

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 2014

By Dean Powell
Publicity Officer & Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Saturday January 25th

Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton

The first engagement of the year saw the Choir make a return visit to Wolverhampton, but to a different venue from previously. On this occasion it was the Victorian grandeur of the Grand Theatre where a large audience eagerly awaited the Choir's arrival. Organised by Jeanne Gray and her theatre agency, the concert welcomed Simon Lovell Jones once again as Guest Conductor with Helen Roberts as Accompanist, Ros Evans as Soloist and Dean Powell as Master of Ceremonies. The warm audience welcomed the Choir onto the stage with a rousing applause and despite a change in musical director, the choristers felt confident under his baton and performed an excellent concert.

The choristers certainly rose to this challenge by concentrating on his every move and despite the occasional slight mishap, the concert went remarkably well. As always there were clearly some "firm favourites" for the crowd, particularly the Welsh choruses. Despite the initial shortcomings, the response was a thrilling ovation from the delighted crowd. As always Ros shone throughout, performing a wonderful array of songs which concluded with the hilarious "Other 12 Days of Christmas".

Following the concert the choristers were guests of Honorary Member John Tucker who invited them back to his favourite watering hole, Walsall Rugby Club. Here a delicious buffet was served and choristers enjoyed a couple of hours of laughter and song in one another's company.

FEBRUARY

Wednesday February 12th

Celtic Manor, Newport

The Choir was invited to undertake a corporate hospitality event in the prestigious Celtic Manor resort in Newport. The Choir, directed by Jeff Howard and accompanied by Helen Roberts, entertained delegates of a conference taking place in the resort throughout the week. They were all part of healthcare professions Abbott Nutrition, who produce a whole range of nutrition products for hospitals around the world. Based in Berkshire, the delegates were clearly overjoyed with the thirty-minute performance, interspersed by introductions by Dean Powell and including the first public performance of "You Make Me Feel So Young". Following the performance the choristers retired to an ante-room for a buffet and refreshments.

Saturday February 15th

St Mary's Church, Bridgend

It was an honour to perform in tonight's concert at St Mary's Church Bridgend. This was the first time for the Choir to appear at this venue in a concert in aid of the Brain Tumour Charity. It was an important occasion for the Choir as the performance was held in memory of Alys Woodward, a nineteen year old girl who lost her battle with a brain tumour just last year. Alys was the granddaughter of Ceri Rees, a member of the Choir's First Tenor section. With so many of Alys' friends and family in the audience,

it was important to ensure a first-class concert. Also present were several members of other choirs, including the Morryston Orpheus and Bridgend.

Jeff Howard conducted the Choir with Helen Roberts as accompanist and Dean Powell as Master of Ceremonies. For the first time the Choir welcomed tenor soloist Kieran Carter, a Rhondda schoolteacher, to the stage and hear him perform a selection of well known show tunes. The audience was clearly impressed by the performance of the Choir although circumstances meant that staging was a problem because of the general lack of room. It had also been something of a frantic evening as the coach booked for the trip had failed to turn up and choristers were forced to find their own transport to Bridgend. However, all things considered the evening went particularly well although there was a mishap in the Choir's performance of "You Make Me Feel So Young", forcing the Conductor to re-start the performance. Following the concert, which raised over £3,000 for the charity, the Choir retired to Bridgend RFC for refreshments.

MARCH

February 28th – March 2nd

Tour of Monaco - See separate report

APRIL

Tuesday April 1st

Treorchy Comprehensive School

The ninth annual Treorchy Male Choir Junior Musician Competition took place this evening at Treorchy Comprehensive School. With guests Roy Noble and Sophie Evans, the primary school pupils shone in the competition. The Choir also performed a selection of items under the baton of Simon Lovell Jones.

Monday April 7th

Rehearsal Room, Treorchy

Following the suggestion of the Welsh Tourist Board, a Spanish television crew including Raul Fernandez and Tirma Perez visited the rehearsal room to film for a popular prime time travel show. The Spanish film crew had the ideal opportunity to not only hear the Choir perform, but also interview one of its choristers – and who better than a Spaniard? Jorge Garcia from the First Tenor section undertook the interview with the film crew, describing how wonderful it was to be a member of the Choir and the many experiences he had enjoyed within its ranks. The Choir also performed "Calon Lan" which were filmed for the forthcoming programme.

