

# TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



## BRIEF HISTORY 1994

By Norman Martin  
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

## **JANUARY**

### **Tuesday January 18<sup>th</sup>**

The choristers were introduced to Mr Malcolm Burnell, the new assistant conductor, who took his first rehearsal of the Choir. This appointment is up until the summer break when both parties can review the situation. Thus another step was taken to secure an experienced member of the music staff, thus ensuring the future of the Choir. Once again the Choir welcomed Bruce Trinkley, the Conductor of the Pennsylvania State Glee Club and Mr Burnell offered him the baton, which he readily took and conducted "Someone's Watching Over Me". The comment from Mr Trinkley was, "It was like driving a Cadillac"!

## **FEBRUARY**

### **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February**

#### **Embassy Theatre, Skegness**

It was a vocal voyage of discovery when the Choir paid its first visit to Skegness. The buses left Treorchy at 10.15am and after getting lost finally arrived in Skegness at 5.30pm. The organiser, Peter Emmens, saw the buses in the town and waved them down, jumping on board to say the event was a "sell out", to which Phil Edmunds asked, "Can't we get in?" A rehearsal was held and then an excellent buffet was enjoyed. At this point the choristers were all introduced to Ed Fraser, the organiser of the USA Tour 1994. It was then on to the hotels, the North Parade Hotel and Royal Hotel, two neat and small family hotels.

The concert began at 7.30pm. The Embassy is the main theatre on the promenade where stars of the British entertainment world perform. During rehearsals it was obvious that a heavily curtained stage was not conducive for good acoustics. The concert, held in aid of the East Lincolnshire Arts, saw the theatre sold out for the first time in a very long time indeed. The Choir, Conductor and Accompanist were certainly conscious of the sense of an initial performance in a new venue, performed with a quality of tone, diction and pride. The result brought a most enthusiastic and tremendous response from the appreciative audience which left no doubt of the success of the performance. The Choir was "aided and abetted" by the accomplished singing of the soloist. Susan Thomson, who had appeared with the Choir previously. Two choristers will remember this night as they were introduced to the audience on their first public performance – Paul Jones and George Jacobs. Mr Ed Fraser was also introduced to the audience. Such was the enjoyment and appreciation of the audience that two encores were sung.

The concert concluded at 10pm and certainly the Choir had "won over" a new set of friends and supporters. After the performance a buffet was available and audience and choristers met in the theatre bar where new friendships were formed, a sing-song ensued to great applause. On the following morning the buses left at 9.30am with the late bus making a stop at Coventry for the afternoon. Thus ended a most successful first appearance in Skegness. Alun Davies (2B) was unable to attend the engagement – this was the first one he had missed in 14 years!

# MARCH

## Sunday March 6<sup>th</sup>

### Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy / St David's Hall, Cardiff

The choristers arrived at the Park & Dare Theatre at 10am to film a television programme with Roy Noble for his series "On The Noble Trail". The Choir staged at 11am and performed the Queen Medley. Roy thanked the men for accepting the engagement even though they had another concert this evening. Meurig Hughes (Chairman), John Mallin (Treasurer) and Dean Powell (Publicity Officer) were interviewed for the show.

At 6pm that day the choristers travelled to St David's Hall in Cardiff for a short rehearsal. They were welcomed by concert organiser Christine Steward and offered a buffet in the Green Room. A touch of class was given when each choristers had a red carnation buttonhole. The engagement was organised by the Cardiff Ladies Circle 197 and the proceeds were in aid of Bobath Cymru. There was a splendid array of talented artists, none more than Elizabeth Reid who at 13 years of age was a magnificent pianist. The evening's performance was professionally introduced by Margaret Pritchard (HTV presenter). John Jenkins conducted the Choir and the Band this evening. The large audience which contained many civic dignitaries amply showed their enjoyment of the performance. Despite the curtailment, owing to the time factor, the concert was very enjoyable, musically because of the standard of performance and satisfying as so much as raised for the worthwhile cause.

