

# KT Singers

## Introduction

The 1979 Annual report announced the creation of the KT Singers, as follows:

*At Christmas, a group of enterprising and enthusiastic pupils, led by Kenneth Thomson of the Fifth Year, sang madrigals and carols in St James' Centre and other local shopping areas. Some measure of their success was the £200 raised for charity, including a local record of £78 in 90 minutes.*

By 2018, the KT's had been in existence for nearly forty years, and had accumulated tens of thousands of pounds for charity in that period, aside providing enjoyment to countless thousands of listeners, and many, many pupils, teachers, parents and other guest singers. Sadly, it would appear that in 2022 the current regime has no place for the choir. However, you can't keep a good horse down, and the group returned to provide a splendid short concert at the 2018 Barnton 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner. One can't help but imagine that although the school has abandoned them, they haven't abandoned the School, and WILL return.

This article comprises a letter from the founder, and a timeline of the group extracted from Annual Reports starting in 1979. The Annual Report account of the singers stopped in the 2013-14 session, indicating its demise.



Ken Thomson's official photo on the Scottish Government website



The KT Singers around 1981 – Ken's younger sister Elizabeth is the organiser



1986 Dec 15 - KT Singers with John Murray centre back row



The KT Choir at the Barnton 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner at Dynamic earth



'KT' being interviewed by Tom Bacciarelli at the Barnton 50<sup>th</sup> dinner at Dynamic Earth

## THE KT's, by KT

A report from the founder, December 2017

Sometime in the early 2000s, an email arrived from John Murray to tell me "the KT's" would be singing carols in the Caledonian Hotel the following week. Did I want to come along? I did.

The choir was ranged up the main staircase, with John conducting from the foot of the stairs. He didn't look a day older, but the choir (I realised) were about the age of my own children, and suddenly I was feeling aged. I slipped onto the end of the back row and joined in with the basses. At the end of that carol, John said to the choir, "If any of you KT's are wondering who the extra bass is - that's KT." The whole choir swivelled to stare, open-mouthed. "Are you really KT?", breathed a soprano. "We thought you were *dead!*"

Well, I'm not dead yet, but the KT's started before those singing that day were even thought of - way back in 1978, when I was a fifth-year pupil in a school with (now that I look back on it) an extraordinary music department, and musical life: as the extracts here confirm.

I got my first experience of that when I first arrived at the RHS. I'd learned to play the 'cello at primary school, so John quickly ear-marked me for the school orchestra. I was also tall compared to others in my year and I could run without falling over. That was sufficient to be ear-marked for rugby coaching too, even though I'd never held a rugby ball in my life. In many schools, that would have been a fork in the road: musician, or sporty type? In the RHS, where John coached rugby as well as conducting the orchestra, it meant I played the 'cello in the first half of the orchestra rehearsal in full rugby kit, then went out to the sports field to join the second part of rugby training. That carried on: in the end I played for the 1st XV before going on to read music at St Andrews (without actually meaning to, but that's another story).

It was part of the musical culture that we just tried things to see what would happen. The practice rooms were often crowded. I remember one day three of us were trying to practice at the same time: piano, double bass and clarinet - so we just tried some jazz (which told me I was never going to be a jazz pianist). In the same spirit, we just tried singing some madrigals, because we found the music lying around. I can't remember whether the madrigals or the Christmas carols came first - but we discovered there were enough of us who could sight-read and hold a part to make a decent noise, and carol-singing gave us a chance to inflict it on parents and neighbours, bussed from one part of the catchment area to another by the indefatigable John.

That went well, so we thought we'd try our hand at singing where there were crowds of people with cash in their hands, and try raising money for charity - driven partly by altruism, but partly also by having found a good excuse to skip the odd class in the days before Christmas. The archives say we went to the St James Centre. I'm fairly sure we went into a few local pubs, too. The Christmas spirit was flowing freely there, which helped us raise what seemed a lot at the time, and still does: £200, or about £800 in today's money.

When we decided to do it again the next year, we still hadn't thought of a name. Since I was the one giving the notes and starting the carols, and it was the second time we'd done it, we became by default the "KT2s". That was my last year at school, but the next year and the year after that still couldn't come up with a better name. "The KT's" stuck. As 3 became 4 became 5, the amounts raised began to lift off, way beyond anything I could have imagined when we started. I'm astonished, and delighted, by how long it's lasted - though equally pleased that I'm not dead yet!

