

Press Release, November 7th 2015

The inaugural recital of brand new Northumberland choir The Bridge Singers of Felton and West Thirston is as I write this, sold out!

The concert is on Monday December 7th at 7.30pm in Felton Village Hall and will feature a wide selection of repertoire, including madrigals by John Dowland, a summery selection from Cuba, Australia and the USA, a few popular Mediaeval numbers, at least two songs mentioning bananas, and a generous sprinkling of festive carols and songs including a world premiere by their musical director and professional composer, Cheryl Camm, as well as plenty for the audience to join in with. The choir will be joined for the occasion by Morpeth pianist Tom Cartmell who will accompany the choir and also play before the concert while everyone else jovially consumes complimentary mince pies and mulled wine.

The choir itself is one of the results of an initiative of Eileen Davidson and Alison Rushby, to get the villages singing together. It all started in April when Alison ran informal come-along-and-sing drop-in sessions at Gallery 45 on Main Street, Felton. These sessions were so popular and there was such a diverse range of people from the villages and beyond that now there are two singing groups. The drop-in singing group on a Tuesday evening run by Alison is still going strong and aims to have singing fun, with a huge range of songs covered, mostly sung in unison or with some optional part-singing. The Bridge Singers rehearses on a Monday evening and also has lots of singing fun, while tackling slightly more complex repertoire in 4 or more parts with a clear aim of presenting enjoyable but quality performances now and then. The Bridge Singers has rapidly expanded to almost 40 members who come from as far afield as Cramlington, Ingram Valley, Christon Bank, but also the vast majority from our very local area.

Review, Jan 10th 2016

More "The Village Sings", this time in public!

Take

- thirty to forty enthusiastic villagers and their singing friends from around the county;
- an enthusiastic willingness to have a go at a staggeringly wide range of choral repertoire;
- three months of laughter-filled, yet hard-working rehearsals;
- an eager concern with getting the musicality and technical intricacies of the music just right;
- songs about bananas, our very own street outside, beautiful feet and shopping;
- a world premiere and a clutch of Medieval catches and rounds;
- festive carols and songs to listen to and join in with;
- mince pies of delicious quality;
- 90 or so friends, family and other interested parties;
- a village hall decorated with twinkling lights, merry wreathes and other smiling beautifications;

- lashings of mulled wine (well one glass each);
- joyful chat and banter;
- an hour's worth of whole-hearted singing and clapping (and even cheering at times).....

...and you get the exuberant and exultant inaugural concert of The Bridge Singers in Felton Village Hall on December 7th 2015! - a joyous occasion of musical excellence, cheerful bonhomie and an all-round welcoming atmosphere. We were so humbled by the excited and appreciative response we received from our sell-out first ever audience...thank you to all of you who have supported and encouraged us as we make our way on our choral journey.

Other benefits of this momentous evening were that we are able to donate all the profits from the recital (over £300) to HospiceCare North Northumberland, and we have several new members joining us for our continued adventure in 2016. Our next recital will focus on this friendly and beautiful little village of ours and is called "Bridges, Rivers and Other Village Friends". It will be sometime in the spring – we'll let you know more details later. If you'd like to join the choir and be part of the fun, we rehearse on Monday evenings at The Northumberland Arms at 7.30pm. Come along, or contact our Musical Director for more info.

Bridges, Rivers and Other Village Friends 18th April 2016

It's all about our local area for The Bridge Singers as we prepare for our next recital in St. Michael's Church, Felton on Saturday May 7th at 7.30. The church will be bursting with songs and music inspired by our new rehearsal home, The Northumberland Arms, angling in the Coquet, St Michael himself, some neighbouring rivers, The Running Fox, the newly-refurbished Felton Park Greenhouse, Oliver Cromwell's visit here in 1650, the three monumental sycamores on the road north, the mill stream, Gallery 45, and even the telephone box on the bridge! As you'll remember from our Christmas recital, we do like a variety of music, so you'll hear a happy mixture of folk, classical, barbershop, a few 1960s classics, a couple of brand new items specially written for us, as well as some poems and readings – we do hope you'll come along and be part of what we think will be a delightful evening.

We are happy to announce that a portion of the profits from this concert will be donated to one of St. Michael's Church's designated charities, The Toby Henderson Trust

(<http://www.ttht.co.uk/>)

Posters are up in the villages with ticket details, or directly contact Anne, who is our box office supremo for this event... Remember our Christmas recital was a sell-out, so don't be disappointed in May!

The Bridge Singers And their Audience Have Their Say! 10th May 2016

We've been all about the villages in 2016, preparing for our recital which took place on Saturday May 7th at St. Michael's. It was entitled "Bridges, Rivers and Other Village Friends"

and our audience of over 130 eager applauders (but not in the first half, so as not to fracture the flow of our narrative!) were full of post-concert comments which we'd like to share with you ("in brackets and inverted commas!") as part of our review of proceedings.

We were especially delighted that poet Tony Williams (*"A fabulous concert tonight, including the premiere of Cheryl's brilliant choral setting of my poem 'The Felton Sycamores'. Bravo!"*) came to the recital to read his brand new poem, (*"The Felton Sycamores was haunting and spine-chilling – [she] ADORED it, as did I"*) inspired by the trees on the road north out of the village and the story that Oliver Cromwell's army marched their thousands of Scottish prisoners through here to Durham after the Battle of Dunbar in 1650. (*"it was spine tingling ... very evocative of the eerie wind cutting into the poor tramping prisoners"*) His poem and Cheryl's setting of it to music provided the heart of our first half which told this wretched tale in dramatic style with readings from the letters of Cromwell and the Governor of Newcastle, (*"[I] particularly enjoyed the first half with its serious content and also enjoyed the readings."*) Civil War marches, and a couple of Michaelmas anthems in honour of our host. (*"Factum Est Silentium was a wonderfully-sung atmospheric start to the concert and worked beautifully in the beautiful church"*)

Following a choc-ice-infused interval, the more light-hearted second half featured a generous mixture of folk, barbershop, popular songs and more readings (*"all the readers were excellent, Claire especially"*) in tribute to some familiar icons: The Running Fox, the phone box on the bridge, (*"the Telephone song was great fun and we enjoyed the performance" "it was my daughter's favourite song"*) our links with the glass industry (St. Michael's, Felton Park Greenhouse, Gallery 45, the clay seam in Thirston), (*"Was so excited to finally hear a live performance of Magical Glasssuch a wonderful song & sung so beautifully."*) the mill, the Northumberland Arms, anglers in the Coquet, and other rivers too. (*"It was splendid to be part of this quite emotional experience - I have just got rid of the magical glass ear-worm! which I particularly enjoyed!"*)

Our hosts at St. Michael's provided refreshments at the close of concert, and we're delighted that proceeds and donations from this recital will be shared between the choir and one of St. Michael's favoured charities, The Toby Henderson Trust. (*"It was a terrific atmosphere last night, acoustics were great and the village did their bit by fully supporting all of us."*)

Finally, why not come and sing with us? (*"I really enjoyed being able to take part yesterday.... I've felt I've really been engaging with music through singing. Such imaginative programming - I found the first half very moving, and have picked up from others that it was sombre but special. And I felt well and truly stretched. An evening I'll never forget."*)

or like us on Facebook (The Bridge Singers)? (*"What a fabulous evening. Thank you all for a wonderful performance. A special thank youfor your amazing work..."* from Ann on FB) or follow us on Twitter @bridgesingers? or come to hear us again at Feltonbury 2016 in Gallery 45, 25th June 6.15pm? (*"Great show at #Felton #Northumberland last night. Looking forward to #Feltonbury :-)"* from Steve on Twitter)

For more information about the choir contact our MD.

The Bridge Singers' Fleecetastic Term, 10th November 2016

At The Bridge Singers we're all about the sheep this term with our three festive concerts in December exploring a range of Christmas and other repertoire in which the woolly creatures or their cheery guardians play a starring role. As ever, our repertoire covers a wide range of styles including folk music, classical favourites and traditional carols for our audience to sing along to. We'll be shearing, tailing, lambing flock-tending in English, German, French and Japanese, with our friends the nymphs, angels and thwarted (and not so thwarted) lovers ...oh and there'll be festive refreshments too, to enhance the merry feeling!

Last year's concert at Felton Village Hall was a complete sell-out and lots of fun so do nab your tickets early this year and join us for . Details are on our poster, but the essential information is:

1. Longframlington Memorial Hall. Monday 5th December 7.30pm
2. Felton Village Hall, Saturday 10th December, 3pm
3. Felton Village Hall, Saturday 10th December, 7.30pm

Tickets from Tim Felton Tickets also available from Gallery 45. Longframlington tickets also available from The Running Fox in Longframlington.

Our three 2016 sheepy recitals are being sponsored by The Running Fox so another way of supporting us is by supporting them and their deliciousness! Thank you so much to them.

In other, non-sheep-related news, our reach has grown, and in October we made our Acklington debut to rapturous acclaim, helping the Art Group to raise over £1000 for HospiceCare North Northumberland at their coffee morning. We also spent a happy singing day in Alnmouth in September. We've also been invited to sing for the Longhirst Music Society In March, and Aln Valley Railway's music day in May. You can also hear us on the afternoon of December 18th at Alnwick Gardens when we will be entertaining the Christmas market crowds.

We do hope you'll be able to join us in December for one of our tuneful bleatings. See you there!

The Bridge Singers' Glasstastic News, 9th May 2017

Oh my, we've been busy already this year performing in Longhirst, Acklington and a wedding in Brinkburn Priory, in the midst of preparing for our major "Magical Glass" recital in St. Michael's Church Felton in June. Saturday June 17th to be precise, when we will perform music inspired by the stunning windows in the church as well as other glass-related activities and objects. As is our usual custom, we will present a varied mixture of music including several scrumptious Renaissance masterpieces (Do you know Lotti's Crucifixus? It's glorious, so do come and wallow in it!) pop classics from the 1960s, spirituals, folk songs, a song with outrageous innuendo, another full of literary gore, a world premiere inspired by the 1870 window, Medieval merriment, a bit of amphibious Baroque...and much more! St. Michael's will be providing refreshments at the end of the recital, and any money they make from this

will help with their fundraising for the repairs to the 1870 window, so do come along and relish us and support them!

In April, we enjoyed a hard-working but fun-filled singing day at Ingram Village Hall where we practised breathing, relaxing and standing with our resident voice expert Jenny, practised our notes and rhythms amidst much laughter, practised our chatting and munching over an extravagant and delicious shared lunch, and made up our own glass orchestra music with our resident composer, Cheryl. You'll be able to hear some of this glass orchestra music in our June Magical Glass recital, and you can hear some of it here too:

<https://youtu.be/RlfDTXeoQR4> Look what fun we have!

Coming up, we're performing at Aln Valley Railway on May 28th, and at Blagdon Hall on June 4th. Also, catch us on our bridge and in Gallery 45 at Feltonbury on June 24th, and very thrillingly at Brinkburn Priory on July 16th. We can't wait to sing in that glorious acoustic again.

