



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



www.meva-choir.co.uk
Registered Charity No:298985

Hope you are all well and looking forward to hearing sing again soon

No: 43



August 2019 – our last appearance on the quay

THE QUAY TO END LOCKDOWN?

Call us optimistic but we are aiming for a return to normal life on the quayside this summer. A lot of boxes need to be ticked in the meantime, but we have to have something to aim for. Our Musical Director Graham Willcocks has already identified a programme for this August's five Mondays – 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd. and 30th – and we are running through them week by week on Zoom.

By the time August comes, of course, it will be 18 months since we have sung together, whether in public or in St Andrews, so we will be rusty. We are unable to sing together, i.e. hear each other, in our online practice sessions but we do get to remind ourselves of the words, while Accompanist Matt Fox's brilliant teach tracks, which we have uploaded to our website, provide the tune – and have made some of us aware of notes that we never knew existed!

Because of the limitations, it is likely that we stick to the same programme over the five weeks, so apologies in advance to those who expect to join us for more than one of the Quay Concerts.

Hopefully by the fifth one on the 30th we'll be back to something like our best.

However, we can make no promises at this stage. Come the end of June, it looks like we may be able to get together to practise, but so much will depend on the advice of the health authorities as the summer progresses. But fingers crossed. We are all so much looking forward to being able to sing with each other again – and to seeing the faces of our friends and supporters.



Let's hope for a similar turnout this summer!

We have not concentrated solely on the Quay programme while on Zoom, having begun work on a couple of new pieces which we are looking forward to introducing at the earliest opportunity, and which may yet sneak on to our next CD. And here we have an apology to make. We had hoped to publish our latest recording this spring but, unfortunately, Graham has expressed himself unhappy with a couple of the tracks and is insisting that we rectify the issues before going public. Disappointing, but we all agree it's important that we don't sacrifice quality for expediency.



Of course, one of the pieces has already been made available – our 11-minute-long *Back to the '60s* track has been available for download since last summer. We decided to release it to raise funds for Cornwall Hospice Care, whose 40th anniversary celebrations were cruelly wrecked by Covid.

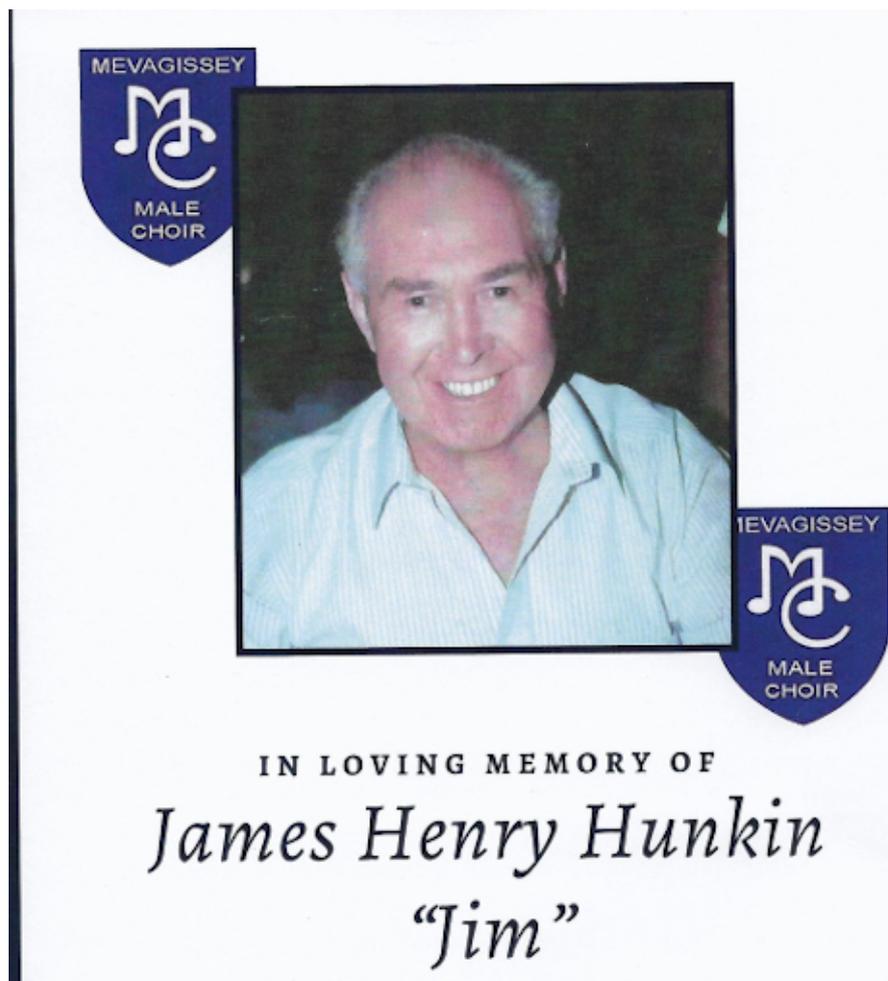
The move raised £700 – and of course the track can still be downloaded from our website [here?](#)
We are also delighted to confirm that 2020 sales of our Christmas CD, 'Song for the Child' raised £350 for St Petrocs, the Cornish homeless charity. This is what Dave Brown at St Petrocs Fundraising and Communications, had to say:

'That's a magnificent sum of money! Thank you for your generous efforts. The funds will go towards services which have no immediate funding source – like our resource centres in Truro and Penzance, and our Outreach service which rely on funds like this. St Austell and the Mevagissey areas will certainly benefit from the Outreach service and the Truro resource centre. Hopefully this coming Christmas we will be able to meet at St Augustine's Church again – let's keep our fingers crossed.

