the road located directly opposite the rear access of a town centre supermarket. The rear of the supermarket gave access to a shopper's car park which involved driving into a self-operated car lift to the rooftop car park. After the ambulance had attended to treat and remove the man to the nearby hospital, another patrol followed up to investigate the lift to the car park.

Found in the lift cage was a car inside of which was a barely conscious female apparently overcome by car exhaust fumes. As she was also treated and placed in the ambulance, it was plain to see that the dress she was just about wearing appeared to be back to front. The car and its contents including personal possessions were recovered to the police station and logged into the special property store. Subsequently some of the relatives along with the rather sheepish individuals concerned, who happened to be from different households, attended the nick to claim and collect their respective property and the car. There were quite a few officers, needless to say, who, being nosy coppers, had made numerous excuses to be at the enquiry desk front counter at that time.

This is just one of the many incidents that the humble "copper on the beat" faces during his long and varied career. All I can add is that this event became known at the nick as the "Great Lift Shaft", and one never to be forgotten. For us it was a case of "Every Little Helps" at that well-known store. Those officers who have worked at that particular town, will by now realise where in fact it was. But, can anyone else?

**Norman Sells (Delta Alpha 08)**

# REFLECTIONS ON LOCKDOWN

## The New Normal

Hearing commentators in the media brandishing the phrase "the new normal" (NN) with glee as if they are in Pulitzer Prize territory, I smile because they seem to imply this is on the horizon coming towards us and we are going to have problems when it arrives. Nothing could be further from the truth; we are incredibly adaptable with fantastic reserves of reasoning and intelligence. In a similar way I suppose looking backwards from this point in time the red flags have been waved over "unworkable" smoking bans in public places, the impossibility of changing schoolchildren's diets for the better, Sunday shop opening, mass adoption of car seat belts, compulsory crash helmets on motorbikes, decimalisation and the prehistoric hunting ban on Great Woolly Mammoths all these events were proven not to be the end of the world. We adapt.

The NN could be a really nice place to be! Particularly if you focus on the positive experiences, we have lived through that contribute to the NN. Families may have rediscovered the joy of nature through a huge increase in the dawn chorus, or taken time to watch birds and animals imbued with what seems like a new confidence. We had a rare Peregrine Falcon that landed in the back garden, two days in a row, confirmed by an expert from my short video; outstanding. They may have taken time to meet again in a more relaxed setting those humans that they live with and have been in close proximity to for weeks, and discover that they actually get on really well. A lively game of cards substituted for "spending time together" watching separate TVs in separate rooms.

Occupants of the centre of Milan Italy are set to embrace a NN where the exclusion of traffic has been a good experience in lockdown and will continue as a massive traffic free central zone. Pollution in city centres could easily be part of the NN New York which has recorded a sustained 50% reduction in Nitrous gases injurious to health. We have found new ways to work that will I am sure persist in the NN, and new ways to communicate with each other via technology that huge numbers have adopted learnt and perfected. Although some experiences have been painful, such as recently 32 people on a zoom meeting I attended online where everyone wanted to talk but nobody wanted to mute, resulting in 45 minutes of happy chaos. But even through that chaos we learnt the value of hand signals to approve/ disapprove a point in the discussion or gain attention to make a contribution.

In so many ways it has been demonstrated that we actually care about each other, and we care about those in the essential services who care for us more than ever. Whilst we were isolating with the virus seven different friends or family members came round with grocery and medicine deliveries to keep us going. It was not asked for; they found out we were in need and pitched in, it was very heart warming. In the NN we will no doubt remember how fragile human life is, and learn to treasure those we have and celebrate with vigour the time we have with them more than ever before. So, let's embrace the New Normal, it's like the old one but different and possibly better.

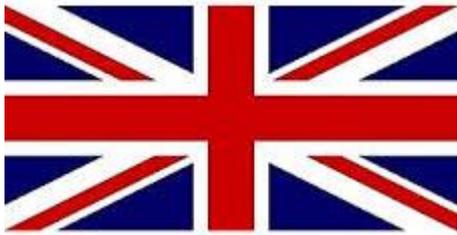
**Anonymous**



This is Tilly taking self-isolation to a new level.  
(Tilly lives in Sheffield with Jonathan, Sally Biggs' son)



**KEEP SINGING**  
(IN ISOLATION)  
**AND**  
WE WILL  
**CARRY ON**  
(JUST AS SOON AS WE CAN!)



## VIVE LA DIFFERENCE!!

By Geoff Fisher



Some years ago, when in my previous choir, we received an invitation from a Dutch choir to travel to Holland to join with them for a weekend's singing and sight-seeing. A great time was had by all – the sun shone, the singing was good and the hospitality of the Dutch was fulsome.

