

Everything you need to know about Escafeld Chorale but were afraid to ask!

Escafeld Chorale has been part of the Sheffield music scene since 1969, when it was founded as the Fossdale Singers by music teacher Ron Law. From the early 1980s it developed and grew under the guidance of Fran Wells, until the baton was transferred to Peter Dutton in 2001. We appointed Ian Roberts as our Music Director from 2013 to 2016. Fran took over on a temporary basis until March 2017, when Nigel Russell took up the baton. George Parsons has been the Music Director since September 2022

This sheet answers questions new members may ask, and reminds existing members how the choir is organised. More formal information is given in our constitution, which is issued to all members.

What sort of music do we sing? Our repertoire spans a wide range of composers and choral styles, from madrigals and part songs to full-length requiem masses. We often perform with other local musicians. We enjoy singing both Bach and Bernstein, not to mention Duruflé, Fauré, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Palestrina, Tippett and Vaughan Williams (to name but a few). If you have a particular favourite, mention it to George or your part rep.

When do we rehearse? Normally on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 to 9.30 p.m. at Banner Cross Methodist Church (except school holidays). We take a 15-minute break at 8.30 and there's a rota for making the tea/bringing cake. (Currently we're not serving tea and coffee – bring your own drink.)

Concert dates are publicised well in advance and you are expected to commit to taking part in concerts. You are also expected to attend rehearsals regularly to prepare for them. We have a final rehearsal at the concert venue, usually on the day of the concert. All concert venues are different and need careful seating plans. The primary aim is to achieve musical balance, though individual preferences are accommodated where possible. We normally sing in 'concert formation' for some weeks before a concert.

Should I practise in between rehearsals? Yes! If your sight-reading isn't that good, try and listen to a recording of the music so that we don't waste too much rehearsal time 'note-bashing'. Practice CDs/MP3s are sometimes available at modest prices, or check out YouTube or Spotify.

Do I have to sign in each week? Yes, please. It helps us plan rehearsals if you can put a cross against any dates when you know in advance that you won't be there. If you have to miss a rehearsal unexpectedly, it's still helpful to let your part rep or George know. The signing-in sheets also ask you to confirm your availability for forthcoming concerts.

How often do we perform? We generally give four concerts a year: spring, summer, and two at Christmas. Our popular Christmas concerts (including seasonal readings and refreshments) have for many years been performed at Wentworth

Church and at a Sheffield venue. Occasionally, we give additional concerts at other times of the year. Donations to charity are sometimes made from concert proceeds and we often go carol singing in aid of local charities, especially St Luke's Hospice.

How long is the probationary period? We retain a policy of no auditions but do aim for high musical standards. You must be able to hold a tune and be able to follow a music score (but sight reading is not obligatory). There is a short probationary period of around two months for new members. On completing this satisfactorily you will be welcomed as a full member of the choir. There may be a waiting list for some parts, so prospective new members should contact Anna Crewe first.

How are subscriptions paid? Subs are due at the beginning of September (see overleaf for current rates) from all full members. If you prefer to pay monthly, the Treasurer has a supply of standing order forms. On completing their probationary period, new members pay pro rata for the remainder of the year. Subs are non-refundable except in exceptional circumstances as determined by the Chair and Treasurer. If you are a taxpayer, please complete a Gift Aid form (available from the Treasurer) to enable us to claim the tax back.

Can I leave temporarily? Members occasionally need to suspend their membership due to personal circumstances. After three terms' absence, your membership will terminate and you will need to check that there is still a vacancy in your voice part. If you then wish to rejoin at a later date, you may be asked to undergo a probationary period.

What do we wear for concerts? This is the current dress code for formal concerts:

- **Women:** long, ankle-length, plain black skirt (or smart trousers); long-sleeved, plain black, round-necked top; scarf (see Anna Crewe about this); black plain shoes.
- **Men:** black trousers; dinner jacket; black shoes; white shirt; blue bow tie (purchase from the membership officer); buttonhole as appropriate (supplied by the choir). For spring and summer concerts it's usually open-necked black shirts.

