

# TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



## BRIEF HISTORY 1980

By Norman Martin  
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

## January

### **Tuesday January 8<sup>th</sup>**

At the first rehearsal of 1980, the first fundraising scheme of the Canadian Tour was announced. The Choir was entering the Ton Pentre AFC weekly draw whereby of all the ticket money subscribed by the Choir, 50% of it would be returned. It was expected that each would sell at least 10 tickets at 10p each.

### **Tuesday January 5<sup>th</sup>**

When Mr W.J. Griffiths made the announcement of the date of the AGM he added that he would not be seeking re-election as Secretary of the Choir. After 32 years as an official of the Choir: (1948-1952) Publicity Officer; (1952-1980) Secretary. This announcement saddened the members. Over this time Mr Griffiths has given dedicated service to the advancement of the Choir. He filled the position as Secretary with dignity and in his administration, organisation and management of the affairs of the Choir, he was an exemplar. He will be sadly missed, but fortunately he will still be a chorister and available for any advice, guidance or assistance that may be needed. At a meeting of the Choir after the rehearsal Life Membership was decided for Islwyn Morgan 1T, Norman Martin 2T, Robert Griffiths 2B and Wally Breeze 1T.

### **Thursday January 17<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Tabor, Maesteg**

The year's concert programme started with the Choir's first visit to Tabor Church, Maesteg. In the audience were 21 Argentinians who are visiting this country and came especially to hear the Choir. Huw Williams 2T was appearing for the last time before leaving the area for a new job in Cheshire.

### **Saturday January 26<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Jerusalem Chapel, Burryport**

With a concert in Jerusalem Chapel, the Choir paid its first visit to Burryport. With such famous artists as Mary Lloyd-Davies and Delme Bryn Jones, a full house of 750 people and a Choir of or 87, it was a successful concert. It was organised by the Rotary Club of Cefn Sidan.

## February

### **Tuesday February 5<sup>th</sup>**

The announcement at tonight's rehearsal were the last to be made by Mr W.J. Griffiths as Secretary of the Choir. After the announcements he thanked the choristers for their cooperation during his term of office as Secretary. The choristers applauded him and spontaneously sang "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow".

### **Thursday February 7<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Community Centre, Abercarn**

The Choir paid its first visit to Abercarn with a concert in the Community Centre. This centre was a converted chapel. The alterations made were for the needs of the community and was a fine place for singing. This concert also marked the last one organised by Mr W.J. Griffiths.

## **Sunday February 10<sup>th</sup>**

The AGM of the Choir was held today. It was the most important one for the last 28 years. The reasons for this were the election of a treasurer and the election of a secretary. Mr W.J. Griffiths explained his reasons for not seeking re-election: with the election of a new team he felt it was time to step down. He thanked the 73 choristers present, which incidentally was the greatest number in an AGM for many years. Surely a tribute to him. He vacated the secretaryship amid long and loud applause. Mr Cliburn Willis and Mr Haydn Erasmus thanked him on behalf of the choristers for his loyal and faithful service.

The officers elected were:

Chairman	Reg Davies
Vice Chairman	W.J. 'Donna' Griffiths
Secretary	Islwyn Morgan
Assistant Secretary	Mike Gale
Treasurer	John Mallin
Publicity Officer	John Davies

The rest of the officers were unopposed.

The following awards were made:

**Long Service Scrolls**            John Hopkins 1T  
   Mike Wade 2T  
   Len Gale 1B

**Life Membership**            Ben Jackson  
   Ieuan Davies  
   Edmund Evans  
   Islwyn Morgan  
   Wally Breeze

Cliburn Willis  
Roy Bobbett  
Norman Martin  
Ben Griffiths

Eiryl Wright  
David Rees  
Edward Davies

Reg Davies  
Roberts Griffiths  
Dan Williams  
Ieuan Lawrence

## **Saturday February 23<sup>rd</sup> & Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>**

### **St Matthews Church, Walsall**

The Choir paid another weekend visit to Walsall with a concert in the splendid old parish church of St Matthews. The proceeds were for the Church Restoration Appeal

and it was gratifying to see the church full of 1,400 people. Despite the cramped position of the Choir and absorbing effect of the hanging material, the concert was a happy one. Choristers stayed in the Barr Hotel, which was about half hour run from the church. On Sunday both buses returned together to the Rhondda.

### **Thursday February 28<sup>th</sup>**

#### **St David's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Cardiff**

The Choir gave another performance in a cathedral. This time it was the splendid Roman Catholic Cathedral of St David's, Cardiff. The proceeds were in support of the Parish of St Joseph in which the cathedral stands. It was a fine place for singing and with 90 choristers, 700 in the audience and despite the churches being cold, it was an enjoyable engagement.

