

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 2000

By Norman Martin
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

FEBRUARY

Thursday February 10th

Bethlehem Chapel, Treorchy

The first engagement for the Choir in the new Millennium was in Treorchy. It was a recording of music to be played on a radio programme depicting the life of Shackleton, the famous explorer

Tuesday February 19th

The election of Committeemen took place in the rehearsal room. The results were Bryn Howells & Stuart Hill (1T); Fred O'Brien & David Powell (2T); David Downton & Alan Bowen (1B); Alun Davies & Alun Morris (2B)

MARCH

Wednesday March 1st

Tynewydd Labour Club

The St David's Day Concert in Tynewydd saw the emergence of two choristers as soloist. Firstly Dean Powell, who has sung more than 100 times as a soloist accompanied by the Choir, this was his first solo performance. Also Ray Daniels, baritone. Their performance, together with that of Rhiannon, accompanying on a superb keyboard and Andrew in a party mood, was met with a tremendous response from the appreciative audience. This was the first concert organised by the Choir's fundraising committee who must have been elated by its success.

Thursday March 2nd

The Annual General Meeting was held and the following elections took place – Chairman: Roger Morse; Vice Chairman: Bert Stephens. Also Life Membership Committee Member were elected as John Hopkins (1T); Norman Martin (2T); Haydn Erasmus (1B); Robert Griffiths (2B).

Saturday March 25th

Guildhall, Southampton

The Choir returned to the Guildhall for another splendid concert. At the rehearsals Derek Moore (1B) discovered he had forgotten his shirt, but Roger Arundell had a spare! The engagement was a carbon copy of the last one in 1999. Once again it was organised by Brian Bates in aid of the Guide Dogs for the Blind. The tremendous response from the elated audience was followed by a post-concert buffet in Southampton RFC. This time the soloist was Helen May and the evening was a success musically, financially and socially.

Friday March 31st

Gloucester Cathedral

Tonight's engagement was organised by the Rotary Club of Cheltenham North. The proceeds were for the LINC (Leukaemia and Intensive Chemotherapy) Fund. The concert centre opened in 1998 in Cheltenham General Hospital. It was pleasing to renew association with Ros Evans, who was the artists and her polished performance captivated the audience. The Choir, as the sound reverberated around this magnificent building seemed to inspire the choristers, and the combined contributions of all

involved brought a deafening response, culminating in an appreciative standing ovation from the delighted audience. A very pleasing fact was that the concert helped to contribute £7,000 to LINC.

APRIL

Tuesday April 11th

Caerphilly Castle

The Choir performed for the first time at Caerphilly Castle. The concert was held in a large hall, void of any furniture so everyone stood for the performance. The evening's entertainment was organised by Cardiff University for librarians from many countries, with a predominance from Australia and especially for them "Click Go The Shears" was sung. Despite the unusual circumstances, the generous response from the audience displayed their enjoyment of the concert. This happy evening ended with a splendid buffet and refreshments, when members of the audience and choristers mingled in the friendly atmosphere

Saturday April 15th

Maesteg Town Hall

The return visit to Maesteg was instigated by Rhys Thomas, former member and organised by The Friends of the Town Hall. The concert started at 7.30pm before a full house and with an entertaining MC and Helen May performing to her usual high standards. The Treorchy Team responded to the wonderful acoustics of the hall, the reaction of this receptive audience clearly demonstrated their enjoyment of this evening's performances.

Friday April 21st

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The public support for the Good Friday Concert in Treorchy has continued for over 35 years. Once more then attended to enjoy another tremendous evening. The Parc & Dare Band was conducted this year by Craig Roberts, a young and most impressive conductor and the band had six female players. The attendance of choristers was pleasing and the admiration and respect went to Leighton Wales who made his first concert appearance following his road accident. In the programme there was a leaflet explaining the formation of the Treorchy Male Choir Appreciation Society (by Dean Powell). The performance of both Band and Choir brought from the audience an acknowledgment of their gratification of the evening's entertainment.