Friday April 11th

Birmingham Symphony Hall

Following several weeks of intensive rehearsals the Choir travelled to Birmingham for their first performance in the magnificent Symphony Hall. Opened in 1991 to immediate public and critical acclaim with a world class acoustics and stunning auditorium it is considered to be not only the UK's finest concert hall but also one of the best in the world. Symphony Hall presents prestigious international orchestras and plays an important role in the life of the region and is regularly used for community

events, graduation ceremonies and conferences. In all over 370,000 people attend around 320 events at Symphony Hall every year. Its 2262-seat auditorium is a model of modern concert hall design and its superb acoustics, engineered by Artec Consultants Inc, New York, are the benchmark by which new concert halls are measured. In 2001 the Hall was completed with the installation of the 6000-pipe Symphony Organ.

It was amidst great excitement that the choristers undertook the two-hour journey from Cardiff to Birmingham and were ushered through the stage door to the Symphony Hall auditorium. There to greet them was Brian Fuller, organiser of the Concert which was designed to raise funds as part of the Centenary of the International Rotarians with proceeds going towards a holiday home for disabled and elderly people in Hay on Wye.

The choristers settled into the stalls high above this magnificent auditorium and despite being slightly later than expected due to a malfunction with the coach, were offered a warm greeting by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and its conductor Anthon Ingles. Rehearsals commenced with Jeff Howard at the helm and Helen Roberts assisting on the piano. For the next hour and a half all of the relevant combined items were rehearsed and when the orchestral players left the stage the rehearsal continued solely for the Choir. Following rehearsals an hour of leisure time was enjoyed before the concert commenced.

A packed auditorium of more than 2,300 people welcomed the Treorchy Male Choir onto the stage and with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra below, received a tumultuous applause. The Choir's MC Dean Powell introduced the first half of the concert with Anthony Ingles leading the second half. The selection of orchestral items were quite breathtaking, especially "1812 Overture" and "Ride of the Valkyries". However, it was the combined items that received the loudest applause, particularly "You Raise Me Up" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic". The second half saw a "Last Night of the Proms" atmosphere with "Rule Britannia!" and "Land of Hope and Glory" along with plenty of fun-filled moments thanks to the conductor of the orchestra. The Choir's solo performance wasn't without its difficulties at times, however the audience appeared overjoyed by the quality of the singing. With a thrilling finale and anthems, the concert concluded at 10pm to a thunderous applause and ovation, leaving a very satisfied Choir and Orchestra indeed.

Tuesday April 15th

Rehearsal Room, Treorchy

It was media-time again when rehearsals were moved to a Tuesday to facilitate a BBC Radio programme. Simon Lovell Jones came to the rehearsal room where he was introduced to the crew from BBC Ulster. They are travelling the UK with three British comedians – an Irishman, Scotsman and a Welshman! The three of them met with choristers, interviewed Chairman David Bebb and Publicity Officer Dean Powell and then tried to sing in the ranks as the Choir performed "You Raise Me Up".

Friday April 18th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The 49th annual Good Friday Concert at the Park & Dare Theatre saw a large Choir combine forces with their musical comrades of the Parc & Dare Band once more

before family and friends who filled the auditorium. Jeff Howard conducted the combined Choir and Band items as well as lead the Choir itself and due to a shortage of rehearsal time errors were clearly obvious in “Tydi a Roddaist” and “Eli Jenkins Prayer” in particular. However, the Choir soon redeemed itself with a much improved second half of the concert and certainly a thrilling selection of combined items including “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “Llanfair”. It was also a pleasure to welcome onto the stage the winners of the Singer and Instrumentalist categories of this year’s Treorchy Male Choir Junior Musician of the Year Competition. The concert concluded with a combined item of “You Make Me Feel So Young”, leaving the audience duly entertained and thrilled by the upbeat finale. Despite the shortcomings of the first half, the concert was deemed another success.

Saturday April 26th
Gloucester Cathedral

For the first time in fourteen years the Choir made a welcomed return to the beautiful and awe-inspiring surroundings of Gloucester Cathedral for another concert organised by Honorary Member David Green in aid of Acorns Hospice. Transfixed by the leadership of Jeffrey Howard and assisted by the magnificent acoustics, the entire performance was faultless from the opening bars to the thrilling conclusion.