Finally, we have an email address, so if you want to contact us about performances, membership, tickets, drop us a line! It's bridgesingers@gmail.com

The Bridge Singers' End of Year Report – July 2017

As you read this we'll be taking a summer break from our year of happy singing ready to start up again refreshed at Gallery 45 on the first Monday evening in September, so this seems a good time to reflect on our 2nd year of existence.

The first thing that springs to mind is how busy we've been, not only with our own concerts—our festive sheep fest “There Were Shepherds” at Felton and Longframlington, and our recent celebration of all things glassy, “Magical Glass” at St. Michael's, but also the many outside gigs we've been invited to, including Acklington WI; Longhirst Music Society; Aln Valley Railway; Blagdon Hall; Alnwick International Music Festival; Brinkburn Summer Music; Alnwick Gardens; Feltonbury 2017, and also a wedding at Brinkburn Priory.

Musically we've come a long way too helped by two Singing Fun Days at Alnmouth and Ingram. Our choice of repertoire has widened and includes music composed between the 13th century and June 2017, ranges in difficulty from “easy peasy” to “bloomin' tricky but nothing we can't handle eventually”, ranges in style from “obscure 16th century motets” to “popular hits from the 1960s” through “folk music in a range of languages” and “music hall numbers” with the odd hymn and world premiere thrown in. We have expanded our range of non-singing-but-choir-related skills too. These are particularly noticeable during our popular shared meals, and also in the formation of our Glass Orchestra for which we also composed our own music (you can find the results of this on our facebook page-

<https://www.facebook.com/thebridgesingers/>) We have also inspired creativity in others including, glass art by Hazel Metherell, art works by Alison Rushby and flower arrangements by Ann Lings, and we have completed our first flashmob on Fenkle Street in Alnwick for our very own dear Sylvia and Don's wedding.

Our audiences have continued to grow, and we are very grateful to all of you who have come along to support us with clapping and also with our efforts to raise money for local causes

including during 2016/7 HospiceCare Northumberland, MS Research and Relief Fund in Morpeth and the Window Repair Appeal at St. Michael's Church in Felton. Plans already brewing for 2017/18 include a fruity Christmas recital, a celebration of Robert Burns and the smell of the ocean is also in the air for next summer. If you're interested in The Bridge Singers – for inviting or joining, do contact us: bridgesingers@gmail.com

The Bridge Singers' Hit The Road. 10th May 2018

Your very own village choir, The Bridge Singers is on tour in June – a bus tour – our Summer Road Show. We'll be trundling through a hopefully sunny, and definitely gorgeous Northumberland, on Saturday June 16th in a big bus, stopping off in Whittingham, Alnwick and back here in Felton for short recitals during the day and evening. We're taking some delicious music with us: madrigals from 16th century England; some 19th century European choral masterpieces; some our favourites from our Burns Night celebration; a couple of 1930s croony, jazzy numbers and few new and old odds and ends we're enjoying at the moment – a Maori waiata, a very recent number 1 hit, a 1980s rock classic, a finger-clicking Simon and Garfunkel number, an Italian sacred love song for double choir. Entry for all three recitals is free – there'll be a retiring collection when you can give us what you think we're worth! Catch us at these venues and times:

Saturday June 16th 2018

St Bartholomew's Church, Whittingham, 12-12.45pm

St. Paul's Church, Alnwick, 3-3.45pm

St. Michael's Church, Felton, 7.30-8.30pm

The weekend after that is Feltonbury and we're performing there too – on the bridge and at our Gallery Forty5 home. Do look out for us on the Feltonbury schedule!

We recently performed at a cheery wedding at Brinkburn Priory, where we were hired as the guest choir of delightful new friends Olivia and Andy. We love singing in the reverberant acoustics there, and are back in July, on 15th at 2pm, where we will showcase some of our warm-toned numbers. One last outing for our current repertoire will be at the RNLI's Lifeboat Day in Craster on 11th August.

We think you know by now that we like a theme for our concerts, but this time our theme is the warm tone itself. We're working on blending all the disparate voices in the choir into a rich whole, and have chosen songs to help us do that. We do hope you'll come and hear how we're doing at one or more of these recitals in the summer – we really are singing some gorgeous music at the moment!

Before the summer is done, we're immediately embarking on a very special project. We've been asked by St. Michael's Church in the village to present a recital on November 10th to commemorate the 100th anniversary since the end of World War 1. We are feeling very honoured by this invitation and are currently in the process of selecting repertoire that befits such an occasion, but we can tell you already that there will be our usual variety of styles and

moods – sombre, cheery-in-the-face-of-it, tear-jerking, hopeful, classical, folk, new pieces, popular...and we'll definitely be reprising Eric Bogle's And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda which was such a hit at last June's "windows" concert!

Four of our members are also in Alnwick's Rock Festival Choir who are performing Rachmaninov's Vespers at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival on August 18th and 19th. Several of our members are organising a trip up there to hear this very special piece. Alison Rushby is coordinating this, so if you fancy a trip up to Edinburgh do contact her via the Felton Music website <https://www.feltonmusic.co.uk/> To find out more about Rock Festival Choir <http://www.rockfestivalchoir.org/>

If you'd like to hear more about The Bridge Singers, do email us: bridgesingers@gmail.com or find us on Facebook as The Bridge Singers or on Twitter @bridgesingers

End-of-Term News from the Bridge Singers, July 2018

Usually at this time of year, The Bridge Singers would be winding down for their summer break over August, and we do think we've earned it this year with more performances than ever in 2017/18 including Alnwick's Last Night Of The Proms, two fruity Christmas concerts, Burns Night, our three-recitals-in-a-day Summer Road Show, a wedding at Brinkburn, two recitals at Feltonbury, another recital at Brinkburn as part of their Summer Music Series and an upcoming appearance at the Craster RNLI event in August. However, we have been very delighted and honoured to receive an invitation from St. Michael's to perform a recital for them to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1, so...no rest for us this summer, as we've a whole new recital of repertoire to master for this most significant of occasions and really do want to continue to give the music we select and the commemoration itself an excellent performance. The recital will be in St. Michael's Church on the evening of Saturday November 10th and will contain our customary mixture of music with readings to match.

Since we last wrote in here we have had our very successful Summer bus tour around Northumberland, stopping for recitals in Whittingham, Alnwick and back here in Felton, as well as a very enjoyable afternoon meal at Weldon Bridge. The audience numbers were very good, and we attracted lots of new fans to our cheery and spirited style of singing. Cheryl's theme for this concert was different to usual in that rather than concentrating on a specific non-musical idea, it focussed on a wide range of music that would help us achieve a more mellow and blended sound, and lots of compliments flew our way on this very skill! We were also particularly happy that in our Felton concert, two holidaying New Zealanders, complimented us on our Maori pronunciation!

World War 1 Commemoration Recital, The Bridge Singers, September 2018

We're working hard (while still having oodles of fun!) in The Bridge Singers, for our next recital on November 10th at 7pm in St. Michael's Church, Felton. We were invited to present this recital as part of the church's commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of World

War 1. There will be readings and songs exploring different aspects of life in Britain, around the world and in the trenches at the time of World War 1, as well as some stunning “requiem” music. As ever we are including a wide range of styles in our music selections: some classical, some folk, some jazz, some popular songs from the early 20th century, and also three new pieces composed for this occasion by our very own resident composers Gary Steward and Cheryl Camm, who have been inspired by letters and stories of WW1 soldiers included in the current exhibition commemorating veterans who were employees or family members of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle. Essentially – there will be something for everyone.

Tickets for this event are free, but donations can be made during the concert in aid of the Royal British Legion. If you would like to secure your seat at this very special recital, tickets will be available from Gallery Forty5, or from Tim ..., or at St. Michael’s Church from the end of September. We do hope to see you there: Saturday November 10th, 7pm, St Michael’s Church, Felton.

The Bridge Singers Go Forth, July 2019

The Bridge Singers, the villages’ community choir, has enjoyed lots of local performances in the last few weeks, most notably as part of the parish’s Ascension Day Service in Brinkburn Priory, helping to celebrate Jack and Nina’s wedding at St. Michael’s, and a couple of performances at Feltonbury. We’re part of the Brinkburn Summer Series of concerts in a few days and will be on song again for another wedding in Brinkburn later in July and then we have a break until the end of August.

You may remember that last summer we went on a bus trip around Northumberland, stopping off for short concerts in Whittingham and Alnwick, before heading back to Felton for a full-length concert in the evening. We rather enjoyed venturing forth, so this Autumn we’re doing it again, but this time heading across to Cumbria for two concerts of Autumn-themed music in Keswick and Lanercost Priory, but Felton will get to hear our new programme of autumn-themed music first... on Sunday 29th September at 3pm in St. Michael’s Church. As usual, our programme will contain a mixture of popular, folk and classical music including lots of new pieces and a few that we’ve sung before.

Someone was asking recently how we would define our choir, and there are a few things we might say: we laugh a lot; we work hard; we’re very good at pooled lunches; we are a mixed bunch of singers including some who read music and some who don’t, some who’ve sung in choirs before, some who’ve not, some who prefer popular styles of music and some who prefer classical styles, but no matter which categories you put yourself in, everyone is welcome and all learning styles are catered for; we are adventurous in our repertoire and are constantly seeking out new singing adventures. The leader of another choir recently told us that what she admires about our choir is that we take risks, particularly in the varied styles and the difficulty of our repertoire choices, but that the belief is always there that we will be able to do it in the end. We’ve made remarkable progress in the three and a half years since we started, and all the way along we’ve had enormous fun....oh and we do, on the whole, pull

everything off in the end. Phew! We'd like to thank those of you who've come along to any one of our performances – we do enjoy our rehearsals enormously, but we also love to sing for an audience of friendly regulars and new listeners. So thank you. We hope to see you at one of our autumn concerts. A poster is somewhere near this article, we hope, with all the details you need! Or you could have a look at our website to find out all about us!

<https://bridgesingers.wixsite.com/thebridgesingers>

The Bridge Singers On Tour! (September 2019)

After a summery month of rest and recuperation following a very busy year of performances at recitals and weddings, The Bridge Singers are starting their 2019-20 season with a loud but tuneful bang, as we limber up our vocal cords and our choral chords for our first “overseas” tour – outside Northumberland, that is!

We're off to Cumbria (!) at the beginning of October to sing in Keswick and Lanercost, taking our usual varied stylistic mix of music with us – an autumnal blend of songs about leaves falling and being kicked about, about Michaelmas, about crickets, about colder nights and amber days, about Remembrance, and we're even throwing in a couple of songs that have nothing to do with Autumn at all, but we like them and want to share them!

We're also taking musical gifts from Northumberland along with us:

- our “home” folksong, which we've been singing on and off since our very first concert four years ago, Felton Lonnen (it mentions horse chestnuts too so fits the theme, albeit tentatively);
- three songs from our tenor/composer Gary Steward including his very popular hit “Northumberland”, and also “Darling Daddy”, a song he wrote specially for us last year as we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the end of WW. He was inspired by the letters of a worker from Alnwick Castle who went off to fight and never did return;
- and also a brand new piece by our Musical Director/composer Cheryl Camm, inspired by the memorial statue at Lanercost Priory of the Infant Elizabeth Dacre Howard who died in 1883 at the age of just four months. The song is a lullaby and tells of silent seasonal events during the year (the opening a daffodil, the shimmer of a rainbow, the curling of the leaves, the falling of a snowflake) which evoke in the singer the memories of the baby's distinct and personal sounds. A special treat for us is that we're being allowed to go into the ruins of the Priory to sing the lullaby around the statue itself prior to our concert in the main church there on October 6th.

