

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 1978

By Norman Martin
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

January

Tuesday January 3rd

At the first rehearsal of 1978 congratulations were expressed to Haydn Erasmus, Life Member, Past Chairman and Committeeman of the First Bass Section on his award of the British Empire Medal in the Queen's New Year's Honours List. The Secretary expounded the excellent qualities of Haydn and the choristers applauded.

Thursday January 5th

The liaison between Mike Sammes, EMI and the Choir continues. At tonight's rehearsal the choristers were issued with the latest arrangement by Mr Sammes, which was commissioned by EMI. The arrangements was of the Lennon and McCartney song "Yesterday" which is for the sole use of the Choir.

Tuesday January 17th

With reference to the previous comments, tonight's rehearsal saw the issue of "Climb Every Mountain" under the same set of conditions.

Thursday January 19th

Abercynon Sports Centre

With the first engagement of 1978 the Choir made their first appearance at the Abercynon Sports Centre. Appearing with the Choir were the Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School Band, thus making it a real "Treorchy" night". The concert organised by and he proceeds were for the Spina Bifida Group of Pontypridd and Abercynon. This was the third concert given to this group by the Choir. The weather was not kind, as snow and ice made conditions most unpleasant, but despite this hardship 300 people attended the concert. The guest compere was Johnny Steward, and with the band playing so well, indeed they got, and fully deserved a standing ovation, this was a fine start to the year's concert programme.

Saturday January 23rd

City Hall, Cardiff

The Choir paid a return visit to Cardiff City Hall after a period of seven years. The concert was organised and promoted to help raise funds for the Ysgol y Wayn a'r Cylch – Cardiff's Welsh medium school. The Master of Ceremonies was the BBC TV personality David Parry Jones and the programme had a photograph of the Choir taken on the steps of Blenheim Palace, and this was the first time the vast majority of the choristers had seen it. With a capacity audience and 92 choristers staging it was a very good concert. Unfortunately it was announced on the bus that Herbert Jones had been involved in a car accident and was in hospital. It was announced in the rehearsal on Tuesday that he was home but was still in some pain.

February

Thursday February 9th

Capel-y-Ton, Tonyrefail

The Choir paid its first visit to Capel y Ton in Tonyrefail with a concert organised by the Tonyrefail Cancer Committee. The Choir gave their first performance of "The Robber's Chorus". Proceeds were in aid of the Cancer Research Fund.

Thursday February 16th

Central Methodist Church, Blackwood

The last time – March 1974 - the Choir appeared in the Central Methodist Church in Blackwood, it was under the auspices of the Bedwellty Council. This being the last engagement under this council. Tonight's concert was the first by the Choir under the new Islwyn Borough Council, again in the same church. This was the sixth visit to Blackwood. Owing to wintry conditions only 200 people were present, but they proved to be a very appreciative audience. This appreciation contributed in making the concert a very enjoyable one.

Sunday February 19th

For the first time the Annual General Meeting of the Choir had to be postponed. The reason for this being the Siberian-type weather. A blizzard lasting several hours on Saturday night devastated the district. Snow drifts two to three metres high, impassable roads, abandoned cars and people stranded was the aftermath of this unusual severe weather conditions.

Saturday February 25th

Walsall Town Hall

The Choir journeyed for the first time to Walsall for a weekend engagement. On arrival the Choir was greeted by a colourful banner stretched across the main street advertising the concert. The concert was held in the Town Hall, a fine building both acoustical and decorative. After a seating rehearsal food was served – sausage, egg and chips – then the members made their way to the Crest Motel, which proved to be an excellent accommodation. With a capacity audience of 1,166, and a most appreciative one, made the Choir answer in no uncertain musical terms. It must have been an inspiring first engagement for Edward Owen 2T. The trip was organised by the Independent Order of Foresters, and the proceeds were in aid of the RNLI and £1,000 cheque was presented to the fund during the interval. With a splendid 'get-together' after the concert in the motel, the Choir spent a most enjoyable weekend in Walsall.

