

EXCELSIOR



THE VOICE OF THE TREORCHY MALE CHOIR

RECORD FOR THE
YEAR 2010

Edited by DEAN POWELL, *Publicity Officer and Honorary Archivist*
and Sub-Edited by FREDERICK O'BRIEN, *Secretary*

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR
2010

Conductor Emeritus:
JOHN CYNAN JONES, M.Mus., B.A., A.T.C.L.

President:
BRIAN BATES, Esq.

Vice Presidents:
HAYDN ERASMUS BEM, NORMAN MARTIN, ISLWYN MORGAN

MUSIC STAFF

Conductor:
JANICE BALL, B.Mus., A.R.C.O.

Accompanist:
HELEN ROBERTS, B.Mus.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Chairman:
DAVID BEBB

Secretary:
FREDERICK O'BRIEN

Treasurer:
STUART HILL

Vice-Chairman:
WILLIAM THOMAS

Assistant Secretary:
GWYN MORGAN

Publicity Officer & Hon. Archivist:
DEAN POWELL

Registrar:
TONY DAVIES

Librarian:
IVOR LOCK

Assistant Librarian:
PHILIP TUCKER

Honorary Members—Sir Tom Jones, Jon Schoffield, John Tucker, Brian Bates, Harold Woody, Douglas Firstbrook, John Reid, James Kelso, Edward Fraser, John Jenkins, Mel Absolam, Andrew Kay, Lester McGrath, Nigel Chivers, Max Boyce, Andrew Badham, Roy Noble, Dr Malcolm Williams, Dr Alwyn Humphreys, Dr Haydn James, Bryan Davies, Stuart Burrows, Richard Dinnen, David Lang, Robert Harris, David Geoffrey Thomas, Philip Gray, David Green

Honorary Lady Members—Janice Ball, Helen Roberts, Jeanetta Lawrence, Jennifer Jones, Iris Williams, Linde Macpherson, Fran Wheat, Val Dix, Judy Chivers, Marion Williams, Helen May, Heather James, Ros Evans, Kate Woolveridge, Mair Roberts, Rhiannon Williams, Toni Rudov, Sue Gannon, Pia di Paolo, Iona Jones, Jeanne Gray, Marcelle Berry.

<u>First Tenor</u>	<u>Second Tenor</u>	<u>First Bass</u>	<u>Second Bass</u>
Arthur Miles	Derek Langley	Paul Evans	David Williams
John Bowen	Andrew Costin	John Fletcher	Alun Davies

ABOVE—Committee members of each section

Cyril Bevan	Jack Bean	David Bebb	David Birch
Ernald Brooks	Keith Bevan	Tom Belmont	Nigel Carney
Graham Cox	Wayne Dury	Alan Bowen	Gareth Davies
Richard Danahar	Joe Harris	Norman Cox	Tony Davies
Stephen Davidson	Gary Horgan	Ray Daniels	Ian Dickson
Wyn Davies	Nick Jenkins	Gareth T. Davies	David Evans
Philip Evans	Lee Lanciotti	Philip Edmunds	Gareth Evans
Stuart Hill	Norman Martin	Gerald Emanuel	Alan Iles
Keith Hopkins	Mark Milsom	Huw Evans	George Jacob
Keith Husband	Frederick O'Brien	Ron Evans	Bryn Jones
John	David Powell	Ray Johnson	Mark Jones
John Jenkins	Haydn Powell	John Jones	Peter Jones
Paul Knight	Jeff Friday	Selwyn Jones	Colin Maddy
Gareth Lawrence	Ian Reynolds	Stephen Lawrence	Idris Morgan
Dennis Lethbridge	Ken Simcox	Alan Lewis	Alun Morris
Alwyn Lewis	Glyn Thomas	Keith Newman	Peter Morris
Dilwyn Llewellyn	Michael Wood	Glynne Nicholls	Jeff Powell
Ivor Lock		Keith Owens	John Radford
Gwyn Morgan		Daryl Stacey	Mike Russ
Islwyn Morgan		Derek Thomas	David Stanton
Roger Morse		William Thomas	Ken Waldin
Adrian Owen		Ceri Warren	Dennis Young
Keith Phillips		Phillip Warren	
Dean Powell		William Watkin	
Ceri Rees		Roger Watkins	
Leigh Sprague		Brian Williams	
Reg Stephens		Ivor Williams	
Gareth Thomas			
Philip Tucker			
Tony Vaughan			
John Weaver			

LIFE MEMBERS

Michael Gale, Ben Jackson, Islwyn Morgan, Norman Martin, Haydn Erasmus, Sam Griffiths, John Mallin, John Cynan Jones, Dean Powell, Reg Stephens, William Watkins, Peter Morris, Len Gale, David Powell, Frederick O'Brien, Peter Jones, Bryn Jones, Bryn Howells, Roger Morse, Ken Simcox, Alun Davies, Cyril Bevan

WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT MY MUSIC?

by GILLIAN CLARKE
National Poet of Wales



The night of November 29th 2010 was icy, roads and pavements slippery as glass. These words by the poet Christina Rossetti came into my mind. Set to music, it is my favourite Christmas carol.

In the deep midwinter
Frosty wind made moan
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone.

The long cold winter had begun, but inside the lofty spaces of Llandâf Cathedral all was glowing, pews filling with concert-goers, singers preparing themselves.

A choir of Tenovus staff, the famous Cardiff cancer charity, were ready in jolly Christmas hats. Little girls from nearby Howells Junior School had gathered, twittering, in the choir stalls. The big stars of the night were the third choir, whose name and history were revered in my South Wales family, where a male voice choir had the status of an angelic chorus - the Treorchy Male Choir.

I had been invited, in my role as National Poet of Wales, to introduce the three choirs at the Tenovus Lovelight Concert, one of the most enjoyable of all my duties. Tenovus had commissioned me to write a special poem for the bereaved to read that evening at the concert, and, in future, to be printed in a leaflet as a prayer that could be read at funerals. It was an awesome responsibility.

Song and poetry both use the human voice for their expression. In Welsh, they share a word. We know that the earliest known poets in Britain, Aneirin and Taliesin, sang their poems to the harp, in Welsh. It was common in early times for every person to hear, to know and to repeat the 'songs' of the bard, in halls, in great houses, in taverns. Of course poetry is word-music, and I would argue it's as natural as song and dance. Think of lullabies, nursery rhymes, dipping and skipping games, spells. It's all poetry. Although somewhere along the line a certain kind of poetry has come to seem grand and distant from ordinary folk, a subject for study, literary criticism and exams. Poetry, like music, is for everyone. No words bring comfort or apt expression to emotions like grief or love like the right poem. When, in the film, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the bereaved lover read W. H. Auden's beautiful poem, 'Stop All the Clocks', it was the British public's favourite poem for a while.

Words and music are perfect partners. Hymns, Christmas Carols, folk songs, the work of the best song-writers, these are all poetry, and we know it because both words and music linger on in the mind long after we have heard them. They leave us stimulated, renewed, and we can't quite explain why our hearts hurt and we don't want the singing to stop. It's not just the music, but the words too. The perfect marriage of poetry and music in a folk song like 'She Moves Through the Fair', Leonard Cohen's beautiful 'Halleluiah', the Christmas Carol, 'In the Deep Midwinter', quoted above, John Lennon's 'Imagine', and many of our hymns in English and Welsh, can break our hearts and mend them in a few moments whether we are singers or listeners.

One of the songs sung in the Cathedral on that memorable night asked this question: "What Would I Do Without My Music?" Such a rhetorical question needs no answer. Maybe more poets should write songs, and composers set more poems to music. There can never be too much poetry, or too much singing. In a moment of astonishing power, after the children's choir had begun to sing one of the songs in their sweet, high voices, the Treorchy Male Choir, standing behind the children, joined in. The sound seemed to come from far away in the recesses and vaulted roof of the cathedral, like a great wave rolling towards the shore where very small waves lapped. It was a most moving moment, as if music were nature itself with all humanity in it. Surely those children will never forget the deep sound of those voices over their shoulders, like the wind, or the sea.

EDITORIAL

by DEAN POWELL

“Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory”

Idira Gandhi

Welcome to the sixty-seventh edition of *Excelsior*, the longest running publication by any amateur musical organisation in the world. Through this magazine we continually celebrate the ongoing success of Treorchy Male Choir and 2010 was certainly no exception to the rule as we enjoyed another memorable and rewarding year of music making together. A satisfying year indeed.

*Fairfield Hall, Croydon*

This year's edition illustrates once more that our Choir is enjoying another "golden age" of performance, conquering new musical genres, concert halls and more exciting opportunities than ever before. We continually strive to reach perfection and with our musical team at the helm, our exciting journey to reach that elusive goal is both demanding, rewarding and awe-inspiring.

During 2010 we visited many magnificent auditoriums and performed to some truly magical audiences who clearly were overwhelmed by the musical standard of our Choir. The opening of this year's *Excelsior*, by the National Poet of Wales Gillian Clarke, exemplifies that fact and we are truly grateful to her for taking the time out of her busy schedule to compile her article, as we are to all of this year's contributors to the magazine.

We are also delighted to print the glowing article of appreciation submitted by Assembly Member Janice Gregory following the concert at Llandaff Cathedral. Mrs Gregory is the sister of chorister Haydn Powell and was obviously overjoyed by the performance which will long-be remembered for the performances of “What Would I Do Without My Music” and the new arrangement of “Calon Lan” to the melody of “The Rose”.

It was a night in which we once more worked with our dear friend and Honorary Member David Geoffrey Thomas whose performance on the new cathedral organ was to its usual distinction. This year David has kindly shared his memories of our tour “down under” together when he accompanied the Choir to Australia and New Zealand. Many of us will remember that David’s commitment to the tour was quite unbelievable, for only a few days into the tour he received the news that his mother had passed away in Wales. Determined not to let the Choir down, he kept the news to himself for the whole tour. We will never forget what this great musician did for us in enhancing our tour despite those odds.

Other writers this year include another new “Treorchy friend” in Crad Evans who attended our concert in Stroud. Cifnydd-born Crad is the second cousin of the late Sir Geraint Evans, the world-famous bass-baritone. Just a few weeks following the sad loss of Sir Geraint’s wife, 90-year-old Lady Brenda, Crad was reunited with his musical routes by hearing the Choir’s performance.