Thursday April 27th

To launch Dean Powell's book "Musical Rhondda", several musical organisations and dignitaries attended the evening at Treorchy RFC. Several admirable speeches were made, and a splendid buffet and wine set the seal to this successful evening.

MAY

Saturday May 6th

Landmark Theatre, Ilfracombe

The Choir paid its first visit to Ilfracombe with a performance in the modern Landmark Theatre. With two conically shaped flat-top buildings situated on the

seafront, it was clear this venue was acoustically very fine indeed. Appearing with the Choir for the first time was a pleasing soprano named Justine Platts and her performance plainly pleased the audience. The performance of the Treorchy Team solicited a tremendous response and acclamation from the captivated audience. This fully illustrated the success of the first visit to the town and many new admirers were made. A social evening was organised by Brian Bates at the Imperial Hotel where an excellent buffet was served.

Thursday May 18th

In the rehearsal room it was down memory lane. John Cynan Jones was present and it was all do with wit Julie Andrews becoming a Dame. The South Wales Echo, ever ready for the good story, contacted the Choir as it appeared with the star in 1973. photographs were taken of John Cynan and the 19 choristers who were in that show, against the backdrop of the full Choir. Memories of that show were given by several choristers.

JUNE

Thursday June 8th

Penygraig Labour Club

With the first rehearsal in Penygraig Labour Club, the Choir continued the efforts to promote the enjoyment of music of various types of music. The sad note of the evening was that Dean Powell, billed as a soloist, was in the hall but could not perform as he had suffered a serious incident last Saturday with a fractured jaw and cheek. The friendly atmosphere, the close attention and the warm acclamation from the audience clearly displayed their enjoyment of the performance.

Saturday June 10th

Priday Place Methodist Church

The Choir returned to Doncaster after 21 years. This was in reply to the invitation to perform on the celebrations marking the 50th year of the Doncaster Wheatsheaf Singers. The long association of Treorchy and Doncaster dates back to 1963 and illustrates the friendship between the two choirs. Therefore it was a pleasure and privilege to celebrate their 50th anniversary this time. On arrival the choristers enjoyed a splendid buffet followed by rehearsals in the church and then a journey to the Campanile and Lakeside Hotels to get ready for the evening. The concert started at 7.30pm before a capacity audience and their tumultuous acclamation to the performance, rang through the church. With such a response it was abundantly clear of their enjoyment of the concert. The Treorchy Choir shield was presented to the Wheatsheaf Singers and the Choir's 50th Anniversary Plate was presented to their Musical Director, Urszula Weber. In return the Wheatsheaf Singers presented the Treorchy Choir with a commemorative plaque. The evening ended with an atmosphere of friendship, happiness and satisfaction. Unfortunately on returning to the hotels they learned of the death of John Weaver's father. He returned home by train on the Sunday morning. On the following morning the Treorchy men appeared in magnificent old St George Church, Doncaster, again with the Wheatsheaf Choir. With its resplendent stained glass windows, "Gwahoddiad" was sung for John Weaver's father and for the quick recovery of Dean Powell. Present were Her Worshipful The Mayor for Doncaster and many civic dignitaries. The service was a fitting climax to the celebrations.

Thursday June 22nd

A warm welcome was extended to the Australia Male Choir in the rehearsal room. Many friendships were renewed after the Choir's tour in November. Chairman Roger Morse presented a 50th Anniversary plate, Choir tie and tour polo shirt to the visiting Choir. A performance was given to welcome the Australian singers. After the rehearsals a most enjoyable social evening was spent in Treorchy RFC.

