



**LIBERTY CHOIR UK**

**UNLOCKING HEARTS THROUGH SONG**



Cover image, Richie - dealing with the loneliness and isolation of life after prison; this page: Richie surrounded by his friends and alternative family in MJ's Community Choirs where he has been singing every week since his release in the Autumn of 2014

# LIBERTY CHOIR SAVES LIVES AND MAKES YOUR LIFE SAFER



## THE STORY SO FAR

ON APRIL 1ST 2014, fifteen women and men – who had travelled from Brighton and all over London – entered Wandsworth Prison to join 20 prisoners in a small chapel of the Trinity Wing, a new wing for prisoners who are about to be released into the community, and launched the first chapter of the Liberty Choir. It's hard to say who was more excited, as well as apprehensive – the singers from MJ's community choirs, outside, or the men inside.

A few of us had gone into the wing the previous week and handed out leaflets and encouraged the guys – while they were queueing to pick up their dinners to take into their cells – to just come along to the chapel and hear MJ, the music director, have a sing and we would tell them all about the Liberty Choir: how it wasn't a religious group, how we sang everything from Jessie J and Bob Marley to gospel and swing and Vivaldi, and we promised they would like it all. And, you know – given where they were – why not give it a go?

Well, they did give it a go, and how. Since then this Liberty Choir programme has just gone from strength to strength. We are entering our fifth year in HMP Wandsworth – what we call the Mothership – which is acknowledged as one of the most challenging and largest prisons in Europe.

*"Liberty Choir is now entering its fifth year in the Trinity Wing of HMP Wandsworth and it is considered to be one of the most successful volunteer programmes at the prison,"*

JEANNE BRYANT, GOVERNOR HMP WANDSWORTH

We are in direct contact with over 40 of our Liberty Choir graduates; men who sang with us inside prison and are now back in society. Some of the ex-offenders sing regularly in our four community choirs on the outside. Others come to special concerts and events. Some just keep in touch on social media or by phone – letting us know they are okay and showing appreciation for the work we did with them in prison.

Some of our singers had been in prison on numerous occasions but have not been since their involvement in Liberty Choir. One singer was what is known as a "revolving door prisoner". At the age of 54, he had never experienced more than two consecutive Christmases out of prison. From the age of 19, when he was first imprisoned, he had only lived out of prison for five years – sporadically – in his whole adult life. Since becoming a member of Liberty Choir, he sings in both of MJ's London community choirs regularly, participates in the concerts and festivals and, at the time of publication, has now celebrated four consecutive Christmas festivities.

As former Wandsworth Governor, Ian Bickers, says:

*"In the criminal justice system, we consider that each prisoner who does not reoffend has a positive impact on at least 100 people in the community."*

Every year, we have a Friends and Family concert - attended by the relations and friends of the imprisoned singers, as well as of the volunteers – and our graduates come back into prison (which takes some ▶

## WINSTON CHURCHILL

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S FAMOUS HOUSE OF COMMONS SPEECH,  
GIVEN AS HOME SECRETARY, JULY 20, 1910 IS THE CLEAREST  
POSSIBLE CONDEMNATION OF PUNITIVE, AS OPPOSED TO  
REHABILITATIVE, IMPRISONMENT:

**“THE MOOD AND TEMPER OF THE PUBLIC IN REGARD TO THE TREATMENT OF CRIME AND CRIMINALS IS ONE OF THE MOST UNFAILING TESTS OF THE CIVILISATION OF ANY COUNTRY. A CALM AND DISPASSIONATE RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE ACCUSED AGAINST THE STATE, AND EVEN OF CONVICTED CRIMINALS AGAINST THE STATE, A CONSTANT HEART-SEARCHING BY ALL CHARGED WITH THE DUTY OF PUNISHMENT, A DESIRE AND EAGERNESS TO REHABILITATE IN THE WORLD OF INDUSTRY ALL THOSE WHO HAVE PAID THEIR DUES IN THE HARD COINAGE OF PUNISHMENT, TIRELESS EFFORTS TOWARDS THE DISCOVERY OF CURATIVE AND REGENERATING PROCESSES, AND AN UNFALTERING FAITH THAT THERE IS A TREASURE, IF YOU CAN ONLY FIND IT, IN THE HEART OF EVERY MAN - THESE ARE THE SYMBOLS WHICH IN THE TREATMENT OF CRIME AND CRIMINALS MARK AND MEASURE THE STORED-UP STRENGTH OF A NATION, AND ARE THE SIGN AND PROOF OF THE LIVING VIRTUE IN IT.”**

spirit) and share their experiences and stories of hope with the Liberty men.