It was a pleasure to welcome Kate Woolveridge back to the stage after more than a year’s hiatus and as always she performed beautifully to the large audience of around 350 people. Similarly it was a joy to have David Geoffrey Thomas back with the Choir, thrilling the crowd with his solo item of Vidor’s Toccata from the 5th Symphony as an “opener” for the second half.

The Choir gave a truly excellent performance this evening. With such astounding acoustics, they ensured a crisp and clear performance under Jeff Howard’s direction. Many highlights shone through, particularly “Battle Hymn of the Republic”, Jeff’s new arrangement of “Calon Lan” and “Eli Jenkins’ Prayer”. Helen Roberts accompanied the Choir once again with Dean Powell as MC and Ray Daniels undertaking the solo duties in two of the items. The concert concluded with a rousing “You’ll Never Walk Alone” followed by a tremendous “Sospan Fach” which resulted in two consecutive standing ovations from a clearly delighted audience.

MAY

Saturday May 17th
Civic Hall, Bedworth

For the twentieth time the Choir performed at the Civic Hall in Bedworth with another successful concert before a large audience. The proceeds from tonight’s concert went to the Mayor of Bedworth’s Charity. Cllr Bob Copland’s charity was People in Action’s Community Garden and it was a pleasure to not only raise funds for the cause but to also welcome his daughter on stage as the soloist for the concert. Soprano Adriana Rackley gave a fine performance to her hometown audience, particularly as it will be one of her last before she moves to Canada for a year to work with her oncologist husband.

The Choir rose well to the occasion with Jeffrey Howard at the helm, accompanied by Helen Roberts. Due to illness Dean Powell will not be on stage again for some time

and therefore the duties of MC were confidently undertaken by Gareth Evans once more. The Choir performed a familiar selection of items, including the more recent new items introduced by Jeff to the repertoire. As yet the Choir and Conductor are still not 100% in harmony on stage, something that develops with time as they get used to one another. However, such shortcomings went unnoticed by the audience who rewarded them with another thrilling ovation.

Thursday May 22nd

Vale Hotel, Hensol

It was with utmost pride and pleasure that the Choir agreed to undertake this after-dinner performance at the Vale Hotel for Bob Harris and the Wooden Spoon charity. Tonight's event was entitled Rhondda Remembers: Cliff Morgan and therefore the choristers were particularly excited to participate in a tribute to one of their great rugby and broadcasting heroes. On the news of Cliff's death in August last year the Choir paid tribute to him on stage and in the Welsh media, telling stories of how closely associated the two "institutions" had been over so many years. The Choir even performed on his "This is Your Life" programme and he claimed to have wanted to give up all his caps for Wales just to conduct "The Treorchy". The friendship and mutual admiration had gone back decades and it was only fitting that Treorchy was chosen to appear in this event.

However the choristers didn't just appear as entertainment for the evening, but also as dinner guests along with several hundred other people. The occasion was filled with well known Welsh personalities from sport and news media. Phil Steele, Roy Noble and Dewi Griffiths were among those who paid tribute to the memory of Cliff. The audience was stunned by the tremendous performance of Clive Rowlands who gave a most impressive speech. The Choir sang beautifully, launching into a repertoire of well-loved Welsh favourites and left the audience applauding for more. A memorable evening indeed.

JUNE

Saturday June 7th

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

After just eighteen months the Choir returned once more to the Royal Spa Centre for another concert organised by Honorary Member Jeanne Grey. The concert hall was not as full as the previous concert but the audience was nonetheless still as appreciative. Jeffrey Howard was at the helm with Helen Roberts as accompanist, Ros Evans as soprano soloist and Gareth Evans keeping it all together as Master of Ceremonies. Once again the Choir rose to the occasion with a very good performance and far few "mishaps" than previously, illustrating how well they are coming to terms with the idiosyncrasies of a new Musical Director. The finale of "You'll Never Walk Alone" featuring Ros, certainly thrilled the audience followed by an upbeat "Sospan Fach".

Ray Daniels opened the second half of the concert by simply stepping forward and launching into "Senzenina" with tremendous effect. Chairman David Bebb also addressed the Choir and audience with news that in 2015 he will climb to the summit of Mount Machu Picchu in Peru in aid of Ty Hafan. For almost a decade the Choir has supported the children's hospice in Sully with fundraising events and Christmas Carol

Service performances. David wanted to take that relationship a step further and asked the audience to donate their change into the buckets provided at the entrance to the theatre. This they did in great number and a significant amount of money was raised for the worthy cause.

