

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 2015

By Dean Powell
Publicity Officer & Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Saturday January 31st

St Mary's School, Calne

The Choir enjoyed a wonderful debut performance in Calne, Wiltshire where they shared the stage with a range of musical artistes from St Mary's and St Margaret's Preparatory School. Hosted by BBC Radio 3 presenter Petroc Trelawny, and with an address by Brigadier Greville Bibby CBE, the atmosphere throughout the evening was electric.

The Choir performed a wide range of music from traditional Welsh to familiar showtunes. They were beautifully complemented by performances from St Margaret's Chamber Choir and St Mary's Chamber Choir, Opera Ensemble and String Sinfonia, along with moving readings by the girls of Thomas Hardy's "Afterwards" and Dylan Thomas' "Do not go gentle into that good night".

The concert ended with a rousing performance of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic", featuring all the performers from the evening, and all those attending left with a sense of wonderment. The evening, in aid of The Armed Forces Fund, was generously supported by members of 9 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps and raised almost £6,000 for the fund

FEBRUARY

Thursday February 5th

National Museum, Cardiff

The Choir performed a short engagement for members of the British Holidaymakers Association at their annual dinner in the National Museum of Wales in Cathays Park, Cardiff. The Choir was positioned on the impressive marble staircase overlooking the main foyer area which was impressively converted into a banqueting hall for the hundred or more diners. With such wonderful acoustics in this grand setting, the Choir and audience was clearly impressed by the overall atmosphere and standard of performance!

Saturday February 21st

Y Ffwrnes, Llanelli

The Choir's long-awaited return to Llanelli came with a number of "debut" moments. Firstly, the St David's Day Concert heralded the first time for the Choir to perform at Y Ffwrnes theatre in the centre of the town. Secondly it was the first time for Ryan Wood to perform the duties of Musical Director of the Choir. Finally the Choir gave their debut performance of the hymn tune "Builth" to the capacity audience.

Organised by Cerith Owens, the concert was a great success with the Choir sharing the stage with the magical sounds of Lleisiau's Cwm, a contemporary ladies' choir and West End hopeful Samuel Morris. Together they provided some first-class entertainment of which the Llanelli audience was clearly thrilled with. Compere for the evening was Radio Cymru presenter Garry Owen.

The Treorchy men, despite being small in number, gave another memorable performance which must have come as a great source of inspiration to Ryan who raised the baton for the first time with them on stage. The concert was performed without a hitch and everyone enjoyed the evening of music and song.

MARCH

Saturday March 7th

No.8 Centre Pershore

It was a pleasure to return once more to the intimate venue of the No.8 Centre in the lovely setting of Pershore. As in previous years, all tickets were sold in advance of our arrival and the performance of the Choir clearly pleased the capacity crowd. On this occasion Ros Evans appeared as the soloist for the evening, with Jeff Howard and Helen Roberts in charge of the music making and Gareth Evans as MC.

The concert was a very enjoyable affair, with some lovely, delicate passages of music that allowed the hair on the back of the head raise itself more than once! The audience clearly enjoyed the more rousing items, particularly “Calon Lan” and “Sospan Fach”, while showing their appreciation for the more delicate passages of “Ar Lan Y Mor”, “My Love is Like a Red Red Rose” and “Y Darlun”. The Choir left the stage assured they had once more made their mark on the Pershore audience.

Wednesday March 25th

Treorchy Comprehensive School

The 10th Junior Musician of the Year Competition celebrated its milestone anniversary with a wonderful night of young talent performing to a packed audience. Emily Richards of Tonyrefail Primary School won the Singer’s Category while flautist Grace Jones of Oaklands Primary School won the instrumentalist section.

For a decade the competition has inspired hundreds of schoolchildren to follow a hobby or even a career as a singer or instrumentalist. This year’s Grand Final, held at Treorchy Comprehensive School welcomed Welsh actress Ruth Madoc to present the prizes.

Shellyann from The Voice also performed her latest recording while Sera Evans Fear fulfilled the role of Master of Ceremonies. Other special guests included Leighton Andrews AM and the Mayor of Rhondda Cynon Taf Cllr John Watts. The adjudicators were Helen Roberts, Jeff Howard, Brian Holvey and Ryan Wood.

Organised by Tony Davies, a total of 20 primary and junior schools in the two valleys entered the competition which is funded by a variety of local businesses, supporters and the Treorchy Windfarm. As always the Choir raised the roof with a selection of items before the final scores were announced and the winners each received their prizes.

