

We had no sudden panics last year due to illnesses of Conductor or Chairman or indeed any members of the Committee. We were, however, very sad when Elisabeth was taken seriously ill, but we are delighted to welcome her and Spencer back into the fold for the new season after her spectacular recovery. Some members may not know that Charlotte has been in hospital during the summer and we are very glad she, too, is back with us, and we wish her good health now. I think we all missed John and Jenny Bodiley when they left the area during the summer of 1996, and we're pleased to report that they have settled happily in Bridgwater. I phoned yesterday and John doesn't have to have a health check-up for the next three years. His choir is busy doing "Noye's Fludde" with 150 schoolchildren and recently they sang in Bristol Cathedral with a choir girl singing Allegri's Miserere. John and Jenny also belong to another choir which is performing the Messiah at Christmas and Vaughan Williams and Poulenc in May.

Several choir members left in 1996; Lorna Lloyd wants to remain a member despite giving up singing because of her health and we wish her and other leavers well.

James has given us an excellent year and we are most grateful for the time, thought and energy he has put into looking after us so well despite a very heavy schedule at school and his other musical interests. We are also extremely fortunate to have Wendy as our friendly, jovial and highly accomplished accompanist, and to have some very musical newcomers in the choir. Tenors abound compared with many choirs of our size. The altos have lost several members and were in urgent need of revitalisation, though the new season sees two welcome additions. Sops and basses keep the numbers up to just above the forty mark.

Rehearsals began last September with an effort to get to grips with Elgar's Dream of Gerontius, and some of us found it pretty heavy going. One or two members have strong reservations about the Mary Wakefield Festival and didn't wish to take part whatever the work, and some others dropped out for this particular work. However, as seven Choral Societies were now joining forces to provide the choir for the concert in March this helped the organisers to keep the numbers down. Other Societies had a similar drop so that we had about the right number in the end.

Our Christmas Carol Concert in the Village Hall was a great success as usual. The audience joined in singing six carols and we sang another nine. James brought a group of his younger flute players who performed in the first half, and a more senior pupil who played a cello solo in the second. Belinda and Wendy gave us items on clarinet and piano in both halves, and we had excellent readings plus a splendid rendering of The Organ Blower by Clarence. We are most grateful to all these solo performers.

We continued the practice of having both carol services on the same day, the last Sunday before Christmas, at Ings in the afternoon and Kentmere in the evening and these are much enjoyed by all present. The choir continues to voice a wish that these were arranged the other way round, but Kentmere has valid reasons of parking difficulties as well as the needs of a farming community to consider.