March

Wednesday March 1st

Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

After a long absence the Choir made a sound broadcast. This was from the Brangwyn Hall in Swansea where a St David's Day Concert was held, the artists appearing were Merril Drower (soprano), Osian Ellis (harp), Cor Merched Mynydd Mawr, Tregellys Williams (organist). The concert was broadcast on BBC Radio Wales from 8pm to 10pm with a 10 minute break for the news. With 86 choristers staging, a good turnout considering it was a Wednesday night and the buses left Treorchy at 5.30pm and an audience of 1,000, the broadcast was an enjoyable one.

Sunday March 5th

The postponed Annual General Meeting as held today, with the weather a complete contrast to a fortnight ago. It was a warm Sunday! Mr Dan Williams 2B was inaugurated as Chairman of the Choir and Mr Edward Williams 1B was voted as Vice Chairman. Mr Mike Gale 1T was presented with his 21 years Long Service certificate.

Saturday March 11th

Tregib Comprehensive School, Llandeilo

The Choir paid its first visit to Llandeilo with a concert in Tregib Comprehensive School, with the proceeds in aid of the Llandeilo Eisteddfod. It was not a successful engagement as the school's main hall was small and acoustically poor, together with an audience which were to say the least, polite. This combination proved to be depressing to some of the choristers and the majority of the Choir did not enjoy the evening. This was most unfortunate for David Thomas 1T making his first concert appearance.

Thursday March 16th

United Reform Church, Porth

Once again the Choir was privileged to assist another Choir in their celebrations. This occurred with a concert in the United Reform Church, Porth when Cor Meibion Morlais invited the Choir to participate in their Golden Jubilee Year Celebrations. During the interval the Chairman of Morlais presented John Cynan Jones with a book depicting the 50 years of Cor Morlais. With 93 choristers staging the concert engendered the bon homme felt between the two choirs.

Friday March 24th

Park & Dare, Treorchy

Tonight's concert was the 13th Annual Concert with the Parc and Dare Band. As usual it was a sell-out and the Choir staged the greatest number of choristers, at least since 1963 with 102 members on stage. "Climb Every Mountain" and "Diolch I'r Ior" were performed for the first time by the Choir. Thus the same line up of Choir, band, Alex Jones MP, provided another successful engagement.

April

Tuesday April 4th

The journey into the field of popular music continued tonight when the latest arrangement by Mike Sammes of "Blowin in the Wind" was given its first rehearsal by the Choir.

Friday April 17th

The Choir lost another founder member when Mr David Jenkins, the Choir's first treasurer, died today. Several choristers travelled to Swindon to attend his funeral on Friday April 24th.

Saturday April 15th

Secondary School, Lampeter

After a period of 20 years the Choir returned to Lampeter with a concert in the Secondary School. The school hall was not the best place to sing in, but with an enthusiastic audience it proved to be a successful one. With the tenors at floor level and immediately in front of the audience, John Cynan Jones moved the audience – not musically – but physically – when he requested them to pick up their seats and move five metres back! This move he assured them would ensure a better appreciation of the Choir's singing. Phillip Wall 1B made his first concert appearance, with Herbert Jones returning to his solo spot after his car accident. Proceeds were in aid of the Swansea Branch of Cancer Research and during the interval a cheque of £400 was

presented to Mr John Peel, Branch Chairman. This gentleman proved to be a most interesting personality. He was over 80 years old and dressed in a blazer with the badge of the Royal Flying Corp and matching tie. He was one of the original flying corp members and was reputed to have been engaged in aerial combat with the famous Red Barron.

Thursday April 27th

Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad

The Choir was honoured again to sing in the presence of royalty. This was the celebrity concert postponed last April and took place in the Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad in the presence of HRH Princess Alexandra (cousin to the Queen). This proved to be a splendid concert with 103 choristers staging, Patricia O'Neill (soprano) and the Mid Glamorgan Youth Brass Band. It was a complete sell-out with the proceeds in aid of the Queen's Silver Jubilee Appeal Fund. The Princess requested the Choir to sing "Myfanwy" and at the end of the concert, the Choir spontaneously began singing "We'll Keep A Welcome" and the audience joined in. The Princess stood and listened to his with obvious pleasure. After the concert the Princess made a royal walk-about and spoke to make choristers and band members. She won the respect and admiration for her charming, friendly and gracious manner during the walk-about.