*“The whole concert was a demonstration of what can be achieved with time, care, work and belief - elements which one imagines have been in short supply for much of those prisoners’ lives. Every prison should have a choir - and more concerts please.”*

SANDRA PARSONS, LITERARY EDITOR, DAILY MAIL  
(FRIENDS AND FAMILY CONCERT, SEPTEMBER 2017)

In 2015, the Liberty Choir (members of our HMP Wandsworth graduates alongside the volunteers from MJ’s community choirs) sang the chorus on the title track single from David Gilmour’s bestselling solo album, Rattle that Lock. The choir was part of an extensive publicity campaign both in the UK and abroad.

In 2017, we became a charity. Our patrons are David Gilmour and Cherie Blair. Our board includes the editor of Britain’s most left-leaning national newspaper, The Observer, and a member of the Conservative government’s cabinet, Michael Gove, previously a radically reforming Minister of Justice. Our team of advisors, includes a member of the House of Lords – Baroness Anna Healy, committed to prison reform – as well as a senior prison officer and an ex-offender, and the editor of the US Guardian.

In an innovative and creative way, Liberty Choir addresses the age-old challenge of re-offending. The practical support that the Choir gives to ex-offenders leads to better outcomes for all involved as well as a very significant saving for the tax payer.

The Liberty Choir model is one which can be replicated across the prison system and has the potential to grow into one of the country’s leading prison reform charities. The prison system is under considerable strain at the moment and in Liberty Choir, we have a practical, effective and economically attractive approach which reduces re-offending.

It provides a joyful social benefit to prisoners and ex-inmates and in doing so aids in the rehabilitation of people who are often very vulnerable. Not only that, the Liberty Choir is also beneficial to the non-inmates who take part: by providing a social experience to those who would otherwise never see the inside of a prison, it breaks down social barriers in both directions and benefits the whole of society.

More than a hundred community choir singers have participated in the Liberty Choir programme.

They come from as far away as Brighton and Hastings and commit to eight weeks of weekly travel and the two-hour rehearsal sessions. Their increased understanding of prison conditions and the lives of prisoners has been a worthwhile education. More than 300 prisoners have participated in the Liberty Choir programme to date.

Liberty Choir is on the move! We are now embedded in two new prisons, HMP High Down and HMP Downview, our first women’s prison. We are entering our fifth year of weekly rehearsals at HMP Wandsworth. We aim to be in two more prisons shortly.

Our big ambition is to have a Liberty Choir in every prison in the UK, with a network of community choirs which prison graduates could join to support them in their journey towards rehabilitation. It is in everyone’s interest to support initiatives that are proven to reduce reoffending. Liberty Choir sows the seeds of recovery within prisons – and helps to stave off despair that is leading to record figures of self-harm and suicide – and nurtures hope which can flourish when the graduates re-enter society.

It’s a fun, purposeful activity which changes lives. Please will you help us to grow?

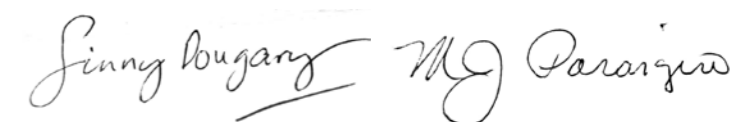
We sign off with a recent letter from one of our singers in the community:

My name is Roy. I was a prisoner in Wandsworth about a year and a half ago. I joined the choir on Tuesday nights – probably one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. It’s given me a complete new outlook on life. Since being released from prison I have continued going to the choir and have changed my lifestyle. I now attend Narcotics Anonymous and have been clean of all mind-altering substances, have sung with David Gilmour’s new album and have performed at a lot of fantastic gigs and have been part of something new and exciting. This experience for me is totally alien to anything I’ve ever been involved with before. I’ve been in care and in prisons throughout my life. I’m now 51 years old and I can honestly say I’ve changed and this has helped me beyond the words I am incapable of putting in this letter. The choir give up their time to try to make that connection that most people in our society either don’t or don’t get the opportunity to try to help people like myself. It’s amazing.

