

Tideswell Male Voice Choir **By Michael Emsen**

Tideswell's well-deserved reputation for high quality choral singing began with the 'Catch and Glee' club, which rehearsed at the Angel Inn in the 10th Century. One of its members, Samuel Slack, sang before King George III. The first Male Voice Choir was formed in the mid 1940's and was conducted by Arthur Furness, the father of Les Furness, our current Chairman, but unfortunately work commitment obliged him to give up conducting. The baton was taken up after a few years break by Raymond Hibbert in 1956 who gathered some of his friends together to reform the choir. By all accounts Raymond was a character of some force, often autocratic in selecting the choir's repertoire and sometimes impatient with the singers but was loved by all the singers. The choir at this time consisted of approximately 20 members and sang in Churches and Chapels over a wide area.

When Raymond died in 1981 Arthur Furness took up the conductors baton once again until Jack Windle from the Dore Male Voice Choir came to conduct the choir. When Jack had to resign for personal reasons, fortune smiled once again on the choir in the form of Chris Senior who became Conductor in 1984. Chris conducted the choir from January 1984 to April 2000 in which time he took the choir to their greatest achievements. In 1985 and 1986 the choir won the Burbage Shield at the Buxton Music Festival and repeated this feat again in 1990. In May 1987 the choir won first prize in its class at the Morecambe Music Festival and was awarded the Grundy Trophy. It also won the Ernest Unsworth Trophy for the Choir with the highest marks in three classes. Success followed at various music festivals including Hazel Grove, Blackpool and Newcastle-under-Lyme establishing the choir as the leading Male Voice Choir in Derbyshire. The third Malta International Choir Festival marked a supreme achievement for the choir when it won the Male Voice section and received the Silver Trophy for the second placed choir in all sections. Over this period the choir grew from about 20 members to around 40 and it built up a very stable membership which no doubt contributed significantly to its success in competitions.

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The choir's success can also be attributed to the stability of its other officials, Llinos Hodgson has been the accompanist for the choir for 22 years and each conductor with whom she has worked expressed the view that they could not have managed without her. The late Frank Horton was Chairman for many years and his patience, tact and diplomatic skills were often in demand as one can imagine trying to manage a group of some 40 strong minded singers. Tribute must also be paid to Arthur Furness who served the choir for many years as conductor and president. Chris Senior retired in 2000 and was succeeded by Suzie Winter who travelled from Sheffield every week to conduct the choir. Like Chris before her she entered the choir into music festivals and won first place at the Hazel Grove Festival. Under Suzie's leadership the choir visited Slovenia in 2003 and performed to packed houses, making many friends over there. Unfortunately, she had to retire for health reasons in December 2003.

Michael Coe was the choir's conductor until April 2005. Michael was a highly accomplished musician who had worked with the BBC. He was commissioned by the choir to write a piece of music specifically for the choir. The result was a beautiful piece of music, with wonderful words written by his wife Sue, that she called 'The Water'