## Saturday 12 & Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March

### Grand Theatre, Blackpool

The Choir paid a return visit to Blackpool after a period of ten years. Leaving Treorchy at 10.15am and while travelling through Tonyrefail an unfortunate accident happened. Dean Powell was walking along the bus when the bus broke suddenly and Dean was thrown into the driver's window, with some considerable force. His anguish and pain he was suffering was obvious and the worry and concern on everyone's faces was displayed – not only because of the accident but because of Dean's brittle bones. The ambulance was summoned and he was taken to East Glamorgan Hospital.

The buses stopped in Worcester and reached Blackpool at 5pm. The venue was the Grand Theatre, a most pleasant place and a short rehearsal was held before travelling to the Savoy Hotel, the Choir's "digs" for the night. A buffet was served before a 7pm concert start. It was gratifying to see a full house and even the "gods" where seats had not been sold for considerable time, were all taken. The format of the concert saw the Choir sing for 40 minutes, then the Blackpool College Big Band performed 40 minutes and the Choir returned to the stage to complete the programme. In such a delightful venue, with Marion's excellent playing on a splendid piano, the par excellence playing of the big band, the Choir giving an entertaining audience and professionally controlled by John Jenkins, the enjoying of the performance was made abundantly clear by the reception from the enthusiastic audience.

The concert was organised by the Soroptomists International of Blackpool and the proceeds of £3,000 were in aid of the Royal School for the Blind, the first of its kind

in the UK which its bi-centenary recently celebrated. The concert saw two new times, “Lord God of Hosts” and “Someone’s Watching Over Me” arranged by John Jenkins. On the following morning, after a hearty breakfast the Choir headed home with one staying in Coventry for the afternoon. Dean Powell was contacted and he had six broken ribs but was feeling reasonably comfortable. Although this was bad enough, it was far less serious than members had thought.

### **Sunday March 27<sup>th</sup>**

#### **St David’s Hall, Cardiff**

The Choir travelled to Cardiff to perform in a very special engagement, the “Alun Williams Memorial Concert”. The choristers were especially pleased as Mrs Williams invited the Choir to appear and because of the long association with her husband dating back to the 1950s with the “All Together” radio programmes. The Choir also appeared with him many times on radio, television and in concerts and he made some unforgettable contributions as a guest speaker in the Choir’s Annual Dinner. They were honoured, privileged and eager to comply with the request. So much so that the Choir had booked an engagement in Blackpool on the Saturday and were prepared to travel back for this engagement, but fortunately the dates were changed and this was avoided.

The Choir arrived at the hall for 2.50pm with the usual busy set-up of rehearsal took place. The Choir rehearsed with Mr Burnell as Mr Jenkins was engaged with other commitments but would be there for the concert. The engagement started at 7.30pm and the tone and atmosphere was set by the Liberty Street Stompers Jazz Group (of which Alun was a member) playing as the audience filled into their seats and setting a happy, joyful yet reverent appreciation to his memory. The multiplicity of talented people performing were numerous. Solo singers, group singers, children and adult dances, BBC personalities and many touching, heartfelt tributes by friends and colleagues which left no doubt of the esteem in which he was held. Throughout all the tributes paid was the feeling that Alun was not merely a commentator or musician but “Mr Entertainment”. This magnificent tribute to this memory ended with the Stompers playing past 11pm as the audience left the hall. The proceeds were for a bursary to assist young people entering the world of broadcasting. It was a memorable night for Scott Morris (2B) who made his first concert appearance.

## **APRIL**

### **Friday April 1<sup>st</sup>**

#### **Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy**

At this year’s Good Friday Concert the Parc & Dare Band was conducted by Ian Holmes, the newly appointed Musical Director. It was pleasing to see Stuart Hill (1T) in the ranks as today was his grandfather’s funeral. Also Doug Firstbrook (Honorary Member) was in the audience. It was time to remember the sad loss of John Davies with a performance of “Someone’s Watching Over Me” and “Were You There” in memory of Rhyddian Hunt and Alun Hughes. Scott Morris was introduced as the youngest member and made the bouquet presentation to Marion. With the band and Choir performing well to the obvious delight of the audience, the concert was an enjoyable one. Well done to John Jenkins who introduced accompanist “Marion Roberts” and youngest member “Scott Phillips”!