Before we head off to Cumbria, we're premiering our Autumnal programme here in the village on Sunday September 29th at 3pm in St. Michael's Church. Tickets are a mere £5 and available from Anne ... We do hope you'll be able to come along and hear us at one of our venues – even make a weekend of it and join us in Cumbria! We're repeating our programme at St. John's Church Keswick on Saturday 5th October at 7pm (tickets are also £5 and available on the door or from Keswick Tourist Information Office) and at The Priory Church of St. Mary Magdalene at Lanercost Priory on Sunday October 6th at 3pm (Tickets are free, with a retiring collection in aid of the church.)

Bookending this industrious start to the year is Ben and Sarah's wedding at Brinkburn Priory (at the time of writing, we've already done that and if we say so ourselves we did a stonking job for them), and a gig for the Alnwick WI three days after our return from Cumbria. We'll then crack on with Christmas preparations – an advance notice of our main Christmas recital for your diaries: December 7th at St. Michael's!

To contact the choir: bridgesingers@gmail.com

Happy New Year from The Bridge Singers, January 2020

At the time of writing this update we are hard into our preparations for our Burns Night Celebration on 27th January (7pm, Felton Village Hall, if you get this edition of The Bridge before the date!) – some songs from our last similar event in 2018 and a few new ones, and we're also eagerly anticipating working with jazz pianist Richard Michael who is coming to be our special guest artist, improvising in a jazzy style around Robert Burns tunes.

Less than a month after that we are guest artists ourselves at a concert of the Coquet Concert Band in Swarland Village Hall (Weds 19th Feb 7.30pm) where we'll be singing some of our current repertoire of folk and popular songs as well as three combined numbers with the band. We're so much looking forward to working with another of our villages' flourishing musical groups – some of us were at their inaugural concert in Gallery 45 in December and they are brilliant!

A busy choiry year is in the offing for us, with several weddings booked in at Brinkburn, as well as Feltonbury, Ascension Day (also at Brinkburn) and two of our own concerts in Felton and Warkworth in the summer – we'll tell you more about those nearer the time, but there is a Queenly theme running through the current planning...think a monarch from the 17th century, an outrageously brilliant rock group and a place where folk tunes from Ireland and Britain were given new meaning by homesick convicts...

As well as looking forward, it's cheering to look back on our recent performances around Christmas, including our own concert at St. Michael's where we raised a whopping £380 for Alzheimer's Society – thanks so much to those of you who came along and supported us and them. We also performed at the wedding of one of our past members (and daughter of a current member) at Otterburn – only the two of them knew we would be there, so we were an enormous surprise to all the guests (and the groom!) when we started singing at them as they emerged from the ceremony! We not only had to practice our singing skills for that but also keeping quiet and still for long periods of time, and gathering ourselves into a choir formation on a tight squeeze of a staircase without falling over like dominoes! (All achieved successfully!) We also had the great honour of being the choir for the inaugural Carol Service at Brinkburn Priory, where we led the carols and sang a couple of our own. Somewhere near this update is a picture of us trying to keep warm in the freezing but magical atmosphere of Brinkburn in late December. Brrr!

If you want to keep up with us in between editions of The Bridge, follow us on Facebook @thebridgesingers or on Twitter @bridgesingers or have a hunt for our website. We look

forward to seeing you during 2020, and if you want us to sing your favourite Queen song in the summer, let us know before the end of February, and we'll see what we can do!

The Bridge Singers News Update (July 2020)

Well, as with many things in life at the moment we have been somewhat on hold. We have not rehearsed together since early March, and our last performance was at the memorial service for our lovely Kate in Newton-On-The-Moor Village Hall also in March. Weddings we were booked to sing at have of course been cancelled or postponed, and all our performances and rehearsals are postponed or on hold until further notice.

However, we have not been idle. We have so far produced six lockdown videos (at the time of writing, the 6th of these is in production, but by the time you're reading it, that one will be out there too!). Our original plans for the first half of the year (post Burns Night) was to prepare a concert of music with a Queen as the main theme (songs by the group Queen, music by Purcell for Queen Mary composed in 1695, and folksongs from Queensland and Victoria in Australia). Avoiding all problems with recording copyright material by Queen, and also avoiding the need for accompaniments in the Purcell, we set to straight away tackling two of our Australian folksongs, learning them on our own with the help of learning tracks provided by Cheryl, our Musical Director. We recorded ourselves singing our parts and sent the results of this rather alarming process (we sing in a choir because it's good to blend with others, and the sounds of our own individual voices has been quite traumatic for some of us!!!) to Cheryl who edited them all together into videos using new updates, photos and art work works to keep us in touch with other.

We then had a go at one of our old favourites, The Parting Glass, which we sang in 2017. In the meantime, Cheryl was approached by members of the hen harrier protection charity Hen Harrier Action if she could compose a song for their Hen Harrier Day in August which of course this year is now online. She duly composed a brand new song, "Skydancer: Ghost of the Moors" and we have recorded that one too. The video for this is going to be released nationally on Hen Harrier Day itself on August 8th, so you'll be able to hear that one then. The charity is encouraging other singing groups to have a go at the song and to this end we have produced a learning video to help others tackle the song. In our dreams we will be allowed to come together on August 8th somewhere outside to sing the song ourselves, but we'll have to see what the meeting-up regulations are by then!

Since early June when groups of six have been allowed to meet up outside, we have had a couple of Monday evenings recording two more songs under the arches of the bridges in small five-person, very-spread-out groups. Lucky for us, our beautiful River Coquet has played along by not flowing through the West Thirston third of the newer bridge supports, and we have found that it is very resonant under there, even with only five at a time singing! This has also enabled other members of the choir who are unable to do the remote recordings to join in. These recording projects have really kept our spirits up and we really all do still feel that we're part of this happy choir – and what an absolute thrill it has been to see and chat to each other during these last two under-the-bridge sessions!

You can hear all our lockdown video projects by visiting our website, where Shirley, our IT guru, has provided lots of links (although of course, you'll have to wait until August 8th to watch the hen harrier song!) <https://bridgesingers.wixsite.com/thebridgesingers>

As for the future, we will continue with our recording projects, and we will continue to find old recordings and make them available on our Youtube Channel (there's a link to that on our website too). We have so enjoyed our mini-recording sessions under the bridge at our usual Monday night rehearsal time slot that we may well have a few more of these during the warm summer evenings. We may give online rehearsals a go every now and then too, although these are fraught with technical difficulties. Anyway, we cannot wait to sing for you again...we will do our "Queen-themed" concert some day and there will be something for all musical tastes in there, so watch this space!

News from The Bridge Singers (July 2021)

At the time of writing...and of reading, The Bridge Singers are in the middle of their "outdoor singing" phase (the regulations have thus far only allowed for six indoors and seeing as there are 45 of us it would take all night to get through all of us!). As it is, so far we've only been allowed to have a maximum of 30 all spread out like not-enough caviar dotted here and there on a piece of toast – very tasty and rather special, but hard to get the full effect. We've sung on the Felton basketball court, next to the shipping containers on the Rec, on a garden tennis court, in the pastures with sheep, at Druridge Bay near the Hadston boat ramp at low tide and each one has been splendid. It's so lovely to sing together again even if we do have to defy the breezes and midges! We've actually been very lucky with the weather each Monday thus far. Umbrellas were only up for about five minutes one evening and then once the sun heard us singing, he came back out again for the duration! Despite all of this, it has been exceedingly wonderful to sing together again.

As you all know, the easing of these restrictions was to have been on June 21st, so we'd planned a get-together on the beach with a Summer Solstice Singalong of some of our current repertoire with family and friends and finally all of us allowed together again. However, as you also know, this was delayed, but we did it anyway, again with restricted numbers and all the spreading out. Some family did come along and sat away from us and each other - it was a very merry event. You can see some of what happened at this link: [The Bridge Singers' Summer Solstice Singalong 2021 Highlights - YouTube](#)

We've decided to make the most of the warmth and light of the summer evenings and carry on with our outdoor rehearsals until the end of August, and are currently in the process of organizing some sort of performance for the beginning of September to round off the outdoor phase of our journey. We'll then have an autumn break for a couple of weeks and come back firing on all cylinders again with Christmas repertoire. We'll send out word of our performance when we know it ourselves. Details will be on our website sometime in August. The address for that is here and you'll find all sorts of other news and videos there too! See you soon! [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers \(wixsite.com\)](#)

The Bridge Singers' Old Term, September 2021

After two years of continuous activity, The Bridge Singers are taking a month off during September 2021 and will hopefully resume with indoor rehearsals in October. We came back from our summer break in 2019 a few weeks early in August to prepare for our Autumn Tour to Cumbria and in spite of all the restrictions that have been thrown at us since our last indoor rehearsal in March 2020, we have just kept on going in a variety of different ways using great imagination and fortitude to continue our singing and our team spirit.

During all the lockdowns and the restricted emergings from these...

- we have produced 33 videos (21 new recordings recorded individually and edited together; and 12 using old recordings);
- we have held weekly rehearsals via Zoom since October 2020;
- we've also had zoom quizzes and our AGM via Zoom
- we have had small groups singing sessions during summer 2020 and in the run-up to Christmas during our daily Advent Calendar singing activities;
- we sang torchlight carols on the bridge to ourselves, spread out in groups of 6 and with no listeners, as the restrictions permitted;
- we held a virtual Burns Night Singalong when we sang our favourite Burns arrangements, and were joined by our old friend Richard Michael via Zoom;
- we interspersed our weekly Zoom rehearsal with special singalongs culminating at the end of March in an live virtual concert when we were joined by audience members around the world including fans in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and a variety of other places in Europe and the UK;
- from May we have explored various outdoor venues in and around the village for our "up to 30" rehearsals including the basketball court, the rec, Anne's tennis court, the lawn at Thirston House, around the oak tree on The Ridings, at the beach near Hadston;
- we held a mini Summer Solstice Singalong at Hadston on June 21st in front of a handful of family and a few passers-by (we made one family's day – they'd gathered together to see each other for the first time in months and there we were nearby singing
- from July we've been able to rehearse with as many as we like...still outside, but such a treat;
- from the first of our cancelled rehearsals in March 2020 to the day in July 2021 when we could have everyone together again, our MD wrote us an email every day to keep our spirits up and keep us in touch with each other...491 altogether;
- we sang at Feltonbury in August, and enjoyed extracting our performance outfits from the back of our wardrobes and actually performing again;
- we gave an end-of-term performance in front of the glasshouse at Felton Park at the very beginning of September

So, as you can tell, we've kept ourselves busy, and all our efforts paid off in these two concerts when we slotted back into performance mode with new and old music firmly under our belts and very much enjoyed raising our game again for live audiences again. We received this feedback from one listener: "Thank you so much for the performance on Saturday. It was a joy to see (nearly) everyone together again, doing something they all love. I didn't realise just

how much we had lost over the pandemic. But hearing you all again truly made me cry tears of joy.”