I just wish this was available to me at an earlier age.

Yours sincerely,

Roy



**DAVID GILMOUR**  
PATRON OF LIBERTY CHOIR, SINCE 2016

“WHAT’S REALLY EXCITING ABOUT THIS TO ME IS THE IDEA OF THE COMMUNITY THAT IS CREATED INSIDE PRISON BEING TRANSFERRED TO A COMMUNITY OUTSIDE THE PRISON. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN RELEASED WILL – THROUGH MUSIC AND SINGING – BE JOINED TOGETHER WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, AND OTHER EX-PRISONERS, IN AN EXTERNAL COMMUNITY WHICH HELPS THEM FIND THEIR WAY BACK INTO SOCIETY .....AND IN A WAY THAT IS PROBABLY BETTER THAN THEY EVER HAD BEFORE.”



David Gilmour and MJ Paranzino conducting the Liberty Choir for the title single on David’s bestselling solo album: *Rattle that Lock*, 2015, Church of the Holy Spirit, Clapham. PHOTOGRAPHER: BEN MUELLER-BROWN



**“BEFORE LIBERTY CHOIR,  
I WAS A REVOLVING DOOR  
PRISONER. NOW I HAVE A  
ROOF OVER MY HEAD, A JOB  
AND I SING EVERY WEEK.  
I AM LEARNING HOW TO  
USE A COMPUTER. IT IS NO  
EXAGGERATION TO SAY THAT  
LIBERTY CHOIR HAS  
SAVED MY LIFE.”**

**RICHE**

**SELF-HARM REACHED  
A RECORD HIGH OF  
41,103 INCIDENTS  
IN THE 12 MONTHS  
TO JUNE 2017, UP 12  
PER CENT FROM THE  
PREVIOUS YEAR**

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, 2018

**“LIBERTY CHOIR IS VALUABLE – TO  
INMATES, EX-INMATES, NON-INMATES,  
FUTURE INMATES, TO SOCIETY IN  
GENERAL. IT GIVES HOPE...IT IS THE  
MOST WONDERFUL THING. I HOPE THE  
MOVEMENT GROWS AND GROWS.”**

**ROBERT BATHURST,  
ACTOR**

**“LIBERTY CHOIR GIVES YOU THE SENSE OF  
WHO YOU CAN BE AND OFFERS HOPE THAT  
YOU CAN BE SOMETHING BETTER.”**

**PRISONER, HMP WANDSWORTH,  
EVALUATION REPORT,  
FEBRUARY 2017**

**“BEING HERE WITH YOU GUYS HAS BEEN  
MY HOPE. WITH MUSIC, YOU GIVE US AN  
OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH OUR  
SOULS. I BELIEVE THROUGH MUSIC,  
WE CAN ACHIEVE CHANGE.”**

**HMP WANDSWORTH,  
LIBERTY CHOIR SINGER,  
SEPTEMBER 2017**



**“I WAS LOST BUT NOW I’M  
FOUND. LIBERTY CHOIR GIVES  
ME A STRUCTURE AND A  
WHOLE NEW WAY OF LIFE AND  
FRIENDSHIP. I’VE PERFORMED  
IN AMAZING PLACES AND  
ENJOY THE WEEKLY  
REHEARSALS. IT’S EXCITING  
BUT ALSO HEALTHY  
AND FULFILLING.”**

**FRANCIS**





**“THE LIBERTY CHOIR BEGAN AS A  
LOVING AND SAFE SPACE AT THE  
MOST DESPERATE AND FEARFUL  
TIME OF MY LIFE. IT THEN  
DEVELOPED INTO A COMMUNITY  
BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE  
THE PRISON THAT UNLOCKED  
CREATIVITY WITHIN ME. LIBERTY  
CHOIR HAS MADE ME A DIFFERENT  
PERSON AND I HAVE RETURNED TO  
MY FAMILY A BETTER MAN.”**

**ROSS**

**IT COSTS  
£35,371 TO  
IMPRISON  
SOMEONE  
FOR A YEAR**

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, 2018

**SAVINGS TO THE TAX  
PAYER BECAUSE OF LIBERTY  
CHOIR TO DATE:  
MORE THAN TWO MILLION  
POUNDS AND RISING WITH  
EACH NEW PRISON**