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

#### **Cymmer School, Porth**

This morning choristers went to Cymmer School where Kaillin Summerhill, aged seven, made a cardboard model of the Choir. This was featured in the Rhondda Leader and organised by Dean Powell. Talk about a lack of communication – two choristers went to Cymmer Avon in Port Talbot! In the evening the Annual General Meeting was held and the new members of the Committee were: Meurig Hughes (Chairman), Gareth Evans (Vice Chairman), Colin Rogers (Librarian) and Committeemen David Powell (2T) and Ken Lewis (2B).

### **Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Victoria Hall, Hanley**

The Choir returned to one of its favourite venues in the Victoria Hall in Stoke on Trent. After a short rehearsal and tea the concert started at 7.30pm and the happy atmosphere was apparent from the outset. In such a magnificent hall and with an appreciative audience, the evening was a total success. Marion had a wonderful piano which she exploited to the full. It was a pleasure to see Mair Roberts make a welcomed return. The Choir, despite being in a “minor key” numerically, produced a quality of sound, diction and intonation, inspired by the energetic John Jenkins. Such was the enjoyment of the audience to their tremendous applause, that John led the Choir with two more encores. The concert finished at 10pm and a pleasant evening was enjoyed in the Ray Reardon Snooker Club nearby.

## **MAY**

### **Saturday May 14<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Bingham Hall, Cirencester**

Leaving Treorchy at 3pm, the Choir travelled to Cirencester for a concert in the lovely Bingham Hall. This venue is no stranger to the Choir as we have performed there several times before and know of the acoustic excellence of it. The performance of Mair Roberts, Marion and the Choir echoed this excellence, as fully displayed by the enthusiastic response from the capacity audience. The concert marked the first performance of Malcolm Burnell as a soloist and the concert was held in aid of Choir funds and organised by Brian Bates. After the interval choristers were asked to draw the raffle and Roger Morse, ever the comedian, announced them in Welsh! After the concert the buses went to Cirencester Rugby Club.

### **Thursday May 19<sup>th</sup>**

#### **St Paul's Church, Cardiff**

For the first time the Choir performed at St Paul's Church in Grangetown. The proceeds were in aid of the Salvation Army, Grangetown Corps with a capacity audience. Heather Main (soprano), Jeffrey Howard (organ) and Dean Powell singing from the raised pulpit, the concert was successful musically and financially. Unfortunately the evening was less enjoyable because of the coldness of the church!

### **Saturday May 21<sup>st</sup>**

#### **St Peter's Church, Pentre**

The Choir assisted in the efforts of Rhondda Borough Council to promote tourism in the valley by performing for visitors in St Peter's Church, There were no other artists

except Dean Powell and with John Jenkins at his “welcoming best”, the performance evoked a standing ovation.

### **Wednesday May 25<sup>th</sup>**

#### **St Peter’s Church, Pentre**

Another concert for the tourism project – but for a different party of visitors. Mr Jenkins had a disagreement with the microphone, much to the amusement of everyone! Another standing ovation.

## **JUNE**

### **Thursday June 9<sup>th</sup>**

#### **St Illtyd’s Church, Penrhiwfer**

A centenary celebration for the church was held in the Lower Rhondda Comprehensive School in Tonypany. The first half was made less enjoyable because of the warm atmosphere, but with the windows opened, the second half was more pleasant. To mark the occasion the Vice Chairman of Mid Glamorgan County Council presented a Coat of Arms plaque to Rev S. J. Bodycombe. The artist was contralto Deborah Parry Edwards, a member of the WNO, making her first appearance with the Choir.

### **Saturday June 18<sup>th</sup>**

#### **St George’s Church, Telford.**

It was exactly six years ago to the day that the Choir paid its first visit to this splendid old church situated in the most pleasant surroundings. The concert was sold out months ago and together with husband and wife singers Sue and Michael Rawlings and Martin Brooks, it was a complete success. The Choir enjoyed a buffet in the nearby cricket club where new friendships were made. It was a concert Eddie Owen (2T) will remember as it was his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday and he was introduced to the audience.