Saturday June 14th

The Arena, Wembley

It was with great pride that the Choir, although reduced in number, travelled to London for a very special debut performance at Wembley Arena. The occasion was the 30th Anniversary of Herbalife in the UK. Herbalife is the well known nutritional supplement used for weight loss, training, exercise and to improve everyday nutrition for sick or elderly people. In celebration of their anniversary a two-day conference was held in the SSE Arena at Wembley and more than 4,000 delegates came from all parts of the world. A series of guest speakers, workshops, training events and plenty of entertainment was provided for the visitors.

One of the highlights of the day was the Anniversary Celebration Concert, “The Best of British” which included Celtic Feet, Scottish Pipe Band, Bhangra Dancers, Dhol Drummers and the finale of the British Imperial Military Guard – complete with confetti cannon! It was amidst the celebrations that the Choir gave its magnificent performance. Led by Jeff Howard and accompanied by Helen Roberts they certainly rose to the challenge and gave a first-class performance of all-time favourite songs. The reaction from the 4,000 delegates was staggering as they cheered and applauded wildly, leaving the Treorchy men in no doubt that they had certainly enhanced the anniversary celebrations. A highlight of the year without doubt.

Saturday June 21st

St George’s Hall, Bristol

For the third time the Choir visited the wonderful St George’s Hall with its splendid acoustics. This time it was in aid of Choir funds and with Jeff Howard unavailable on this occasion (as he was conducting a concert in Colston Hall just a short distance away!) the Choir depended on the support of Simon Lovell Jones. Helen Roberts was accompanist with Ros Evans certainly rose to the challenge brilliantly as soprano soloist. Once again Gareth Evans undertook the role of Master of Ceremonies.

It had been quite some time since the Choir had performed under the leadership of Simon and despite only having once full rehearsal beforehand, the result was excellent. The large audience was clearly impressed by the standard of the performance as illustrated by their rousing applause and cheers. Once again David Bebbs explained his intention to raise funds for Ty Hafan and the audience dug deep in their pockets with donations. Another successful evening.

Thursday June 26th

Vale Hotel, Hensol

At very short notice the Choir returned to the Vale Hotel for another fundraising evening organised by Honorary Member Bob Harris but this time in aid of Velindre Cancer Hospital in Cardiff. Around 75 people attended a dinner in one of the hotel suites and the Choir came along to perform a selection of songs for them under the baton of Jeff Howard and accompanied by Helen Roberts. The short concert performance was well received and plenty of monies was raised for this organisation.

JULY

Saturday July 5th

St Mary's Church, Bibury

The Choir made its debut performance in the beautiful village of Bibury with a concert in its majestic St Mary's Church. A few years earlier the Choir's Minstrel group performed at a wedding in the same venue and the vicar was so impressed by the quality of singing that he wished to arrange a concert. It was an important evening for Rev Errol Williams as it marked his retirement from the church after many years of faithful service. "Morte Christe" was performed for him – and the emotion he showed at this rendition was truly moving.

The concert was a great success with a packed church of several hundred people crammed into their seats to hear the Choir perform. Jeff Howard and Helen Roberts led the choristers through a varied repertoire of favourites, while the audience was clearly enchanted by the superb performance of soprano Ros Evans. It was also a pleasure to see the return of Dean Powell as Master of Ceremonies following a long period of ill health.

Some of the many highlights this evening was the rousing opening of "Men of Harlech", "Llanfair", "Calon Lan" and "Eli Jenkins Prayer". During the second half Chairman David Bebb again announced his intention to raise funds for Ty Hafan and a substantial sum of more than £400 was raised for the cause. It was also a pleasure to make a debut performance of "Till There Was You", a new Jeffrey Howard arrangement. The choristers enjoyed a social evening at the Catherine Wheel.

Saturday July 19th

Memorial Theatre, Frome

The final concert of the season saw the Choir travel to the beautiful Somerset town of Frome for their first concert in the Memorial Theatre. This lovely venue provided an ideal setting for a performance by the Choir although the warm summer's evening turned the theatre into an oven and the temperature appeared to rise as the concert continued! So much so that on the command of the Musical Director, for the second half of the concert, the men took off their dress suit jackets.