Saturday March 28th

St Augustine’s Church, Penarth

Following a 22 year period the Choir returned to the glorious setting of St Augustine’s Church in Penarth for a concert in aid of Ty Hafan. The event was organised by Choir Chairman David Bebb who raised more than £7,000 in bucket collections at various

concerts for the worthy cause and will shortly raise further funds for the children's hospice when he climbs South America's tallest mountain, Machu Piccu.

The concert also welcomed the talented young children of Albert Road Primary School and Rhondda-born West-End hopeful Callum Howells (the grandson of Life Member Bryn Howells) to the stage. Due to the unavailability of Jeffrey Howard, the concert was conducted by Simon Lovell Jones with accompaniment by Helen Roberts.

The Choir performed a wide selection of items which received more than favourable responses from the audience. As St Augustine's is the final resting place of composer Dr Joseph Parry, then the Choir sang "Myfanwy" and compere Dean Powell gave the audience background information on the association between the Choir and the famous Welshman during the 19th century.

The concert concluded with a combined performance by the Choir and the children of the school of "You Raise Me Up" which received tumultuous applause and a standing ovation from a very enthusiastic audience.

APRIL

Friday April 3rd

Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

A celebratory atmosphere pervaded the theatre as the Choir and Band celebrated the 50th annual Good Friday concert. The evening was a first-class performance of voice and brass, with some outstanding performances from the Choir and their faithful friends of the Parc & Dare Band.

The concert opened, as it had done 50 concerts ago in April 1966 with a joint performance of the "Soldier's Chorus" from Faust with Jeffrey Howard taken the podium as Conductor. He led the Choir – with the accompaniment of Helen Roberts – through a selection of new items as far as the Treorchy audience was concerned, including "Ar Lan y Mor", "Till There Was You", "What a Wonderful World" and his arrangement of "Calon Lan".

There were also a sprinkling of favourites in "Bryn Myrddin", "Let It Be Me" and of course "Myfanw"y, all of which received a thrilling response. The joint performance of "Roses of Picadry" by Ray Daniels and Dean Powell was very well received indeed.

Dean also introduced to the audience those performers who had appeared in the very first Good Friday concert all those years ago, including Malcolm Pickins (Band Chairman), Bryn Jones, William Watkin, David Powell, Norman Martin, Reg Stephens and Islwyn Morgan to thunderous applause! It also marked the first concert appearance of Mike Tibbot, but also the final one of retiring chorister David Birch.

The joint items were excellent, including "Builth", "You Make Me Feel So Young" and the thrilling climax of "Sospan Fach" – complete with audience participation which was also performed a second time as an encore.

The concert also welcomed the winners of the Junior Musician Competition on stage. Emily Richards and Grace Jones both won the hearts of audience, band and choir alike with truly professional performances. A memorable 50th Good Friday Concert in our hometown! Here's to many more!

Saturday April 18th

Atrix Theatre, Bromsgrove

The Choir made another visit to Bromsgrove with a repeat performance at the Atrix Theatre on the outskirts of the town. As in previous years the format of the concert was the same, featuring Jeff Howard and Helen Roberts as Conductor and Accompanist. It was a pleasure to welcome Ros Evans as Soprano and this evening Gareth Evans fulfilled the role of Master of Ceremonies.

A reasonably large audience welcomed the Choir on stage at this intimate venue for another enjoyable evening of music and song. The Choir stuck to its recent repertoire of largely Welsh music in the first half of the concert and a variety of items in the second half. It also introduced a new number into the repertoire, Owen Harry's composition "Can You Hear Me". With Ros Evans in fine voice, the concert finale of "You'll Never Walk Alone" received a thrilling reaction. Another enjoyable visit to Bromsgrove

Thursday April 30th

Rehearsal Room, Treorchy

BBC Broadcaster Roy Noble visited the school hall with a television crew from Tinopolis Media. They are filming a new programme entitled "Cymoedd Roy" which will be broadcast later this year. Roy interviewed archivist Dean Powell and chorister Hywel Bryant beforehand in the school yard. Then the film crew recorded and filmed a selection of items in the rehearsal room for the programme.

