

## A Plod to Tenor.

Bob tells of his journey from retirement in the police force to singing as a tenor in the the choir.



*" My greatest achievement since retirement ? To sing with the choir"*

July 1997 and I retire from the Police Force, stationed at Heathfield. I had been told a few months earlier that my posting was no longer rural Heathfield but Eastbourne, however I was to work out of the Heathfield police station. The prompt to retire I thought! So what do you do after 30 years in the police and 49 years of age? Go back to learn all the things I failed at in school was my answer, maths, singing and latin. So in 1999 and I achieve GCSE in mathematics then some years later I saw an evening class at Uckfield – “Singing for those who think they can’t”. Well, this was for me so I enrolled. About 15 of us in the first evening, the majority with the same story as me - the music teachers at school saying “you can’t sing”. But the tutor, Angela Tilley, convinced us that everyone can sing. We started pitching two notes and working from there. "You may never be a Pavarotti or a Dame Kiri but you have a singing voice"

After a year of evening classes I was looking for another amateur choir to sing with and asked around my friends. Then I’m told “you are expected at choir practice on Thursday night, I’ve told them you’re coming!” it’s the Royal Tunbridge Wells Orpheus Male Voice Choir – WHAT!! This is way beyond me, sounds much too posh but off I went, no voice test or audition, just stand there and see how you get on. A couple of months later and we are are singing at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill.

The RTWOMVC was founded in 1938 and has had many professional musical directors. The most notable, W G Stevens, who arranged many songs in four parts, bass, baritone, first and second tenor, the four part harmonies for which male voice choirs are famous. In 1997 a CD made by the choir had ten out of the sixteen tracks arranged by him. I settled in to sing with the second tenors, 'we get the notes the others don't want' - as the line from a song.



The choir sing at concerts in support of local good causes and is itself a registered charity. We have sung in many local churches around Tunbridge Wells (raising money for toilet facilities within the church was popular!). We have never got to Heathfield to sing but have given concerts at Buxted, Wadhurst, Groombridge and Crowborough.

You can find a couple of recordings from recent concerts on YouTube, go to the web site, [See and Hear Us](#)

I have sung with the choir at the Menin Gate ceremony in Ypres, which was very emotional as my father had served in the First World War. The choir returned there to sing again in 2018.



So Covid comes and normal choir rehearsals stops. Some of us, not to be beaten, learnt about Zoom, we couldn't sing together so we all became soloists. Adapting to this new way of learning was not easy and dealing with the foibles of intermittent wi-fi signals was yet another challenge. Finally in September 2021 we are back singing together and we take part in the Remembrance Day Service in Tunbridge Wells and a concert for Hospice in the Weald. Now in 2022 we joined with the Tonbridge Community Singers for the St Georges Day Concert and then back to Trinity Theatre in May.

GCSE in Latin? I went on holiday instead of taking the exam. My greatest achievement since retirement is to sing with the choir - come and join us !

Bob Jupp

If like Bob you are looking for your next challenge in life then why not visit our web site and click on the [Join Us](#) page. Who knows where your journey will lead you?