## **March**

### **Saturday March 8<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Oxford Town Hall**

After a lapse of 29 years (1951) the Choir performed in the city of Oxford. The journey up was eventful as one of the buses had a puncture on the motorway and it was with some difficulty that the drivers, Bryan and David, repaired it. This took 1.25 hours and when the buses finally moved off it was noticed that one of them had left a piece of apparatus on the hard shoulder. To retrieve it again took time. Despite all this delay the bus arrived at Oxford Town Hall in time for the concert. The Town Hall proved to be beautifully ornate and acoustically ideal and with a capacity audience of 1,200 the concert was a satisfying one. At the end of the concert presentations were made to Jenny and Gillian (bouquets), Mr J.C. Jones, Sam Griffiths and Harry Price (ties).

After the concert the arrangements proved not to be satisfactory as the Assembly Rooms were packed with people and the choristers had difficulty in the matter of food : pre-packed lunches and they had to buy a cup of tea at 10p. The bar was so crowded that many members went out to the local pub for a drink. Despite this many new friendships were made and old ones renewed. The buses left the Town Hall at 11.45pm and arrived home at 2.30am.

### **Thursday March 13<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Saron Chapel, Ynyshir**

After a period of 26 years the Choir gave a concert in Saron Chapel, Ynyshir. Again the proceeds were in aid of another local musical organisation – the Ynyshir and Tymawr Colliery Band. It was a joint concert and it was pleasing to see such a large audience support this young band.

### **Saturday March 15<sup>th</sup>**

The Choir honoured Mr W.J. (Donna) Griffiths, the retiring Secretary of the Choir with a Presentation Dinner at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff. Mr John Davies MBE presented Mrs Tydfil Griffiths with a lead crystal vase. Among the guests were Mayor of Rhondda Mrs Annie Powell, Mr Alex Jones MP and Mr Allan Rogers, Member of the European Parliament.

### **Thursday March 20<sup>th</sup>**

Noddfa Chapel, Ynysybwl

The Choir was privileged to take part in another fundraising concert for Ynysybwl Rugby Club with a concert in Noddfa Chapel, Ynysybwl. Unfortunately Wyn Davies was taken ill so he was not present, but the ever-faithful Sam Griffiths took over the mantle of extra soloist work.

## **April**

### **Friday April 4<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy**

The same team gave their 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive Annual Good Friday Concert at the Parc & Dare Hall, Treorchy. Again it was a full house with the Choir giving their first performance of “There Were Many Babies Born” with Harry Price as soloist. John Davies, the new Publicity Officer, made his first contribution to a programme.

### **Saturday April 19<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Greathouse, Chippenham**

The Choir its fifth concert in aid of the Greathouse Cheshire Home, with a concert in the St Andrew Church, Chippenham. The engagement followed the same pattern as before – performance at the Great house with a concert on the lawn thanks to the glorious weather and an evening concert in the church. During the afternoon visit to Greathouse Mr Reg Davies, Chairman of the Choir presented Greathouse with a photograph of the Choir.

### **Thursday April 24<sup>th</sup>**

#### **St Mary’s Church, Bridgend**

With a return visit to Bridgend the Choir gave a concert in St Mary’s Church. The proceeds were in aid of the St Brides Major Scout Group, of which Geoffrey Morris 2T is a Grand Scout Leader. As Jenny was accompanying the Tenor Soloist, Mr Dewi Thomas, then Mr J.C. Jones accompanied Sam’s solos.

## **May**

### **Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>**

#### **North Shore Methodist Church, Blackpool**

It was “discovery time” again when the Choir gave its first concert in Blackpool. As it was Cup Final Arsenal vs West Ham (0-1), an early bus of choristers left for Blackpool at 7.15am. The later bus left at 10.30am. The weather was glorious and this made the journey most pleasant. In Blackpool that afternoon the famous Red Arrows flying team performed. Indeed a thrilling sight.

The concert was held in the newly decorated North Shore Methodist Church. Despite the Choir singing at “split levels”, the large audience showed their appreciation in no uncertain manner with loud and prolonged applause at the end of the concert.

On Sunday morning the members witnessed another thrilling sight – two Spitfires flew over the town and a large contingent of RAF personnel marched along the Promenade and held a service at the Cenotaph.

The buses left at 9.45am and after a break in Worcester arrived home at 5pm. It was a very pleasant first visit to Blackpool and will be remembered with joy, especially the two choristers who made their first concert appearance – Anthony Vaughan 1T and Herbert Stephens 1B.