The concert was another great success as the Choir shared the stage with soprano Iona Jones and with a reasonably sized outfit, before an intimate audience of just under 300 people, the evening was a total success. Jeff Howard and Helen Roberts led the Treorchy ensemble through its paces while Dean Powell entertained as Musical Director. The Choir enjoyed a social evening in the theatre bar following the concert and ended their season in style!

SEPTEMBER

Saturday September 6th

Community Centre, Knighton

The route to Knighton was prolonged with many pick-up points, but the concert started at 7.30pm and soon became obvious the capacity audience was most

appreciative of the Choir's performance. The different approach to the programme, with Ray Daniels opening the second half by singing "Senzenina" without a Conductor present making a memorable moment. At the invitation of the Conductor the audience joined in with clapping the rhythm of "Sospan Fach" which brought prolonged applause from the contented audience.

The artist, Iona Jones, added to the joyous ambience by her singing and pleasant rapport. Gareth Evans fuelled the fun of the evening as a most competent Master of Ceremonies. The care free, happy, smiling attitude of the Conductor led the Choir's performance to a higher musical standard. The concert finished with the audience displaying their absolute, unbounding happiness of the evening's entertainment with a tumultuous sustained standing ovation.

Saturday September 27th

Bath Abbey

After a period of twenty one years the Choir returned to the beautiful surroundings of Bath Abbey. This magnificent, historic building provided the perfect venue for a performance by not one, but two male voice choirs! Tonight the Treorchy men shared the stage with their colleagues at Bath Male Choir, ably conducted by the familiar figure of Grenville Jones with whom Treorchy has enjoyed an association for almost thirty years. The two Choirs, performing very different music indeed, enjoyed the luxury of splitting the concert into four sections and singing two sections each.

It was most pleasing to hear an English male choir perform their melodies, all of which were sung very well indeed. It was also a delight to share the stage with such a genuinely nice group of men who made the Treorchy team so very welcome in their hometown. The Welshmen gave another incredibly impressive performance of items from their rich and diverse repertoire. The religious items were greeted with tremendous applause and admiration as the music rang through every corner of this magnificent building. "Llef", "Men of Harlech" and "Sospan Fach" – complete with a communal "clapping" went down an absolute storm. The concert saw the debut performance of "My Luve Is Like a Red Red Rose" which was also an excellent rendition. The Choir received such a thunderous ovation that it gave not one, but two encores including "Myfanwy" to much acclaim. It had certainly been a very enjoyable and memorable return to Bath where old acquaintances were renewed and new friendships made.

OCTOBER

Thursday October 2nd

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

Another Annual Concert was upon us and all who attended agreed that it was one of our best performances in our hometown to date. This marked the first anniversary since Jeff Howard had taken up the baton in Treorchy and the progress made was unmistakable. Almost ten new items were introduced into the concert programme since the previous year and the over all polished performance of the Choir was noticeable to everyone present – both on and off the stage! The concert saw the debut performance of "Ar Lan Y Mor", along with a host of relatively new items including "Till There Was You", "Sospan Fach", "My Luve Is Like A Red Red Rose" etc.

What also made our Annual Concert special was our unique line-up of soloists. Ros Evans and Kate Woolveridge are certainly no strangers to the Treorchy family. However, this was the first time that they appeared together on stage with the Choir and were joined by fellow soprano Merial Andrews (who gave an incredibly feature film performance of “O Mio Babbino Caro” in “Very Annie Mary”) along with accompanist Nikki Rose. Together they are known as “Diva! Diva! Diva!” and their combined performances of beautiful songs, arias combined with plenty of hilarity, made them a refreshing group for the Annual Concert. Everyone appeared overjoyed by the skill and mastery of their music, performed with plenty of high jinx and “temperamental diva” humour.

The concert concluded with a combined performance to mark the centenary of the First World War of the song “Roses of Picardy”. The Choir sang the chorus while the trio performed the verses and MC Dean Powell recited “In Flanders Fields” throughout the start of the piece. It made for a poignant and unforgettable finale to this year’s Annual Concert.