Another individual making his debut in *Excelsior* is John Inverdale, the award-winning BBC broadcaster and sports correspondent who opened our return concert to the Fairfield Hall, Croydon in aid of Wooden Spoon. Our commitment to the charity continues and we were delighted this year to present our good friend Robert Harris with Honorary Membership of the Choir. It was a poignant moment for Bob, who had lost his beloved wife Carol during the year. The Choir had performed at her funeral in St Peter’s Church and were glad to welcome Bob to the rehearsal room some time afterwards to celebrate his long-standing commitment to Wooden Spoon and Treorchy.

During the year Honorary Membership was also bestowed upon concert organisers Phil and Jeanne Gray, David Green and Marcelle Berry, along with a fiftieth anniversary gold watch presentation to chorister Reg Stephens. It was also a year of honours for two of the Choir’s Honorary Lady Members as former accompanist Jennifer Jones received the OBE and soprano soloist Mair Roberts was admitted into the National Eisteddfod’s Gorsedd y Beirdd.

It was another year when we welcomed many new choristers to the ranks

and we hope they enjoy their inclusion in the Treorchy family. Sadly it was a year when several choristers were forced to leave the Choir due to personal reasons and I would like in particular to pay tribute to a dear friend in Alan Lewis who has emigrated to Spain. For over 25 years Alan was a devoted member of the First Bass section and I, along with his many friends, will certainly miss him.

One of the highlights of the year was the unveiling of a second Blue Plaque in honour of the Choir in Treorchy. This time a plaque was placed on the front of the Red Cow public house, where the original "Treorky" first found its voice in 1883. We enjoyed a celebrity evening of entertainment, televised live on S4C with special guests including Joy Amman Davies, Roy Noble, Dewi Griffiths, Wyn Calvin, Iona Jones, Kate Woolveridge, John Cynan Jones, Bryan Davies and Jennifer Jones. It was also a joy to be reunited with Miss Elvira Henry, the soprano soloist who appeared many times with the Choir in the 1960s. Miss Henry and Wyn Calvin have also written in this edition of *Excelsior*.

Other memorable moments included performing on the beautiful Brecon Beacons one glorious sunny Sunday afternoon to film the Sky Sports television campaign for the Ryder Cup golf tournament taking place at the Celtic Manor. With over 80million homes around the world tuning into those opening scenes with the Choir performing "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau" shadowed by the magnificent site of Pen-y-fan, one cannot underestimate the international exposure enjoyed by Treorchy during those few days.

Similarly, its reputation for performing music on the international stage was recognised by Stephen Sondheim, the American composer and lyricist, who was enchanted by the Choir's recording of his song, "Send in the Clowns". When a review of his work was produced on Broadway to celebrate his 80th birthday, the Choir's recording and broadcast was shown on stage along with Barbra Streisand, Liza Minelli and Elizabeth Taylor.

Locally we remain committed to supporting Rhondda schools by encouraging the talents of young people in our valleys. The Junior Musician Competition, which this year welcomed both Roy Noble and Max Boyce as special guests, remains another outstanding success. Also this year we contributed to a history project by the pupils of our very own Treorchy Primary School and were overjoyed to see the unveiling of an impressive mural in the school grounds to commemorate the Choir's world-fame. Teacher and head of the project, Ed Sprague has kindly submitted an article for the magazine.

The Choir is indeed proud of its long history and was pleased to welcome

Wendy Thomas to the rehearsal room. Mrs Thomas, who lives in Germany, has also written an article for this year's magazine regarding her genealogy and particularly her grandfather, the "God-sent tenor" and former Choir soloist in the late 19th century, William Todd Jones. We also acknowledge the contribution to Welsh music by two of Treorchy's "rivals" in the Morryston Orpheus Choir and the Rhondda Glee Society the latter's relationship with our Choir epitomised the "cythraul y canu" tradition of the Victorian Welsh choral scene. This year we celebrated the 75th anniversary of Morryston Orpheus Choir and I was particularly honoured to act as Master of Ceremonies at their anniversary dinner along with actor Philip Madoc.

As the year's pass by, one begins to wonder what else the Choir has left to achieve. Yet year on year we continually enhance our musicality, our concert repertoire and our reputation with an ever-growing army of admirers. We look forward to 2011 with great anticipation for the many musical delights and honours it brings. Excelsior!

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

By BRIAN BATES

Once again I am delighted to have the opportunity of joining others in recording my thoughts about 2010 for *Excelsior* - the record of Treorchy Male Choir. Despite gloomy economic forecasts you managed a full calendar of concerts for the year, criss-crossing the UK from Croydon to Shrewsbury, Axminster to Wolverhampton giving in all nineteen concerts and many other engagements besides that brought much pleasure to audiences in venues across the country and further afield.

It is always a great pleasure to be with you and I was able to enjoy, in Pershore, Wolverhampton, Tidworth and Stroud your continuing friendship and stunning concert performances; your singing has been admirable. Much of this I am sure comes from your hard practice and the leadership of your Musical Director, Janice Ball, Praise must also go to Helen, our fine accompanist, and to our soloists Kate, Iona, Dean and Ray for the wonderful work and support they give.

No organisation can function without a committee to run things. My sincere thanks goes to those elected to the Management Committee for their guidance and good counsel during the year.

It was with regret that I heard the news that our long serving Chairman,

Gareth Evans, was standing down from the position. We owe him a debt of gratitude for all his endeavours. Replacing Gareth we welcome new Chairman David Bebb and I am sure we all send him our good wishes

Each year we welcome new choristers to the ranks and wish them every success and a long and happy stay with us. We also thank those having to leave through personal, family or business reasons. This year we learnt of the deaths of former choristers in Derek Moore, Derek Fear, Ken Baldwin, Jack Knapgate and David Trembath. I had the pleasure of knowing them all, always good company to meet and their long service and dedication to the ranks will not be forgotten.

I am at this time tempted to single out one or more members for special mention, however I think it more appropriate to congratulate all those members receiving Life Membership and Long Service Certificates during the year; their excellent dedication and service to TMC will long be remembered. Likewise congratulations to our new 2010 Honorary Members.

In conclusion may I offer all readers of *Excelsior* my best wishes for the coming year.

TREORCHY'S MAGNIFICENCE

By JANICE GREGORY

Assembly Member for Ogmere

It was a privilege to be in attendance at the Tenovus Lovelight Concert in Llandaff Cathedral. Not only was it a tremendous opportunity to raise money for such a worthwhile cause but also a kick start to the festive celebrations.

I have family members and friends as choristers and my respect and affection for your Choir grows with every performance I attend. The Choir has always been held in worldwide esteem and continues to give great joy to people all over the world.

I know that the magnificent sound from the Choir doesn't happen by chance. It is the result of hard work and dedication from everyone involved with the Choir. Please convey my grateful thanks to them all.

I enjoyed everything you sang but my favourites have to be "Adiemus" and "What Would I Do Without My Music", the finale of which resounded throughout that superb cathedral and certainly was very moving.

I am always immensely proud to say I was born and raised in Treorchy and

now I can legitimately say I have a connection to such well respected ambassadors for Treorchy and for Wales.

I hope the Choir will continue to go from strength to strength and I look forward to attending many more concerts.

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

by DAVID BEBB



As there were no overseas tours in 2010, anyone would be forgiven for thinking this would be a relatively quiet year for Treorchy Male Choir. However, nothing could be further from the truth, because in addition to the raft of performances, there were additional functions such as recording a new CD album and an advert for Sky's coverage of the Ryder Cup.

More will be explained later but first I would like to mention the immense honour I feel for being selected for the post of Chairman of such an illustrious organisation. As Vice Chairman I thought it was a natural progression to ascend to Chairman if the post became available and receiving

the backing of two respected choristers in Islwyn Morgan and Norman Martin confirmed it for me. My duty is to represent Treorchy Male Choir to the best of my ability and I look forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

Taking over the role of Chairman was well publicised due to my ancestry where my grandfather's uncle was in the first Treorchy Male Choir formed in 1883, and subsequent members of my family including my grandfather and uncle also joined the ranks. The missing link is my father who attempted to join at the age of 13 but was refused, who then went to sing with Treorchy Royal Welsh until it disbanded in the 1980s. Certainly, I will be working on him in order to make a 'full-house' of Bebb's contributing to Treorchy Male Choir over the years.

Additionally I discovered that I am the youngest ever Chairman. Now, at the age of 43 I thought my days at being the youngest anything were well and truly passed! As a statement of intent I would like to say that I have the utmost respect for every single chorister and musical staff, who commit so much energy and effort to making Treorchy Male Choir the household name

that it is. With the swell of interest in choral outfits the need for musical perfection has never been greater. To aid the task I will look to Janice Ball, Helen Roberts, the committee and every member for advice and assistance. Furthermore, I would like to say a thank you to previous committee members in Gareth Evans, Roger Morse, Islwyn Morgan and Norman Martin for the assistance they have given me to date. I will be bending their ear in the future I can assure you.

The year started with the trip to Basingstoke and Leamington Spa, before an 'overnighter' in Croydon in February. The night was marred when our musical director Janice suffered the theft of her holdall and although the entire Choir tried searching for it, it was not recovered. The trip ended with a return on the Sunday morning and a brief 'refreshments stop' whereupon the back of the bus attempted to recreate our concert performances in their own imitable style.

A return to home roots occurred in March with the Junior Musician Of The Year Final and in April with the Good Friday joint concert with the Parc & Dare Band. The Junior Musician competition continues to grow in size and stature and the standard throughout was admirable. The organisation of this competition is fairly complex and respect must be paid to the sub-committee and especially Tony Davies and John Fletcher for their efforts in ensuring that the competition runs as smoothly as it does. This year saw the highest amount of entrants to date and a truly excellent final where Charlotte Lewis and Katie Leigh Jones ran out deserved winners. The competition was added further credibility by the attendance of guest judges Dr Haydn James, Jeffrey Howard, Derek Holvey, Joy Amman Davies, Jan Ball and officiated by Roy Noble and Max Boyce who presented trophies to our 20 finalists.

In June a concert at the Park and Dare Theatre in order to celebrate Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen's 60th Anniversary was a huge success with the school demonstrating its talent for music and culminating in a joint performance with our Choir. Further concerts with young people occurred again in the Park and Dare at our Annual Concert in October where we were honoured to sing with the Maesteg Children's Choir and their soloist Lauren Coates (the granddaughter of our choir Secretary) and again in December at Llandaff Cathedral where joint items were performed with the Howell School Junior Choir. It is a joy to see so many children so enthused with singing and performing generally and therein lies the future for Treorchy Male Choir. Hopefully a lot of them will join our ranks in the years to come.