**Thursday May 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**St Martin's Church, Caerphilly**

The Choir paid its first visit to the splendid St Martin's Church in Caerphilly with a concert in aid of the Rhydyfelin Welsh School Organ Fund. Mr J.C. Jones made his debut as organ soloist and Graham Smith 1B made his first concert appearance.

**Thursday May 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Soar Chapel, Merthyr Tydfil**

A return engagement to Soar Chapel, Merthyr after a period of seven years with a concert in aid of Hen Cwrdd Cefn Restoration Fund.

## June

**Saturday June 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Hereford Cathedral**

The Choir made an appearance in yet another cathedral. This time it was Hereford Cathedral. The concert was organised by the Cancer Research Committee and with a full house of 750 it proved to be a financial success, such that with the proceeds of other functions, the committee presented a cheque for £2,000 to Cancer Research.

As to the musical success of the concert, the standing ovation at the end showed that this was achieved in no small means. Gerald Macnally 1T was making his debut on the concert platform. After the concert a convivial evening was spent at the Farmers Club where many new friendships were made.

**Tuesday June 17<sup>th</sup>**

**New Theatre, Cardiff**

At the New Theatre, Cardiff the Choir was privileged to appear on the same programme as yet another famous television star, Lena Zavaroni. The Choir shared the first half of the programme with the popular Welsh group, Y Triban. Despite a very busy time, 86 choristers staged.

**Friday June 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Fairfield Hall, Croydon**

The Choir was again privileged to sing in one of the finest concert halls in the country when they made their first visit to Croydon to give a concert in the Fairfield Hall. This is a magnificent concert hall, seating 1,900 and for the concert 1,550 people were present. In such a fine hall and a large appreciative audience, 84 choristers present, it was a splendid engagement. To fulfil the engagement the choristers travelled 590km and had time off work. This was done so the money earned was earmarked for the Canadian Tour. The concert programme included for the first time the Choir's performance of "Dafydd y Garreg Wen" with soloist Wyn Davies.

### **Thursday June 26<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Bodringallt Chapel, Ystrad**

A place revisited after 12 years. This was the experience of the Choir when they gave a concert in Bodringallt Chapel, Ystrad. The proceeds were in aid of the Gateway Club which cares for Rhondda mentally handicapped. It was gratifying to see such a large audience (300) support such a worthy cause. Mr Alex Jones MP was the Chairman.

### **Saturday June 28<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Salvation Army Temple, Exeter**

It was weekend time again for the Choir when they made another visit to Exeter. They left Treorchy at 12.40pm, arriving after a pleasant journey at 4pm. The buses were met in Exeter motorway station by members of the Police Band, and they guided the buses to the Salvation Army Temple for a rehearsal with the Band, then downstairs for a short rehearsal before going to the buses to change ready for the concert.

The Salvation Army Temple is an acoustically fine hall and with the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary Band, a full house of 750, it was a fine concert. The proceeds were in aid of the RNLI and a £250 cheque was presented by the Deputy Chief Constable to the Fund. This was the 300<sup>th</sup> engagement to be conducted by Mr J.C. Jones.

After the concert the choristers travelled to the Police College where they were billeted. The billets being single rooms in various buildings in the grounds – Devon, Torbay and Exeter house etc. At the get-together in the canteen the Deputy Chief Constable presented to Mr Islwyn Morgan with a memento of the Choir's visit – a framed etching of Exeter Cathedral on stainless steel and suitable inscribed.

During the evening a group of Ugandan policemen being trained at the College, demonstrated their musical way of life with a song and dance item. After an excellent breakfast both buses left for home at 9.30am, arriving back at 12.15pm concluding a pleasant weekend trip.

## **July**

### **Saturday July 12<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Albert Hall, Nottingham**

The Choir paid its fifth weekend in Nottingham under the auspices of John Player & Sons. The arrangements were as previously, staying in the Savoy Hotel and the concert in the Albert Hall. This was the last concert before the summer break and after such a very busy time 78 choristers staged. Again it was gratifying to see such a large audience of 1,000 in the hall, and the choristers were unexpectedly treated to an extra musical item. After Wyn's solo items he announced that he and Sam were going to sing two duets. This was the first time they had performed as a duo and they sang the duet from "Pearlfishers" and the "Bold Chandarms" in which Jenny played an important part in the arrangement. At the end of their performance the three enjoyed rapturous applause of both audience and choristers.