**LIBERTY CHOIR'S MISSION,  
VISION AND VALUES**

**THE LIBERTY CHOIR VISION IS THAT  
THE REOFFENDING RATES AMONG  
EX-OFFENDERS CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY  
REDUCED THROUGH A NETWORK OF  
CHOIRS LOCATED WITHIN PRISONS AND  
THE COMMUNITY. WE BELIEVE THAT THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CASE FOR  
THE CHOIRS IS OVERWHELMING.**

**OUR MISSION IS THAT BY 2020, THE  
LIBERTY CHOIR WILL BE DELIVERED  
ACROSS A MINIMUM OF 8 PRISONS ALONG  
WITH A "THROUGH THE GATE"  
ARTS PROGRAMME WHICH WILL BE  
RECOGNISED AS A MAJOR FACTOR IN  
REDUCING REOFFENDING.**

**THE LIBERTY CHOIR PROGRAMME  
WAS HIGHLY COMMENDED  
IN THE NHS-FUNDED MENTAL  
HEALTH AWARDS, 2014\***



**“LIBERTY CHOIR HELPED ME TO STAY CONNECTED TO MY HUSBAND DURING A VERY DARK TIME. WHEN THE CHILDREN FELT SO SAD AND FEARFUL FOR THEIR DAD, HIS MUSIC WAS ALWAYS OUR RELIABLE HAPPY PLACE TO GET HIM AND ALL OF OUR FAMILY FEELING POSITIVE. KNOWING MY HUSBAND WAS SAFE FOR TWO HOURS A WEEK, KEPT ME GOING AND WAITING FOR HIM WHEN HE GOT OUT.”**

**VICKY, WIFE OF ROSS**



**“WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN  
PRISON, YOU HAVE HIT ROCK  
BOTTOM AND YET FROM THE  
DEPTHS OF DESPAIR LIBERTY  
CHOIR CREATES PROFOUND  
CHANGE, CONFIDENCE AND  
TRUST THROUGH MUSIC.”**

**ED**

## LIBERTY CHOIR BOARD AND STAFF



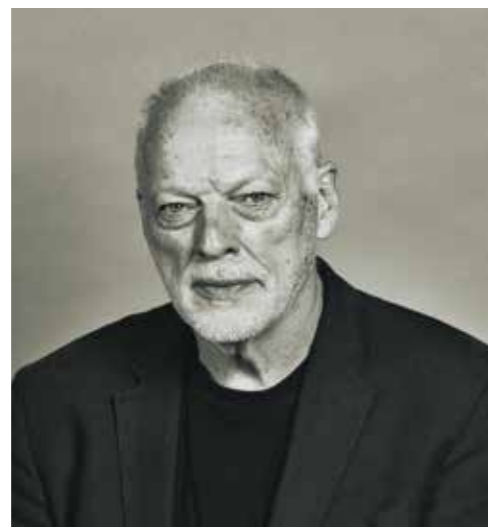
**GINNY DOUGARY**  
CO-FOUNDER  
OF THE LIBERTY  
CHOIR

Ginny Dougary is an award-winning journalist best known for her interviews with the great and the good. She worked for The Times for several decades and her work has appeared all over the world. She now writes freelance for a variety of newspapers and magazines. Her role is to develop and extend the Liberty Choir programme, lobby, publicise, create opportunities and be an advocate for the prisoners and the Liberty Choir.  
[www.ginnydougary.co.uk](http://www.ginnydougary.co.uk)



**MJ PARANZINO**  
CO-FOUNDER OF THE  
LIBERTY CHOIR

MJ Paranzino is the director of four community choirs – Brighton City Singers, South London Choir, West London Choir, and Hastings Town Singers. She is also an entertainer, composer and arranger who has been leading vocal workshops in the UK and the USA for twenty years. She is passionate about singing and how it is a force for all that is positive in life. MJ's Choirs are non-auditioning choirs, with over 300 members. The choirs sing all styles of music, from Mozart, gospel to rock. She music directs Liberty Choir, creates the music programme, and is responsible for auditioning and training new musical directors and accompanists needed to staff the choirs as we extend into an increasing number of prisons.  
[mjparanzino.co.uk](http://mjparanzino.co.uk)



**DAVID GILMOUR**  
PATRON

David Gilmour CBE, guitarist, vocalist and songwriter with Pink Floyd, and a renowned solo artist, has been a Patron of the Liberty Choir since July 2016; he was introduced to the Choir, by his son Charlie. David's single, Rattle That Lock, featured the Liberty Choir. David and his wife Polly Samson, continue their support through the DG Charitable Trust. "I have been into prison and seen the joy the Choir brings to the prisoners and I have also met the guys singing in MJ's community choirs when they come out of prison. Now it is exciting to see it enter more prisons - which will mean more hope for prisoners and more hope for society when they come out."