New items were introduced into the repertoire under the tutelage of Janice, who leaves no stone unturned in our weekly practices. The sound of the

Choir is excellent and Jan's role in this is without doubt. Her skills in music combined with the Choir's capacity for learning such a vast array of different musical genres surely sets us apart from similar outfits and is responsible for the Choir's continuing success. The Choir blends traditional items with modern recordings and will see firm favourites such as "Llef" standing shoulder to shoulder with the "Abba Medley". Other favourites such as "Let It Be Me" and "What Would I Do Without My Music?" continue to gather in strength and will be mainstays in our concerts for several years to come.

It is at this point that I must mention Jeffrey Howard's penned accompaniment of "The Liberation Hymn", which gives the 2nd Base section the opportunity to flex their vocal chords as they carry the tune from start to finish. The CD single version of the song is a popular seller with all proceeds going to Help for Heroes and was added further poignancy when the Choir performed the item at Tidworth's Army Garrison Theatre in July.

Special mention for their efforts throughout the year and beyond goes to two choristers in Reg Stephens and Norman Martin. Reg has been a stalwart of choral singing for many years and in our Annual Concert in October these efforts were recognised as he celebrated 50 years as a chorister with Treorchy Male Choir. Reg is a hugely respected member of the Choir and his commitment to the task is admirable. His attendance at practices and concerts has not lessened despite the number of years he has been a part of it and he is still keen to learn new music. Additionally, he is well-liked in the ranks and it was a great honour for me to present Reg with a gold watch to celebrate this achievement on behalf of the members of Treorchy Male Choir. Norman Martin has already received this honour but is mentioned here due to the commitment he continues to show week in and week out. Norman has maintained his presence in the 100 Club, where he has not missed any practice or concert for several years and with practices being twice weekly and over 20 concerts in 2010, this provides some indication of his dedication to the cause. Also, he has been compared to Tiger Woods recently but that's another story!

Other achievements in 2010 include both Jan Ball and Helen Roberts reaching 100 concerts as a musical director and accompanist respectively. The Choir are blessed to have the services of such musicians and this is exemplified when Helen stands in as musical director on occasion and Jan turns her hand to the piano (as she was accompanist for years prior to taking the baton of musical director). A skilled musician, she has also performed her own compositions on church organ. This task however is usually reserved for David Geoffrey Thomas, who together with soloists Iona Jones, Kate Woolveridge

and our very own Ray Daniels and Dean Powell make a huge contribution to our performances. My thanks go to all of you.

New choristers continue to swell the ranks and are immediately welcomed into the fold. The Choir will not maintain its standards if it weren't for the stalwarts and the new members who continue to take the leap of faith. Also, the background of these new members continues to impress with a Mastermind finalist and a former Welsh Rugby International now in the ranks. The need for recruitment continues however and if there is anyone out there interested in joining the Choir I can guarantee that you will not be disappointed. The sensation of performing on stage cannot be put into words and there is always the 'afterglow' where a few more songs are performed.



Sky Sports Ryder Cup TV Campaign

Two major events in 2010 were the performance of the National Anthem for Sky TV and the recording of a CD, called "Timeless" of new items at St. Germans Church in Cardiff. We were approached sometime ago by Sky looking for an appropriate advert for the Ryder Cup in Celtic Manor. Obviously we grasped this with both hands and on a, fortunately for us, sunny day in July, we performed "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau" on numerous occasions with the beautiful mountainside of the Brecon Beacons as the backdrop. The recording was not as glamorous as it sounds however as there were numerous cowpats and wasps that needed to be avoided by the choristers. Not all were successful in doing this! However, the final performance was screened worldwide in October during the Ryder Cup and, due to the fact that the weather was so poor, at least this gave the opportunity for our performance to be screened more regularly. Every cloud has a silver lining.

Due to popular demand, the Choir decided to record the CD 'Timeless' and this also occurred in July. My thanks go to the vicar at St. Germans Church in Cardiff for allowing the use of this magnificent building over three elongated days. The acoustic of the venue was a perfect choice of location to showcase the sound of the Choir. The actual recordings were tough with many choristers going there straight from work and not returning home until after midnight. However, it was felt by all that a job was well done. Once more, respect needs to be paid to the many choristers who attended without complaint and performed admirably and to the best of their ability at all times. The Treorchy Male Choir has continued to support many charities throughout 2010 including Wooden Spoon, International Rotary, Ty Hafan, Help the Heroes, Acorn Hospice and Tenovus. Each to a man believes that this is a very important function of the Choir and if more monies can be made from our presence, then we are always happy to assist. Indeed, Bob Harris of Wooden Spoon was made an Honorary Member of the Choir in 2010 and the Choir has become something of a staple at Wooden Spoon events. Hopefully, this will continue in 2011 and for many years to come.

The Treorchy Male Choir has benefited from the direction and musical knowledge provided by Jan and Helen, the management of the organisation by its Committee and, most importantly, the skills of the men in the ranks. The deserved mention of Jan and Helen's role has been stated earlier, so the committee deserve some mention for their efforts in managing the work that is entailed in the successful functioning of the Choir. To that end, Fred O'Brien's and Stuart Hill's role is recognised and rewarded here. Another mention goes to Will Thomas who has recently accepted the mantle of Vice Chairman. I would also like to pay particular thanks to Dean Powell for his boundless enthusiasm in not only presenting concerts and acting as soloist, but so much of the work behind the scene as publicity officer, archivist and webmaster. Together they have the Choir running through them like a stick of rock and the additional efforts they have put in have not gone unrecognised. The same applies to the rest of the committee who are always striving to do the best for the Choir. The old adage 'you can't please all the people all the time' is fairly stark especially in an organisation with over 100 members, but all are committed to dealing with any issues that come our way.

Finally, thanks to the public for their continued support. Strong relationships have been formed with too many to mention here but you all know who you are. The Choir would be nothing without the public paying for our concerts and merchandise and keeping the profile of Treorchy Male Choir at its highest. Also, thanks to our concert organisers, the charities mentioned above



Fairfield Hall, Croydon

and that of Jeanne Grey who do such a lot of work for us. For the future, we will continue to develop songs that have been learned and will generate a range of new music throughout 2011. Already a number of prestigious events have either been booked or are in the development stage, so it would appear that another busy year lies ahead. Not that anyone is complaining, we are all linked by the desire to sing and to entertain. Long may it continue.

A NIGHT AT THE CONCERT

by CRAD EVANS

Treorchy Male Choir certainly knows how to pick its venues. The past couple of years have seen performances at Llandaff and Winchester Cathedrals, Millennium Stadium Cardiff, and of course the iconic Sydney Opera House.

You wouldn't then, necessarily link the "Stroud Subscription Rooms" with the architectural magnificence of these sights. However, built in 1833 the building may not share the same size and grandeur but it's nevertheless a handsome Regency Building in its own right. Where it does outperform these other arenas is in its cosy intimacy, the combined length of its stage and auditorium probably less than the length of the hallowed Cardiff pitch itself, and with seating for about 400 a mere fraction of the others' capacity.

So it was that on a cold, damp night at the end of November, and long before doors opened we queued with glorious expectation. At the same time our anticipation was enhanced by the sight of the two coaches bringing the Choir itself, meaning that matters would proceed according to schedule, and that if the doors opened on time we might just have time for a pre-concert drink in the bar before settling down in our seats.

Imagine therefore, in such a cosy environment, the effect of such an explosion of harmony when the Choir comprising some eighty in number, began the first part of the evening. They opened with obvious enthusiasm performing the appropriately named 'With a Voice of Singing'. Its contribution in that first half included a small number of well-loved Welsh hymns and spirituals. Their rendition of that favourite Welsh hymn 'Llef' (meaning "cry from the heart") was sublime. Incidentally why are all the best Welsh hymns written in the minor key? Perhaps it makes them more reflective.

Dovetailed into the programme were songs and arias by Kate Woolveridge, without question a mezzo soprano of immense talent and charisma. Kate took us all by surprise by coming in on the blind side, entering at the back

of the auditorium and performing the role of Bizet's 'Carmen' with great effect as she moved teasingly towards the front.

The first part of the evening was brought to a magnificent close with a medley of songs from *Les Misérables*, in which the multi-tasking Dean Powell stepped out from the phalanx of tenors to share with Kate a couple of solo items.

Even the interval break gave me an added bonus point. A small handful of choristers joined those of us in the bar, but only of course for rehydration purposes, and it was very pleasant to share their company, albeit briefly.

The second part of the evening comprised songs by the Choir, including an elating Abba medley and further songs and arias from Kate Woolveridge. Another accomplished soloist, Ray Daniels, emerged from the ranks to join Dean in singing *From Far Inside the Shrine*, from Bizet's *The 'Pearlfishers'*.

The last item from the Choir was a song entitled 'Senzenina'. I hadn't heard this before but I've since learnt that the title means "What have I done?" It's a Zulu protest song, in which Ray Daniels again contributed in no small way. I also learn that there are many alternative lyrics which became more aggressive as the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa intensified. This now puts nicely into perspective the Choir's rebuttal with an off programme and stirring rendition of 'Men of Harlech'. If I didn't always think of Stanley Baker, Ivor Emmanuel, Michael Caine et al when I hear this, I will now!

Dean Powell was not only a tenor in the ranks and soloist, but also acted as Master of Ceremonies. His personality seemed to equip him ideally for the role, and his humour and professionalism meant that the whole event proceeded very slickly. It would be easy to forget though, that without an accompanist and conductor there wouldn't have been a concert of such outstanding quality. Helen Roberts and Janice Ball respectively, both highly accomplished musicians in their own right, ensured that the Choir enjoyed an enviable standard of direction and support.

If like me you're a lover of choral singing, Welsh, and male, then you'll know straightaway how difficult it is to sit in the audience and silently mouth the words being sung, desperately wanting to get up and join the men on stage. For those of us in the audience who met these criteria our chance partially came of course at the end, in the singing of the national anthems, (ladies also allowed). I think that in my own singing of 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' I couldn't have injected more hwyl, and did so for the ten miles back to the house. I once heard it said that the music of Mozart's 'Requiem' is such that it wraps its arms around you and takes care of you, something like a comfort blanket I suppose. For me, a child of the Valleys, the close harmony of the Treorchy Male Choir has the same effect, (as long as it's in the minor key?)