We cannot wait to be back rehearsing indoors when we can hear each other properly and not be at the mercy of wind and drizzle,,,,and hopefully before too long it will be safe enough to sing to larger audiences of our friends, families and fans! Roll on October for the former, and roll on (hopefully) Christmas for the latter!

The Bridge Singers Update, November 2021

To be part of this choir means so much to all of us:

- It's to instantly have 40 or so friends who have at least one thing in common;
- The contributions of each of us are vital and special, but together we produce something remarkable;
- It's uplifting of spirit and mood – it's joyous;
- The Bridge Singers creates a space for laughter and hard work and chat and care, as well, of course, music;
- We love to show our friends, families and neighbours what we've been working on and to let them share in some of the joy we have.

Luckily, all of the above has continued during 2020 and 2021, and as we so hoped, we have been rehearsing indoors again since the beginning of October in our new larger home at St. Michael's Church. It has been glorious. We're becoming accustomed to the current normal for choirs round the world, with risk assessments, lost voice and breathing capacity, testing, distancing, masks, one-way systems, shorter and more focused practice. Even with all this to consider, we are almost ready to share what we've been working on with you.

We are revising some of our old Christmas favourites to get us gently back into the swing of things and will be performing these in St. John The Divine Church, Acklington on Monday December 13th at 7.30pm. As usual, there will be a mixture of styles in our repertoire, including some folk songs, some very popular carols, a few more obscure items, and also Handel's Ascendit Deus. We first sang this beautiful and cheerful anthem at Brinkburn Priory for the Ascension Day service in 2019 and then again in the summer. It was one of the favourite songs of our beloved soprano and choir secretary Jenny Ellis, who died earlier this year, so we are singing it in honour and happy recollection of her.

Numbers are limited, so do please book your tickets in advance with Tim...

We are also hoping to present this concert to a smaller capacity audience in St. Michael's, Felton on a Saturday afternoon in December, but at the time of writing, this has not been finalized. Do keep an eye on our website for details: [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers \(wixsite.com\)](https://thebridgesingers.wixsite.com)

We're also on Facebook as @thebridgesingers, and update our page regularly with news, photos and clips. We also have a Youtube channel and a playlist of all our recordings including

our 2020-2021 Review Of The Year which was uploaded since the last edition of The Bridge: [Songs from The Bridge Singers- YouTube](#)

From Christmas to Silence, January 2022

A big thank you to those of you who came along to support us at our two Christmas concerts in Acklington and at St. Michael's here in Felton. It was really very special to sing to a live audience indoors again after so very long without you. We also brought out some of our Christmas repertoire and sang it on the bridge on the last Monday before Christmas. We had done this in 2020 all spread out along its full length and in small, very distanced groups, with no on-lookers as restrictions dictated, and it lifted our spirits and was so very special that we vowed to do it again in 2021 as far as any new restrictions permitted. Most of us did indeed do this and again, it was very special indeed.

We are already well into our preparations for our next event which will be at the end of February – a Concert of Silences. We did have a live Zoom event in March 2021 at which we sang lots of music that either had actual silence, or the word “silence” somewhere in it and our intention is to present a similar programme, but with a live audience. More details will follow about dates and times, but we can tell you already that the programme will be a mixture of folk, classical and popular music as it always is, including a new song by our very own Gary Steward, one of our all time favourites Factum est Silentium by 16th century composer Felice Anerio, and two of last year's lockdown projects of songs by ABBA and Billy Joel.

By the time you read this, The Bridge Singers AGM will have taken place at the end of January, and it marks the end of an era in some ways. We have been under the Chairmanship of Tim Cooper ever since we were founded, He started as (in his words) 'Cheryl's Little Helper', and so continued. He has constantly had the good of the group in mind, and has done a lot to plan events, sell tickets, fill in forms, and very caringly keep in touch with ill members and their families. He is there, checking parking and fire regs, communicating with the Charities Commission and Making Music. He has been priceless during the pandemic, repeatedly getting to grips with the regulations as they keep changing, and mapping out our new rehearsal venue at St Michael's church with his 2m stick. He took on many of the roles of Secretary too after our beloved Jenny died last summer. He does get some affectionate teasing, but tolerates this with a cheeky grin and continues his cheerful support. No one person can fill such shoes, so his jobs will be distributed liberally between the members of an enlarged committee, following the AGM. Thanks for all your leadership, Tim, but do please stay and sing tenor with no added stress!

Do watch our website and Social Media outlets for details of our upcoming Concert of Silences: Twitter: @bridgesingers Facebook: @thebridgesingers Website: [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#)

Our enormous thanks to Tim for his dedication and attention to detail as Chairman, and pleasure that we shall still see him weekly in the Second Tenors.

Silence, Weddings and Queens – The Bridge Singers in 2022 (March 2022)

At the time of writing, it's a week or so since our Concert of Silences in St. Michael's in which we explored some old and new repertoire around the theme of silence: prayerful silence, both thoughtful and joyful; silence in trying times; lockdown silence and creativity. We performed some new works by Gary Steward and Cheryl Camm, and highlighted some of the artistic creativity that our members have shown in the recent months. Never a choir to do the same old same old, we live-streamed our concert to friends and family (and anyone else who knew about the link!) around the world and the country to thank them for their support during the last two years. It's not too late for you to view the livestream. The link to it is here on this online programme: [Concert of Silences- Cheryl Camm – Composer](#)

We've put this concert together in just two months after our Christmas events, and with so much new music and some difficult repertoire to revise, it's been a full-on start to 2022. We now have a more relaxing learning time until May to learn new repertoire for a trio of weddings we've been booked to enhance – one in Corbridge and two in our beloved Brinkburn Priory. Lucky for us, we had a bonus reminder of the thrill of that building's beauty and wonderful acoustic, two days before the Concert of Silences when we sang for an hour at their wedding fayre. Oh my – it brought a tear to many of our eyes to hear ourselves reverberate around there – tears and smiles a-plenty, indeed.

Our summer concerts this year, which will be in July will be entitled Queens Of the Summer Skies (or something similar!) and will be a mixture of Purcell's music for Queen Mary's birthday in 1695, songs by the group Queen, and sundry other folk and popular songs with Queens in them! This was originally going to be our summer programme for 2020, but the Queenish theme has accrued even more relevance this year, of course! Anyway, look out for posters in the village and on our website for precise dates and venues, and we look forward to welcoming you back to our concerts again. You can also find us on Twitter as @bridgesingers and on Facebook as The Bridge Singers.

The Bridge Singers searching for Somebody To Love, May 2022

Since our Concert of Silences at the end of February we've been cracking on with the repertoire for our next concerts in July. We're singing our usual mixture of folk, classical and popular music, loosely based around a theme – watch out for posters and other information soon. The finale to these July concerts will be a version of Queen's Somebody To Love. You'll know the one we mean – a number 2 hit from the album Day At The Races in 1976, a follow-up single to the hugely successful Bohemian Rhapsody when Queen were at the height of their first wave of popularity, gospel-style vocal arrangements, Freddie Mercury really going for it in a way that sends a thrill down your spine, a song that Freddie himself apparently said was the best song he ever wrote, a Platinum record in the UK, a Double Platinum record in

the USA, a song that's been covered by many and has featured in movies such as Happy Feet. Yes – that's the one. Well we're learning it and will perform it as many times as possible during the summer and beyond, because it is one of the hardest things we've ever sung, and once we've mastered it, we want to show as many people as possible!

What makes it so hard? Essentially, Freddie Mercury was an amazingly virtuosic singer with a range and style that none of us can replicate. Also, we don't have Brian May-ish guitar solos, nor the driving drum and bass power of Roger Taylor and John Deacon. We're a choir...so...we're providing all of that, plus the gospel choir vocals all on our own, and this makes for an intricate arrangement! Each section of the choir takes the tune at times, the guitar solo at times, the driving beat at times. At the time of writing this report, we have tackled with great determination all the notes – page 8 (of 14 – it is also a long song!) was the last to be mastered, and on Monday night this week we sang through from beginning to end twice without going astray. Huzzah! Now we start to polish and put our souls into it, and maybe even memorise some of it...although on reflection that might be a step too far...!?

There's also the small matter of the rest of the concert's repertoire to learn, and three weddings coming up before May is over with, but this song is the one that's running through our brains in between rehearsals, and is currently giving us the most trouble and the most joy. We do hope you'll come along and hear us. Check our website, or Facebook page, or Twitter feed for precise details nearer the time (it'll be 16th and 18th July, we think). There'll be posters too!

The Bridge Singers Basics! (September 2022)

We are a choir of 50 voices based in the villages of Felton and West Thirston in Northumberland. We are an un-auditioned choir, but do love a musical challenge! We sing a wide variety of music in every concert – always a mixture of folk, popular and classical music. We rehearse on Monday evenings in Felton Village Hall and St. Michael's Church, Felton, and we perform in those two venues as well as other churches and halls in the region.

Recent Concerts

During our 2021-2022 season we sang Christmas concerts in Felton and Acklington. In our Concert of Silences in St. Michael's Felton in February we contemplated the recent silences of our WW1 commemoration, our popular Factum Est Silentium motets about St. Michael, and the creativity of all of us as we negotiated the recent lockdowns with new compositions and new favourites, recorded and practised by us during the "recordings, Zoom and outdoors" phases of our recent past. After singing at many weddings in the spring, and at Feltonbury in the early summer, we finished off our term with two concerts of "Exuberant Music for a Summer Evening" with the Westfield Brass Quintet, in Warkworth and Felton. These concerts featured Come Ye Sons Of Art by Henry Purcell, a selection of folk songs from Australia and New Zealand, and songs by the group Queen.

The Bridge Singers' Christmas Plans 2022

We're planning two programmes of Christmas-themed music, during this autumn and winter: the first with repertoire based around St. Mary; and the other, a recital for Epiphany, based around the story of the three kings.

This year's festive music

A few details of the concerts are still sketchy, but we're certain of the music we'll sing and it is all completely gorgeous and vibrant, including several requests from our choir members and audience, including Biebl's Ave Maria, Lauridsen's O Magnum Mysterium, Rachmaninov's Bogoroditse Devo, Queen's Jesus, Rutter's Mary's Lullaby, Longmire's Mary In A Blue Gown, a few Medieval Christmas songs, and an assortment of carols and Christmas folksongs.

Plans for 2023

After a quick turnaround from our two Christmas concerts, we'll be embarking on repertoire for a concert for St. David's Day on Wednesday March 1st. We hope to sing some of the repertoire in Welsh. In recent years, we have celebrated three different Burns Nights at the end of January with Scottish music, poetry and treats, and we thought that this year, we'd try something different. The majority of this concert will be folk music, and most of our Christmas repertoire is classical and folk music so in the summer we'll redress the balance, with our "Night And Day" concerts which will mostly be in a variety of popular styles.

