

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 1974

By Norman Martin, Registrar
& Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Thursday January 17th

Tabernacle Chapel, Skewen

With the first engagement of the year in Skewen, the Choir gave the first public performance of *Arouse Ye*. This corresponded with the use, for the first time of the music stand donated by Mrs Danny Davies, in memory of her husband. Soloists were soprano Mrs Weaver and contralto Mrs Williams.

FEBRUARY

Thursday February 14th

University Hospital, Cardiff

In the concert at the University Hospital, Cardiff for the Haemophilia Society, the *March of the Holy Grail* was performed publicly for the first time. The Scottish group, which consisted of *The Isle of Mull*, *The Old Woman* and *The Dashing White Sergeant* was sung to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Sir Hugh Robertson.

Sunday February 18th

At the Annual General Meeting, under the new system whereby a person can only be Chairman for a period of one year, Haydn Erasmus (Chairman for the last seven years) vacated the Chair for the oncoming Chairman Robert Griffiths. William Jones was elected Vice-Chairman.

Saturday February 23rd

Albert Hall, Nottingham

A splendid weekend was spent in Nottingham. Under the auspices of John Player & Son, the Choir gave a concert in the Albert Hall. This was a first-class hall for performance and the audience, numbering 1,700, was most appreciative. *In Taberna* was performed for the first time. Jenny made an impressive entrance in her flowing new dress. The Choir was booked into the Albany Hotel, one of the best in Nottingham and all the food and refreshments were free to the choristers. Rupert Hull (1B) had his initial concert appearance and 400 miles were travelled in fulfilling the engagement.

MARCH

Saturday March 2nd

Sophia Gardens, Cardiff

The Choir's third appearance at Sophie Gardens Pavilion was with the Black Dyke Band (Conductor Ron Newsome) on the occasion of the Excelsior Festival of Music. The Choir appeared in 1970 and 1972 when the brass band contests held, but this time no contest took place. The BBC recorded the concert and it was broadcast at a later date.

Thursday March 7th

Hebron Chapel, Ton Pentre

The Choir gave assistance to another local organisation with a concert in Hebron. The proceeds were in aid of Ton Pentre Football Club's Floodlight Fund. The floodlights

helped the club to win the Welsh League Premier Division Championships. Guest of honour for the concert as the newly elected MP for Rhondda, Alec Jones. Soloists for the evening were elocutionist Herbert Jones and Sam Griffiths.

Saturday March 9th

Another enjoyable social evening was spent by choristers, wives and friends in the Penrhys Community Centre at a Spring Dance.

Thursday March 21st

Central Methodist Church, Blackwood

This was the final concert organised by the Bedwellty Urban District Council. The committee was formed in 1961 and the Choir had been engaged five times to appear – 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1974. With the new County Council organisation coming into force on April 1st, Bedwellty will cease to exist.

APRIL

Monday April 4th

Dolman Theatre, Newport

Organised by the Newport Music Club, the soloists were Sam Griffiths, mezzo-soprano Anne Smith and accompanist May Parry.

Friday April 12th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The ninth consecutive concert with the Parc & Dare Band (conductor Ieuan Morgan). It was also the fifty consecutive appearance of guest speaker Alec Jones MP and he was congratulated on his recent appointment to the government post.

Thursday April 18th

At the AGM the choristers unanimously endorsed the recommendation from the Life Membership Committee that Sam Griffiths be made a Life Member of the Treorchy Male Choir.

Saturday April 20th

Albert Hall, Llandrindod Wells

The concert marked the return of the Choir following a period of 15 years. The proceeds were in aid of the British Heart Foundation and during the evening John Cynan Jones presented the lucky winners of the raffle with a Choir record autographed by him. This was the one concert where the second tenors really went down well – the stage collapsed beneath them!

MAY

Saturday May 11th

Mowlem Theatre, Swanage

After a five year break the Choir returned to Swanage. A very pleasant weekend was spent by choristers and some of their wives. Vince Knight (1T0) and Mansel Evans (2B) made their first concert appearance and the Choir travel a total of 305 miles to fulfil this engagement. Soloists for the evening were Sam Griffiths and Herbert Jones.

Thursday May 16th

A very pleasant ceremony took place at the rehearsal room when the Chairman, Robert Griffiths, presented his brother, Sam Griffiths, with his Life Membership Certificate. The Conductor and Secretary spoke of the sincerity and loyalty of Sam and congratulated him on his Life Membership.