Saturday June 24th

Parr Hall, Warrington

The Choir made a return to Warrington once more. During the rehearsal it was pleasing to renew friendships with Cecilia Smiga who was the soloist on the North of England Tour in 1997. After a rehearsal most of the choristers attended a civic welcome in the Town Hall while 16 choristers visited St Rocco's Hospice for a guided tour and the singing of two songs, "Sanctus" and "Myfanwy" took place in the passageway for the staff. This was the third concert arranged by Mel Absolam for the hospice. The concert started at 7.30m and the soloist's performance akin to the maxim of "wine improving with age". The return of Dean Powell to his solo spot after his traumatic experience was a delight and pleasure. The Choir responded brilliantly to the excellent acoustics of the hall. The overwhelming response from the delighted audience, was undeniable confirmation of the success of the concert.

JULY

Saturday July 2nd

Queen's Hall, Barnstaple

The staging of the Choir this evening proved difficult and a short rehearsal was held. The concert commenced at 7.30pm and a heavy-laden curtain stage plus heat from the glaring spotlights, offered a challenge. Helen May and Rhiannon maintained their high standards this evening and with Andrew and the Choir aware of the problems that faced them, were delighted with the vociferous response to the concert from the audience. This was ample proof that all the problems were met and overcome.

Saturday July 22nd

Town Hall, Kidderminster

The Choir returned to Kidderminster Town Hall but on arrival found the piano was locked and no key was available to open it. So the rehearsal continued unaccompanied before the key was finally found and everything was "in tune" for the start! Although not a large hall, it is a wonderfully acoustic one and the acclaim from the captivated audience with applause, shouting and stamping of feet, showed the overwhelming display of their enjoyment of the performance of the Treorchy Team. Another victory!

SEPTEMBER

Saturday September 16th

Colston Hall, Bristol

The Choir renewed the association with an "old venue" in the Colston Hall where they last performed 17 years ago. After a short rehearsal the concert commenced with Helen May as artist. In such a wonderfully acoustic hall the thunderous applause from

the ecstatic audience left no doubt of the success of the concert. An excellent experience for the two choristers making their debut – Gareth Lawrence (1T) and Brian Thomas (2B). The concert was marked with two extremeness: “Gwahoddiad” was sung in memory of Gary Horgan’s son (no applause). “Unwaith Eto” was sung for Judy’s birthday. The engagement was organised by Brian Bates and the proceeds in aid of the RNLI.

NOVEMBER

Thursday November 2nd

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The Choir’s first performance following its tour of the West Coast of Canada and USA. The Annual Concert was held despite severe weather, widespread flooding and disrupted travelling arrangements. This had caused Saturday’s concert in Aberdare to be cancelled altogether. In the dressing room preparing for the concert, the choristers were shocked and devastated by the Chairman’s announcement of the sudden and tragic death of Gwyn Morgan’s son aged 27 years. Notwithstanding this terrible news, the choristers staged with a determination to make this concert a success. During the performance the Conductor welcomed Gary Horgan who was in the audience and wished him a speedy return to the ranks. Prior to the commenced of the second half special presentations were made. Chairman Roger Morse presented Robert Griffiths with a gold watch in recognition of his 50 years service. The Chairman expressed the Choir’s admiration and respect for his outstanding years of service. Robert replied of the great honour or receiving this award, and reminisced on some events of the past. He returned to the ranks amid warm applause. The response to the combined efforts of Helen May and the Choir left no doubt of another successful Annual Concert.

Saturday November 18th

City Temple, Cardiff

The Cardiff gave a thrilling afternoon performance at the City Temple on Westgate Street. Soloist for the concert was Justine Platts, who accompanied the Choir on their recent USA tour. This was the Choir’s first visit to this venue and was help to visitors to Wales as part of the Heart of England Heritage Campaign.

Tuesday November 23rd

Islwyn Morgan announced that owing to his health problems he would not be seeking re-election as Secretary in the AGM.

DECEMBER

Saturday December 16h

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The year finished with another appearance at the Park & Dare Theatre in aid of the Rhondda Group of Boys and Girls Club.