Hull History Centre: Records Relating to West Hull Ladies' Musical Union

C DSWH Records Relating to West Hull Ladies' 1925-2006 Musical Union

Accession Number: 13/41

Historical Background: The West Hull Ladies Musical Union was founded by Madame Constance Hall in 1925 and ran until November 2006 when it was agreed that due to depleted attendance the choir would fold.

The society began as a small concern and their concerts were originally held in Coltman Street School Room. The first festival the choir entered, in Scarborough in 1928, they won first prize and following this their membership increased until by 1929 they were able to hold concerts at Powolnys in King Edward Street, Hull.

Although musical activities were suspended during the Second World they held regular whist drives throughout the period which raised £180 for the forces fund.

After the war the choir reformed but sadly Madame Constance Hall had to leave shortly after due to ill health and for the next five years the choir was led by her daughter, Betty Hall. Under her guidance the Union won a number of awards including the Sizer Challenge Cup in Cleethorpes in 1947, the Butler Rose Bowl in Mexborough in 1947 and 1948 and the Burgess Trophy in Scunthorpe in 1948.

Madame Constance Hall died in Hull in 1951 and on the 24th April 1952 the Madam Constance Hall Memorial Concert was held at the City Hotel in Lowgate. By this time Betty Hall had become unwell and was unable to attend, however, during the concert her brother, Mr Andrew Hall presented a music stand to the society on behalf of his father George and sister Betty.

In 1951 the choir auditioned for the BBC. They were accepted and broadcast on the 13th July 1951. The choir was invited to broadcast again and recorded a number of songs at the Leeds studio of the BBC with Jack Hardy's Orchestra which aired on the 1st January 1953. Following this the choir was invited to broadcast again for overseas and several songs were recorded at the Young People's Institute on George Street, Hull on the 3rd June 1954.

In 1957 the choir won the Hull Festival but by this time membership was starting to decline and by 1965 there were insufficient members to form an evenly balanced choir. Following the resignation of both the conductor and the accompanist, help was sought from Mrs Lydia Turner's Savings Guild Choir who agreed to assist with the first concert of the season and members of the Derringham Bank Guild Choir assisted with the second. Mrs Turner was willing to take over as conductor but when it became apparent that it was impossible to arrange rehearsals for both choirs which did not clash, the two choirs agreed to rehearse together. At the Annual General Meeting of the West Hull Ladies' Musical Union in 1965 it was approved that the choirs be known as a combined choir and which ever choir was holding the concert, theirs would be the lead name.

The 1965-1966 season saw the numbers of West Hull Ladies deplete even further and the rehearsals and concerts became more dependent on the Savings Guild Choir's members, guest artists and guest choirs. They managed to keep their heads above water but over the next few years it became routine to hire four choirs for the concerts. In January 1972 it was

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decided to vote on whether to continue as a society but with a majority vote of 12 to 9 and with a small adjustment to the calendar of the season, the society continued. The direction of the choir was discussed again in 1996 when due to the running costs the November and February concerts were cancelled.

In 2000 the Union celebrated 75 years with a grand concert at the Young People's Institute in George Street followed by a buffet supper, but despite some newcomers to the society, overall numbers continued to decrease. Following a change in rehearsal venue to Bricknell Avenue in autumn 2005, numbers dwindled even more. At the 2006 Annual General Meeting there was an open forum to discuss the future of the West Hull Ladies' Musical Union and a debate as to whether to continue as a musical union or a choir. The decision was made to continue as a choir.

When the secretary, Mrs Sue Rowe resigned in June 2006, Mrs Jean Ward Skerrow who had been a member of the union for 60 years and held the office of President for three terms; 1972-1975, 1985-1986 and from 1995 onwards, also decided the time had come to resign. Together they had battled to keep the union together for many years but it was clear that the lack of members and a president to take over meant that the society could no longer continue. The final meeting was held on the 4th September 2006 at the home of Mrs Ann Spur and after 81 years of operation the final concert took place at The Lees Rest Houses in Hull in November 2006.

Custodial History: The records were deposited by Valerie Skerrow, a member of the choir for 60 years and their President for three terms; 1972-1975, 1985-1986 and 1995-2006.

Description: Includes minutes of meetings, photographs and programmes

Extent: 2 boxes

Access Conditions: Access will be granted to any accredited reader

C DSWH/1	Minutes of meetings & annual reports 6 volumes, 1 bundle	16 Nov 1925- 4 Sep 2006
C DSWH/1/1	Minutes of meetings 1 volume	16 Nov 1925- 29 Apr 1935
C DSWH/1/2	Minutes of meetings 1 volume	9 Sep 1935- 28 Apr 1958
C DSWH/1/3	Minutes of meetings 1 volume	19 May 1958- 2 Mar 1967
C DSWH/1/4	Minutes of meetings 1 volume	1 May 1967- 10 Apr 1975
C DSWH/1/5	Minutes of meetings 1 volume	13 May 1975- 27 Jan 1986
C DSWH/1/6	Minutes of meetings 1 volume	14 Jun 1986- 25 May 1994

C DSWH/1/7	Minutes of meetings 1 bundle	27 May 1994- 4 Sep 2006
C DSWH/2	Items relating to members 1 volume, 1 bundle	1927-1994
C DSWH/2/1	Members Register Includes a typewritten history of the Union from inception to 1952 1 volume	1927-1938
C DSWH/2/2	Member's Cards Members card for each session detailing the officers, the syllabus of concerts and any other events taking place during the year. Includes 1948-1949; 1974-1975; 1983-1985; 1985-1986; 1992-1994 1 bundle/7 items	1948-1994
C DSWH/3	West Hull Ladies' Musical Union Concert Programmes 3 bundles	1949-1994
C DSWH/3/1	Concert Programmes Programmes for concerts held on 21 Apr 1949; 3 Nov 1949; 8 Dec 1949; 26 Oct 1954; session 1977; 8 Mar 1984; 10 May 1984; 6 Dec 1984; 7 Mar 1985; 25 Apr 1985 1 bundle/11 items	1949-1985
C DSWH/3/2	Concert Programmes Programmes for concerts held on 10 Oct 1985; 12 Dec 1985; 6 Mar 1986; 24 Apr 1986 (includes a ticket to the concert) 1 bundle/7 items	1985-1986
C DSWH/3/3	Concert Programmes Programmes for concerts held on 10 Oct 1991; 2 Dec 1991; 27 Feb 1992; 23 Apr 1992; 11 Jul 1992; 2 Dec 1992; 22 Apr 1993; 10 Jul 1993; 14 Oct 1993; 1 Dec 1993; 21 Apr 1994 1 bundle	1991-1994

C DSWH/4	Concert Photographs 1 volume	1928-1964
C DSWH/4/1	Concert Photographs Scrapbook containing photographs of the members of the Union at concerts, suppers and dances, outings, and presentations made to individual members including Mrs Winifred Ashton, Mrs C G Newlove and Mrs T H Prince. Some individuals are named. Includes a number of newspaper cuttings to accompany the photographs. The majority of the photographs are copyright of the Hull Daily Mail. 1 volume	1928-1963