

CHOIR NEWS FEBRUARY 2015 – LATIN AMERICAN ISSUE



This month's Choir News takes us on a detour from the usual tales of singing and ecclesiastical affairs, following instead one of our intrepid tenors on a climbing expedition to Central and South America. Derek (Stone) prefers to call it an "expedition" because if he called it a holiday his wife Cathy (who remained behind during the 8 week trip) would make him do the housework for the rest of his life. He very kindly ghost wrote this for me, can't you tell.....

Derek also took the rather drastic step of resigning from his job first. If that does not scream "mid-life crisis" I don't know what does. But at least he had the good sense to take his older brother and guitar with him. One to provide a steadying influence in case mountain fever got the better of him and the other to help him in case he fell on hard times and had to resort to busking to pay for his return ticket (there is good money to be made in exchange for agreeing not to sing and play your guitar in public).

I understand that the main aim was to climb the highest mountains in Mexico and Argentina and the highest volcanoes in both North and South America. As his fellow tenors can report, Derek does like things to be just right and every list has to be completed and ticked off (I have been ticked off by Derek a few times but that is a different story). In this case his list included Pico de Orizaba (Mexico), Ojos del Salado (Chile/Argentina) and Aconcagua (Argentina). None of them are particularly technical climbs (although crampons and an ice-axe are required), but the altitude and weather make them even tougher than a rehearsal with Cynthia (*Mike's note: I doubt it!*)

All went well in Mexico as Derek hit the high notes on the "practice" mountains and soared to a top "A" on Orizaba. At 18,500 feet it can get ropery on the glacier, but the chords were pitch perfect. South America was tougher. The wind blew hard and Derek had to brace himself to avoid falling flat (a common problem among the tenors). The air is dry and dusty as it whistles across the Atacama Desert, parching throat and cracking skin. Fortunately Derek had a plentiful supply of beauty products to counter the worst ravages of the storm, and finally made it to the top of Ojos del Salado (22,650 feet) on 3rd December.

Aconcagua was not to be so easily tamed, as the wind gusted to 80 miles per hour and the temperatures dropped below -40c. Jeff always says "more air, more air" but this was ridiculous. Beaten by the storm, our tenor retreated to Easter Island for some R&R before returning the UK in time for Christmas. Aconcagua will have to wait – in any case that mountain is only 200 feet higher than Ojos and, for a tenor searching for the right note, 200 feet is close enough.

(Mike's second note: goodness me, how do I follow that?)

THE BLEDLOW 100 CLUB

By the time this edition of Messenger hits the streets, the 2015 100 Club will be in full flow. Details of members, winners and a limitless supply of application forms will be found on the parish website.

The winner of our December draw was Gerald Fowler, another of our tenors

More news next month

Mike Beattie

Tenor, promoter of the Bledlow 100 Club and scribe

10 January 2015