## **KT Singers – timeline recorded in Annual Reports**

### **1978-79**

At Christmas, a group of enterprising and enthusiastic pupils, led by Kenneth Thomson of the Fifth Year, sang madrigals and carols in St James' Centre and other local shopping areas. Some measure of their success was the £200 raised for charity, including a local record of £78 in 90 minutes.

### **1979-80**

The senior pupils who formed the KT II madrigal group—led and organised by Kenneth Thomson—repeated their success of the previous year in raising over £400 for charity by singing in shopping centres in the city.

### **1980-81**

Elizabeth Thomson of the Fifth Year, assuming the mantle of her elder brother, Kenneth, fashioned the 'KT. 3' group and, with their help, raised nearly £200 for charity by carol singing at a range of venues.

### **1981-82**

Elizabeth Thomson (S.6) who once again organised a group of singers who raised over £300 for charity at Christmas by singing carols at various venues round Edinburgh: their fund-raising has now reached £1,200 over the last four years of carol singing.

### **1982-83**

The year 1982 ended with a Carol Concert and a further magnificent fund-raising effort by the K.T.5 Carol Singers.

### **1983-84**

Special mention should be made of the K.T.6 Carol Singers, organised and rehearsed by Neil Watson, who raised a magnificent £639 for charity as a result of much activity.

### **1984-85**

The traditional Christmas concert gave the wind band, string orchestra, the three choirs and various soloists the opportunity to display their musical talents. It was also the occasion for the KT Carol Singers to give a selection from their repertoire; their efforts in the second half of December raised over £850 for charity, a result on which they are to be greatly commended.

#### **1985-86**

The 16 member KT8 carol-singing group who proved to be more than worthy successors to the previous KT ensembles. This enthusiastic group, led by Karen MacIntyre, spent ten days at Christmas singing at a wide range of venues and raising an impressive £1250 which went to deserving charities.

#### **1986-87**

At Christmas the KT9 Singers, led by Karen MacIntyre, managed to surpass last year's marvellous achievement by raising £1350 by singing carols at a number of venues in and around the city. The highlight was a visit to the Esso plant at Mossmoran where over £200 was raised.

#### **1987-88**

The KT Singers celebrated their tenth anniversary at Christmas by raising a sum of £1500 for charity during a fortnight of intensive effort. Contrary to popular opinion, the KTs do possess a repertoire outside of carols! They meet on a weekly basis to prepare a range of music including motets, madrigals and other part songs. This session their Christmas efforts created a new record, and since their foundation they have contributed over £7,000 to a variety of local and national charitable organisations.

#### **1988-89**

The KT XI Choir, ably organised by Rachel Shewan of the Sixth Year, fulfilled another punishing ten day carol singing schedule prior to the Christmas holidays and equalled the record of their immediate forerunners by amassing £1,500 during this period. This sum was donated to The Malcolm Sargent Cancer Relief for Children Fund and since their formation in 1978, successive 'KTs' have raised over £7,000 for a range of charities and are always interested in hearing of new and lucrative markets for their talents.

#### **1989-90**

The Christmas period saw the 12th K.T. Singers out and about raising money for charity, led by Louise Grant SW. The group raised £1900 singing carols which was donated to The Malcolm Sargent Cancer Relief for Children, and The Muscular Dystrophy Group of Scotland. Since their inception in 1978 successive K.T.s have raised in excess of £10,500.

#### **1990-91**

The Annual Christmas Concert drew together the Senior Choir and K.T.Singers, staff and pupil barbershop groups, the Wind and Jam Bands, String Orchestra, a dance group and a number of soloists. Many of these performers later performed for the Edinburgh Gilbert and Sullivan Society and gave a concert at Stockbridge House to raise funds for the Edinburgh and Leith Old People's Welfare Council.

#### **1991-92**

The K.T.XIII Choir completed their annual "Carolthon" and this year raised £2000, divided between the Leonard Cheshire Foundation, the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children, the Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Western General Radiation Oncology Project.

#### **1992-93**

No information recorded

#### **1993-94**

Concerts by the K.T. singers and soloists at the Cramond over-60's Club and St Giles Cathedral in November maintained our profile in the community as suitable preludes to the Christmas Concert.

#### **1994-95**

At Christmas the KT singers, ably supported by a large number of Former Pupils, raised over £2,000 for charity through a series of carol singing expeditions across the City.

**1995-96**

The KT Singers (in their 18<sup>th</sup> year) raised £1800 through further carol singing. They were again invited to the carol service at St Cuthbert's Church, and performed a lunchtime choral and chamber music concert at the same venue after Easter.