If you have problems getting hold of a long skirt or a dinner jacket, mention it to your part rep. For less formal concerts, ladies are asked to wear plain, **blue/green**, short-sleeved shirts/tops, with collars (and plain black skirts/trousers).

How do I get the music? The librarian obtains the music. If we're likely to use something several times, you may have a chance to order your own personal copy at a discounted price. You are responsible for ensuring music is returned to the librarian after concerts. If the dog has chewed the music, or you have lost it, you will be charged for a replacement copy. Late returns may be subject to a library fine, for which you will be held responsible.

What else do I need? Concert folders are available for purchase at a discount. You'll also need a soft pencil for writing in George's directions, and an eraser for revising them. Please try *not* to mark the scores heavily and *don't* use ink; libraries may impose a fine for 'defaced' music.

What is the semi-chorus? Some pieces of music are best performed by a small number of singers – a semi-chorus – rather than by the whole choir. George will choose the right group of voices to achieve the intended effect. If you can sing your part without relying on others, and would like to be in a semi-chorus, then do let George know, especially when he asks for volunteers.

Can I talk to my neighbour during rehearsals?

No! Please save the chat for the tea break or the pub afterwards. If you have a particular problem with the music, ask George to go over it but save lengthy discussions until later.

Annual subscriptions 2023–24

Members: £111 (Special student rates available on application to the Treasurer.)

Friends: £40

Concert dates 2023–24

Christmas Saturday 9 December 2023, Holy Trinity Church, Wentworth, 4 p.m. (rehearsal 1.30 p.m.)

Tuesday 19 December 2023, Holy Trinity Church, Millhouses, 7.30 p.m. (rehearsal 12 December)

Spring Saturday 16 March 2024, Holy Trinity Church, Millhouses, 7.30 p.m.

Summer Not yet confirmed

Committee 2022–23

George Parsons*	Conductor	Mary Harrison	Chief librarian (sop))
Sarah Hindmarsh	Chair (alto)	Ann Kingdom	Publicity (alto)
Mo Cave	Treasurer (sop.)	Kath Mowforth	Alto
Alison Allen-Booth	Secretary (sop.)	Chris Barker	Tenor
Anna Crewe	Membership (sop.)	Phil Parker	Bass
Helen Cramp	Soprano		

**Attends committee meetings, but not a voting member of the committee*

N.B. The tea/cake rota is organised by Phil Parker (bass) and Chris Barker (tenor); Steve Joseph (bass) is concert manager.

What should I do if my neighbour sings out of tune? If this persists, have a word with your part rep, who will discuss the issue with George. If the problem cannot be resolved, a member might be asked to review their membership if they are unable to maintain the musical standards of the choir.

What about publicity? This is very important. You can help to publicise concerts by displaying posters/fliers at suitable locations, as well as selling tickets to your friends and family.

Are there any social events? Choir members and partners (and Friends of Escafeld Chorale) are encouraged to attend any social events. Meals, walks and other events are organised occasionally. And if you fancy a drink after rehearsals, why not join those of us who usually patronise a local hostelry? (Ask your part rep for information.)

Who are the Friends of Escafeld Chorale? The scheme was set up in 2003 to encourage regular support for the choir. An annual donation (see below) entitles Friends to two free tickets for each concert, and they are invited to any social events.

What do part representatives do? As set out in the constitution, a committee is elected at the AGM each year. Each part has at least one representative (see below), who acts as a two-way conduit for information, raising members' concerns and canvassing members' views on various issues. If you want to get more involved, do put yourself forward for election at the autumn AGM. The committee normally meets about six times a year, to plan future concerts and generally ensure that the choir is running smoothly. Regular email bulletins are also sent out to keep members informed.