Thursday May 23rd

Workmen's Hall, Ferndale

The Choir gave the last in a series of concerts celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Founding of Pendyrus Male Choir. Glyn Jones, Conductor of Pendyrus, presented John Cynan Jones with a baton and Morley Morris, Chairman of Pendyrus, presented Robert Griffiths with a celebration plaque. The Master of Ceremonies was former Welsh rugby captain and current BBC Sports Editor Cliff Morgan.

Friday May 24th

Mr John Cynan Jones and his wife Mary attended the Pendyrus Male Choir Golden Jubilee Banquet in the City Hall, Cardiff.

JUNE

Thursday June 6th

St Peter's Church, Pentre

After 15 years the Choir returned to St Peter's Church with a concert with the Cory Band (conductor Major Arthur Kenney). The timing of the concert, although accidental, was opportune as it coincided with the release of the record "Cwm Rhondda" which featured the band and the Choir.

Friday June 7th

Six choristers from each part of the Choir assisted John Haydn Davies with a television broadcast of a programme on the "Golden Age of Tonic Solfa" which took place in Salem Chapel vestry, Cwmparc.

Saturday June 16th

William Brookes School, Much Wenlock

Once again the Choir broke into pastures new with a first visit to Much Wenlock in Shropshire. Arriving on a sunny afternoon, the Choir was entertained to a splendid tea, complete with pastries and trifle! After food many of the choristers spent a pleasant hour watching a local cricket match in glorious sunshine. On completion of the concert held in the school hall, with soloists Sam Griffiths and Harry Price, a convivial evening was spent in the company of members and wives of the Much Wenlock Choir in the Legion Hall.

JULY

Thursday July 4th

Llantwit Major Comprehensive School

Tonight's concert was in aid of those dedicated volunteers who patrol the sea shore during the summer in readiness to assist anyone in danger. The Llantwit Major

Lifeguards also organised the concert, which featured soloists Sam Griffiths and Herbert Jones. During the evening the most appropriate *Michael Row Your Boat Ashore* was sung for the first time. Jennifer also used her new piano stool for the first time!

Sunday July 14th

An official photograph of the Choir, in colour, was taken on the steps of St Peter's Church, Pentre. John Haydn Davies (Conductor Emeritus) and Cliff Taylor (President) were present. After taking the picture a very pleasant ceremony took place. In appreciation of long and faithful service W.J. "Donna" Griffiths, Secretary for the last 22 years and Gwyn Williams, Treasurer for the last 13 years were presented each with a suitable inscribed briefcase. To crown an eventful day the Choir appeared on television in the evening in a repeat showing of "Glory Glory".

AUGUST

Thursday August 29th

At tonight's rehearsal the Choir was involved in a fascinating experiment. The recording engineers of EMI brought recording equipment to the rehearsal room and asked choristers to fill in a questionnaire on the quality of a sound recording of the Choir singing The Huntsmen's Chorus on two different tapes. Of the results 60% chose the expensive tape and 40% chose the EMI tape!

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday September 3rd

At tonight's rehearsal, John Cynan announced that Jenny had been appointed as the harpist with the Mid Glamorgan Youth Orchestra.

Saturday September 21st

Recreational Centre, Bridgend

Coinciding with the Choir's first appearance in the new Recreational Centre, was the first performance of *The Villager's Chorus* from the "Bartered Bride" by Smetana. Two choristers (Selwyn Croudace and Neville Blandford) made their first appearance on stage with the Choir. The printed programme was the first to use the new photograph of the Choir. During the concert a very unusual incident took place. While singing the quiet passage of *Michael Row The Boat Ashore*, a downpour of rain made such a noise on the roof of the hall that the conductor stopped the Choir singing. After the rain stopped and before the singing restarted, John Cynan Jones wittingly remarked that was the first time that "rain stopped singing". Also joining the Choir on stage was the Parc & Dare Band, (Conductor Ieuan Morgan) and the concert was organised as part of the "Bridgend 74" festivities.

Saturday September 28th

Assembly Rooms, Bath

The Choir made its first appearance in the glorious Georgian city of Bath with an engagement in the splendid Assembly Rooms. The concert was organised by the Silver Ring Choir (Conductor Kelvin Thomas), with whom Treorchy undertook an exchange broadcast in September 196. Both Choirs performed at the concert and

soloist was Herbert Jones. At tea in the Manver's Road Church the Choir was welcomed by Mr Thomas. Present at the concert was the Mayor and Mayoress of Bath, and after the concert a pleasant time was spent by members of both Choirs in the Octagonal Room.

