

Dear RMVC

May I start by saying that perhaps many of you are thinking that I should be at the AGM, particularly as I am about to become president. However, I have decided not to attend this important event because I feel this year's music has belonged to Clive and I should therefore keep well out of it. In effect he has been your M.D. in every respect, and has directed every concert. This situation I personally have regretted enormously. I can't tell you how much I have missed working with you. It has been a bitter blow but one I have had to accept. For much of the year I had hoped to be able to tell you that I would return as your M.D. next season, but have been advised not to. I haven't got the energy to sustain a whole rehearsal, let alone a concert. I don't want to let you down by collapsing in the middle of something. So it's now curtains for me and as you already know I have resigned as your leader. The struggles of 43 years are over. However, if you are willing to support this idea, I intend to write some arrangements specifically for you (I have already done a couple). Clive has agreed to rehearse them and I hope to come along to a rehearsal and go through one of them with a view to conducting it at your next concert. I hope to have the strength for that, at least, and I do want to keep in touch with you.

Thinking back, I am very proud of you all and all your achievements. Our first big boost was 37 years ago, when we represented the UK in the International rounds of the BBC 'Let the Peoples Sing' competition. We were already a choir to be reckoned with. Since that time the standard of singing has been pretty consistently more than satisfactory and frequently better. You have given pleasure in many parts of the world, Norway, Holland, Ireland, Lithuania, Spain etc. Your singing has invariably been appreciated, and I am proud of that too. At home, particularly in recent years, you have raised large sums for a variety of charities, again appreciated generally and particularly by the organisers.

All these things I shall miss in practice, but they will remain in my memory for always. Most of all, I will miss regular contact and conversation with members of the choir. RMVC must be one of the friendliest and most sociable organisations that exist. To many people it is central to their lives and is the most important event of the week. Your friendships percolate down to the singing itself, and 'gel' the performances and give them strength and purpose. People who get on well together sing well together.

I must express a word of gratitude especially to all those who have served the choir in various official capacities. We all recognise that our officials have on the whole been first class, assiduous in their duties and invariably concerned with the well being of the choir and its individual members. I can't at this point individualise the hundreds of officers I have had the pleasure of working with. Sufficient be it to say I am grateful for the support and friendship I have received from the committee. However, I must break the rule and individualise one man. Clive has been my constant support and friend for practically every one of my 43 years. The standard of any choir depends to a large degree on its accompanist and we have had the benefit of an exceptional one. Haven't I been lucky! I am sure his taking over the job will ensure our standards are maintained, or shall I say improved? I wish him every success, and if he enjoys it as much as I have, he will be having the time of his life.

Thank you for putting up with me for so long. I wish you a rosy future.