How to find out more about us.

We have a website: [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#).

As well as all our news, this website also gives you an email address to contact us and links to our videos, and Youtube channel

The Bridge Singers Are Off On Their Jollies, July 2022

As we write this we are gearing up for our two end-of-year concerts, but as you read this, they will be done. So let's write what we hope has happened:

Our two evenings of "Exuberant Music for a Summer Evening" in Warkworth and Felton have been roaring successes with accomplished and lively singing and huge audiences greeting us and our guests, the Westfield Brass Quintet. You will have seen our cheery posters around the village with the wren singing its heart out with great joy – an image we hope we replicate in all our performances, exuberant music or not! We joined together in the first half to give rip-roaring performances of Purcell's Come Ye Sons Of Art with trumpets blazing and voices dancing. He wrote it for Mary II's birthday in 1694, and we like to think that she would have been very happy indeed with our celebration of her 328th birthday. In the 2nd half, we travelled to Australia and New Zealand for some rousing folk songs, closer to home with performances of very new songs by our very own Gary Steward and Cheryl Camm, our guests performed some sparkling pieces of their own, and then came the highlights for many of the entire year's work. We sang three songs by the group Queen: Teo Torriatte, Let Us Cling Together (you may have heard us sing this one at Feltonbury, with some audience members weeping at the beauty of it), Love Of My Life and Somebody To Love. This latter is one of the

trickiest songs we've ever tackled, and we pulled it off with aplomb and to rapturous applause and whooping from the assembled fans.

Well, maybe that's how it went. If you were there you can let us know if we imagined it correctly!

What we can say with certainty is that we have performed at three weddings in May – two at Brinkburn Priory and one in Corbridge – and we did sing with great aplomb and sensitivity at those, and also twice at Feltonbury, in the Village Hall and The Panthouse stages – and members of the crowds there did shower us with praise afterwards so we've thoroughly enjoyed our spring and summer singing. We're off for the entirety of August and a teensy bit of September, and will be back singing here and there in the Autumn, so keep an eye on our website and facebook pages for news.

Thanks so much for all the support you've given us during our 2021-22 season. We really do appreciate our local support. Happy holidays!

Christmas Singing with The Bridge Singers, November 2022

We do like to try new things in The Bridge Singers, and this Christmas's new thing is that we're learning two programmes of music at the same time – one centred around Mary which you can hear at 3pm on December 4th, and one all about the Three Kings, Epiphany and Twelfth Night, which you can hear at 7.30pm on January 6th. Both recitals will be in St. Michael's, Felton, and both do not require a ticket – entry or exit is by donation – whatever you can pay or whatever you think it was worth!!!

As ever, both recitals will contain a mixture of styles of music.

Our "Mary" repertoire includes lots of carols, of course, and also three contrasting (but all sublime!) settings of Ave Maria, including our all-time favourite, Bogoroditse Devo by Rachmaninov (as voted by us in several polls during the last few years!), a Medieval Italian song accompanied by members of the recorder ensemble Fingers Adrift, our first ever song in Welsh, and the very beautiful Christmas anthem O Magnum Mysterium by Morten Lauridsen. Have a listen to this right now! You'll see what we mean by the beauty of it – we're absolutely loving it, and we know you will too!

For our "Kings" concert we will be joined once again, after their joyous contributions to our summer concerts, by Westfield Brass Quintet. There will be lots of sing-along carols, some glorious Renaissance motets, a song by Queen, a chorale by Bach, and several short folksongs and brassy tunes to enjoy.

In addition to these two recitals we will be contributing to the Carol Service at Brinkburn Priory on Sunday 18th December, which at time of writing is scheduled for 1.30pm. We did go and sing there at the end of October before they closed for the winter, just for the joy of singing in that glorious acoustic – oh how we love the sound we make in there!

Looking forward, our next concert will be on March 1st and will consist of lots of Welsh music to celebrate St. David's Day – look out for more information on that one in early 2023!

Our Christmas concert posters are somewhere in this edition of The Bridge and you'll have noticed them around the villages too. We'll also be sharing sneak previews of our concerts on our Facebook page @TheBridgeSingers and on our Twitter feed @bridgesingers. There's also our website if you want more! [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#)

The Bridge Singers: Christmas and Wales, January 2023

As you read this we will be deep into our learning for our concert on March 1st which is filled with Welsh folk songs and harps. As we write this we even haven't started yet as it was our last Christmas concert just three days ago, exploring the music of Epiphany and Twelfth Night at the Village Hall with the vibrant Westfield Brass Quintet. It was an effervescent evening of carols, fanfares, lots of Kings (or rather just the three, but many times over), thoughtful readings and a chatsome shared feast at the end of it all.

This capped off a very busy festive season for us, which started with our Mary-themed Christmas concert on December 4th, happily attended by a large and exuberant audience, who whooped for encores. Again we had a wide range of music, as is our constant aim, and there was much laughter as well as some top-notch music-making. Both the Mary and the Epiphany programmes were shorter than usual, and each concert was performed straight-through with no interval. We did learn just as much music as usual, but spread it across the two concerts – a bit of an experiment really, which seemed popular with most choir and audience members. If you were at either of our concerts and want to give any feedback, please do – we collect it eagerly...both good and bad!

In between the two concerts, we had the absolute thrill of once again singing for the Brinkburn Priory Carol Service in December – such a joy to sing in there in spite of the freezing cold both inside and out. We were also invited to be the choir leading the singing at St. Michael's in Alnwick for the Mayor's Carol Service there. We had a few "items" as well, so a good opportunity to give some Mary music another go and to give some of our Epiphany repertoire a preview! One of our Mary concert songs was the Welsh Plygain carol Ar Gyfer Heddiw'r Bore, which we also sang in Brinkburn. You can hear us singing it in Brinkburn Priory on Youtube, if you look it and us up – it's a rather beautiful video.

So onto Wales! Our concert on the evening of Wednesday March 1st (St. David's Day) will be at St. Lawrence's Church in Warkworth and will consist principally of folk music from Wales, mostly in English, but with a smattering of Welsh too. There will be readings, and extra music from Harps Northumbria. There's something very, very magical about the melodies of these Welsh folk songs, and our arrangements are full of variety, with some traditional, some hymn-like and some given a contemporary twist. We do hope you can join us. Check our website for more details! [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#)

Ten things The Bridge Singers have done since the last time we wrote (March 2023):

1. Learning Welsh Music – the main thing that's been occupying us since our Epiphany Concert on January 6th has been learning lots of Welsh folk music for our St. David's Day

Concert on March 1st. We started immediately and continued with great determination, and lots of laughter until the performance. We sang five songs in Welsh, and the rest was in English, but all of our songs were beautiful Welsh melodies. The idea for this concert started in 2018 after our first Burns Night Concert in January that year, when our Musical Director, Cheryl was reminded by our very own Welsh bass Richard, that there was not only wonderful Scottish music out there to learn, and that one year we might mark St. David's Day with a concert. Cheryl did not need much persuading and set about selecting and arranging suitable music. 2023 was the year!

2. Reflecting on Christmas – our decision to have two short concerts around Christmas (Mary themed on December 5th and Kings-themed on January 6th) rather than one long one, is still being reflected on. Shorter concerts in the afternoon seem popular with audiences around Christmas, but perhaps not so much in the evening. We'd be interested to hear your opinions to help our planning in the future. What we do already know is that the choir did enjoy learning the two contrasting programmes, and certainly loved our collaboration with Westfield Brass Quintet for a second time.
3. Gallery 45 – Before the pandemic we always practised in the Long Room at Gallery 45, but then when we were able to resume singing together in the autumn of 2021 we had to stand too far apart to all fit in that room, so we moved our rehearsals to the Village Hall and St. Michael's where we could spread out. Sometime during this Welsh-learning time we tried out Gallery 45 again, now there are no restrictions. There were so many comments as members arrived at the top of the stairs along the lines, "Ooh! It feels like we've come home!" that as of 20th March we will be permanently back there. Hurrah!
4. Singing Day – in January, Gwyn Thomas, a Welsh speaker, who lives in Rock and sings with a few of our members in Lionheart Harmony, came to our Singing Day in Howick Village Hall to help us learn our Welsh Language songs. We love these singing days, usually taking place on a Saturday, somewhere outside the village where we can do some intensive learning and some intensive socialising. Gwyn was a real hit with the choir, and judging by some of the comments we've received since the concert from some of our Welsh-speaking audience members, he did a fine job with us. Our next Singing Day will be in Newton-On-The-Moor in April where our guest will be Jazz singer Jacqui Wicks, who will hopefully help us loosen up for our Summer repertoire!
5. Weddings booked – Also during these couple of months, we've been booked to sing in a couple of summer weddings in Brinkburn Priory. We love singing there – the acoustics are glorious, and weddings are such happy occasions to be part of!
6. Syria and Ukraine Fundraiser – Along with many other groups from the villages, we joined in with the Afternoon Tea fundraiser in the village hall in February. We sang in the background for 20 minutes – a couple of our Welsh songs and we resurrected a few of our favourites from last summer and earlier – We sang in five different languages in total, which just about sums us up – we do like to keep our brains active!!!
7. Harps Northumbria – Our guests for the St. David's Day Concert were nine harpists from Harps Northumbria – Imagine nine harps together in the one place at the same time!!! Marvellous stuff! We sang one item with them, and listened to the glorious sound they made in two selections of Welsh folk tunes. You may have heard them as they often play at Feltonbury. If you get the chance, do go along to listen.
8. St. David's Day Concert – And so we finally arrived at the concert and St. Lawrence's Church in Warkworth was full to the brim with happy audience members, and we and they thoroughly enjoyed the evening. The church provided Welsh-themed snacks in the

interval. The choir sang with great energy and musicality, Richard had chosen some beautiful, poignant reading to intersperse with the music, our Welsh was praised by Welsh speakers in the audience, the harps were glorious and there was well over a minute of applause at the end- we know because Cheryl recorded the whole thing on her machine! The feedback we've had since has been almost all complimentary, so we have embarked on a choir...

9. ...Holiday for a couple of weeks beaming with pride and eager for the next challenge. We're not all on holiday together, of course, but we have taken a break after the intensity of three concerts in three months, and will resume again on March 20th with our AGM and a folder-full of exciting new repertoire for the summer.
10. Looking forward to the Summer – Our major concert in the summer will be in the Village Hall on July 1st, and is called "Night and Day". You know by now that we like to sing a mixture of Classical, folk and popular music in all our concerts, and so far, this choral year the focus has been on classical (Christmas concerts) and folk (St. David's Day) so in the summer we are redressing the balance with some jazzy numbers and quite a few popular songs. Oh yes – there'll be a couple of classical and a few folksy songs in there too, but popular music will dominate! We're performing at Feltonbury too, so there'll be plenty of opportunity to hear us in the coming months.