On our return to Blighty, full of Dutch cheese and beer, we started to make plans to reciprocate the Dutch hospitality and arranged for a joint concert followed by a reception for our guests. Goudhurst village hall was the location. The day came and the Dutch choir, accompanied by their WAGS, turned up for the concert in the very beautiful Goudhurst church. The concert went down very well and, après-concert, there was much back-slapping and mafficking and general celebrating. As it was a fine evening, we wended our way down the hill towards the village hall. Tables were set, hostesses were beaming, barrels of ale were unbunged, wine corks popped, sandwiches and sweetmeats were uncovered and the aura of good fellowship filled the air. What fun!

At this point, gentle reader, I will digress to paint a verbal picture. I think I am right in saying every organisation has a 'Rupert'. I'll call him Rupert as that is a fitting name and, apart from that, he shed his mortal coil some years ago and I would hate to denigrate his memory. How shall I describe our Rupert? He was tall and lanky and had no respect whatsoever for personal space. He was kind-hearted and well-meaning but very accident prone. He was loud of voice but soft of heart. His family loved him and he loved small furry cuddly creatures and subscribed to the National Trust. Given the opportunity, our Rupert would walk through a minefield with nary a qualm to do anybody a favour. In short, our Rupert was a Jolly Good Egg. He was a top Tenor, but shall be forgiven that little foible, and every rehearsal saw him set up his portable cassette recorder on a purpose-built stool so he could record the tenor part. Every rehearsal invariably contained an interval, several in fact, when Rupert's cassette recorder would whistle and scream as he fought to control the damned thing. Not being of a mechanical mind, Rupert's life was marred by his encounters with technology. Rupert occupied a world of his own and was totally oblivious to many things.

Back to the Goudhurst fun-fest. The evening wore on and voices grew louder and louder as the beverage flowed. Our Rupert – did I mention he was also a gregarious soul and an ex-wine merchant – glowed happily as he cruised from group to group with glass in hand, standing very close to several Dutch ladies of a certain age. A bit of a Romeo was our Rupert.

Now it came to pass that my choir had recently recruited a very fine baritone singer. At this juncture I will say that baritones, to a man, are always fine singers and all choirs should treasure and applaud them. This particular baritone was a shy fellow, not really given to mixing on a social level. He stood alone in the throng sipping occasionally from a half-empty wine glass.

Rupert, not so socially inhibited, (remember, he was a wine merchant), espied our lone baritone - let's call him Barry – from the other side of the room and homed on him like an Exocet guided missile. Rupert by this time was, judging by the colour of his nose, quite shall we say 'happy'.

Now, for some reason, our Rupert thought Barry was a Dutchman. Those of you who have encountered Dutchmen will know that they are almost invariably large well-built men with loud voices. Barry was none of these things so Rupert's identification of his as a Low Countries man is somewhat confusing. However, to Rupert it made perfect sense. Rupert, a good head and a half taller than Barry and totally ignoring his personal space, fixed him with a benevolent gaze.

'**H-a-v-e y-o-u v-i-s-i-t-e-d E-n-g-l-a-n-d b-e-f-o-r-e ?**' intoned Rupert, enunciating every syllable as slowly and as carefully as he possibly could. We, in Blighty, all know that a foreigner will immediately know what we are saying if we speak English very, very slowly and carefully while thrusting our reddened faces into that of the person to whom we are speaking. If we are in Spain, we add a letter 'o' to the end of every word just to be on the safe side. In Italy, we add an 'i'. It works a treat – no wonder we had the largest Empire ever seen.

'**A-r-e y-o-u h-a-v-i-n-g a g-o-o-d t-i-m-e?**' carried on Rupert to a now very confused Barry who, backing off as fast as his little legs would allow, collided with sundry items of furniture in his flight. By this time Rupert had the light of battle in his eye and was determined to be as friendly as possible to his prey, this heathen Dutchman with not a word of English to his name!

From a distance, I watched as Rupert and Barry circled the room with Rupert earnestly explaining the intricacies of English life and custom. Barry, was just as earnestly trying to explain to Rupert that he was, in fact, not a Dutchman but in fact came from Southborough where he lived with his mum and two marmalade cats. Alas, Rupert, by now, totally oblivious to Barry protestations carried on with his conversion of the 'Dutchman'. It was probably one of the funniest and surreal things I have seen. Suffice to say, Barry was 'rescued' eventually and Rupert, like a loose cannon, carried on his merry way.

All ended well. Rupert did his perceived good deed and Barry remained, somewhat discombobulated, with the choir for many years and he and Rupert had many a laugh as they recalled their first meeting.