CONDUCTOR'S NOTES

By JANICE BALL

We began the year with plenty of aims and ambitions for 2010. The two most prominent aspirations were the introduction of new music and the need to recruit more choristers. Both of these have certainly been fulfilled with many new young choristers in the ranks and inclusion of new arrangements.



We often take for granted the name of Treorchy and the many opportunities it gives us to perform for so many varied audiences in first-class concert halls. Once again we were not disappointed as the year progressed. Certain engagements stand out from the rest including our long-awaited return to the Fairfield Hall, Croydon with its magnificent organ where our concert did much to

swell the funds for our charity, Wooden Spoon.

The Treorchy Male Choir prides itself in being a family and this was certainly exemplified in March when many of the choristers performed for Dean Powell's parents at Llantrisant Parish Church where they renewed their wedding vows on their 40th Wedding Anniversary. Our performance of "Love Could I Only Tell Thee" was indeed an emotional moment and it was a privilege to be there and share such a wonderful occasion.

It was an honour for the Choir to share the stage with the children of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen in celebrating their 60th anniversary at the Park & Dare Theatre. This was the first of two engagements during the year in which we performed alongside talented young artists. In our Annual Concert in Treorchy later in the year we welcomed the Maesteg Children's Choir for another memorable evening of song.

In July we filmed the Sky Sports television advertising campaign for the Ryder Cup Golf Tournament at Celtic Manor. Our filming took place on a glorious sunny Sunday afternoon on the Brecon Beacons and the finished product was

broadcast to a staggering 80million homes. At Derby we performed once more with the Derwent Brass Band and we hope very much to welcome them to our hometown in the near future.

As the year drew to a close, two concerts remain foremost in my memory. The performance at Llandaff Cathedral for the cancer charity, Tenovus with the Queen's Gold Medal winner for Poetry, Gillian Clarke-Thomas and the Tenovus Choir and Howells Junior School Choir and the intimate atmosphere of Ludlow which created unique and emotional evening for the Choir.

Much of the year's preparation was geared towards recording the first CD album in several years with an emphasis on the more contemporary musical items in the repertoire. This was held at St German's Church in Adamsdown, Cardiff, and I would very much like to thank Richard Kuhnel and staff for their patience and assistance in using this wonderful building for our recording. Working with Adrian Munsey and Gareth Williams for the second time in three years was a great privilege and we recognise their musical and promotional expertise. We wait with great anticipation for the release of "Timeless" in 2011 and look forward to many more collaborative recordings with them both. They certainly made life so much easier in the recording studio as we relied on their superior musical and technical opinions.



Jan with Beryl Thomas, daughter of founder accompanist Tom Jones

How we select our music is often due to the many suggestions of the choristers and audiences, allowing us the feedback of extensive and varied musical taste helps compile combinations of differing genres. 2010 was certainly another fulfilling year as we renewed old arrangements and introduced many new items which continually evolve, including 'Let It

Be Me', 'Take A Chance On Me' (as part of the Abba medley), Elgar's 'Ave Verum', 'One', 'Wonder Of You', 'The Rose' (to the words of 'Calon Lan') and the new arrangement of 'Liberation Hymn'.

The revival of 'Liberation Hymn' – by popular demand – gave us an ideal opportunity to support the charity work of the Help for Heroes fund.

Therefore it was apt that we performed a new arrangement, by Jeffrey Howard, at the Tidworth Garrison Theatre in aid of this particular cause.

I am also very pleased to welcome many new choristers into the ranks and look forward to many more joining the Choir in the year to come. The dedication and perseverance of the choristers who attend twice weekly rehearsals throughout the year is admirable and much more appreciated.

My eternal thanks go particular to Fred and Dean for their help and support throughout the year. Also my thanks to the Management Committee for their administration skills in running our Choir. Soloists are an integral part of our organisation and I wish to thank our "home soloists" in Ray and Dean and of course our good friends Kate Woolveridge, Iona Jones and David Geoffrey Thomas always professional, always stunningly musical. My thanks of course go as always to the performances of Helen. I very much look forward to 2011 which undoubtedly will be filled with many prestigious concerts and opportunities for the Treorchy Male Choir.

A HUNDRED MEMORIES IN A SINGLE NOTE

by JOHN INVERDALE

Music is by its nature a very personal thing. Songs remind us all of lost loves, lost relatives, moments of triumph and despair. A single note can evoke a hundred memories.

In 1971, my father took me to my first game of rugby in Wales - or at least the first I can remember. He'd recently taken up a post at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, and decided that after my school on Wednesdays, he and I would systematically head off to find a floodlit match somewhere, in the process doing a grand tour of all those great names of welsh rugby which I could never in several scarlet moons, have placed on a map - Cross Keys, Ebbw Vale, Aberavon.

I used to sit in the passenger seat with the map spread across my lap, offering helpful comments such as 'I think you missed it back there' or 'it's either right or left at the crossroads.'

The day we went to Treorchy is lost in the mists of time. We saw the road-sign, and I think I said (apologies to all concerned) that Treorchy didn't have a rugby club to which my father replied that we weren't going to drive down the main street to see rugby, but just to say we'd been to the place where the most famous male voice choir in the world came from.



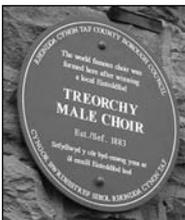
Fairfield Hall, Croydon

At the age of 14 I'm not convinced this exactly rocked my world, but nonetheless we did it, and it was duly ticked off the list of places to visit.

At school in Bristol the next day, I probably wisely refrained from saying that my wild Wednesday night had taken me up the valleys to a place where there was a Choir, but as is the way with these things, events in your childhood assume greater clarity with age, and just by writing these words, my father's Datsun passing between the tight-knit houses becomes a very vibrant image.

I've been lucky enough to work with the Treorchy Male Choir on several occasions, sometimes in grand settings, but the name for me is synonymous with a car trip nearly 40 years ago. A name and a sound that means a teenage day far removed from Slade and David Bowie. And a very precious memory.

BLUE PLAQUE AWARD



Treorchy Male Choir became the first choir in the country to be honoured with a Blue Plaque in recognition of its massive contribution to the rich cultural heritage of Wales.

In 2009 a Blue Plaque was unveiled on Treorchy Primary School to celebrate its second distinctive period of history



An evening at the Red Cow

from 1946 to the present day. A year later and a second Blue Plaque was unveiled on our original home, the Red Cow public house in Treorchy where the Choir was formed in the summer of 1883.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council presented the plaque to remember the original “Treorky Male Choir” which gained two first prizes at the National Eisteddfod of Wales and performed for Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in 1895. A special unveiling ceremony took place in July, 2010 at the Red Cow where Mayor of



S4C's 'Wedi Saith' live at the unveiling



Performing outside the Red Cow.

Rhondda Cynon Taf, Cllr Simon Lloyd attended along with a host of special guests.

The event was subject to a series of “live” broadcasts on S4C’s evening news programme Wedi Saith, featuring interviews with Conductor Janice Ball and Conductor Emeritus John Cynan Jones.

As the programme began the Choir performed “Gwahoddiad” prior to the actual unveiling and a performance of “Myfanwy” – the song performed on the first night in 1883 when the Choir won £1 for its efforts.

Some of the many guests of honour included Roy Noble and Dewi Griffiths from the BBC, along with entertainer Wyn Calvin. Choir soloists Kate Woolveridge and Iona Jones attended, along with former soprano soloist Elvira Henry who was reunited with the choristers after almost fifty years.

Former accompanist Jennifer Jones, Conductor of the Morryston Orpheus Choir Joy Amman Davies, President Brian Bates, Honorary Members Nigel & Judy Chivers and Jean Lawrence all attended the event.

Chairman Gareth Evans presented landlord and landlady Clive and Zaina Aktar with a large framed collection of Choir pictures which will go on show in the public house when its impressive refurbishment work is concluded in 2011.

A GREAT HONOUR

By ZAINA AKHTAR and CLIVE NUNES
RED COW, TREORCHY

We are delighted to be a part of the strong fabric of Treorchy history, by being the latest proud owners of the historic Red Cow Hotel.

Last summer a Blue Plaque was placed on the front of the building to formalise its place in history as a significant tourist attraction, and historically noteworthy premises.

We were unaware when we first came to Treorchy that such a world-famous institution such as the Treorchy Male Voice choir hailed from here, and when we went to view the Red Cow we were informed of its intriguing connection to the Choir - and it helped in our decision to purchase it.

We were honoured to have been able to host the Choir there for the presentation of the Blue Plaque which was televised, and are looking forward to restoring The Red Cow to some semblance of its former glory in the near future.

We were very touched when they broke into song during the presentations and are moved that we are associated to it all.



Clive and Zaina with a presentation from Chairman Gareth Evans

We have closed to start the process of refurbishment and plans are being finalised as we speak. We look forward very much to working with the Choir in the future and ensuring there's always a warm welcome in the Red Cow!

A CHOIR OF EXCELLENCE

by WYN CALVIN, MBE, OSTJ



The international impact of the Treorchy Male Choir has enhanced the reputation of choral music and also of Wales as The Land of Song. It has also made many aware of the town called Treorchy and its place in the annals of Rhondda history.

So it was a personal pleasure to be present on the evening of the unveiling of a Blue Plaque and to enjoy the good company of the lyrical lads of Treorchy at the Red Cow Hotel. One of the memorable features of being with the Choir is the sense of enjoyment that the choristers reveal – and this is relayed to audiences which enhances the impact of the singing.

Ever since the beginning of human time “man” has been aware of the rhythm and the sound of music – to be able, in the twenty first century to increase the joy of harmony and song by being part of a Choir of excellence of “our lads” is more than a pleasure. It is a privilege.

Congratulations to everyone involved – and warmest good wishes for the next years of international impact.

A SOPRANO'S RETURN

Soprano Elvira Henry had the distinct honour of appearing many times as the soloist for the Treorchy Male Choir almost fifty years ago. Originally from Treherbert, she was recognised for her beautiful voice by founder conductor John Haydn Davies who invited her to appear with the Choir at a concert in Caerphilly on May 1962.

During the next six years Elvira appeared in a total of fifteen concerts throughout Wales and beyond its borders and was a firm favourite with both choristers and audiences alike.

When the Choir launched its new website, www.treorchymalechoir.com, the Archivist re-discovered Miss Henry at her new home in the Swansea Valley. The Choir was delighted when she visited Treorchy in July 2010 to attend the unveiling of a Blue Plaque at the Red Cow public house.