To keep in touch with us, find us on Facebook or Twitter or have a look at our website

A Day In The Life Of The Bridge Singers, (May 2023)

We're loosening our bow ties a little during the next few months with lots of jazzy and popular songs in our repertoire for the summer concerts. As ever, there are classical and folk songs in there too, but for lots of our "Night and Day" programme we'll be trying to set toes a-tapping and fingers a-clicking. The songs are all something to do with the morning, day or night, as you might guess from the title, and our posters too!

So, what will be you hear when you come along to our performances this summer? Well, numbers by Bob Marley, The Kinks, Elbow, Bill Withers, Ben. E. King, as well as the jazzy Blue Moon, Deep Purple and Night and Day itself. There are a couple of shanties – one jaunty and one thoughtful, a couple of songs from our St. David's Day concert of Welsh music, a couple of madrigals, a couple of songs from our very own Gary and Cheryl, three sacred pieces from the 16th, 19th and 20th centuries, a couple of folk songs from England and Scotland. There's more too – come along and hear what they are...there are a few opportunities, as it happens!

At the time of writing in early May we are already confident enough on some of this repertoire to give it an airing on May 7th at Brinkburn Priory for an informal singsong, and you'll be able to hear a lot more of it at Feltonbury in June. Our full "Night and Day" concert will be at Felton Village Hall on July 1st, where we will be joined by our pals from over the A1, Swarland Voices, who'll sing three songs of their own, and join us for a couple of numbers too. A new venue for us in the summer will be Bamburgh Castle where we are performing three times on July 23rd at 11am, 1pm and 3pm for visitors passing by and hopefully stopping to listen. We also have a couple of weddings in amongst all this, and are very honoured to have been invited to sing at the Ascension Day service at Brinkburn Priory on Thursday May 18th at 7pm.

Thanks for your continued support of your local choir – we really do appreciate you coming to hear us. Our policy at the moment is not to charge for our concerts, and there are donation buckets if you feel compelled to use them, but for our concert on July 1st, there is a restricted number of people who can fit in the village hall, so do give Chris or Hazel a ring to reserve a place – we will have a bouncer on the door, and once the seats are all taken, she will not allow any more fans in!

If you want to keep up with what we're up to, you can follow us on Facebook and Twitter and we also have our own website which is regularly updated with news and videos. [The Bridge Singers](#) | [Choir](#) | [Felton](#) | [Thebridgesingers](#)

News from The Bridge Singers, November 2023

Way back in the summer, we wondered what would happen if you let every member of the choir vote for their five favourites from all the Christmas songs we've ever sung, and promise that the most popular 60 minutes of music from that vote would make up the programme for the 2023 Christmas performances. We wondered so much that we held that vote, and we can report that the result is that we've ended up with the same sort of wonderful mix of styles and genres that we usually end up with. Here's the menu:

- Two lambs, a boar's head, an orange and some cheesecake;
- Three lots of Shepherds (jolly, dancing and gentle) tending those lambs;
- French, Italian and Welsh delicacies;
- Two 19th Century classic festive servings;
- A forkful of Medieval morsels;
- A main course of such exquisite gorgeousness and popularity that it received more than twice as many votes as the next song on the list;
- Morning and solstice sunshine to rinse it all down;
- Three hundred and six hallelujahs to send you home in a joyous mood.

We hope that there are some of your favourites too, and that you'll come and hear them at one or other of our outings this festive time – they're all in the same few days as it happens:

Saturday 9th December is our own concert in St. Michael's Church, Felton at 7.30pm where we'll sing all the chosen songs and follow them up with mince pies and mulled wine for our audience and ourselves!

Sunday 10th December we are the guest choir at the Brinkburn Priory Carol Service at 2pm. We love singing there, even if it is freezing cold in the middle of December, and we know from the last few years that this is always a very magical service indeed.

Tuesday 12th December we are the guest choir at the Alnwick Mayor's Civic Carol Service in St. Michael's Church, Alnwick. It's in the evening – at the time of writing we're not sure exactly when!!!

Prior to these we will have sung at Bamburgh Castle on Sunday 26th November, and after that in late January we are singing an assortment of old and new repertoire at a fundraiser for the

church boiler fund. Keep an eye on our website and other places for news of that and other upcoming events:

[The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#)

Facebook: @thebridgesingers

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The Bridge Singers' Alphabet of News, January 2024

A Happy New Year of singing has already started for us at the time of writing as we're well under way with rehearsals for our next concert at the end of January, but the new year, following a two-week break, also provides a great opportunity to look back on a very busy festive period, so...

B is for Brinkburn Priory where we were once again the guests of the parishes of Felton and Longframlington at their annual carol service. We sang songs from our Christmas repertoire, selected by the organising committee, and once again revelled in the glorious acoustics and surroundings of that wonderful building.

C is for the Alnwick Mayor's Civic Carol Service in St. Michael's Church, Alnwick. Where we provided a lead on the communal carols and sang a few of our own items as selected by a different organising committee!

D is for different as in this quote from a castle guide at Bamburgh Castle: "I've stood in this room many times with choirs singing – they sing the same old Christmas stuff, but you were different – a real mixture. I especially loved that you sang the Bob Marley – Who sings Bob Marley at Christmas? Brilliant."

E is for Elbow, who, along with The Kinks, Jethro Tull and the afore-mentioned Bob Marley provide the popular end of our repertoire for the upcoming concert on January 27th.

F is for Fundraiser. This is our next concert, on Saturday January 27th in St. Michael's, Felton at 7.30pm. It will be a variety concert of some of our least christmassy Christmas repertoire, a few old favourites and a handful of Robert Burns songs (seeing as it's only two days after Burns Night. The church is raising money to bolster funds after a huge spend on the new heating system. It's £5 at the door and there'll be not only the singing, but also a longer-than usual interval with the opportunity to indulge in refreshments and a raffle provided by the church.

G is for Gaudete, which was one of our several Medieval Christmas songs from Christmas. If you want to hear and see some more of what we got up to in the run-up to Christmas, Have a search for this blog, by our Musical Director, Cheryl. [The Bridge Singers' Christmas 2023- Cheryl Camm – Composer](#)

H is silent in this quote from one of our festive altos: "it was totally exhilarating and exhausting!"

I is for "interesting and informative" which is a phrase used by several audience members to describe our programmes. "...They also liked the touch of our signatures on the back!"

J is for January 27th 2024, 7.30pm – this is the date of our next concert, which we may have mentioned!

K is for King's Hall, Bamburgh Castle, which was a new venue for us back in November, where we sang a couple of slots in amongst the Christmas display. Lots of people we really have no connection to at all, stopped to listen and were very complimentary indeed (see V!)

L is for "L'Adieu des Bergers" by Hector Berlioz, which we sang at every single one of our Christmas outings – a very popular choice with us and all those organising committees!

M is for our lovely soprano, Margaret Lediard, who died in November. Her funeral in Longhirst provided our last performance of 2023. Her husband Chris asked us to sing for half an hour before the service, with other favourites of theirs during. It was a very emotional event for us, but we sang wonderfully, and Chris said afterwards, "Margaret would have loved it!" which made us smile and cry in equal measure.

N is for Northumberland (and other North-East) music, which will be the focus of our attention from February onwards as we prepare for concerts in May.

O is for O Radiant Dawn and O Magnum Mysterium – two of our favourite, gloriously expansive motets from Christmas. You'll be able to hear at least one of them again on Jan 27th!

P is for Paul Hill, our lovely tenor, who died in the summer. We sang his choice, The Boar's Head Carol, at the start of many of our Christmas events in his joyful and boisterous memory.

Q is for queue in more feedback: "A lady in front of me in the queue to leave the church said, 'What beautiful singing!' "

R is for Robert Burns – we're singing five of his songs on Jan 27th – our favourite five (we had another vote!)

St. Michael's in Felton was the venue for our main Christmas concert and is also where we'll be singing on Jan 27th! We love singing there. Do come along to hear us!

Thanks to everyone who came along to our December performances. We do love singing to ourselves, but there's always an extra thrill when we have a large and eager audience to perform to!

U is for uplifting, as in this quote after our Brinkburn performance: "It's always such an uplifting experience singing there even if I couldn't feel my feet afterwards!"

V is for village choir: "I am a choir director myself, and couldn't believe it when I was told that you were just a local village choir – that's some pretty exceptional village choir."

W is for Margaret Watchorn, who was our accompanist for our Felton concert in December. She is such an exceptional musician, and we were very lucky to have her enhance our performance. She's also a composer and we'll be singing one of her sacred songs in our North-east themed concerts in May.

X is unfortunately for Xmas vote – we happily chose all the repertoire for Christmas ourselves by voting for our five favourites – the top 70 minutes of music made it to the concert – and guess what? We ended up with the same mixture of classical, folk and popular that we usually sing!!! (By the way, "unfortunately" because we prefer to use Christmas rather than Xmas, but we needed an X for this list!)

Y is for the Y at the end of The Birks of Aberfeldy. Sometimes we put "ie" instead. I wonder what will be in the programme on Jan 27th?– you'll have to come along to find out!

Z is for the Z in Mozart. Can you believe we've never sung any Mozart before? but Alison tells us it's his birthday on Jan 27th, so we're learning his Ave Verum Corpus especially for the event. See you there!!!

Songs From North-East England with The Bridge Singers (March 2024)

Our current repertoire is all music with a north-east flavour: mostly folk music, but a few popular songs and also a couple from local composers. We do like a variety, as you know! Here are some of our favourites:

One of the new folk songs we're tackling is a version of Whittingham Fair. The story is of a courtship characterised by impossible tasks set first by the man, then answered by the woman ("Tell her to make me a cambric shirt...Without any seam or needlework..." "Tell to find me an acre of land...Between the salt water and the sea sand...") It's a very speedy song with lots of dancing rhythms which might take you by surprise – they took us by surprise when we started the learning process! At the time of writing we can sing it slowly, but are getting faster and faster, and more and more precise – let's see how fast we get by our first performance in April!

Gary Steward, who is one of our tenors has written lots of songs for us to sing over the years, and we're singing two of them at the moment. One is the ever-popular-with-choir-and-audiences "Northumberland," which he first wrote for the band Piddler's Pot. We first sang his other choice "Darling Daddy" in our World War 1 Remembrance concert in 2018 – in fact, he wrote it for us, and we gave the world premiere in that concert. It's a gentle and poignant song. Gary writes: "It's loosely based on the story of Private Joseph Forster who worked as a plumber for the Duke of Northumberland at the outbreak of WWI. He enlisted in the Northumberland Fusiliers, leaving behind his wife and three young daughters, and was sent to France where he engaged in fierce fighting. Private Forster wrote home of his experiences, and it was evident that he was missing his family very much. One postcard ended with the words, 'Let me get home safe to love you all once more.' His daughters replied with simple messages; how they were doing at school and about their new kitten. They often began each postcard 'Darling Daddy,' which is where the title of the song came from. Private Forster was captured and sent to a POW camp in Germany. He died there in September 1918."

Three of the clutch of folk songs we're learning are from the Durham coalfields and our favourite of these is "Rap Her Te Bank". It's a dramatic celebration of the work of a miner by his son or daughter. The miner of course meets with tragedy by the end of the song (coal mining songs are rarely full of cheer and optimism!) but in the meantime we learn lots of coalfield language, which we have discovered is pronounced differently in every single street of these County Durham pit villages, (!) and it really lends itself to an in-your-face, fanfare-like style of singing!

