

Elizabeth Simpson Remembers.....

My Lifetime of Singing starting in 1962



White Horse Inn 1970

Image: From the RLHS archives courtesy of Elizabeth Simpson.

I do not profess to be a very good singer, but I do enjoy performing with like-minded individuals and hopefully creating a joyful sound, for the pleasure of others.

After starting at the Redditch County High School in 1962, I soon joined the school choir. This led to participating in some of the annual Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, under the direction of Harvey Morris. An example of this was in 1965 when we performed H.M.S. Pinafore. Many of the names of the participants will be familiar to those who grew up in the town, such as Nigel Burton, Felicity Barlow and David Vann, together with Anne and Ruth Marriott.

By 1970, my friend Alyson Brazil and I decided to join the Redditch Operatic Society, where her mother, Mavis Brazil was already a member. At that time we used to perform at the Abbey Hostel Hall in Redditch, which has since been demolished and is now the location of Sainsbury's supermarket. Well known Redditch residents, such as Maurice Clarke, Gillian Huddleston, Alan Styler, Barry Thornton and Keith Parrish were the soloists that year. Happily it received a good review from the Redditch Indicator.

The following year, Redditch Operatic Society was able to move to the newly refurbished Palace Theatre, for the first time since 1939. We performed the Student Prince and as the Indicator reported: *"The performers appreciated their elevation from a cold and cheerless Abbey Hostel into a real theatrical environment and grasping their opportunity, soared to a crescendo of voice and exaltation which will have reverberated in Redditch the whole week through"* Along with our regular soloists, we were also joined by John Emms.

After our move to the Palace we started performing twice a year, alternating between Gilbert & Sullivan and a popular operetta. This included the Pirate of Penzance and The Vagabond King in 1972 and The Gondoliers in 1973.

By this time, I was now working at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, which also had an Operatic Society. We were also performing Gilbert & Sullivan, which we performed in the Theatre at the top of the Medical School of Birmingham University. A far cry from the Palace Theatre, as we were now changing costumes behind bed screens at the side of the hall!!! However, it was good fun.

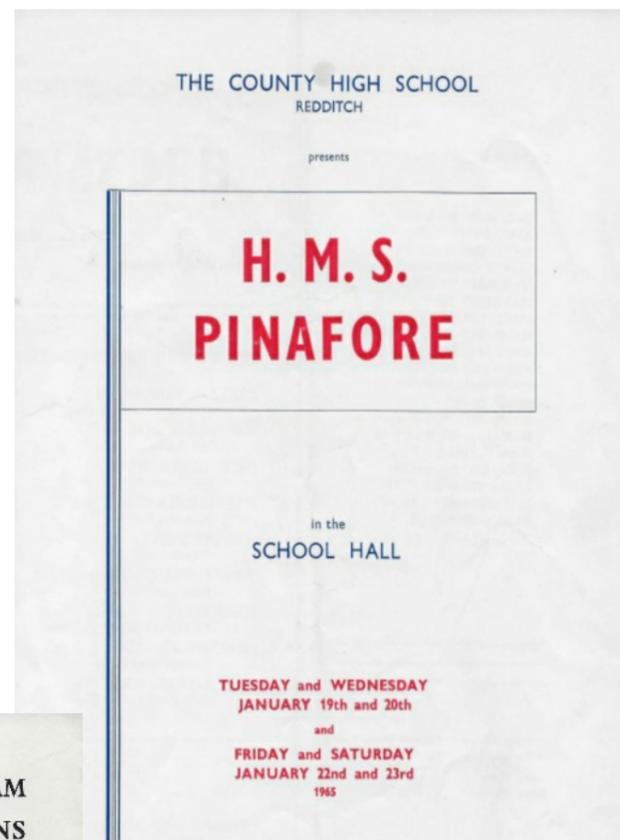
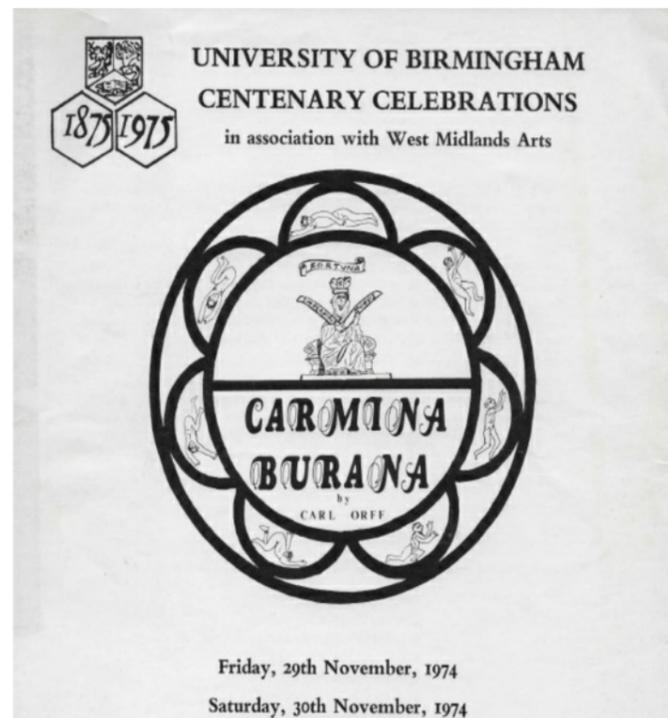


The Student Prince 1971

Image: From the RLHS archives courtesy of Elizabeth Simpson.