Having also made a financial donation to the Choir funds, Miss Henry wrote the following words for inclusion in this edition of Excelsior:



Janice Ball and Elvira Henry

“Thank you so much for giving me the honour in requesting an article from me for your annual magazine Excelsior. I’d like to say, that from the bottom of my heart, performing as soloist with the dear Treorchy Male Choir under the supreme baton of the late Mr John Haydn Davies, has given me so much pleasure through my life, and also opened up so many other doors of entertainment for me.

“Thank you all for remembering me, it made me feel so proud. Wishing you all at the Choir, your soloists, conductor and accompanist every success through 2011 and the years ahead.”

RUBY WEDDING CELEBRATION

One special occasion this year took place for chorister Dean Powell because it marked the Ruby Anniversary of his parents, Carole and David. In celebration of forty years together, they decided to hold a Renewal of Wedding Vows ceremony at Llantrisant Parish Church.



Carole and David Powell's Ruby Wedding Ceremony

This deeply emotional service will live long in the memory of all who attended. Janice Ball agreed to conduct the Choir with David Geoffrey Thomas as organist. Almost half of the Choir also attended and provided a magical and inspiring sound.

They performed 'Gwahoddiad' as Mrs Powell walked down the aisle on the arm of her nephew, the singer Jeff Hooper.

Following a moving speech by Dean, soprano Ros Evans sang 'O Mio Babino Caro' before the Choir concluded with 'Love Could I Only Tell Thee'. A day to remember.

JUNIOR MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

Talented schoolchildren throughout the Rhondda gave the performance of their young lives at the Grand Final of the Treorchy Male Choir Junior Musician of the Year Competition 2010.

A total of 20 children took to the stage at Treorchy Comprehensive School hall, which had been magically transformed into an atmospheric theatre, before a packed audience of 600 parents, teachers and supporters for the major event.

The winner of the Singing Category was Katie Leigh Jones of Alaw Primary School for her performance of "Part Of Your World". The winner of the Instrumentalist Category was Charlotte Lewis of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg



The Grand Finalists



Max Boyce

Ynyswen who performed “Solitaire” on the cornet. Young Charlotte also won the Grand Final in 2009.

Now celebrating its fifth year, a total of 22 primary and junior schools in the two valleys entered the competition whose patron is Welsh

bass-baritone Bryn Terfel MBE.

BBC Broadcaster Roy Noble opened the evening’s proceedings and Welsh icon Max Boyce presented the prizes. Both gentlemen are Honorary Members of the Choir.

Hundreds of schoolchildren auditioned in a series of preliminary heats, judged by members of the Treorchy Male Choir. Two further Semi Finals were



Roy Noble and Max Boyce making presentations to the two winners



The Grand Final Adjudicators.

held in Porth Comprehensive School and at the Tonypandy College.

The finalists received a certificate, trophy and tickets for themselves and an adult to a day out in London to see "Oliver" in the West End.

The two winners each received £200

prize money, a trophy and the Treorchy Male Choir Trophy to be retained by their school for one year. As a special prize they also enjoyed an all-expenses paid trip to Euro Disney, Paris for themselves and two adults.

They also had the opportunity to share the stage with the Choir at their Good Friday Concert in the Park & Dare Theatre.

The Grand Final had an impressive list of adjudicators, including Joy Amman



Griff Rhys Jones welcomed the finalists at London's West End.

Davies, Conductor of Morriston Orpheus Male Choir, “Only Men Aloud” arranger and accompanist Jeffrey Howard, Conductor of the Four Counties Youth Choir Derek Holvey, Janice Ball, the Conductor of the Treorchy Male Choir and Dr Haydn James, retired Conductor of the London Welsh Male Choir and the man who leads the singing at the Royal Albert Hall and on the pitch at the Millennium Stadium prior to every Welsh international match.

Max Boyce explained: “This has been a magical night and these children have all performed magnificently. Treorchy means a lot to me, after all it was here that I made that first album and the people of the Rhondda remain very close to my heart.

“All congratulations to the children and also to the fine Treorchy Male Choir for having the immense foresight and dedication to make this competition such a paramount success.”

RHONDDA GLEE SOCIETY

RIVALS IN SONG

by DEAN POWELL

“Cythraul y Canu” or the “Demon in Music” is a term used to encapsulate the intense musical rivalry which once existed between so many of Wales’s leading male voice choirs. Today we cannot comprehend how significant the role choralism played in moulding an image of Wales. The Land of Song phenomenon continues to baffle historians today as they examine a period, predominantly from the mid 19th century through to the Second World War when this “golden era” shaped the very identity of the Welsh people. Yet behind the façade lay an undeniable tension as the rivalry between choirs was akin to tribal warfare.

It was much more than just the occasional remark over a post-eisteddfod drink, or a short letter in a Welsh-language periodical. The 19th century was a time of intense competitiveness between Wales’s foremost musical ambassadors, the likes of which we will probably never see again. It wasn’t just choir or community pride that was at stake. Increased cash prizes and behind-the-scenes betting, all created an atmosphere at competitions that saw the crowds flock in their thousands.

When Wales played England in rugby at Newport in 1891, there were 8,000 spectators there to watch the game. A few months later and the Chief Male

Voice Choir Competition at the National Eisteddfod welcomed 20,000 fans, such was the popularity of choral contests. This exciting, vibrant and youthful industrial heartland of South Wales, of which the Rhondda was the most famous, became an entire hotbed of musical fanaticism. Competitors were vindictive: big money was at stake in bets, law suits took place and sabotage was used on more than one occasion. Long before village rugby teams reached a position of prominence, it was the choirs who inspired villagers to turn out en masse to watch the "battle of the giants". Newspaper reports of the period tell some joyous tales of adjudicators fleeing for their lives when awarded the first prizes at various eisteddfodau. Tomatoes, boots, even chairs were thrown across marquees at the adjudicator's table. At one semi-national in Carmarthen, the adjudicator escaped from his hotel dressed as a policeman to avoid an angry mob.



Rhondda Glee Society

One of the 20th centuries most eminent Welsh composers, William Mathias, summed up the story of Rhondda choral music in Victorian times by saying, "The tradition of the 19th century Welsh choralism was as much a sociological as a musical phenomenon, arising out of the need of the people to express religious fervour or to rise above hardship and poverty through the means of choral singing. They are to be honoured for doing so. They and their leaders were in bond to their time in taking the only means open to

them with results which were often inspiring.”

It was in such circumstances that the original Treorky Male Choir first found its voice in the Red Cow Hotel, Treorchy in the summer of 1883. The recorded history of the Choir has since been well documented, and while undertaking several years of research work into the subject, another choir's name came frequently to the surface. The Rhondda Glee Society existed but a mile or two away in neighbouring Ton Pentre but alongside Treorky, their competitive performances were greeted like two nations in armed combat. Choristers from both choirs often worked in the same colliery, or even lived in the same terraced streets, adding to the heightened tension. It was not uncommon for the strained eisteddfod competitions to cause tempers to fray, resulting in large-scale fights breaking out in adjoining fields, only to be quelled by the constabulary.

However, it wasn't only the organisations themselves that revelled in this animosity. The conductors could hardly be considered close friends either. Tom Stephens, like Treorky's William Thomas, also grew up in the Cynon Valley and also sang in Caradog's South Wales Choral Union, or Cor Mawr that went to Crystal Palace in 1872 to win the Thousand Guinea Trophy. Yet that was where their similarities ended. On the one hand Thomas was a staunch teetotaller whereas Stephens was the landlord of the Blacksmith's Arms in Treherbert. He moved to Ton Pentre as the precentor of Bethesda Independent Chapel and became the first and only conductor of the Rhondda Glee Society.

The Rhondda Glee Society enjoyed a proud, if short-lived history. Formed in 1877, they travelled far and wide to claim prize after prize in both local, county and even national eisteddfod competitions. A relatively small group of just 30 singers initially, in their debut year they claimed first prizes at Pontypridd, Tonypany and Pentre.

Tom Stephens, next to Griffith Rhys Jones (Caradog) had for many years been the most famous choral conductor in Wales. He maintained a reputation never to shirk a contest and when his preminence was challenged, he continually produced many first class performances with the Rhondda Glee Society attaining the position as one of the top three choirs in Wales.

Tom Stephens was born in Brynaman on February 25th 1856 and sixteen months later the family moved to Aberdare. The Stephens family were not known for their musical prowess, yet Tom was a gifted scholar at Ysgol y Comin where schoolmaster Dan Isaac Davies recognised his immense potential. A gifted violinist, Tom read and studied avidly, while taking every opportunity to watch choirs perform at local eisteddfodau where he observed

the methods of singing and conducting. Caradog, the Trecynon blacksmith who later became landlord of the Treorchy Hotel, influenced his musical technique more than anyone else. In fact it was Caradog who appointed him as one of the alto singers in Aberdare Choral Union when Tom was a boy working in the local colliery. After Caradog retired and Rhys Evans took up mantle, Tom was his deputy and continued to develop his craft.

It was his musical prowess that led him to accept a position as precentor (or chorusmaster) to Bethesda Chapel in Ton Pentre in 1877. At the same time Rhondda Glee Society was being formed by schoolmaster Rees Jones and James Thomas, originally of Llandysul. Together they approached Tom to become Conductor, recognising his musical accomplishment as the Conductor of the Aberdare Glee Society, Aberdare Temperance Bank and the Mid Rhondda Choral Union. He was also the deputy of the Sylvia Opera Company and trained the Santiago Choirs during the Cardiff Exhibition some years later.

For the next few years his training and mastery over the Rhondda Glee Society continued to bear fruit. In 1881 the Glee Society entered the male voice competition at Aberdare, beating the immortal Danny Davies and other capable musical leaders of his generation. Two years later in 1883 – the year Treorky Male Choir was formed - the performance of the victorious Rhondda Glee Society at the National Eisteddfod in Cardiff, led to a revolution in their particular style of singing, attracting thousands of spectators. At long last the male voice choir contest became the rage, with the largest prizes attracting larger crowds and competitors.

Over the coming years the list of first-prizes for the Glee Society increased, with major wins at Aberdare, Merthyr, Porth, Pentre and Treharris. By 1887 the membership had increased to forty and that year they shared the first prize at the National Eisteddfod, held in London, with the Huddersfield Choir. Incredibly in 1889 the party toured the Welsh settlements of the United States of America for months on end, but according to reports returned “somewhat disorganised and a long period of readjustment took place until Stephens could pull them together again”. If truth be told, they returned virtually bankrupt and entered numerous competitions in an effort to recover their financial losses. It was a new golden era for them with 15 successive wins and only three defeats in the next two years.