Saturday April 29th

Albert Hall, Nottingham

The Choir made its fourth weekend visit to Nottingham, under the auspices of John Player Ltd. A total of 88 choristers staged in the Albert Hall and with the usual large audience the concert was again successful, the programme included "The Three Bells" which was performed for the first time by the Choir. The soloist was Wyn Davies 1T. The get-together in the Savoy Hotel proved to be as happy and enjoyable as ever.

May

Saturday May 13th

St Nicholas Church, Newbury

With a concert in St Nicholas Church the Choir paid its first visit to Newbury. After a three-hour journey and a meal in the United Reform Church Hall, the Choir started the concert in this magnificent parish church, both structurally and acoustically. It was built 450 years ago and every window in the main building was of stained glass and there were 31 windows. With a "full house", an appreciative audience and the artists, accompanists and conductor being introduced before and after the concert, the presentation of a bouquet of flowers to Jenny, the visit was a most enjoyable one. "Moab" was given its first performance by the Choir and the other two hymns were conducted by Jenny with John Cynan Jones at the organ. The proceeds of the concert were for Christian Aid.

Thursday May 18th

Holton Road Baptist Church, Barry

The Choir has given their services to a very large number of charities and charitable causes, particularly for the upkeep of religious buildings. Tonight's concert in the Holton Road Baptist Church was different in as much as the proceeds were in aid of keeping the church itself open and available to the churchgoers in Barry. The money

from the concert were for a fund to purchase the freehold of the church thus ensuring that it would not be demolished. The concert was a successful one because although the church was not full, because of a local bus, the tickets had been sold. Sitting in the audience was Edward Jones ex 1B whose family had brought him there from a clinic in Penarth and when the conductor announced that “Moab” was to be sung especially for him, he was visibly overcome. A touching moment indeed.

June

Saturday June 10th

Town Hall, High Wycombe

The Choir made its first appearance in High Wycombe with a concert in the Town Hall. They left Treorchy at 2pm and arrived at High Wycombe at 5.30pm and after re-arranging the staging at the Town Hall and a short rehearsal, tea was served in the Salvation Army Citadel; salad, sweet, tea with a welcome from the Deputy Mayor. The hall was not a very good place for singing and with the arc lights it became uncomfortably warm. Despite this the “full house” audience enjoyed it. A small silver bowl was presented to John Cynan Jones in appreciation of the efforts of the Choir in raising funds for the worthy Torchbearers Youth Club.

Sunday June 25th

Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

It was record making time again when the Choir visited the Brangwyn Hall to cut another LP for EMI Company. The case was the same, recording team, organist, Choir, but with the added attraction of Mary Davies, soprano with the Welch Opera Company. The Choir accompanied her in three songs. Although it was the World Cup Final Day in Argentina, 99 choristers were present. Dennis Wells 1B made his first engagement appearance and the following items were given their first performance by the Choir – “Let Us Break Bread Together”, “Blowin in the Wind”, “Lord of the Dance”, “Yesterday” and “Y Nefoedd”.

July

Saturday July 1st

Civic Hall, Bedworth

After a period of 12 years the Choir revisited Bedworth with an engagement in the Civic Hall. This hall, a comparatively new building, proved to be one of the best the Choir has sung in. This together with a most appreciative capacity audience, made the concert a very enjoyable one. The Choir left Treorchy at 1.30pm and arrived at 5pm and after a seating arrangement, tea, an appetising salad, was served in the hall. The concert started at 7.30pm and finished at 9.30pm when the Choir were applauded as they left the stage. During the interval John Cynan Jones, Jenny, Donna, Sam and Wyn were introduced to, and entertained by the Mayor of Bedworth. The early bus left at 10.10pm and returned to the Rhondda at 1am. No doubt the late buses made and cemented new friendships in the ‘get-together’ in the hall’s refreshment room.