## August

### Saturday August 9<sup>th</sup>

#### Navigation Colliery, Treharris

The Choir was privileged once again to appear with two of the brightest stars on television – Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett, “The Two Ronnies”, At the request of the producer of the show only a limited number of choristers (35) needed to appear. Members travelled to Treharris, where a tele-recording for the show was being made. No dress suits were required and as it needed to mime to “We’ll Keep A Welcome” to our record, no musical staff were needed. With Will Jones making his first appearance the Choir arrived in Treharris at 10am on a warm, sunny day. The choristers changed into the miner’s clothes provided by the BBC in the local Boys’ Club.

The first location was at the Deep Navigation Colliery, the second on the mountainside above the village. After this “take” at 1pm lunch was taken. This proved to be an excellent meal as the BBC hired a mobile caterer and they provided a choice of either beef stroganoff or cottage pie with required vegetables or a cold buffet – a sweet, bread and cheese, tea, coffee, squash and fresh fruit!

At 2pm it was back to the mountainside for the last ‘take’ and while waiting for the crew to set up the camera the Choir, at the request of Ronnie Barker and the rest of the TV crew, gave song of “In the Evening”. This was enjoyed so much by them that they requested that it be sung again when the other Ronnie arrived on the scene – the Choir duly obliged.

All the afternoon the Choir was miming to “We’ll Keep a Welcome”. At the end of the official take they requested a take of the choristers singing it. With John Francis 1T singing the solo part the Choir sang it. It was now 3.30pm and the Choir returned to the Boys’ Club, changed and spent a pleasant hour in the Navigation Pub, arriving home at 5.15pm.

## September

### Saturday September 6<sup>th</sup>

#### Methodist Church, Cardiff

With the first engagement after the summer holidays the Choir travelled to Cardiff to appear in the new HTV religious programme “Sing to the Lord”. This was a tele-recording in the very fine Methodist Church on Conway Road, near St Winifred’s Hospital. Dinner was taken at 1pm – chicken and ham salad, with tea at 4.30pm or tea and ginger cakes and finishing at 5.30pm. The compere was Mr Clifford Evans, the famous actor, the organist was Mr Robert Court, the Welsh Brass Consort (Conductor Mr Julian Smith). The Newtown Girls’ Choir and Carwyn James will also be on the programme when it is shown on September 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>.

### Saturday September 13<sup>th</sup>

#### Eton College Hall, Windsor

It was another ‘first’ for the Treorchy Male Choir when they made their initial debut in Windsor. The concert was held in Eton College and was organised by the Slough Society for mentally handicapped children. The Eton College Hall was a wonderfully

acoustical building and with a capacity audience of 600 the concert proved to be a very successful one, both financially and musically as £600 was raised for the fund. During the concert a splendid plaque was presented to the Choir to commemorate the occasion. For this engagement a bus full of choristers chose to stay overnight in Pirbright Army Camp where an enjoyable night was had by all. Again in appreciation of the Choir's visit to the camp a framed replica of the regimental colours was present to Mr John Davies, Publicity Officer, who was instrumental in arranging and organising the visit.

### **Friday September 26<sup>th</sup>**

A buffet dance was held in the Pentre Legion Hall for choristers, wives and friends.

## **October**

### **Thursday October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

#### **Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy**

The Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School Band and the Choir gave a pre-competition and pre-tour concert in the Parc & Dare Hall, Treorchy. The band are travelling to London on Saturday to compete in the Great Britain Youth Championships being held in the Albert Hall. County Councillor H.H. Jones, Chairman of the Board of Governors, wished every success to the band and expressed best wishes of everyone concerned in the Choir's Canadian Tour. This was wholeheartedly endorsed by Mr John Davies MBE. Mr J.C. Jones thanked the Amenities Committee for obtaining a first-class piano, which was being used for the first time. With a "full house", 94 choristers and the excellence of the band, it was a successful engagement.

### **Saturday October 4<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Worcester Cathedral**

Again the Choir had the honour and privilege to appear in a Cathedral. With their first visit to Worcester the Choir gave a concert in the magnificent Cathedral. Unfortunately Sam Griffiths was ill and unable to attend but the Choir substituted for him by singing extra items. Although the attendance of the choristers was disappointing at 78, there was a capacity audience, and the comments from some of them was one of admiration and satisfaction for the evening's performance. Owing to the stage arrangements, which necessitated the Choir going on and coming off after their items, Eilir Wright 1B had to sit down all night behind the stage. After the concert members of the late bus entertained at the Worcester Rugby Club.