One of our more popular-style songs is a version of the theme music by Mark Knopfler to the film "Local Hero". Because we're a choir and not a rock band of guitars and drum-kits, our version is slightly more reflective than the title theme "Going Home" and more like the "Wild Theme" (If you know your Local Hero soundtrack well, you know what we're talking about!),

but the awe-inspiring melody still soars through in our version. After we'd programmed this music and purchased our scores, we noted with interest that there is a new version of this song released sometime in March by Mark Knopfler himself along with over 60 rock legends and all in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust – so two excellent opportunities coming up for you to hear this beautiful piece of instrumental music. Yes – instrumental...so no lyrics. Lots of oohing, aahing and mmm-ing for us!

We're attempting to learn nineteen north-east songs altogether, and already have three performances lined up...in April in Longhirst Village Hall, in May at Warkworth, and in June at Feltonbury, with a possible fourth in October in Rennington. Check on our website for more details and updates and also on our Facebook page. Thanks as ever for your ongoing support – we love singing to ourselves, but we love it even more when you come to hear what we're up to!

The Bridge Singers' News and Any Musical Suggestions? (March 2024)

Since we wrote in the last edition, one rehearsal in, of our plans for the May-themed concert in April, we've cracked on big-time with our learning, and if pushed, could present the whole thing to you tonight, but we won't! As you can see we have a poster too and it tells you all you need to know! We're presenting the concert twice: first in Wooler on Saturday April 26th; second in Felton on Monday 12th May instead of our usual rehearsal. This gives us lots of time to apply the polish that you deserve. We're really looking forward to sharing our love-filled, sacred and secular, spring-bursting, workers' rights-themed repertoire with you, so do come along and make our evenings! It's such a thrill to sing for a cheery audience as well as our cheery selves.

As the year progresses we're presenting another concert in July and also making appearances at Feltonbury, Ascension Day in Brinkburn, and one or two other events. However, it's the July concert and beyond we'd like to talk to you about. During our choir year 2025-2026 we will be celebrating our tenth anniversary, and we'll be singing lots of our favourites from these last ten years. All members of the choir are currently pondering over the list of 298 songs we've sung in that time, and will be feeding back their favourites to Cheryl in the next couple of months. You can be part of that too. If you have particular favourites that you've heard us sing at one of our concerts, we'd love to hear from you. Perhaps there's something we haven't sung, but you wish we had. Write to us or tell your friends in the choir and tell us why you like the song you've chosen.

Looking forward to hearing from you and seeing you in person at our May-themed concert(s). [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#)

Days of Singing with The Bridge Singers. (May 2024)

As we write, we're five hours away from a Singing Day in Cresswell, seven days from our concert of North-East music in Warkworth, three weeks from singing at the funeral of one of our lovely friends and altos, Carol, one and a half months from singing at Feltonbury, seven

weeks from singing at a fundraising garden party at Wallington for the Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team, and four months away from a performance at the Rennington Music Festival. We love to sing and we love to spend time together, and we love to perform to you and others.

So off we now go to a singing day at Cresswell Village Hall. We've been there a couple of times before and it's such a brilliantly sited venue overlooking the sea and Druridge Bay dunes and beaches – it should be perfect on what promises to be a sunny day. Over the last few years, we've had a few of these singing days around the village halls of the county and have previously ventured to Alnmouth, Howick, Newton On The Moor, Ingram amongst others, as well as our own lovely village hall in Felton.

There'll be lots of singing of course – a bit of finessing of our north-east repertoire for next week's concert in Warkworth will be our main focus. However, we love to have a guest at these events to give us a fresh perspective, and today we are joined by all-round excellent Northumbrian musician Margaret Watchorn. She recently accompanied us on the keyboard, at our Christmas concert in St. Michael's, and you may have come across her playing the fiddle with her husband Andy on Northumbrian pipes, or maybe with her own singing group Medieval Mixture, or maybe as a popular singing teacher, or maybe as a singer with Rock Festival Choir. Anyway, she's multi-talented and a very lovely friend of the choir, and at the moment, we are very much enjoying one of her compositions, O Frondens Virga, which we will be performing at next weekend's concert. It is inspired by the music of Medieval nun and composer Hildegard of Bingen and is full of flowing melodic lines that cascade around each other in a thrilling fashion in a six-part texture of gloriousness.

So yes – there'll be singing a-plenty, but these days give us a wonderful opportunity to relax together as well with much stopping for tea-breaks and chat and a shared lunch that is always spectacular. I dare say that already (at 5am) there'll be the industrious baking of cheese straws, flapjack, Malteser slice, salmon quiche and other treats occurring in the kitchens of our members!

There really is something rather glorious about being part of a choir. We each have our own interests, skills, lives... and on our own we sing with various degrees of confidence and tunefulness, but together we combine to produce something magnificent – we sound altogether more sublime as a group than individually, we create a vibrant energy of cheery gladness and enthralled wonder, we laugh, laugh, laugh a lot, we cheer each other up, we struggle and succeed hand in hand...and lucky us get to spend a day at the seaside together!

Anyway, that's our day coming up. By the time you read this it will already have happened, as will our north-east concert, but as you can see, there will be plenty of other opportunities to hear us as the summer progresses, and we look forward to welcoming you to our performances. Do keep up with our goings on at [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#)

We are interested and pleased to hear that there is a new organisation being set up to monitor and improve the quality of our beautiful River Coquet. You can read a bit about the new group, Coquet River Action Group, elsewhere in this edition of The Bridge, and about their launch meeting at Swarland Village Hall on September 12th, to which we are all invited.

Our own links to this river (and several others) are strong. Our own name refers to the bridges over the Coquet that link our two villages of Felton and West Thirston, where over half of our members live, and our second ever concert in the spring of 2016 was all on the theme of this and other rivers as we linked all our repertoire to “Rivers, Bridges and Other Village Things”.

During the summer of 2020 when we were not allowed to meet up in groups of any more than six at any one time, and even then, only outside and only at a great distance to each other, we used the river bed under the new bridge to sing and record a few of our lockdown videos. The river was very low at the time, it's a very resonant space, and there was plenty of room for our groups of six to spread out around the microphone. Perfect, therefore, for our recordings which were then edited together and illustrated with photos and art work from members of the choir into some very meaningful choir work. Of course, there was not much traffic rumbling overhead in those days, but there were the sounds of the river dancing by and also the ducks quacking along – you can hear them if you have a listen! We recorded Teo Torriatte, Reynold The Fox and Autumn Sea down there in June, July and August, before the restrictions closed in again and our next video was back to individual recordings at home.

That next video, in September, was Water Of Tyne, and this rivery song is now part of our “normal” life repertoire in 2024. We mentioned in the last edition of The Bridge that we were in the middle of a busy period of singing lots of north-east repertoire. At the time of writing this in July, we are still going with our north-east repertoire as we have two more gigs after our summer break. Water of Tyne will be part of those. It's been one of our most popular songs with audiences in the last few months. We do like to introduce our audiences to lots of new repertoire, but sometimes something familiar in amongst it all is very reassuring, eh?! Our arrangement features the bass section in verses one and three and the sopranos in verse two. There's much ooh-ing elsewhere in the choir on some very tear-jerking harmonies and it all combines to produce a rather beguiling whole.

Heading further south to another north-east river, we're also currently singing about the River Wear, and the infamous Lambton Worm which at one time terrorized the inhabitants of Wearside with its child-and calf-eating inclinations. Alison forsakes her alto colleagues in this one to play her recorder in virtuosic fashion, as we tell the outrageous tale in an engaging and dramatic style. Interestingly, although this song story is about the River Wear and was composed by Sunderland man Jack Leumane, it was actually first performed as the very first pantomime in the Tyne Theatre and Opera House in Newcastle in 1867.

Another song in our current repertoire is all about our very own River Coquet, the Fisher's Invitation. The words (full title, “The Auld Fisher's Invitation to his Friend in Newcastle”) for this song were written by Robert Roxby of Hartburn near Morpeth and Thomas Doubleday of Newcastle, for the 1832 “Fisher's Garland”. This pair were regular fishermen around the rivers of Northumberland, particularly the Rede and Coquet. In this one, they refer to the pleasures

of fishing in the Coquet near Weldon Bridge. They wrote lyrics to several fishing songs, generally using well-known tunes. The tune for this one is “Tak Your Auld Cloak About Ye” which could date from the 16th century, but definitely was published in the mid-18th century.

Anyway, we gather that Cheryl is in the process of making a video of this one using a recording from our recent concert in Warkworth, so keep a look-out for that! You can hear and watch most of the songs mentioned in this rivy article on our Youtube playlist [Songs from The Bridge Singers- YouTube](#) The Fisher’s Invitation will be added to that once it’s completed!

By the time you read this we’ll be on our summer break, but we’re back to sing at the Longframlington Flower Festival on Saturday August 31st at 7.30pm in the parish church, and you can also hear us and our north-east repertoire at the Rennington Music Festival on the evening of Monday September 30th in their parish church. Hope to see you there, but in the meantime, do have a listen to our recordings, and thanks so much for your support during our 2023-24 season.

News from The Bridge Singers (September 2024)

Evolution Of A World Premiere

We’re currently gearing up for a concert on September 30th at the Rennington Music Festival. As it’s such a short lead-in after our summer break in August, we’re mostly singing music from our north-east music concert in May, with a few others from various performances this year at fundraising concerts, funerals and weddings. However, we’ll also be performing a world premiere of a new piece by our musical director Cheryl. It’s called “A Takeaway Sunrise” and the lyrics are by the poet Ian McMillan, who wrote them especially for us. Here’s Cheryl’s story of the evolution of this song:

November 2023

Following on from the cheering feedback from both choir and audience members in 2021 and 2022 to the seven short “Silent Early Stroll Songs” composed using some of Ian McMillan’s Early Stroll tweets during the lockdowns, and designed to help the choir keep singing in the rather challenging choral circumstances at the time, I thought it would be a wonderful thrill for me and the choir to have a new, longer song to compose, then learn and perform, for our north-east themed concerts this summer. I wrote to Ian on the off chance, to ask whether he would be prepared to write lyrics for us, and perhaps come and be part of our concert. His replies were yes to the former and unfortunately no to the latter.

January 2024

Following on from our very busy Christmas schedule and then a fundraiser for St. Michael’s Church at the end of January, it was clear that we couldn’t start learning our north-east repertoire until February, so Ian agreed to write lyrics during January, for me to compose the music in February, and for the choir to start mastering it in March, giving us nearly three months to learn the new song. The lyrics he sent are in seven stanzas and his accompanying

note said: "it's based on early morning walks in Beadnell when I've been on holiday there and I also wanted to play with the phrase 'it goes to show'."

February 2024

I set to with the music, trying to evoke the complete magic of an early morning colourful sunrise at the beach as the apricots and crimsons give way to the enchanted illuminating of every detail set out before you. Following a request, I sent Ian an update on how I was approaching the composing. (There's a bit of musical jargon in there, but you get the idea!)