Meanwhile ...

The past few months have not been without a number of sad moments.

Jim Hunkin



From Jim's order of service

The new year was only two days old when we learned that Jim Hunkin, a founder member of the Choir, and still taking his place on the risers in 2017, had passed away, tragically less than three weeks after his beloved wife Iris.

Jim was one of our Top Tenors and, in the words of his son, Kelvin, 'loved the Choir' and was virtually an ever-present on the risers for over 40 years.

Born on 18th May 1931, Jim was a keen footballer and swimmer as a youngster and appeared in the film 'Johnny Frenchman', swimming in the outer pool of Mevagissey Harbour. From age 14 he worked in and around fishing industry, although he was conscripted at 18 into the Army, serving in Egypt and Cyprus.

On his return, he made a lifetime career out of HGV driving, working first with Robins Fish Merchants and later with Western Ex/Imerys. He married Iris in 1954 and, three years later, Kelvin was born.



Jim and Iris

Kelvin reminded us that Jim loved to be involved in local organisations, and was on the Social Club Committee, Football Club Committee, Parish Council, and also enjoyed helping others putting up Harbour Xmas lights display. In the early '70s he started up and ran a boys' football team.

"He adored his granddaughter, Jasmine and she, together with the camaraderie of the choir, brought great joy to the lives of Mum and Dad", Kelvin adds. Jim's niece, Kate, was briefly an accompanist to the Choir.

Jim's funeral took place at Bodmin on 22nd January and, while numbers were necessarily limited, there was a huge turnout in the village that morning to see him off. Many personal tributes were paid by his fellow choir members.

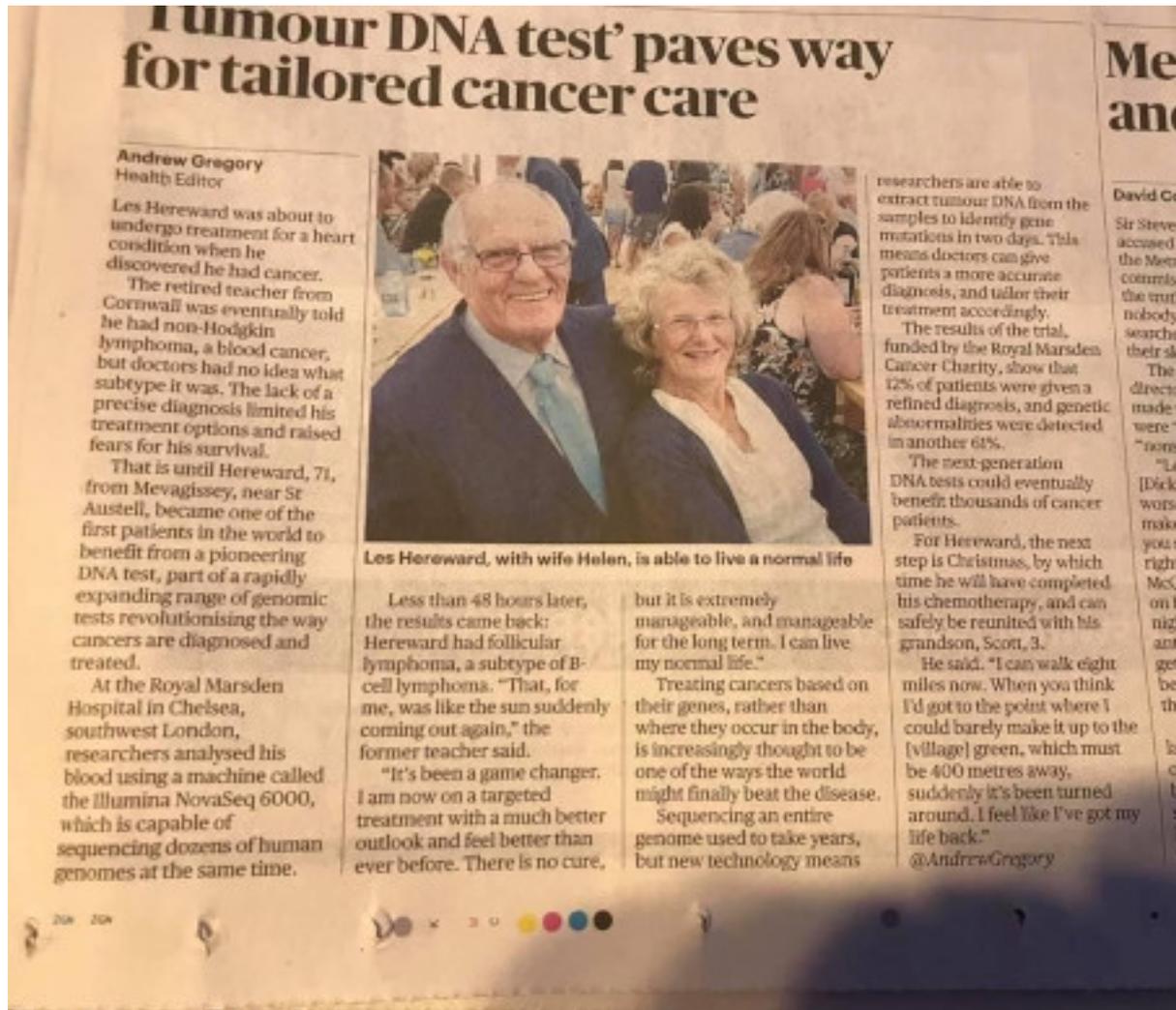
Sadly, of course, Covid restrictions also prevented the Choir from giving him the send-off they would have liked, but the service, which was followed by many online, included our recordings of '*Cornish Hearts*', '*Calm is the Sea*', and '*Mevagissey Bay*'.