## **JULY**

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

The S4C cameras were in the school yard to film the Choir singing “Cwm Rhondda”. This will be broadcast in November in a programme marking the anniversary of the Nationalisation of the Coal Industry. After passing of the Bill some members of Parliament went arm-in-arm down the corridors of the House of Commons singing this hymn.

### **Saturday July 16<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Anvil, Basingstoke**

Paying its first visit to Basingstoke, the Choir performed at The Anvil Theatre. This is a purpose built venue with a striking modern design and was opened in May 1994. The building comprises of a 1,400 seater auditorium and the excellence of acoustics puts it in the first rank of concert halls. A rehearsal took place with the Hampshire Youth County Band on arrival, under the direction of Leighton Rich. The concert began at 7pm and Treorchy was the first Welsh Choir to appear there. This was the fourth time for this band to share the stage with the Choir. This concert saw everyone perform to the highest possible standards, ensuring the night was a complete success. Scott

Morris was introduced to the audience on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and Gareth Morgan was also introduced as this was his debut concert.

## OCTOBER

### Saturday October 1<sup>st</sup>

#### Cheltenham Town Hall

With the first concert after the summer break, the Choir returned to a favourite venue. After a short rehearsal, the concert started at 7.30pm and everyone was “on their toes” to make sure the performance was of the best possible standard for the full Town Hall audience. The concert was organised by the Lions Club and the proceeds were to help maintain a wheelchair ambulance. It was an unforgettable night for Gareth Day (2B) who was introduced to the audience on his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. Also Adrian Dix, one of the Choir’s ardent supporters, was present on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. The concert finished at 10pm and an excellent buffet was provided in the Victory Club where everyone shared in Adrian’s birthday cake!

### Thursday October 6<sup>th</sup>

#### Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Concert was a local affair as the artist was Darren Jones from Gelli. He is a very fine baritone and we will hear a lot more of him in the future. “Cwm Rhondda” was performed for visitors Harry Errington and Ken Alderson of Carlisle and after the concert a plaque was presented to Adrian on his 50<sup>th</sup> year and to commemorate his attendance at 100 concerts with his wife Val.

## NOVEMBER

### Friday November 25<sup>th</sup>

#### Cardiff International Arena

The Choir travelled to Cardiff to perform in a grand re-union dinner of the Wales and South Africa Rugby Associations. Unfortunately there was a lack of communication as the Choir was asked to have dinner there. All the choristers received was a salmon sandwich and a bottle of water! Eventually they staged at 10.30pm and performed five songs, remaining on stage during the rest of the proceedings, and bringing the night to a close at 12.25am. a disappointing engagement, but it was pleasing to see the glittering array of famous rugby stars and the excellent group of African dancers and television personalities.

### Saturday November 26<sup>th</sup>

#### Fairfield Hall, Croydon

The Choir made its ninth visit to the Fairfield Hall, arriving at 6.40pm. After the usual teas and coffees, rehearsals were held and the concert commenced at 8pm. It appears that this venue brings out the best in everyone. Mair Roberts sang better than ever. Marion played superbly, David Bell, was a sympathetic accompanist on the organ and the choristers responded magnificently to this wonderful acoustic. It was a truly warm and appreciative audience and John Jenkins certainly revelled in this atmosphere, ensuring a most successful engagement.

## **DECEMBER**

### **Saturday December 10<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Lyric Theatre, Carmarthen**

The Choir returned to Carmarthen for a concert in aid of the British Red Cross. This was the last concert organised by the Dyfed Branch as it will be amalgamated into a larger branch. The concert began at 7.30pm and despite the stage being heavily curtained, the performance brought an enthusiastic response from the capacity audience. A special night for Robert Turner who celebrated his birthday. After the presentations the concert concluded at 10pm and a pleasant hour was spent in the theatre bar.

### **Saturday December 17<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy**

The concert programme ended with the third consecutive appearance in the Rhondda Boys Club Appeal Concert. The Carol Concert was another great success with everyone joining in the festive atmosphere. A pleasant debut concert for Brian Jenkins (1T) and David Downton (1B). The Choir's contribution was well known tunes sung to Christmas carol words as arranged by John Jenkins.