We all loved Rupert and thought the world of him. When he passed to the Great Wine Cellar in the Sky his funeral service at Tunbridge Wells crematorium was stuffed to the gills with well-wishers. He was a real character. After his funeral we learned that Rupert played a key role as a lieutenant in Naval Intelligence co-ordinating aspects of Operation Overlord.

Long live characters like Rupert – bless 'em all.



I am a volunteer Blood Biker and Controller for the charity **SERV Kent**. We take calls from hospitals who require blood and lots of other products to be delivered from blood banks or moved between hospitals (all at our own expense). They are a worthy cause. Please take a look at their web site.

<https://www.servkent.co.uk/>

Around Easter, I had 25 Easter Eggs donated by a company which I delivered to Demelza Children's Hospice, as **SERV Kent** provides voluntary deliveries for them.



*Tim Richards at Demelza wrote to say:  
"Dear Chris, thank you so much for dropping your "suitcase" full of Easter eggs in to us yesterday - it is very much appreciated... We had a young person come in just after you left who was delighted to see an Easter Egg, as he thought they had all gone for the year - so, his day was made a little brighter. Thanks again to you and all your colleagues at SERV."*

**Chris Daniel**

## In Loving Memory

Patrick (Pat) Keast



It is with the greatest sadness that we announce that on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May Patrick Keast lost his fight against Covid 19 Coronavirus and passed away in Medway Maritime Hospital. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Wendy and his daughter Jo at this most difficult time.

Patrick (Pat) was 73 years of age and had been a member of our choir since 2010. He had one of the best bass voices in the choir and we shall not only miss him when we all join up again but his magnificent organisational skills too. He was also a member and Treasurer of Sittingbourne Orpheus Choral Society.

This is a very sad time for all those who knew Pat especially his family, his friends, close colleagues, Carole and Chris Cole who have supported Wendy and Jo these past months and the whole choir.

*R.I.P.*



# *The Good Lord works in mysterious ways*

**Glen Peacock shares a tale of converging circumstances that prove it's a small world**

It was about 5p.m. on a Monday evening in early March 2020. It was getting dark, the wind howling and the rain putting in yet another appearance as if we hadn't had sufficient in the past few weeks. I was indoors cosy and warm, watching a World War 2 movie on television and completely absorbed. Suddenly a loud bang on the front door, followed the hurry up summons from the doorbell. I was quickly sparked into action and not by the sound effects on the T.V. movie with bombs exploding in devastating fashion, but by the unexpected noise coming from the front door direction.

My wife had preceded me to the front door and was engaged in loud conversation with an elderly man who was previously unknown to both of us. He was hard of hearing and tended to speak in loud tones. He explained that he was trying to locate a husband and wife who he believed to be living in Tenterden and gave their names. Both of the names were completely unknown to us and we explained that we had been resident for the past 18 years at the current address. We asked him where he lived and he provided an address in Hawkhurst, which was known to my wife and I. As he was unable to give us any further information of how we might help locate his missing friends I asked how he intended to return to his home in Hawkhurst. "On the bus". I told him that I doubted that there was a service connecting Hawkhurst at that time. Furthermore, the inclement weather was not in keeping with his mode of travel. He was using a collapsible wheeled walking frame. I offered to drive him to his home, which he accepted.

The drive from Tenterden to Hawkhurst was quite enlightening and quickly put to bed any suspicious that I may have briefly had that he was confused, although he did have a hearing impediment. When he started his day, it was by travelling on the bus from Hawkhurst to Maidstone to meet some friends. He then decided to catch a bus from Maidstone to Tenterden where he wanted to make enquiries to try to locate his lost Tenterden friends whose address he had lost or misplaced, finally landing up on our doorstep.

The reason for locating the man and wife in Tenterden was to invite them to his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party in July 2020. A couple of days later I was at a meeting in St Mildred's Church Hall Tenterden when I recounted my unusual story. On asking if anybody recognised the names of the mentioned husband and wife, three different people knew them, volunteered an address and one had a telephone number of a relative of the wife of the couple I was trying to locate...amazing! When I returned home, I rang the given telephone number and a lady answered the call. I introduced myself and she said that she was at her mother's house on a visit and just happened to pick up the phone. She just surprisingly turned out to be the other half of the husband and wife team that my doorstep caller had been trying to locate. She indicated that she had received information from another family member about the earlier part of my story and thanked me for returning the 'old gent' to his home.

It seemed a case of all's well that ends well and her early 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday invitation had been delivered.

You couldn't make it up, could you?

We look forward to seeing you again very soon

The Kent Police Male Voice Choir website will be updated as soon as the choir is back to rehearsals and postponed concerts rescheduled

[www.kpmvc.co.uk](http://www.kpmvc.co.uk)