More recently, we learned first that Cathryn Vellenoweth, wife of Top Tenor Phil, and Sheila Foard, widow of David, another of our founders, who sang with the Basses, had left us. And, just before we went to press, Baritone Mel Combe informed us that he had lost Celia, who finally succumbed to a long illness. Our thoughts have been with the Foard, Vellenoweth and Combe families, as well, of course, as with the Hunkins.

But there have been some good moments, too.

Hereward Reawakens!

Back around the turn of the year we were reading about our very own Les Hereward in the Sunday Times no less! Mevagissey resident Les, one of our popular Basses, had become one of the first patients in the world to benefit from a pioneering DNA test, one of a range of procedures that is revolutionising cancer diagnosis and treatment.



Les goes national!

Les was about to face treatment for a heart condition last year when he learned he had non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a blood cancer. The medics had no idea which of many subtypes it was, however, which limited his treatment options and raising fears for his survival.

That was, until London's Royal Marsden Hospital intervened with their pioneering new equipment which quickly cleared up the uncertainty. 'It's been a game changer,' Les told Sunday Times Health Editor Andrew Gregory, 'I am now on a targeted treatment and feel better than ever before. Suddenly I have my life back.'

Les's treatment programme ended just before Christmas so we asked him for an update. This was his reply.

'I am sitting in our caravan at Sedgefield County Durham on a round of visits to family something that would have been beyond me 8 months ago. For me this is a marathon rather than a sprint. My cancer is indolent and low grade; sounds a bit like some of my school reports. It is also incurable but very treatable.

'My constant companion over the last decade, the lymphoma slowly became more and more noticeable and last year came to the point of needing treatment. Even a short walk or the tiniest slope became a major obstacle. Good timing, given the pandemic, since I would have had to isolate in treatment anyway. As the treatment started to settle, I managed to attend Zoom MMC rehearsals and start longer walks. Before, I was just managing the 250-metre walk to the village green, now I can walk all day. Next, I hope to get back to cycling as well and I am looking forward to face to face rehearsals and hopefully singing on the quay.'

Bravo, Les, look forward to seeing you!



Les and wife Helen dressed for the Cornish summer at the Dodman, with Tilly

GOLDEN OLDIES

Meanwhile, congratulations were due our Chairman, 'Nick' Nicholls, and his lovely wife Lesley who celebrated their golden wedding in April.



Nick and Les wedding day



Nick & Les today

The popular couple escaped being sung to but couldn't avoid a deluge of congratulatory messages on social media, while daughter Kate put together a video of choir members and others performing (separately, of course) 'Hot Love', by T Rex, the 'song' that they danced to on the wedding day.

We're on TV Again!

Just before 'going to press', the BBC's 'Songs of Praise' broadcast the second four songs that we 'sang' for them last August. As recorded in the previous newsletter, around 20 choir members made our way to the Eden Project, where we were filmed miming to four of our existing recordings. The first was aired a week or two later, in September 2020, and then, on Sunday 25th April, the producers included a video of us 'performing' 'Jesus Shall Reign'.



At the same time, we were provisionally booking the Minack for 2022. The world-famous open-air theatre have pencilled us in for 14th May. Here's a reminder of our last visit:





It is also worth noting that the Cornish Choirs concert in Birmingham has been provisionally re-booked for Saturday 3rd September 2022. However we await further news on Nick Hart's environmental festival at the Eden Project, for which we have begun learning a new song, 'Lungs of the Earth', which has been especially written for us.

And finally...

... for those who've never seen it, here's a pic of our meeting with footballer Pele, in Parliament Square, in 1987.