MAY

Thursday May 14th

Village Hall, Dinas Powys

This was the first time for the Choir to visit this particular venue in Dinas Powys – but it was certainly a concert that will live long in the memory! The performance was held as part of the Dinas Powys Music Festival which enjoyed more than a week of live music throughout the village. One of the highlights was the performance of the Choir in their Village Hall, which enjoyed delightful acoustics. With a packed audience of local residents, the atmosphere was memorable and the Choir were assured of a first-class performance.

A choir of more than 60 marched onto the stage and were conducted by Jeff Howard, but accompanied for the first time in concert by Ryan Wood owing to the unavailability of Helen Roberts who had suffered a family bereavement. This new musical duo led the Choir through a selection of favourites and also changed roles for the performance of "Builth". With plenty of thrills and audience participation, the Choir gave a first-class concert to a very appreciative audience.

It was also a pleasure to welcome a new soloist onto the stage. For the first time Rhondda-born Sophie Gregory joined the Choir and with a very enjoyable voice and

plenty of good humour, she soon endeared herself to the packed audience. Dean Powell fulfilled his role as MC and performed the duet of “Roses of Picardy” with Ray Daniels as part of the finale and in tribute to the 100th anniversary of World War I.

Saturday May 16th

The Cathedral, Bristol

The Choir gave its debut performance at the beautiful Bristol Cathedral to raise funds for the Help for Heroes charity. The entire event was organised by the Rotary Club of Nailsea and the Inner Wheel of Nailsea and Backwell. A packed audience filled the cathedral and the Choir marched on stage promptly at 7pm, slightly shocked by the freezing cold temperature inside the building at this time of year!

The concert opened with a performance by the Drummers of the Royal Marines Band before the Choir launched into its programme of music. Once again Jeff Howard led the concert, with Helen as accompanist, Dean Powell as MC and Iona Jones as soprano soloist. Opening with a first half filled with familiar Welsh tunes, which enjoyed the audience participation of “Sospan Fach” and “Calon Lan”, the audience appeared slightly reserved at first, but clearly enjoyed their evening.

The second half included items such as “My Love is Like a Red Red Rose”, “Roses of Picardy” and “Myfanwy”. The concert concluded with a performance of “You’ll Never Walk Alone” with Iona Jones as soloist. A fundraiser for Help for Heroes also gave an emotional speech of the incredible work undertaken by the charity for injured British servicemen and women. It was an honour to support such a worthy cause.

Friday May 27th

The Oval, Treorchy

The concert in a marquee at The Oval rugby ground in Treorchy did not quite go according to plan, but nonetheless was a success for the organisers who raised funds for the Rotary Club of Great Britain. The Choir performed a number of items at the close of the programme which was slightly later than originally anticipated.

The MC for the evening was comedian Phil Howe who introduced a selection of soloists onto the stage including Callum Howells and Georgia Williams who have both performed with the Choir on previous occasions. The third soloist was Jackie Faye whose lifelong ambition had been to sing Working Man with the Choir and this evening we did exactly that.

Despite the late hour, cold and wet weather and the difficult acoustics and staging, the Choir did their best in the circumstances and the joyful audience appeared more than happy with the concert overall.

JUNE

Saturday June 20th

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

The Choir made another return visit to the excellent auditorium at Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury. A large audience welcomed the Choir of almost sixty members and they appeared thrilled by the performance. The Choir personnel was somewhat different to

normal this evening owing to the unavailability of the Conductor and the regular MC. Therefore Simon Lovell Jones acted as Musical Director for the concert while Secretary Selwyn Jones performed the duties of Compere in the most confident and able manner. Helen Roberts accompanied the Choir and the guest soloist was Ros Evans.

Organised by Honorary Lady Member Jean Grey, the concert was a total success from its opening bars. The Choir gave another excellent performance of its repertoire of classic arrangements which were obviously enjoyed by the appreciative audience who displayed their thanks in the loudest manner possible! The Choir and soloist combined gave a very memorable evening's entertainment which will be long remembered by all those present.

Thursday June 25th

Parc Primary School, Cwmparc

A small representation of the Choir attended the annual Cwmparc Memorial Service. Held at the Parc Primary School, it also included the local pupils and residents of the village who came to pay their respects to the memory of those killed in the 1941 bombing by the Luftwaffe. It was another poignant ceremony with some memorable musical items produced by the children and adults alike.