The 1888 National Eisteddfod at Brecon marked the start of the bitter rivalry between the Rhondda Glee Society and Treorky Male Choir that occupied the Welsh music scene for a decade. During their next encounter the constabulary was called to the riot-like scene of bloody-faced choristers fighting in the

streets. In an eisteddfod in Porth, adjudicated by Mr D.W. Lewis, the test piece was Dr Joseph Parry's "The Pilgrims." Treorchy was disappointed at not securing the services of Gwilym Thomas from Ynyshir, to perform a solo in this arrangement.

A few days before the competition Treorchy's William Thomas booked the famous Welsh operatic baritone David Thomas Ffrangcon Davies (1855-1918), but the welcome he received at the competition was anything but friendly. Recognising the professional singer on stage (which was unacceptable in an amateur competition), an uproar ensued with Tom Stephen's men heckling throughout the performance. Mr Davies, raising his hand to the audience announced, "I see you object to a professional singing this solo. I am very sorry and did not know there would be an objection. But if the adjudicator awards me the prize for the solo performance, I will not take it. Let it go to the next best, if I happen to be best which I very much doubt."

Eventually there was silence and the audience sat spellbound at his remarkable voice, breaking into rapturous applause and cheers when he concluded. The Treorchy Male Choir did indeed win the first prize, causing heightened animosity amongst the rival male choirs.

At the 1891 Royal National Eisteddfod in Swansea the test pieces were "The Destruction of Gaza" by Laurent De Rille (with its remarkable eight-part harmony) and Dr Parry's "The Pilgrims." A total of twelve male choirs competed including the Port Talbot Male Party, Rhondda Glee Society, Pontycymmer Glee Party, Glantawe Glee Society, Cynon Glee Party, Myrddin Male Party, Treherbert Male Party, Treorchy Male Society (as it was named!), Rhondda Fach Glee Society, Cynon Valley United Glee, Brynaman United Glee and Llanelli Philharmonic Party.

Treorchy came a creditable second behind the Pontycymmer Male Choir who won "£30, a gold medal and books to the value of £5." The following year they also lost the National Eisteddfod in Rhyl where none other than Dr Joseph Parry himself led the adjudication panel.

The year of 1893 marked Treorchy's most important musical competition to date and also marked yet another fierce encounter with the Rhondda Glee Society. During the previous four years they had competed against each other on 11 occasions with Treorchy winning six times, the Glee Society twice and both choirs sharing the first prize three times. On one occasion a competition was brought to an abrupt end when the Glee marched around the back of the marquee, pulled out the ground pegs and the roof collapsed on the Treorchy singers!

The Pontypridd Royal National Eisteddfod of 1893 was one of the most



Mr. Tom Stephens

heated events because the winning choir was to be invited to travel to America and compete in the Chicago World Fair. The male voice choir competition generated tremendous interest with the test pieces "The War House" and "The Tyrol". Five male voice choirs competed including Treorky and the Rhondda Glee, Porth & Cymmer, Caernarvon and Maesteg. The adjudicators were Caradog and the eminent English composer Samuel Coleridge Taylor. At one stage Treorky was a point ahead with their performance of "The War Horse", but the Glee's performance of "The Tyrol" clinched the first prize by two points. Apparently Tom Stephens had received first

hand information about the yodelling techniques of the Tyrolean mountains from a brewery traveller who visited his pub. This piece of realism was the turning point in the event and earned them the transatlantic ticket. They went on to win the Chicago World Fair eisteddfod against choirs from Ireland, Italy and Holland, but on their return they never competed again, yet their absence from the eisteddfod field did not signal the end of the rivalry.

On Whit-Monday 1895 Treorky Male Choir enjoyed a memorable victory at the Caerphilly eisteddfod on the test piece "The Druids" by Dr Joseph Parry. The chief adjudicator, Dr Roland Rogers of Bangor, announced, "We could not find one single fault from beginning to end of the performance." It was a remark that gave them the confidence to enter the Royal National Eisteddfod in Llanelli later that year.

Llanelli was a memorable National Eisteddfod. Treorky "showed such a unity of discipline, vocal riches and inspiration", that three of the four judges, Sir Joseph Barnby, Dr Joseph Parry, David Jenkins and R.C. Jenkins independently had each written the word "Wonderful", after Treorky's performance. Although retired from the competitive arena, the Rhondda Glee Society, with 54 eisteddfod choral prizes to their name, heightened the rivalry with Treorky still further. Treorky had long-since been favourites of the Dunraven family, who, following the Llanelli victory, contacted the Royal Household, suggesting Queen Victoria herself should hear the Welsh miners. The royal seal was finally set when the news was received from the Queen's Private Secretary, Lord Edward Clinton, "Mr Thomas, 70 Dumfries Street, Treorchy. The Queen

has decided to hear Welsh Choir on Wednesday twenty seventh. Please communicate with me as to any arrangements you wish made.”

The news of the Royal Command Performance, which was to be held at Windsor Castle on November 29th 1895, resulted in remarkable newspaper coverage throughout the entire country. A circular was then issued throughout the Rhondda, reading: “Her Majesty the Queen has been pleased to allow the Choir to sing before her in Windsor Castle in the course of the next month and to give a selection of Welsh Airs to Welsh words. It is generally felt that the Choir, by its matchless singing and marvellous success, has conferred honour upon Wales.”

A major fundraising effort began with the Vicar of Ystradyfodwg appointed chair. An active working committee was elected with W.P. Thomas, the Secretary of the Ocean Coal Company, appointed secretary to the committee and E.H. Davies as treasurer. Weeks of fundraising and rehearsals dominated the Treorky Male Choir as they prepared for the royal concert. The rehearsal room was filled every night with visitors who came to hear the musical ambassadors before they embarked on their royal journey. Treorky Male Choir had achieved greater fame than any previous Welsh choir of its kind.

William Thomas was regarded as a national hero. The invitation to sing before the Queen marked an important milestone not only in choral history, but in Welsh history. He was inundated with letters of congratulations, honorary titles, certificates and even poetry was written in celebration of his success.

Tom Stephens and his men at the Rhondda Glee Society were furious. In fact, Tom went so far as to accuse the telegraphic office of sending the invitation to sing for the Queen to the wrong choir and that such a grave error had deprived his choir from the privilege. Tom went to the national press with the story, demanding the resignation of the Treorchy postmaster no less!

During their previous visit to Chicago, the Welsh exiles assembled at a concert and asked the Glee Society to convey to Prime Minister Mr Ewart Gladstone, an address of thanks for the part he took to meet the demands of the Welsh people to create a national university. Rhondda MP William Abraham, “Mabon” (who coincidentally was the President of the Treorky Choir!) introduced Tom Stephens and friends to Gladstone in a reception at the House of Commons, and the Liberal Leader said his Choir should sing for the Queen and negotiations began.

Unfortunately the Queen Empress was at Cannes so the initial concert was postponed. Shortly afterwards Gladstone retired and during Lord Roseberry’s premiership Mabon reminded the Prime Minister of the promise, resulting in

the Controller of the Household making arrangements. But once again these were scuppered with the death of the Duke of Clarence, the Prince of Battenburg and that of Sir Hugh Ponsonby.

Major Walter Quinn took up the suggestion again and finally on January 25th 1898 – more than two years since Treorky’s visit – an official letter came from Quinn inviting them to appear at Windsor. It was closely followed by a telegram from Sir Walter Parratt, the Queen’s Organist, directing them to appear in evening dress – and not “Sunday Best” as had been Treorky’s way. While Treorky had taken Dr Joseph Parry as their guest of honour to Windsor, Tom Stephens invited his good friend Eos Dar, the famous Pennillion Singer and multiple-winner at the National Eisteddfod of Wales. Ironically enough, six members of the Glee Society had previously sang with Treorky and appeared with them before the Queen in 1895.

On February 22nd 1898 the Choir left Ystrad train station to a huge send-off. Along the hillsides of Penrhys and Gelli people waved at the royal singers while crowds gathered at Pontypridd and Cardiff to greet the choristers through the windows of their saloons of the Great Western Railway carriages. They reached Windsor at 6.10pm, settling into their accommodation at the White Hart Hotel and enjoying tea in the dining room where Mabon struck up “Crugybar” and the Choir sang for a few minutes before Tom Stephens ordered silence for fear they would lose their voices. He did, however allow them a rehearsal of “God Save the Queen” before they departed for their rooms to don their evening dress and white gloves, also bearing breast badges to say they’d won the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd.

At 8.45pm they formed a procession up Castle Hill and entered through the Grand Entrance to be met by Mr Miles of the Lord Chamberlain’s Department in the cloakroom. Then they were led up the grand staircase to St George’s Hall where an orchestra had been erected and six tiers of seats for the Welshmen. A group of 36 gilded chairs in six rows were placed for the audience with a low armed black oak chair, richly upholstered, stood in the centre alongside a small table holding a pair of opera glasses, a magnifying lens and a copy of the concert programme bound in red borocco.

Mr D. Jones sat at the grand piano and Percie Smith was sat at the American organ. Punctually at 10pm the bells chimed and the doors opened into the hall. The Ladies and Gentlemen of the Household, with Lord Edward Clinton, Controller of the Household appearing to signal the Queen’s approach. They all rose to the majestic strains of the National Anthem. The Queen, bent over, walked slowly. Her right hand was resting on a stick, her left holding her Indian attendant. Dressed in black with a flowing white head

dress, the Queen sat with her daughter, the Princess of Battenburg to her right, with a Lady in Waiting to her left. The Queen smiled as they performed "God Bless the Prince of Wales" in English and Welsh, which was followed by "The Little Church" (Beckker) and "Comrades in Arms" by Adolphe Adams.

The Western Mail journalist Morien, who had also accompanied Treorkey on their Royal Command, observed, "Other items were sung without any special incident except that as the choristers proceeded they gained in confidence. There was a fine rendering of 'Annabelle Lee' to the words of Edgar Allan Poe and music by Dr Joseph Parry." According to reports the "The Pilgrims Chorus", with soloist David Jones of Cilfynydd and "Huntsmen's Chorus" was especially well received followed by "Day And Night" and "Men of Harlech" when "the choristers were at their very best". Berleur's "Hues of the Day" followed with a solo and chorus of "matchless beauty". While "Y Tyrol" gave them admirable opportunity to display versatility and musicality of the chorus and soloist Ambrose Thomas which proved to be one of the best of the evening."