**CHERIE BLAIR**  
PATRON

Cherie Blair CBE, QC, is a leading international lawyer, campaigner for women's rights and the wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Cherie is the Founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and Founder and Chair of Omnia Strategy LLP, a pioneering international law firm. Cherie has joined founding Patron, David Gilmour, to become a Patron of the Liberty Choir. "I am delighted to be a Patron of Liberty Choir. I have visited many prisons and believe in giving prisoners the opportunity for meaningful rehabilitation. Choirs offer a great sense of community and support. Liberty Choir is a wonderful combination of the two."



**MICHAEL GOVE**  
BOARD MEMBER

Michael is the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He first became interested in prison reform when he was Education Secretary under David Cameron. As Justice Secretary he was convinced that the criminal justice system should be about helping people to lead better lives in the future rather than judging them forever on what they might have done in the past.



**SHEILA JONES**  
BOARD MEMBER

Sheila Jones is a psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapist. She has over 20 years experience in the profession and is committed to working with people suffering from mental health problems. Sheila works in the NHS, a professional training organisation and also has a small private practice.



**MAHNAZ MALIK**  
BOARD MEMBER

Mahnaz is an award-winning barrister and author. She practices international law at 20 Essex Street Chambers. She established the British Pakistan Law Council Advocate Programme in partnership with the Law Society through a network of pro bono lawyers which helped over 300 children in detention in Pakistan, and is currently working to empower young women in Lyari - one of South Asia's largest slums - by training them as boxers.



**ALEX ROBERTS**  
LIBERTY TEAM

Alex has played, as a clarinetist, in the Philharmonia Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. He has also worked as accompanist and musical director throughout Australia and the UK. Alex has been involved with Liberty Choir from the start, and is now responsible for directing many sessions as well as training and embedding new staff in the programme.



**PAUL WEBSTER**  
BOARD MEMBER

Paul Webster was appointed Editor of The Observer in April 2018. Prior to that he held the post of Deputy Editor since 1996. Previously he was Foreign Editor and Home Editor on The Guardian and Business News Chief Sub Editor at The Sunday Times.



**EMMA PARSONS**  
LIBERTY TEAM

Emma has been working in business development and design in the charity sector for over 20 years and uses this experience to inform Liberty Choir progress and expansion. She has just completed a Foundation in Art and Design and intends to combine her part-time role as Liberty Choir's project managing consultant with working as a fine artist.

### ADVISORY TEAM

**PRISON REFORM**  
*Anna, Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill*  
A campaigns and communications expert she now devotes her parliamentary work to prison reform and is delighted to help Liberty Choir in their mission to bring hope and inspiration to prisoners and their families.

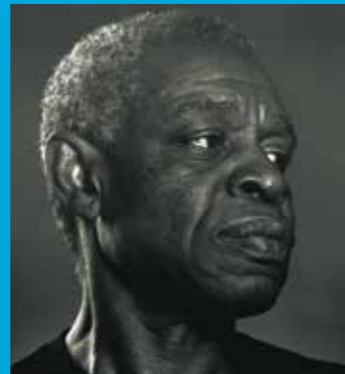
*David Wood*  
David has been a prison officer for 27 years at HMP Wandsworth. His current position is Custodial Manager and he is responsible for a wing and 26 staff.

*Ross Bell*  
Ross is a graduate of the first Liberty Choir programme in April 2014, in HMP Wandsworth. He was released from HMP Standford Hill in February 2018. Ross joined The King's Regiment as an officer, after university in Cardiff and RMA Sandhurst. His last operational tour of Iraq was in 2003 and led to a long period of Adjustment Disorder upon leaving the Army in 2005. This in turn led to a series of disastrous decisions culminating in being part of a massive Missing Trader Fraud for which he was convicted to 8 years imprisonment in February 2014. He is now dedicated to helping the Liberty Choir.