Thursday July 20th

The Choir was honoured and privileged to appear in the Welsh Arts Council’s brochure. To facilitate this, a photographer roamed the ranks of the choristers during

rehearsal, taking many shots from many angles as the Conductor put them through their musical paces.

September

Saturday September 9th

University Hall, Cardiff

Although the Choir has paid numerous visits to Cardiff, it was their first visit to the University Hall, Cardiff with a concert organised by the Boys' Brigade. The Choir last appeared with the brigade 17 years ago with a concert in Wood Street Chapel. The Choir was arranged in the stage so that the back two rows had difficulty in seeing the Conductor and in fact this was noted by the Chairman, and at the end of the first half he asked the two rows to stand up so that the audience could see them. This situation was rectified for the second half by moving some of the Choir to ground floor level to the appreciation of the audience of 1,200. The Choir gave their first performance in public of "Let Us Break Bread Together" and as Wyn was unable to attend, the ever faithful Sam shouldered the burden of soloist work with the Choir giving extra items. At the end of the concert, bouquets were presented to Jenny and Mary Cynan Jones and a Boys Brigade tie and cuff links to John Cynan Jones and the Choir received a standing ovation.

Saturday September 23rd

Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool

Once again the Choir grazed in pastures new when it made its first visit to Liverpool for a weekend engagement where it wore the new dress suits for the first time. The concert was held in the acoustically splendid Philharmonic Hall and was organised by the Liverpool Welsh Society. The programme included "Lord of the Dance" which was receiving its first public performance and David Rosser 1B was making his first concert appearance. With such a splendid hall, a capacity audience of 1,700, the engagement proved to be a successful one. The hotels, The Bradford and The Feathers, were to say the most, adequate and it was unfortunate Bob Griffiths was unable to find his record case, containing 30 records, before returning home.

Saturday September 30th

Noddfa Chapel, Treorchy

After a period of 14 years, the Doncaster Wheatsheaf Girls Choir paid a return visit to Treorchy. The only remaining members of the Choir's last visit was Mr and Mrs John Barker, the Conductor and Accompanist. The venue was the same, Noddfa Chapel, and the Choir thrilled the audience with some fine, bright singing. This together with the Treorchy Choir's different style of singing made for a first-class concert. The Chairman was John Davies MBE and the girls were welcomed by the Mayor Rugus Ashman and Alex Jones MP. The Choir arrived two hours late, so after a civic lunch in the RAFA Club and a seating rehearsal in Noddfa, the girls were paired off to their hosts. Sunday afternoon in the Treorchy rehearsal room saw the gathering of guests and hosts and after a parting song from the girls choir, the presentation of a plaque, bearing the Welsh National Anthem, and the latest record "Climb Every Mountain" given to Mr Barker, the coach started its journey back to Doncaster.

October

Saturday October 14th

Secondary School, Bishop's Cleeve

The song, "The Three Bells", from the latest record "Climb Every Mountain" was played on the Tony Brandon Show this morning. This was a fine start to the day as later the Choir paid a return to Bishop's Cleeve. The arrangements were the same as last time with a concert in the excellent school hall, followed by supper in the splendid Hotel Be La Bere. The proceeds were in aid of the Parents Teacher Association.

Friday October 20th

Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad

For the first time the Choir gave a joint concert with the Mid Rhondda Brass Band. It was held in Rhondda Sports Centre with the proceeds of £224 for the band. The Mayor was present and with an audience of 600 the concert was an enjoyable one.

Saturday October 28th

Launceston, Cornwall

The Choir paid a weekend visit to Launceston, Cornwall. Leaving Treorchy at 8.30am they were met near the end of their destination at 1pm. There the Choir first met the organiser Wilfred Cox, a bank manager, but soon they were left in no doubt of the efficiency and capability of this man. Some choristers took their wives and these together with the Choir were entertained to lunch in a local factory canteen. This was graced by the present of the Mayor of Launceston and after lunch he officially welcomed the Choir.

Then it was on to Launceston, to the hotels of the White Hat and Eagle and to private billets. That evening the Choir was transported to Plymouth to give a concert in the Guild Hall and a buffet tea was available in the National Westminster Bank – a typically delicious Cornish tea!