At this point Tom Stephens was called upon. The Queen said, "Your choir sang magnificently."

"I am delighted", he responded, "That Your Majesty is pleased with their efforts."

"Are they all professionals?" she asked

"No Your Majesty. Three fourths of them are colliers. We have but one professional, Mr D Jones and even he, Your Majesty, has been brought up in the mines and worked underground until the last two or three years when he won a scholarship and entered the Academy."

"You surprise me", the Queen replied.

Princess Battenburg said, "That singing is really most beautiful."

Her Majesty added, "I'm sure you wouldn't mind singing the "Men of Harlech" one more time?"

"With pleasure Your Majesty", he replied.

The Choir launched into Gounod's "Soldier's Chorus", "Italian Salad" and then "Men of Harlech" where the rafters resounded to "Cymru Fo Am Byth". The choristers performed "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau" next while the last item on the programme was Rhys Lewis's Welsh version of "God Save The Queen" with solos and chorus. "The Cymric fire was there in beautiful blend with the rich and sonorous intonation for which welsh singers are known." Unlike Treorchy Choir there were no encores.

Following the performance the Choir resumed their seats. Her Majesty “gave gracious inclinations of the head towards her Welsh subjects. She placed an item in the hands of Mr Mutcher, her German librarian and he gave it to Tom Stephens, saying, “Her Majesty has wished me on her behalf to ask your acceptance of this gift”. The item was a precious gold scarf pin, glittering with precious diamonds and rubies with the VRI crest in the centre.

Tom Stephens was asked to visit the Queen at her private apartments. Led by Lord Clinton, the conductor was approached by Her Majesty who said, “I should like you to write your name in my autograph birthday book. Now take your time. Take your time, there is no hurry.” Trembling he wrote “Tom Stephens, Windsor Castle, February 22nd 1898”

On the Choir’s arrival in the Rhondda they were again treated to a hero’s welcome, as had their rival singers. In Pentre the streets were decorated with streamers, flags and Japanese lanterns. The streets were “thronged with an immense crowd” carrying torches and lights. A procession was led by Tom Stephens in a trap accompanied by Mr E.H. Davies JP and Mr D Richards (grocer) who had been in charge of the local celebrations. The entourage was followed by the Cory and the Pentre Volunteer Brass Band while 200 people walked four abreast behind. The splendid spectacle led through the village to Treorchy where the “Choir was cheered vociferously as the procession wound its way to Treorchy, the home of the other male choir party who were accorded similar royal honours a few years ago”.

At Stag Square they turned back and reached Cory Workmen’s Hall where Tom Stephens appeared at a window on the second floor. With a muffler around his neck and suffering from a cold, he thanked them all “Diolch yn fawr iawn I chwi I gyd” before the crowd sang “For He’s A Jolly Good Fellow”. The Choir then sang “Men of Harlech”, “God Save the Queen” and “Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau” to the enthusiastic crowd.

Subsequent newspaper reports have often questioned whether the Royal Glee Society were afforded the same rousing applause from the Royal Family as Treorky had received earlier. Morien himself explained, “There was not on the part of the audience that cheering which characterised the reception afforded to the Treorky Choir two years ago. This was probably to be accounted for by the fact that whereas Treorky were in ordinary Sunday clothes, they had not worn evening dresses and were consequently received and treated as miners. The present choir appeared in evening dress and white gloves and were more or less received and treated as professionals. There can be no mistake about it. They looked well, they sang splendidly, and they were thoroughly appreciated, but the method adopted to show the appreciation was not the same.

Their singing was listened to in silence. There was not much sign of approval.”

Tom Stephens died eight years later, by which time the Rhondda Glee Society had disbanded. He was buried on January 29th 1906 in Aberdare where a choir of 500 voices were led under the direction of his old friend, Eos Dar. His obituary remembered him for the kindness and support of all musical organisations in which he became involved. As a competitor he had been very successful, had followed the careers of Caradog and Joseph Parry, and above all was a “great believer in Welsh music who always wanted to promote the music of his country.”

AN IMMACULATE PERFORMANCE

A Review of the Concert at Wolverhampton Goodyear Pavilion

It was indeed an evening to be proud of when Treorchy Male Choir were supported by the Wolverhampton Orpheus Male Voice Choir at Goodyear’s Pavilion in support of the WFC 050 Group.

The Pavilion was bulging to the seams, with everyone enthralled by the music and beautiful singing of the choirs. Superb performances by the soloists, soprano Kate Woolveridge and tenor Dean Powell, added to the sheer enjoyment of the audience.

It is not difficult to understand why, with their quality, power and immaculate timing, the Treorchy Male Choir is so famous around the world.

Chairman of the evening was Mel Thomas, who is as Welsh “as they come” but lives in Halesowen. Mel had everyone highly amused with his witty humour which linked the sections of the programme so well.

It was heartwarming too, at the end of the evening, when everyone stood to join in the singing of both National Anthems, something that seems to have declined over the years.

The evening, however, did not quite end there as Goodyear’s maintained the bar until midnight and the Welshmen demonstrated that their capacity to drink was not far behind their ability to sing. It was definitely a memorable evening.

IN MEMORIAM

“Close Thine Eyes & Sleep Secure”

During 2010 members of Treorchy Male Choir paid their final respects to a large number of former choristers. Although those dearly departed men had long-since left the ranks of the Choir, the friendships and memories shared with present-day choristers made their loss an opportunity to mourn and reflect on their contributions to the Treorchy Male Choir. Individually they had all played their part in the ongoing success of the Choir and once again, members came together to pay their final respects to some dear old friends.

David Trembath of Bryn Terrace, Ystrad joined the Second Bass section of the Choir in 1974, a year before his brother-in-law Cyril Bevan also joined the ranks. David was a stalwart member of the Choir, with a larger than life character and always full of humour. He received his Long Service Certificate in 1995 and was a Committee Member for his section from 1985 to 1992. Employed in the mining industry, David was one of life’s great characters who will be sorely missed.

When it came to larger-than-life characters, then few could rival Derek Fear. Known to one and all as “Dicky Fear”, he was truly a funny, friendly and joyful character. Dicky, who worked for T.C.Jones in Treorchy, was a born-comic, always ready with a joke and a smile. Originally from Pentre, he joined the First Tenor section in 1958 and remained there for the next twenty years. During the days when he lived in Clydach Vale he would famously jump off the Rodneys coach at post-midnight hour, rush into the house to change into his pyjamas and walk into the road to wave the coach off after it had turned at the top of the hill. Armed with his trademark cigar, he was pictured exchanging his cigar with Tom Jones during the filming of one of his Christmas Specials.

Another of the former choristers who passed away during the year was Ken Baldwin of Troedyrhiw Terrace in Treorchy. Ken, who worked for British Gas, joined the Choir in 1966 and performed in the ranks of the Second Bass section for the next 23 years. He was also a Committeeman from 1974 to 1975 and remained a popular and friendly member of the Choir throughout his choral career.

A number of choristers attended the funeral of former member Derek Moore who served in the ranks for over a decade. Derek, from Tyn-y-Cymmer Close in Porth joined the First Bass section in 1997, but ill health deprived him of the opportunity to perform regularly in the ranks during his latter years. A devoted musician and brass band enthusiast, Derek passed away at the early age of just 58.

Some of the singing statesmen of the Choir will also remember baritone Tom Griffiths. Tom was the twin brother of Sam Griffiths, the Choir's baritone soloist for more than forty years. For a very short period of time in late 1948, early 1949, Tom was also a member of the First Bass section alongside his brother and was recognised as an equally as talented vocalist. Tom survived his younger brother, former Choir Chairman Bob Griffiths by less than a year. A number of older choristers joined Sam to pay their final respects.

Finally, during the Autumn of 2010 choristers paid tribute to one of its founding fathers in Jack Knapgate. Jack was a true son of Treorchy whose family had been associated with the Choir for over a century. Jack's father, Edward "Ned" Knapgate was a member of the Choir following World War I and was later instrumental in reforming the Choir in 1946 where he remained as Vice Chairman for 17 years and Vice President. Another of Jack's relatives was Tom Knapgate, Accompanist of the Choir in 1920. As for Jack himself, he joined the Choir after a decorated service in World War II which saw him drive the landing crafts on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. Jack originally joined the First Tenor section as far back as 1949, but a professional football career for Scunthorpe United saw him leave the Rhondda for several years. He re-joined the Choir in 1962 and remained a permanent fixture of the second row of his section until 1982. Following a four-year gap, he returned once more and remained a chorister until 2002 when kidney failure resulted in his retirement from the Choir. Despite his illness, Jack overcame his problems to live a further eight years, remaining faithful to the Choir and always making sure he was kept up to date with events and news. His large scrapbooks and albums of Choir history, now kept in the Choir archives, are testament to his devotion and many choristers will remember celebrating his 80th birthday during the tour of USA and Canada in 2000 when once again he charmed the crowd with his nightingale-like solo performance. Jack was indeed a great friend to all and a devoted member of the Treorchy Male Choir.

"We salute their memory and mourn their passing"

AN ORGANIST'S RETROSPECTIVE OF THE TOUR DOWN UNDER

(Not A Distant Memory But Still A Very Vivid One)

By DAVID GEOFFREY THOMAS

I really couldn't believe my ears when Jan asked me to be the organist on the Treorchy's fourth tour of Australia and New Zealand. Not being such a sea-



David Geoffrey Thomas receiving his Honorary Membership of the Choir.

soned traveller as Jan or, come to that, the rest of the Choir, I had NEVER been so far for so long. My sojourns hitherto had taken me as far as Torquay, the Isle of Staffa and a couple of places on mainland Europe and for never more than seven days. Being an unsophisticated little boy from Llanelli and my father only having one week's holiday a year, we only ever went to Ilfracombe and Torquay. The notion of going anywhere unreachable

by car and for longer than a week was completely anathema. My mother wouldn't go on a ship in case it sank and an aeroplane was only for people you saw on television. Before I came along, my parents went on holiday in a caravan to Saundersfoot once but one night there was a terrible storm and the caravan started to slide down the hill so that was the end of a caravan-type holiday.