Monday October 6th

St David’s Hotel, Cardiff

The Choir was invited to perform at a reception for the Football Association of Wales Presentation Dinner in Cardiff Bay. The evening celebrated the career of Gareth Bale and to ensure a truly “Welsh Welcome” the Choir sang from the first-floor balcony of the hotel to the champagne-drinking guests below. Although no applause was actually heard, the thirty minute performance was gratefully received by the many dinner guests. Apparently!

Saturday October 11th

Worcester Cathedral

After a period of nineteen years the Choir made a welcomed return to Worcester Cathedral Throughout 2014 the Choir has been blessed with performing in a whole host of magnificent religious buildings and Worcester was certainly no exception. The concert was held once again in aid of Acorns Hospice with Honorary Member David Green at the helm. Tonight’s soloist was Iona Jones while Dean Powell performed the duties of MC and the Choir was led by Jeff Howard, Helen Roberts and good friend David Jeffrey Thomas on the organ. It had all the makings of another excellent concert and despite the rock-bottom temperature in the cathedral, the Choir certainly didn’t disappoint.

The concert featured many of the new items introduced into the repertoire in the past few months and the audience appeared delighted with the resounding performance of the Choir. Some of the highlights included “Eli Jenkins Prayer”, “Senzenina”, “This is the Moment”, “You Make Me Feel So Young” and a finale of “You’ll Never Walk Alone”, followed by “Sospan Fach” as the encore. It was certainly a pleasure to return to Worcester Cathedral and the many favourable concerts made the visit worthwhile indeed.

Saturday October 25th

St Mary’s Church, Lyme Regis

Following more than a decade the Choir made a welcomed return to Lyme Regis with a performance in St Mary’s Church. Another successful evening took place thanks to

the collective efforts of all those involved. Owing to the unavailability of Jeff Howard, the Treorchy baton was handed once more to Honorary Member Dr Haydn James who with his usual efficient manner, conducted the Choir through its new repertoire of music. Helen Roberts displayed her usual professionalism at the piano and the role of soloist was undertaken brilliantly by Ros Evans. This evening the position of Master of Ceremonies was given to Gareth Evans who again ensured a smooth link between artists. The concert was held in aid of Cancer Research and saw many highlights to the evening's performance. The Choir of 61 members gave an excellent concert and the thrilling applause from the audience was testament to that fact.

Following the concert the Choir was delighted to be invited to visit the nearby Talbot Arms. This was owned by a couple who originated from Treherbert and they gave the warmest of welcomes. Not only was there free drink available, but also the most splendid of buffets, including the mighty Hog Roast which certainly ensured nobody went hungry. A splendid after glow took place which will live long in the memory of each and every one present.

NOVEMBER

Sunday November 2nd

Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad

It was an honour to participate once again in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance Concert at Rhondda Sports Centre in Ystrad. The evening was another wonderful display of first class music coupled with the brilliant display of servicemen and women, raising of the standards and the pomp and circumstance of a military event. The atmosphere of the evening was one of celebration and commemoration, with the first half performed as a concert whilst the second half was a service to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

In many respects it was something of a family affair for the Treorchy Choir. One of their members, Jeff Powell, shared the stage with his wife Jill who is a member of the Heritage Singers of Trehafod. Also one of the soloists for the evening, Georgia Williams, is the daughter of Mark Williams in the First Tenor section. It was a delight to share the stage with the Heritage Singers and Georgia, along with the Band of the Royal Welsh and young soloist Lucie Anne Davies. The entire affair was ably compered by MC John Asquith. The evening didn't go as smoothly as planned either when accompanist Stuart Street lost his music when performing with Lucie. Fortunately Treorchy MD Jeff Howard came to the fore and without any music or preparation, accompanied Lucie brilliantly.

The Treorchy men gave another excellent performance of "Bryn Myrddin" and "You Make Me Feel So Young". The audience also appeared overjoyed with the delicacy of "My Love Is Like A Red Red Rose". For their second section they performed "What A Wonderful World" and "Calon Lan". However, the longest applause came for their performance of "Roses of Picardy" which saw Ray Daniels sing both verses and the Choir perform the chorus while Dean Powell read "In Flanders Fields". The response as Choir and both soloists performed the final chorus brought a thunderous applause. The Choir also combined with the Heritage Singers and band to sing "Morte Christe"

and joined in the congregational hymns as part of the Remembrance Service. It was another enjoyable, yet poignant service as we marked the centenary of the start of World War I.