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The QE Operatic Society was invited to join Birmingham University Choir for part of the University Centenary Celebrations in 1974, which included a performance of Carmina Burana, with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. This was to be the first fully choreographed production of Carl Orff's dance drama to be given in Britain. Towards the end of the Centenary Year the choir and orchestral forces joined together to mount their most ambitious musical project with a concert performance of The Trojans of Carthage by Berlioz with Janet Baker performing as Dido. This was a spectacular performance that I will never forget.

I continued to sing with the University Choir until 1981, when work commitments prevented me from attending sufficient rehearsals to continue.

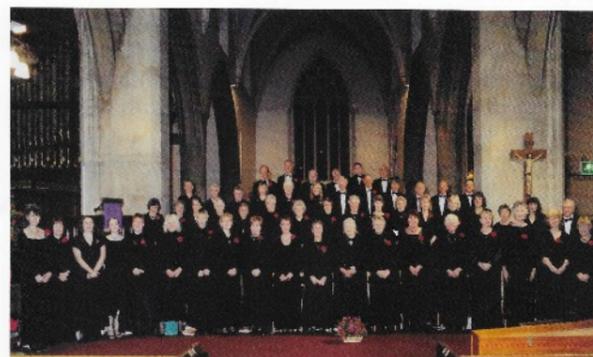
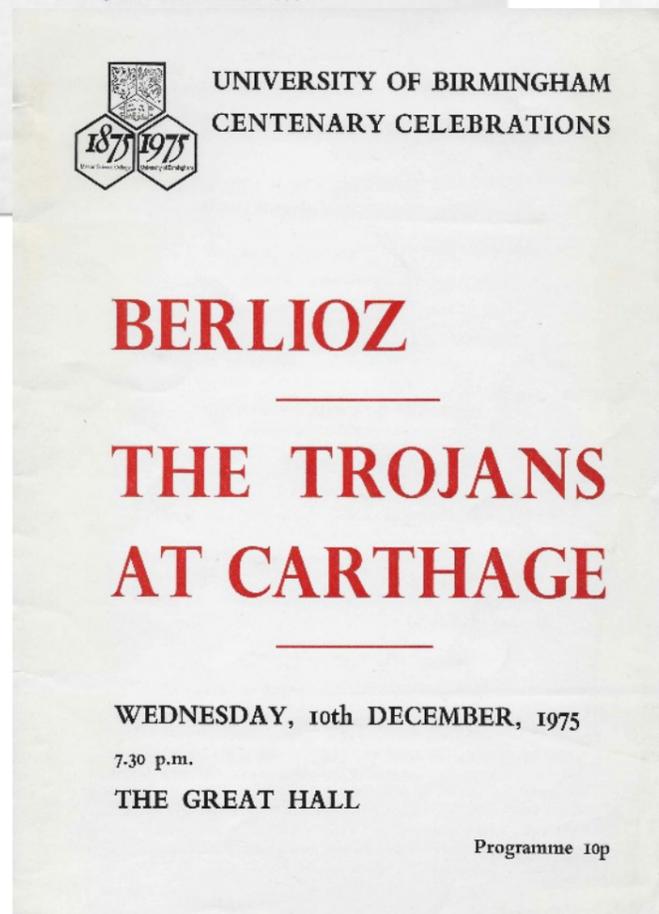
During that time we performed works such as Beethoven Missa Solemnis, Mahler Symphony No. 8 (the Symphony of a 1,000), together with various pieces by Handel and Mozart, with many very good guest soloists.

It took until 2010, after I had retired, before I had the time to start singing again.

At this point I joined Redditch Choral Society, under its Director Alma Bright who had formed the Society in 1964. Since joining the Choir we have been performing twice a year in and around the town, often at St Stephen's Church, with programmes such as Mozart's Requiem, Bach's St Matthew Passion and Handel's Messiah. The highlight has been our 50th Anniversary Concert in St Stephens in 2014.

It has been a lovely experience to be able to share a love of music and singing again in Redditch. I hope to be able to continue to do this for years to come.

Elizabeth Simpson (Nee Baldwin)



50th Anniversary Concert

St. Stephen's Church

15th November, 2014

Memorable Concerts

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