### INTERNATIONAL TEAM

*John Mulholland*  
Former trustee of Liberty Choir, when he was Editor of The Observer (2008-2018), John is now US Editor of The Guardian - based in New York. He will be assisting Liberty Choir with introductions to American philanthropists, with the support of Trevor Phillips, and feeling out possibilities for a future US expansion of Liberty Choir.

## YOU CAN DONATE



Supported by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



## THANK YOU

WIMBLEDON FOUNDATION COMMUNITY FUND, THE MORPURGO'S, KOESTLER TRUST, HASTINGS VOLUNTARY ACTION, BEN LANE AND THE ARTS COUNCIL, ROGER DIXON, SHEM LAW AND RADIO TIMES, ANDY GEORGE OF HEARTS & MINDS WHO VERY GENEROUSLY LET US USE HIS PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO FOR SEVERAL SHOTS (W1STUDIOS.CO; HELLO@W1STUDIOS.CO), TAYLOR BLOXHAM (WWW.TAYLORBLOXHAM.CO.UK) WHO KINDLY DONATED THE PRINTING FOR THIS BROCHURE, CAZ ROBERTS, JOHN MULHOLLAND (WITHOUT WHOM THIS BROCHURE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE), MARK HARRISON, GILL MORGAN, THE BOARD OF LIBERTY CHOIR, SALLY HILL, JEANNE BRYANT, ROBIN ELDRIDGE, LOUISE SPENCER, IAN BICKERS, KENNY BROWN, ROSS, VICKY, RICHIE, ED, FRANCIS, THE VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS OF MJ'S COMMUNITY CHOIRS, AND DAVID AND POLLY, ALWAYS.

### BROCHURE TEAM:

EDITOR GINNY DOUGARY

ART DIRECTOR CAZ ROBERTS

PHOTOGRAPHER MARK HARRISON

PRODUCTION EMMA PARSONS

### OUTSTANDING SUPPORTERS:

GREGORY NASMYTH AND SAMANTHA ROWE-BEDDOE; DAVID KOWITZ AND SARAH GORMAN KOWITZ

**MAJOR FOUNDING SUPPORTERS:** POLLY SAMSON AND DAVID GILMOUR, PETE TOWNSHEND, ROGER DALTRY  
**FOUNDING SUPPORTERS:** IAN HISLOP, DAVID SUCHET CBE AND SHEILA SUCHET, BARONESS KINGSMILL CBE, GARY MULGREW, ED LAW, VICKY BELL, FAMILY AND FRIENDS **FOUNDING FRIENDS:** DR CHRISTINE PICKARD, DAVID BOWEN, SIR NICHOLAS UNDERHILL, GINO CHIAPPETTA, RAVENSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL  
**CONTINUING MAJOR SUPPORTERS:** DAVID GILMOUR AND POLLY SAMSON; ROGER DALTRY; PETE TOWNSHEND; IAN HISLOP **CONTINUING FRIENDS:** JOSEPHINE FAIRLEY AND CRAIG SAMS

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO ORGANISED OR PARTICIPATED IN A COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER ON BEHALF OF LIBERTY CHOIR: MJ'S COMMUNITY CHOIRS' CAROL SINGERS, JOHN BRINKLOW AND SARAH SKELTON FOR CHRISTMAS CARDS, SINGSWELL CHOIR, BATTERSEA CHORAL (ST THOMAS') THE SHIRLEY TAPPERS AND HOT FOOT TAPPERS, SALLY GIBBONS' COLLEAGUES

**SPECIAL THANKS** TO FORMER MANAGING CHAPLAIN HMP WANDSWORTH TIM BRYAN AND ED VAIZEY, FOR BELIEVING IN, AND HELPING US REALISE, THE VISION OF OUR LIBERTY CHOIR PROGRAMME

YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION THROUGH OUR WEBSITE: [WWW.LIBERTYCHOIR.ORG](http://WWW.LIBERTYCHOIR.ORG)

LIBERTY CHOIR UK REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1173799

REGISTERED OFFICE: JACKSON HALL, PORTLAND PLACE, HASTINGS, EAST SUSSEX TN34 1QN

[WWW.LIBERTYCHOIR.ORG](http://WWW.LIBERTYCHOIR.ORG)

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