"My approach has been (if I call the "verses" 1-7)....

- 1 + 2, and 4 + 5 have very similar music, slow in tempo with a free-sounding beat, layers of 7th chords and melodic gestures are built up around a central horizon of middle C – like you take in the scene when you actually go to the sea to see the sun rising, or like you notice as you look at a photo you may have taken of said sunrise. They take their time to evolve – lots of space and drone-like accompaniments.
- 3 and 7 are the same as each other, like a chorus, and are exuberant, joyful, full of vibrant rhythms, a lively tempo. They still centre around that horizon of middle C, linking in to the other verses, but are quite the contrast in mood. I'm thinking of the absolute delight of those "brightest that there's ever been" sunrises.
- 6 is what I'm currently tinkering with. It moves away from the middle C anchor, but has the more reflective qualities of 1,2,4,5. There are bursts of exuberance in there too, reminding of the music for 3 and 7. It's a bit plainchant-y, I guess. I've taken on board your earlier comments that the "goes to show" lines are important, so am aiming to give them something prominent in some way...
- The ending will be a snap-shot or reminder of teensy elements of the 1,2,4,5 music in an extended cadence...for the listeners to takeaway with them....like a photo, I guess.

March-April 2024

I made a mock-up recording to help the choir become acquainted with the song, then we started learning it. However, it became clear during these two months that we would run out of time to revise or learn everything I had planned, so with extreme distress on my part, I postponed the learning of A Takeaway Sunrise, so we could devote our energies to perfecting the rest. I find as time goes on that composing music becomes more and more central to what I'm about, so to pour all my effort and inspiration into something, then have to stop before that task is complete is somewhat upsetting. Anyway, looking on the bright side, as I like to, we had June and July to start afresh and the prospect of the concert at the end of September, so we go at it again with renewed vigour!

June- September 2024

To place your music in front of people, knowing that it is perhaps tricky to learn, with fifty or so faces looking back at you showing their struggles in the learning, their incomprehension as to how it all fits together, and what the overall effect will be, is quite the hurdle to overcome, I can tell you. Being always enthusiastic and continuing to encourage their trust and belief that it really will be alright and will sound just as evocative and awe-inspiring as you imagined, can be an exhausting task! Anyway, as I write this, in early September, with three rehearsals to go,

it's starting to flourish. There are a few overheard comments along the "Ah – now I get it!" and "Ooh, that bit's beautiful" lines.

The Bridge Singers have been through this before, of course. Right from the start of this choir, nine years ago we've tackled tricky music, initially with despair that it will never be ready, and usually with the result that it is indeed ready and we actually rather like it...and that we also like the thrill of being able to pull it off. Most days I'm confident that this will be the case this time too. To have a poet of the renown of Ian McMillan write something for us is a thrill and an honour, and also a huge responsibility for me and the choir to do him as well as ourselves justice.

Well, that's what Cheryl the composer has to say! We do hope you can join us in Rennington at the end of the month, or later on in December for new repertoire in our winter concerts. For more information, check our website: [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](http://Thebridgesingers.com)

Wintry Songs And Carols with The Bridge Singers (November 2024)

Let's rest awhile at the fireside while the chilling rain thrums relentlessly on the windows...and sing a few wintry songs while we're at it. This is what Antonio Vivaldi was thinking when he composed the slow movement of "Winter" from his Four Seasons. Well, maybe not the singing bit, as he had violins in mind, but still...this is our approach to this season. We're replacing Vivaldi's violins with our warm and mellow voices to bring you this delicious melody. So singable, so evocative of that cosy fireplace that Vivaldi was inspired by, so loved by musicians of all types for the re-arranging. We've put together a playlist of different versions for our own and your entertainment, and hopefully in a few weeks' time we'll have our own version to add: You can find the playlist on our YouTube channel, then look for [Largos from Vivaldi's Winter- YouTube](#)

Inspired by this one movement, we're learning lots more beautiful winter music for our upcoming concert in St. Michael's Church, Felton. It's Saturday December 7th at 2pm. After previous Christmas concerts, we have received quite a bit of feedback from potential or actual audience members who express their reluctance to leave their fireplaces on dark winter evenings and prefer daytime concerts at this time of year, so we've plumped for 2pm in the hope that we'll be done before it gets too dark.

As ever, the music covers a wide range of styles including more classical favourites by Handel and Handl, plenty of Christmas carols, popular wintry songs by The Mamas and The Papas, Simon & Garfunkel, Jethro Tull and Queen, folk songs from around and about, and a world premiere festive carol by Northumberland composer Margaret Watchorn. The tenors and basses are shivering in French and the sopranos and altos indulge in a bit of Shakespeare, and we're all relishing the prospect of some double-choir fireworks – something for everyone. There'll be opportunities for you to sing along too, if you like.

We know that this is enough, but for that added incentive....mulled wine and mince pies in the interval!

We're also part of the Brinkburn Carol Service on December 8th, also at 2pm, leading the carols and singing a few of the above. While we definitely cannot offer you "cosy" at Brinkburn in December, we'll be channelling that inner fireplace as Rev. Rich has chosen the Vivaldi to be part of the service. For those of you interested in the Vivaldi fireplace thing...he wrote four sonnets as well as the music for his Four Seasons, and the bit of sonnet that goes with our movement is:

Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti
Mentre la pioggia fuor bagna ben cento

Which essentially means: "To rest contentedly beside the hearth, while those outside are drenched by pouring rain."

For more about us, have a look at our website: [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](http://Thebridgesingers.com)

Mayday Mayday! (March 2025)

The Bridge Singers are circling round another theme in the first part of 2015! This time we're exploring May Day: countryside folklore and rituals; International Workers' Day; the bursting forth of spring; goodbye to winter; sunrise merriment; the promise of love; May, the month of Mary and Ascension Day. There's lots to explore, and lots to share with you when we perform on April 26th – more precise details (time, venue, poster) to follow in the next edition of The Bridge! For now, we'll give you a taster of what's in store.

At the time of writing, we're only one rehearsal in to our new year, but already we've tackled one brand new (to us) song – the very rousing and cheery "Hail, Smiling Morn", and not only did we tackle it, but we got all the way to the end, and if pushed, could perform it to you next Monday! Oh my, what a sparkling tune it is! It was composed by Reginald Spofforth in 1810. He was born in Nottinghamshire and went to seek his composery fortune elsewhere (a bit like our Cheryl), and this is his biggest hit. Not only is it cheery, but it's versatile. It's a folk song from the Sheffield Carols tradition. It's a Christmas or Easter carol, but it has no obvious religious text, so could just be a very cheery welcome to the day, or season, or whatever you fancy. "Hail smiling morn, that tips the hills with gold, whose rosy fingers ope the gates of day..." I mean, what a splendid way of describing the May sunrise, and the music rollicks along in a dancing triple time, tripping over itself with cheerful notes and melismas. A melisma is when you get lots of notes for one syllable of text – we learn something every day in The Bridge Singers! Other folk songs in our May Day repertoire relate to Pagan festivals in Cornwall, a love song from New Zealand, and workers' rights songs from Weardale, Scotland and the USA.

As you know, we always like a mixture of folk, classical and popular music in our concerts – something to suit everyone's tastes. This time our classical contribution centres around people called Handl and Handel. The more famous George Frederick Handel wrote The Messiah amongst other stuff and we're keeping going our three scrumptious Messiah songs

from the Winter concerts in December. Jakob Handl is a bit more obscure, although you'll have heard us sing his *Ascendit Deus* a few times over the years, and we've sung his *Omnes de Saba* before too. This time, we're doing both of those again and also adding in his glittering *Ave Maria* to suit our May theme. He was around in the 16th century and his music is incredibly upbeat and jolly. We think that everyone would benefit from a bit of Handel/Handl in their lives, so do come along and experience it for yourselves!

On the popular music front we're going from Winter into merry summer with references to five different months, including our new best friend May, in songs by Simon and Garfunkel and revising one of our all-time favourites: *59th Street Bridge Song* (do do do doo doo doo doo, feelin' groovy). And on the love front we're going from the hope of love, through the middle of love, to remembering love, with songs by Queen and Billy Joel. One of our two Queen songs is *Somebody To Love*. We sang it in 2022 in our Queens-themed "Exuberant Songs For A Summer Evening" concerts, and boy is it a tricky one. We put oodles of effort into learning that one and it will be so good to tackle it afresh, but with all that prior learning under our belts – it'll mean we get to the nub of it quicker, right...?! It really is a very exuberant song, but more reflective is Teo Torriatte. It's partly in Japanese and is incredibly beautiful: "...Though I'm gone, It's just as though I hold the flower that touches you. A new life grows, The blossom knows There's no one else could warm my heart as much as you. Be not gone..." I mean, really, it makes your heart sing, right...and that's without the very gorgeous music. We've sung this one before as well – it was one of our lockdown learning projects in 2020, so means a lot to those of us who were in the choir back then, struggling to keep on singing together when we couldn't.

Anyway, plenty to get our singing teeth into, and plenty for you to enjoy later in the year when we're ready to share. In the meantime, check out our latest videos and news on the website [The Bridge Singers | Choir | Felton | Thebridgesingers](#) and on our Facebook page [@TheBridgeSingers](#).

The Bridge Singers' Favourites in Score Snippets

We've been voting for our favourite songs from all 298 that we've ever sung in our nearly-ten years of existence. We'll be singing lots of them during our celebratory 2025-26 season. Voting finished at the end of April and here are some of our favourites, and teensy snippets of the scores we use to help us perform them!

Crossing The Bar by Rani

Arbo: it's so emotional, and exceedingly beautiful. We sang it at our lovely Gillian's funeral too, so it's tinged with a bit of sadness for us.



Skydancer: Ghost Of The Moors by Cheryl

Cam: It tells of the plight of the persecuted hen harriers and was commissioned from us by Hen Harrier Action who used it as part of their lockdown Hen Harrier Day in 2020.



Misty Morning by Bob Marley

You can see from this bit of score that we have to sing in eight parts and make all sorts of percussive sounds as well as sing. It's tricky. We struggled so much when we started to learn it, but we're not a giving up sort-of choir, and now we love it!

Days by Ray Davies: We love this hit song by The Kinks so much that it came top of our vote!



Ae Fond Kiss

The favourite of our Robert Burns songs. In our version, we combine the two most well-known tunes into one glorious arrangement.



Blue Moon by Rogers & Hart: The basses get to do lots of doo-be-doo-be-dah-ing in this arrangement of our favourite jazzy number!



Northumberland by Gary

Steward: We love singing Gary's songs and this is our favourite. This is a bit of the tenors' melody. Elsewhere, the basses are shsh-ing as the sea, and the sopranos and altos are half-whistling/half blowing as the wind!



The Way Old Friends Do: This ABBA song was the last of our very many lockdown songs in 2021, and one that sums up our very friendly choir perfectly.



When I Am Laid in Earth by Henry Purcell: Surely one of the most beautiful tunes that ever was written. No wonder we voted in our droves for it, eh?!