**1996-97**

The Christmas term ended on two high notes: the KT singers raising over £2000 for the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children, and the Christmas concert held in the Assembly Hall.

**1997-98**

In December the KT XX Singers put their vocal talents to good use in raising in excess of £2000 for charity (the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund being the main beneficiary) with participation in two City Christmas services with support from pupils in the Art Department who designed the programme for the SPIFOX charity event.

**1998-99**

The KT Singers set a new record over the Festive season in carol singing for charity.

**1999-2000**

The KT singers, organised by Alexander Johnston (S6), excelled themselves in a very busy three weeks at Christmas. This included representing Edinburgh schools by singing at the City Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony on the Mound and also in the St. Cuthbert's Parish Church Christmas Service, and by raising £3,000 for the Children's Cancer Charity Sargent Scotland.

**2000-01**

The KT singers were also asked once more to perform carols at the City Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony on the Mound, and again successfully achieved their £3000 target in carol singing for charity over the festive season at various venues, including the annual Christmas service at St. Cuthbert's Parish Church in the city.

**2001-02**

Once again the KT Singers (organised this year by Alistair Hodgson S6) began their annual 'Carols for Charity' singing marathon at the end of first term by performing at the City Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony and ultimately reached their target of £3000 with their laudable carol singing efforts.

**2002-03**

The KT Singers were again invited to open their annual Christmas Carol Singing for Charity by performing at the Council's Christmas Lights Ceremony in Princes Street and under the organising efforts of Claire Addison and Jenny McLeod (both S6) very nearly reached £3000 albeit on a much tighter, reduced time scale than last year — all credit to them.

**2003-04**

The KT Singers who were awarded a certificate in 2003 for the most money raised in Scotland on behalf of Sargent Scotland, the Cancer charity for Children from carol singing last Christmas. This year they sent an even larger cheque to the same charity for their vocal efforts in December. We are very proud of their loyal work for charity over the last 26 years and they deserve much credit for it.

**2004-05**

Thin pickings but.... In mid December the brass group and KT singers made a strong contribution to the Cramond Kirk Christmas service. At the end of term the regular Christmas concert featuring all our singers and instrumentalists proved a great success with participants and audience alike.

**2005-06**

We once again saw the return of the KT Singers who in their 28<sup>th</sup> year still work tirelessly to sing carols for charity, often in their own time. This year they successfully raised over £1300 for Sargent Scotland - the Children's Cancer charity performing at a number of local venues and at our annual Christmas concert in the school.

**2006-07**

Our Christmas concert in the Assembly Hall gave all music making instrumental and choral groups the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and talents to a large and most appreciative audience, prefaced by a selection of carols from the KT singers before the concert. December saw the KT Singers performing carols in various locations in Edinburgh and raising money for Sargent Scotland as they have done for the last 29 years

**2007-08**

The well-known chamber choir 'The KT Singers', now in their thirtieth year, were once again in demand in the best addresses in Edinburgh including the Balmoral Hotel and Jenners, raising over £1000 for Sargent Scotland which provided support for families of children with cancer.

**2008-09**

No entry

**2009-10**

No entry

**2010-11**

As is now a major school tradition, the KT Choir struggled against the winter weather carolling at various prestigious venues across Edinburgh, raising over £400 for their chosen charity. This year's leaders, Charlotte Kilby and Rachel Geddes, demonstrated both initiative and persistence in arranging and re-arranging venues at short notice.

**2011-12**

Throughout December the KT Singers, drawn from senior members of the choir, performed carols around Edinburgh in aid of Waverley Care. This year's KT group, now in its 35<sup>th</sup> year, was brilliantly organised by Amy Osborn and Kirsty Geddes and we were delighted to be able to send a cheque for well over £1,000 to Waverley Care.

**2012-13**

There was a very busy period for the KT Singers performing carols around Edinburgh, this year raising money jointly for Waverley Care and Habitat for Humanity. This year's carol singing was very ably organised by Kirsty Geddes and Amy Osborn and despite the best efforts of the weather and illness, the choir raised well in excess of £1000.

**2013-14**

The KT singers were once again busy over the Christmas period performing carols at venues such as the Davidsons Mains Christmas lights ceremony, Jenners and the Balmoral Hotel. Under the excellent leadership of Joshua Baillie and Harriet Barton the choir raised over £1,000 towards our two charities, Waverley Care and the school's Romania Project.

**2014-15**

No entry

**2015-16**

No entry

**2016-17**

No entry – is the group still singing, or has it been abandoned? Recent reports (2022) indicate it has been forcibly retired.