JULY

Thursday July 2nd

National Museum, Cardiff

The Choir made a welcomed return to the magnificent National Museum foyer where they entertained a post-dinner audience. The evening concert was arranged by the University of South Wales and welcomed conference members from across the UK. The Choir stood on the marble stairs to perform to a very enthusiastic audience. With only thirty-minutes of material required, the Choir gave of their best, assisted by Jeff Howard, Helen Roberts, soloist Ray Daniels and MC Dean Powell. With the splendid acoustics afforded by the grand entrance hall, the choristers thoroughly enjoyed the experience as always!

Sunday July 5th

St Peter's Church, Pentre

An afternoon concert in the "Cathedral of the Rhondda" welcomed a whole host of performers and a packed audience too. The concert was organised to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Gallipoli but also paid tribute to those servicemen from the village of Pentre who fell in World War I. Called "Pentre Remembers", the concert included a whole host of local performers.

The Choir sang a variety of items from its extensive repertoire under the direction of Jeff Howard and with accompaniment of Helen Roberts. Dean Powell performed the MC duties for the lengthy concert and ceremony which lasted almost two hours without an interval! The Parc & Dare Band performed magnificently under the baton of Andrew Jones while former TMC Junior Musician Competition winner Shona Evans. The young pupils of Pentre in Tune performed a selection of wartime favourites and laid poppies at the war memorial. The Western Front Association also

gathered information on all those local men who made the ultimate sacrifice. Their names were read by two members of the Pentre Air Cadets.

As this was a free-concert, the audience were able to make donations to the British Legion and clearly were happy to do so because of the standard of performance. A mixture of celebration, commemoration and profound sense of gratitude and humility pervaded the entire event. A memorable occasion indeed.

Saturday July 18th

Torch Theatre, Milford Haven

The Choir's return performance to Milford Haven showed a total change in their appearance on stage. For the first time the Choir wore their new concert outfits – a great suit with a black shirt and black tie. This contemporary, classic look clearly impressed the packed audience of 200 people.

The concert also welcomed a new soloist on stage, in Jessica Robinson who gave an absolutely first-class performance. Her incredible talent was well appreciated by Choir and audience alike and we all hope to work with her again in the future. As a former student of Conductor Jeff Howard, plenty of fun tales were told on stage!

Dean Powell was MC for the evening and carried out his duties to the usual high standard, with Ray Daniels as soloist in both “Senzenina” and “Roses of Picardy”. As always Helen Roberts gave a masterful performance at the piano.

The repertoire was varied and well-received by the audience. It was another “first” too as the Choir gave its debut performance of the “Nat King Cole Medley” to triumphant applause. Another memorable and rewarding performance.

Tuesday July 28th

City Hall, Cardiff

The Choir made a guest appearance in City Hall, Cardiff as part of Gold 2015 – a conference of scientists led by Cardiff University for those who work with the precious metal. A full audience of diners were entertained for half an hour by the Choir, led by Jeff Howard, accompanied by Helen Roberts and with Dean Powell as MC. The crowd were clearly thrilled by the standard of performance and the wide range of repertoire and the Choir left the stage to thunderous applause until every last man left the auditorium.

SEPTEMBER

Thursday September 3rd

National Museum, Cardiff

It was a “short but sweet” performance tonight on the marble steps of the grand foyer of Cardiff's National Museum of Wales. The Choir performed a 15-minute selection of items for delegates of the Association of University Engineers Conference which was taking place at the University of South Wales. As the members enjoyed pre-dinner drinks in the foyer and balconies above, they were greeted by a selection of Welsh items from the Choir. Once the dinner commenced, the choristers discreetly left through the side entrance. Another engagement completed!

Tuesday September 16th

Caerphilly Castle

The Choir was delighted to return to Caerphilly Castle after a period of fifteen years to perform to a delegation of Chinese visitors. The Choir appeared in the large banqueting hall before an audience of around 100 people.

The performance included “You Raise Me Up”, “Myfanwy”, “Cwm Rhondda”, “Men of Harlech”, “Sospan Fach” and “Ar Lan Y Mor”. The audience rewarded the choristers with a thrilling standing ovation.

OCTOBER

Friday October 2 – Sunday October 4

Tour of Guernsey – see separate report

Monday October 12th

Rehearsal Room

At the invitation of insurance brokers A.J. Galaghers, choristers “whistled” the song “Bring Me Sunshine” for an online fundraising campaign for homeless people.

Thursday October 22nd

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

Never before has the Choir’s Annual Concert had such an uplifting atmosphere of fun and excitement. The very entertaining concert programme of new arrangements, coupled with local young artists, provided a fresh, contemporary feel to the yearly event. Jeff Howard and Helen Roberts led the large Choir on stage, with Dean Powell fulfilling his duties as Master of Ceremonies.