### **October 18<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup>**

#### **Tour of Canada**

## **November**

### **Saturday November 8<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Gloucester Cathedral**

With the first engagement after the Canadian Tour in the magnificent Gloucester Cathedral, the Choir's number was sadly depleted. With the cold weather and the arduous Canadian Tour taking its toll on many choristers. The Cathedral was very

cold, but the 800 strong audience did not appear to take too much notice of this and showed their appreciation in no uncertain manner. The Cathedral being such a wonderfully acoustic building that, although the Choir was not up to its usual strength, 65 being present, the performance of the Choir was such that it drew favourable comments from many of the audience. The concert proceeds were in aid of the Cheltenham Multiple Sclerosis Fund.

### **Saturday November 15<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**

Tonight's first engagement in the Civic Hall, Wolverhampton proved to be a memorable one. It was organised and arranged by Mr and Mrs John Tucker, to aid the Choir in the effort to finance the Canadian Tour. Leaving Treorchy at 12.45pm and travelling via Walsall, to pick up Islwyn Morgan there, the Choir arrived at the Clevedon Arms at 4.30pm. This engagement showed the enthusiasm of at least one chorister – Alun Hughes 2B – he missed the bus, but phoned Mike Wade, who was waiting at the BBC Studio to delay the bus for about 10 mins. After which time he arrived in his Rolls Royce, parked it in the BBC ground and boarded the bus! The tea of faggots, peas and chips was served in the dining room of the Clevedon Arms, which was decorated in the style of an old Victorian Music Hall. On the table, in front of each chorister was a book of raffle tickets, 50p a book, in aid of the Foresters' Funds. After the meal Islwyn called up W.J. Griffiths to make a presentation to Mr John Tucker. John called his wife and they came forward. This proved an embarrassment to the Choir as only John was to be presented! This was done as W.J. Griffiths thanked them for their efforts and gave John a newly acquired sweat shirt emblazoned with the Choir badge and name. Before leaving the Clevedon Arms the Choir sang "Myfanwy" to the staff.

The Civic Hall was a magnificently acoustic hall with one of the most appreciative capacity audiences the Choir has performed for, it was indeed a memorable and enjoyable one. The proceeds were in aid of the Choir funds and during the concert Mr Tucker presented W.J. Griffiths with an interim payment of £2,400. Also one of the things that shows that the Choir does everything possible to ensure its good name. On the stage with John and his wife, outstepped Islwyn who presented her with a lovely bouquet of flowers. After such a most satisfying evening the Choir left for home, one bus calling at RAF Cosford, the arriving back at 2am.

### **Saturday November 22<sup>nd</sup> & Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>**

#### **City Hall, Sheffield**

The Choir paid a return visit to Sheffield with a concert in the City Hall. The engagement was organised by the Independent Order of Foresters and the proceeds were in aid of the RNLI. The coaches left Treorchy at 10am and after a break in Worcester they arrived in Sheffield in time for tea at the Co-Op Hall. The choristers were staying the weekend at three different small hotels. This was a joint concert with Desford Colliery Band with whom we performed at Leicester in the De Mountford Hall. Although there were only 62 choristers present the concert was a successful one. During it £1,000 was presented to the RNLI by the High Chief Ranger. Present at the concert was the Lord Mayor of Sheffield Coun. William Owen JP, Lady Mayoress of Sheffield Mrs Sheila Owen, Chief Constable J. H. Brownlow QPM and an audience of 1,100. Leaving Sheffield at 9.30am on Sunday morning and after a break in Worcester, the Choir arrived home at 4.30pm.

### **Saturday November 29<sup>th</sup>**

The Choir was poorer today because of the death of Mr Gwyn Hopkins 1B. Gwyn was a faithful member of the Choir since he joined in 1963. He toured Canada with the Choir and although he was not well there he missed only one concert. On returned he attended the concert at Gloucester Cathedral, where it was bitterly cold and in rehearsal on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> it was announced that Gwyn had been taken to hospital. He remained in hospital until he died.

## **December**

### **Thursday December 4<sup>th</sup>**

Today was the funeral of Gwyn Hopkins. More than 40 choristers attended the funeral at the Crematorium and “Rhys” and “Arglwydd Mae Yn Nosi” were sung. This was the final tribute to Gwyn.

### **Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Maesteg Town Hall**

The year's concert programme ended where it began – Maesteg. The concert in Maesteg Town Hall was organised by R.J. Thomas 1B. Proceeds were in aid of the Choir's Canadian Fund. Present at the Town Hall was the Mayor and Mayoress Mr Ray Powell MP and County Councillor Mr V.E. Hart Chairman of Mid Glamorgan County Council. Unfortunately Mr Alun Williams (BBC) who was supposed to be present as Master of Ceremonies was unable to attend due to him suffering from a severe cold. Despite this disappointment, with a most appreciative audience of 450, and with 84 choristers staging, it was a fitting end to the year's concert programme after a very busy time.