OCTOBER

Thursday October 1st

An interesting visitor appeared at tonight's rehearsal. He was Mr H.A.Madden, Deputy Conductor of the Dunedin Male Choir. He expressed his pleasure at being in the rehearsal as the Treorchy Male Choir was famous in New Zealand. He presented John Cynan Jones with the Royal Dunedin badge and a good luck token. Three items were sung by the Choir, *Michael Row Your Boat Ashore*, *Llanfair* and *Myfanwy*, which were recorded by Mr Madden to be taken back to New Zealand and played to his Choir.

Thursday October 10th

Grammar School, Newbridge

Organised by Newbridge RFC and featuring soloists Sam Griffiths and Herbert Jones, the concert was interesting on several accounts. It was the first visit by the Choir to Newbridge and to the chorister's surprise, the first performance of *The Crusader's Chorus* from I Lombardi. Throughout the country another important engagement was taking place – the General Election!

Tuesday October 15th

Once again another interesting visitor came to the rehearsal room, Michael Edelson of West 72nd Street in New York. He is a musician and writer who was writing featured articles for a popular American magazine about Wales, its customs and its people. One of his features was on the Choir and during the rehearsal he took photographs. *Battle Hymn of the Republic* was sung for him

Saturday October 26th

Princes Theatre, Clacton

An excellent weekend was spent on the Choir's first visit to Clacton-on-Sea. This was due to no small measure to John Cynan Jones who in spite of a sad bereavement in his family travelled up to conduct the Choir. The choristers were booked into two hotels, The Esplanade and The Geisha, situated on the seafront. The welcome afforded the choristers was very warm and the hospitality of the hotels was first class. The concert, organised by the Clacton & District Welsh Society and featured Sam Griffiths and Herbert Jones. A "sell out" evening, the reaction of the audience left the choristers in no doubt on the excellence of the performance. After the concert the choristers and organisers spent a convivial evening in the Esplanade Hotel, where the liquid refreshments were free.

NOVEMBER

Saturday November 2nd

Greenfield Church, Llanelli

At the concert it was pleasing to see the return of Chairman Robert Griffiths following his illness. A coincidence in this concert as that in the last concert here on Saturday 9th

December 1972, the Choir number and the audience number was practically the same. Tonight there was one more person in the Choir – and twenty less in the audience! The evening was another success, organised by the Greenfield Baptist Men's Movement and featured soloists Sam Griffiths and Herbert Jones.

Sunday November 17th

Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

Once again the Choir was privileged to travel to the Brangwyn Hall in Swansea to make another L.P. record for the EMI company under the watchful ear of Bob Barratt. The organist was David Bell. Ninety two choristers, together with several new members spent the day in the hall, with a break for foot, making the record containing eleven songs. Named "The Crusaders", it was due for release in Easter 1975.

Friday 22nd

The Choir held a dance in the British Legion Club, Pentre, where an enjoyable time was had by all.

Saturday November 30th

City Hall, Sheffield

The Choir sallied forth for a visit to Sheffield in Brewer's buses – one of them in service for the first time! To enable the choristers to see the Barbarians vs The All Blacks match, a bus of fifty two choristers started at 8am, and made the journey non-stop to Sheffield by 1pm. The two other buses left later and took a more leisurely speed. For the second time the concert was held in the City Hall to a capacity audience and where the Choir made contact with the first-class Brighouse & Rastrick Band. They shared a most successful evening with us and the concert was compered, in his usual inimitable manner, by Cliff Morgan of the BBC. The engagement, organised by the Independent Order of Foresters in aid of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, resulted in a donation of £1,000 from concert sales.

DECEMBER

Sunday December 1st

On the way home from Sheffield the mixed company buses stopped for lunch in Daventry, which is famous for its radio transmissions. A total of 460 miles was travelled in fulfilling this engagement.

Thursday December 15th

Central Hall, Tonypany

The last concert of the year was with our old friends of the Parc & Dare Band (Conductor Ieuan Morgan) at Tonypany. The proceeds were in aid of the Danybryn Cheshire Home in Radyr, and the Lord Lieutenant of Glamorgan, Sir Cennydd Traherne, was presented with a cheque for £500 during the concert. The Mayor of Rhondda was also present and with an appreciative audience the year's engagements programme ended on a pleasing note.

Over the festive season the "Carolling Christmas Choristers" spent a few evenings singing carols in aid of charity. They collected £105 for the Rhondda Handicapped Children Appeal. This magnificent sum was a credit to the choristers and the general public.