The concert commenced at 7.15pm in the splendid Guild Hall and with the young musicians of the area, Y Diliau as the artists and a capacity audience of 900 the concert was an enjoyable event. After the concert the Choir returned to Launceston, where they had food in the Town Hall. When they finished the chicken salad and sweet they gave a short informal concert of "Cyfri'r Geifr" and "Myfanwy", conducted by John Cynan Jones,

On Sunday morning a trip to Bodmin Moor was arranged and a short but pleasant time was spent in the famous Jamaica Inn, where tea and coffee was provided for the complete party. On returning to Launceston the choristers were billeted out for Sunday dinner to the people of the area, to return for a seating arrangement in the Methodist Church.

The concert commenced at 3pm with the same artists except Diane Fuge (soprano) from West Wales in place of Y Diliau, and with a full house of 600 again it was an enjoyable concert. During the concert where the effervescent Mr Cox was in Plymouth was the Master of Ceremonies, presentation by him were made to each artist and to Jenny – a blue plate – to Donna – a book – to John Cynan – a mounted

map of Cornwall and to John Davies MBE – who with his wife was attending the weekend as special guests, a book and a miniature brass miner's lamp. Mr Davis conducted the hymn "Cwm Rhondda" sung by the Choir and the audience.

After the concert a buffet was provided in the church schoolroom, where the choristers said goodbye to their new-found friends and boarded the buses for the journey home. The proceeds of the concert were donated to several worthy charities and £75 was donated to the Leukaemia Research Fund in South Wales.

November

Thursday November 9th

Trinity Methodist Church, Penarth

The Choir made a triumphant return to Penarth after a period of 18 years, with a splendid concert in the Trinity Methodist Church. As the Choir arrived a queue was already outside waiting in the hope of some tickets being returned – quite a compliment to the Choir. The church was a fine building with a capacity audience of 650 who were warm and friendly. Sam and Wyn were in fine voice and the Choir responded well to this convivial atmosphere. The proceeds of £375 were in aid of the Penarth Branch of the Salvation Army. As always when the Choir performs near Armistice Day, poppies were worn.

Saturday November 18th

Town Hall, Dudley

The Choir paid a return visit to Dudley with a concert in the Town Hall. The concert again proved to be a sell-out and 950 people gathered in this magnificently acoustical hall and warmly applauded each item. For the first time, after being introduced to the audience, the Choir stood to receive their applause, The concert had to re-start the item "Were You There" after a false start. The organisers were again the Rotary Club and the proceeds of £1,500 were in aid of a computerised Cardiac Monitoring System for the Burton Road Hospital. In the get together after the concert a pleasant incident occurred. With the lights dimmed, in came Mike Gale carrying a cake and John Mallin bearing a box holding 70 candles. With the Choir singing "Happy Birthday", the two placed their offerings in front of William Jones 2B. As an added surprise he was also presented with a birthday card signed by all choristers, and a suitably inscribed under pants!

Thursday November 30th

Park and Dare, Treorchy

Another honour as bestowed on the Choir during tonight's concert with the Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School Band. The concert was in aid of the band and with a full house it was indicative of the community efforts to help them as much as possible. During the concert the Chairman of the Rhondda Recognition Committee, Mr W.D.Jones, presented the Choir with the Recognition Committee Plaque for their efforts in bringing to many parts of the county the best in Rhondda's way of life. It was fitting that on the stage for the presentation was John Davies MBE.

December

Thursday December 7th

Addoldy Chapel, Glynneath

It was a trip down memory lane for the long serving choristers with an engagement in Addoldy Chapel, Glynneath. The last time the Choir appeared in Glynneath was in 1956, how time flies! The concert was in aid of the Neath Hospital Society of Friends and during the interval of cheque of £500, the proceeds from the concert, was presented to Aneurin Rees J.P.

Wednesday December 18th

In the long running programme “Desert Island Discs” introduced by Roy Plomley, the castaway was Barry John, the famous Welsh outside half. He had chosen eight records and one of these was the Choir singing “Myfanwy” and out of the eight records he chose this one to take to his island.