**Stourport Choral 1964-2014**

***“Music alone with sudden charms can bind***

***The wandering sense and calm the troubled mind”***

***William Congreve.***

In the 21st Birthday year of Stourport Three Arts Guild, the music section, led by David Oakley with accompanist Phoebe Capewell, decided to branch out and become a separate society, which became Stourport Choral and Operatic Society – affectionately known as SCOS. David together with Don Darby co-founded the society and with their wonderful tenor and bass voices were the inspiration for many folk to join. David Oakley was the choir’s MD from the outset, until his retirement in 1995, with a short break in 1967. He was asked to make a return as conductor for a performance of The Yeoman of the Guard in 2000, but sadly this was not to be as he became ill on the first night and died shortly afterwards. He was greatly missed by all who knew him.

Judith Standing took over the baton in 1995 and continued to lead the choir in shows concerts and festivals. During the years when David and Judith directed the choir the competitive side of the society saw them win 3 Gold Cups at the Cheltenham Music Festival and a clean sweep at Knighton Eisteddfod. Judith retired following the summer concert in 2006, but she continues to sing with the choir, so her wonderful voice and experience have not been lost. Judith’s mum Grace Evans, a professional soprano in her earlier years, was a great asset to the choir for many years, with her experience of voice production and choir direction. Since then we have had a number of fine directors and for the last 6 years we have been fortunate to have Alastair Elliott holding the reins. Alastair brings new energy to our singing and repertoire.

Mention should also be made of our accompanists, whose unenviable task is recognised by the society. Beryl Beech was pianist for many years, accompanying us for many of our competition successes. Our present accompanist, Angie Allard, has been linked to the choir since 1979 when she loved to turn the pages at the carol concerts at the age of 8.

Apart from local concerts we have been asked to venture further afield, singing with Valerie Masterson, Helen Landis, The Symphony Hall City Organisation and the Three British Tenors. The choir has also been to Stourport’s Twin Town Villeneuve- Le-Roi on two occasions and we have hosted their choir twice. It has been the choir’s policy to donate a proportion of their proceeds to charity and for many years took part in Music for You at Kidderminster Town Hall. The latest charity event was on Sept 13th last year when the choir took part in an exciting performance with the West Midland Fire Service Band, raising money for Kemp Hospice. We hope to be joining other choirs this year to raise money for the Philippines’ disaster.

As with any longstanding organisation, we have seen members come and go, but there are still a few people singing with Stourport Choral (our new name), who have been members since the outset. During the 50 years since the choir’s inception it has performed approximately 32 shows and 126 concerts, our performances always reflecting the changing trends and tastes in music. Hopefully we are continuing to fulfil the sentiments expressed by the choir’s chairman, councillor Hume, in 1965. “You have achieved success in no small measure and I can see only success for the future”