The concert was a truly family affair as the soloists were West End hopeful Callum Howells (the grandson of Life Member Bryn Howells) and the singer-songwriter Georgia Williams (the daughter of Mark Williams of the First Tenor section).

The first half of the programme included a number of traditional items, included “Builth”, “Myfanwy” and “Adiemus”. However, the musicality of the pieces was enhanced with the introduction of drummer and guitarist Jason Elliot and Tim Lewis. They provided a more contemporary accompaniment, which the audience was clearly thrilled with. Other items included “Tydi a Roddaist”, “Sospan Fach” and “Roses of Picardy” featuring Ray Daniels and Dean Powell.

In the second half the Choir opened with a very funny performance of “King of the Swingers” from the Jungle Book. Performed with Callum, Georgia and a “tap dancing” Jeff Howard, the combined performance brought a smile to everyone’s face.

It was a memorable night for Bryn Jones from the Second Bass section who received a gold watch to commemorate 50 years in the ranks of the Choir. David Bebb also made a presentation to Ty Hafan, amounting to more than £11,000 raised with his trek to the summit of Machu Pichu.

Also included in the concert was the new medley of music made famous by Nat King Cole, “What Would I Do Without My Music”, “Can You Hear Me” and a new

arrangement of “Bring Me Sunshine”. The concert concluded with the King of the Swingers as an encore, bringing a sparkling, enjoyable evening to a close.

NOVEMBER

Sunday November 8th

War Memorials – Treherbert & Blaenrhondda

Every year choristers represent the Choir by performing at various Remembrance Sunday services in the County Borough. Once again a group of singers joined the congregation in two services at the War Memorials of Blaencwm and Treherbert to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

Saturday November 21st

Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Cardiff

The Choir gave its first performance in the Dora Stoutzkher Hall in the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama with its colleagues of the Rhondda Symphony Orchestra, Conducted by Brian Weir and led by Marissa Wall, the orchestra provided a fine selection of classical items which thrilled the capacity audience in this modern auditorium.

Similarly the Choir provided a varied and enjoyable programme of items, some of which were combined with the orchestra, making for a magnificent sound. Highlights included “Men of Harlech”, “Can You Hear Me”, “You Raise Me Up”, “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “Llef”. A memorable evening for both musical organisations.

DECEMBER

Saturday December 5th

Leatherhead Theatre, Leatherhead

The Choir made a welcomed return visit to Leatherhead Theatre for a fundraising performance in aid of the Wooden Spoon Society. Once again the concert was introduced by English rugby commentator John Inverdale. The evening’s line-up was slightly different as owing to the unavailability of the Musical Director, our good friend Ryan Wood took up the baton, ably assisted by Helen Roberts with Gareth Evans as MC. The Choir was also introduced to soprano Cecillia Forrest, who enthralled the audience with her operatic programme.

Once again the large audience appeared thrilled at the performance of the Choir. Some of the highlights included “Builth”, “Can You Hear Me”, “Senzenina” and “What a Wonderful World”. As always the choristers responded well with the style of a new conductor before them and the concert was another success, both financially for the charity and musically for the Choir.

Thursday December 10th

Paget Rooms, Penarth

It was hard to believe that 26 years had passed since the Choir last performed in the Paget Rooms, Penarth. This fine Edwardian theatre provided an intimate and enjoyable auditorium in which to perform. The concert was organised by Penarth

Town Council and once again Ryan Wood performed the duties of Musical Director, alongside accompanist, Dean Powell as MC and soprano soloist Ros Evans.

The concert had very many highlights, particularly “Senzenina”, “Roses of Picardy”, “What A Wonderful World”, “Cwm Rhondda” and “Builth”. It was a memorable night for Robert Morgan as he made his concert debut. What was quite remarkable about the evening was the fact that during the previous visit the Choir was accompanied by Maesteg Childrens’ Choir and one of their young boy sopranos was none other than Ryan Wood himself!

Thursday December 17th

Ty Hafan

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.

Friday December 18th

The Lion, Treorchy

Every year members of the Choir perform on the main street through Treorchy to help raise funds for the designated charity appeal of Treorchy Chamber of Trade. A group of choristers performed carols to the passing crowd of shoppers during the afternoon and were rewarded with plenty of hot soup and refreshments in The Lion public house.