Saturday November 15th

Town Hall, Walsall

The Choir made a welcomed return to the Town Hall in Walsall for a fundraising concert organised by Honorary Member John Tucker in aid of the NSPCC. Jeff Howard was at the helm this evening with Helen Roberts at the piano, Iona Jones as soprano soloist and Gareth Evans as MC. A large audience gathered in the lovely setting of the Town Hall for another memorable concert.

The Choir performed its usual selection of items, with a heavy emphasis on Welsh music for the first half, complemented by more contemporary music in the second half. It was the first full concert for new First Tenor Alex Davies, who at 16 years of age certainly enjoyed the opportunity to sing in the ranks. Following the concert the Choir retired to their favourite of watering holes, Walsall Rugby Club for shepherd's pie and chips!

Saturday November 22nd

Millennium Stadium, Cardiff

The Choir was deeply honoured to performed once more at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff prior to the Wales vs New Zealand autumn rugby international. The first time the Choir performed at this same line-up was back in 2007 and once again it was under the experienced baton of Dr Haydn James. On this occasion the Choir was joined by singers from North Wales in the form of Cantorion Colin Jones.

With a full rehearsal in the depths of the stadium, the choirs were led onto the pitch by the Band of the Welsh Regiment. The atmosphere within the stadium was electrifying. The roof was closed due to adverse weather and a staggering 73,000 people crammed the terraces. The combined choir sang in three different locations, performing all-time favourites of "Cwm Rhondda", "Delilah", "Gwahoddiad" and "Green Grass of Home".

That magic moment came when they walked to the centre of the pitch and gave a beautiful performance of a medley of Maori songs, much to the obvious delight of the Kiwis in the audience. Then with a flash of flames and thunderous noise the Welsh team and the All Blacks ran onto the pitch. Amid this wonderful atmosphere and with a feeling of deep pride, the Choir sang both national anthems before the All Blacks broke into their traditional Haka routine. A memorable day indeed.

Thursday November 27th

Albany Road Baptist Church, Cardiff

The Choir made its first visit to this venue at the invitation of Rhondda-born Mike James who wanted assistance in fundraising for two very special charities, Leprosy and the Rainbow Homeless organisations. The evening was led again by Jeff Howard, but due to the unavailability of Helen, David Geoffrey Thomas performed at the piano.

The sold-out event saw an intimate gathering enjoy one of the best concerts of the year. On the one hand the Choir itself gave a full concert of all-time favourites, performing them magnificently and to the obvious joy of the audience. What made the evening even more special was the introduction of the Conductor's wife, Rachel Howard, as harpist. Her wonderful playing and charming disposition endeared her to all. However, it was the combined performances of husband and wife with Jeff playing the piano or organ and his wife playing the harp that made for the rousing and thunderous applause. What a concert!

DECEMBER

Saturday December 6th

Wellington Academy, Ludgershall

Another "first" as the Choir made its debut performance at Wellington Academy between Ludgershall and Tidworth in Wiltshire. Due to the unavailability of Jeff, the baton was handed confidently to Dr Haydn James ensuring yet another excellent performance, despite the relatively small Choir on stage. The evening was organised by Ivor Lock's nephew, Martyn Evans and the regulars of the Queens Head public house, a favourite venue for the Choir over the years. This year they're fundraising activities were in aid of Pancreatic Cancer and with a sold-out concert the funds were certainly given a well-earned boost.

The Choir shared the stage with the Southern Jacobites Pipe and Drums, who played a variety of Scottish favourites on drums and bagpipes. Helen Roberts was back at the piano while Dean Powell undertook the role of MC once again for this final concert of the year. The audience was clearly thrilled by the performance of the Choir, particularly "Battle Hymn", "You Raise Me Up" and "This is the Moment". With an encore of "Sospan Fach", the performers left the stage to a rousing applause – and spent another enjoyable evening at the Queens Head.

Thursday December 18th

Ty Hafan Hospice, Sully

Traditionally the Choir has completed its year with a performance at the Ty Hafan Hospice in Sully. This year was certainly no exception and choristers were only too pleased to support this incredibly emotional memorial service to those young people who were cared at this remarkable place before passing away. Another moving evening to conclude the year.