As the chapel was such a big part of our lives, we had only ever heard of places that were mentioned in the Beibl Cymraeg – Yr Aifft, Y Môr Marw, Caersalem, Yr Iorddonen. We never knew where they were because there was no Welsh atlas in print. Australia, which was not mentioned in the Bible at all, just didn't feature in our lives. You can see, therefore, that the thought of going to the Antipodes was as if travelling to a distant planet, so my inner being was filled with trepidation, elation, complete bewilderment and – excitement – in that order! My flying hours could be counted, literally, on one hand. How would I cope with being so far away for such a long time? I couldn't possibly carry sufficient clothes for three weeks and washing them was something you only did at home. This, however, was far too good an opportunity to miss and I felt so privileged to have been asked and to think that I was considered good enough.

I couldn't wait to tell all my friends. There was some disappointment, however, when one or two of them (including my brother and his wife) replied, "Oh I've been there, it's a nice place"! My ego was soon restored, though, when I told them that they had not been there with the Treorchy Male Choir nor per-

formed in fabulous concert halls nor played the organs I was going to play. To me, this was an epic adventure into the unknown and a fantastic experience. I have played for a few male choirs and thought I knew the repertoire. I had never played for the Treorchy, however, and did not know the tour repertoire. Luckily, Jan made sure that I played as much as possible with the Choir before going in order to get used to the routine, learn the music and, most importantly, meet everyone. What a fantastic group of people and what a fantastic sound.

From the moment I stepped on to the aeroplane in Heathrow I knew straight away that I was in good company and in the presence of seasoned travellers, whereas I was a mere novice. To coin the old cliché that ‘Travel broadens the mind’, this trip certainly broadened my mind in more ways than one! As I stepped off the aeroplane in Perth, I simply couldn’t believe I was there: this unsophisticated little boy from Llanelli, far from home, being exposed to the wicked ways of the other side of the world by none other than the Choir whom I have admired for so long. They do say, however, that what happens on tour, stays on tour and that is the golden rule to which I shall abide. Ask no questions and I shall tell no lies.

I had some fantastic organs to play in fantastic concert halls but, alas, an organist’s life is seldom an easy one. Pianos always look the same but every organ is different and not always in the most convenient places. The organ console can be a lonely place if it is remote. In Melbourne, for example, I found myself acknowledging applause by bowing to the lighting gantry where nobody could see me! In Adelaide, I had to play the organ in its cupboard backstage – apparently the largest cupboard in the world! To the audience, the sound must have appeared to be coming from nowhere. To acknowledge that applause I had to literally jump off the stool and run around like a madman to the front of the stage from behind the curtains before the applause stopped but, of course, that was no real proof that it was I who actually played. The backstage crew just laughed. The organ in the Robert Blackwood Hall in Melbourne was an awful thing. It was difficult to play and out of tune, designed by some eccentric who wanted to make life even more difficult for the player.

I did enjoy myself, however, playing all these different instruments as it all adds to the experience of an organist. We are like train spotters, I suppose. We are also meglomaniacs – the bigger and louder, the better. The sense of power is amazing. An organ going full blast can shake everything!! In the immortal words of Mrs. Organ Morgan, “It’s organ organ all the time with you...”

Sydney Opera House was the famous one – the largest of its kind in the world. What an organ! I had to meet the organ tuner before I was allowed to play it. I envisaged being told, “Don’t touch this...don’t play that”. There was none of that, however. He was the most delightful and co-operative person, having to battle his way through the same security regime in the Opera House as everyone else and all he wanted to do was to show off his organ to whoever wanted to play it. The poor man. He showed me around his organ and stayed with me throughout the whole concert in case I collapsed out of sheer wonder. There were humidifiers on inside the organ which produced a slight mist. At the end of the concert he told me that when I played ‘Hen Wlad y Nhadau’ I was so loud that the bellows sucked in all this mist and nearly created a vacuum. After everyone left the building and the Choir were safely ensconced in a local hostelry, the organ tuner’s mate turned up. They showed me all around the inside of the organ – a far better experience than drinking Australia’s amber nectar. I left at midnight and the pair of them stayed inside the organ to tune it until 3.00am or until they became fed up. On reaching the outside of the building I heard Jan’s voice shouting at me across Sydney Harbour. Another memorable experience.

New Zealand was a refreshing place. It was a nice change to go by coach and see the countryside. The terrain, I thought, was similar to Wales. The sheep looked the same but I found the sight of billowing smoke coming from volcanoes most unnerving. I felt safer seeing smoke coming from the chimney stacks of Port Talbot.

As you know by now, whilst on the tour I had the sad news of my mother’s passing. It was on the 28th May. We came off the stage of the Costa Hall in Geelong and my brother phoned me. I sat in my dressing room in deep thought. My mother had been in her own world for the last six months and did not know who I was. Nevertheless, my plan was to spend some time with her in the nursing home before coming on the tour. I never managed it. Both my mother and my father, who had passed away the year before, would have been so proud of me going on this tour with the Choir they regarded as being in the top league. The name of Treorchy was often mentioned in our household when I was young. John Davies, Treorchy – a highly revered man – often conducted the annual Gymanfa Ganu at our chapel. Treorchy was a far away place in those days and so his arrival was a much trumpeted affair.

My parents came to almost every concert I gave which, in the latter years, became a huge effort. They did not want to miss any, however, as they derived great pleasure and satisfaction from my playing. If it had not been for the sacrifices they made you would certainly not be reading this now. They would

even have come to Australia had it been within their means. I could not help thinking to myself on that sad night that they probably did come with me after all – they made it. The following day, 29th May, was my birthday. It was a lovely day and I sat with Jan and Iona having coffee on the banks of the River Yarra. I chose not to say anything. It would have been the last thing my parents would have wanted to have seen me leave the tour and return home. I took great comfort from all the company on the tour in my own quiet way and this kept me occupied. In Christchurch the choir heard of the passing of Robert Griffiths. After Gareth Evans's tribute backstage, I remember the choir singing "Arglwydd, Mae Yn Nosi" by Caradog Roberts. My parents often sang this in the chapel choir. This short piece I regard as the most exquisite 13 bars of music. It is so simple but so hugely effective. I thought of my parents when you sang it and found it so moving. Thank you.

There were no highlights – the entire tour was THE highlight. I am truly indebted to the Treorchy Choir for the opportunity of accompanying it on its tour. I would never have visited Australia and New Zealand otherwise. In addition, I am thoroughly enjoying my association with the Choir in all its concerts and look forward to each one. Thank you most sincerely for making me an Honorary Member and for all the great times I have with you at concerts.

To summarise – great tour, great concerts, great times, great places but, above all, great people. Diolch yn fawr!

SKY HIGH FOR TREORCHY

Treorchy Male Choir appeared on 80million television screens in the Autumn of 2010 at the Opening Ceremony of the prestigious Ryder Cup Golf Tournament.

For the first time the tournament came to Wales and was held at Celtic Manor Resort, accompanied by multi-million pound investment and the appearance of some of the world's most famous and wealthy people.

Treorchy was invited by Sky Sports, the world-wide channel which broadcast the three-day sporting event, to film the television advertising campaign for this prestigious tournament.

On a glorious sunny day choristers, wearing for the first time their black suit and shirt, filmed on the Brecon Beacons with Penylan as an ideal backdrop to the Welsh scenery.



The Ryder Cup TV Campaign for Sky Sports.

Using a recording of the Choir performing the Welsh National Anthem, the filming was then edited with an astonishing final product for the viewers at home.

With images of the Choir singing on the mountainside, the television campaign was interspersed with messages from the world's leading golf players.

On the opening day of the Ryder Cup it was broadcast around the world.

No other choir has received this level of International Exposure and Treorchy Male Choir was delighted once more to be heralded musical ambassadors of Wales.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

A pair of faithful choristers were presented with Life Membership of the Treorchy Male Choir this year to mark their 35 years unbroken service to the organisation.



Cyril Bevan



Alun Davies

Life Membership was presented at the Annual General Meeting by Choir Chairman Gareth Evans.

The honour of Life Membership is presented to a chorister as a token of gratitude for outstanding service to the Choir or for 35 years membership. This year the honour was bestowed upon bass Alun Davies of Treorchy and tenor Cyril Bevan of Gelli.

Both men received a Life Membership scroll and a standing ovation from their fellow choristers in recognition of their dedication to the Choir.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP FOR WOODEN SPOON CHAIRMAN



Robert Harris

Treorchy Male Choir rewarded rugby charity giant Robert Harris with Honorary Membership during the year. The Choir made the presentation in honour of Rob's outstanding work on behalf of Wooden Spoon, the British Rugby Charity.

Bob has been a fervent supporter of the Choir throughout his life. A former rugby player and landlord of The Griffin public house in Pentre, he was recently widowed fol-

lowing the tragic death of his wife Carol.

It was through his work with Wooden Spoon that he has enjoyed a close association with the Choir. Over the years Treorchy has become recognised as the official choir of Wooden Spoon which raises several million pounds per year for disabled and disadvantaged children.

Wooden Spoon is a national rugby charity and Bob is the former Chairman of the Wales branch and Director of Rugby.

Choristers have performed many concerts for Wooden Spoon, they famously released a CD single of the Bob Marley hit "Stir it Up" for the charity and have performed at many Wooden Spoon functions at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on Welsh rugby international days.

On receiving Honorary Membership from Choir Chairman Gareth Evans, Mr Harris said: "This is the greatest honour I have ever received and I only wish Carol could be here tonight to witness it. We love this Choir – you are the greatest in the world – and I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of this wonderful honour."

THE WORLD'S BEST CHOIR

An Appreciation

By ROBERT HARRIS

HONORARY MEMBER

To be asked to write an article for this year's *Excelsior* publication, is not just a pleasure, but an absolute honour. The relationship between the Wooden Spoon Children's Charity and Treorchy Male Choir has become stronger and stronger, with the Choir appearing at a variety of events throughout the UK in support of the charity.

Personally, I have been involved with Spoon for the past 12 years, now holding the post of Development Director of Rugby and our Challenge Programme. Wooden Spoon raises money for socially, mentally and physically disadvantaged children. Over the 27 years of our existence, we have raised over £17million for those wonderful children, money raised from a network of 46 regions throughout the UK.

The support of 'The Worlds' Best Choir' is of paramount importance to the charity, not just that, they are also a fabulous bunch of people!

This year has been the toughest year of my life, losing my wonderful wife of 36 years. Carol was diagnosed with a brain tumour in January 2009 and sadly, we lost her in February 2010. She absolutely loved the Choir and whenever she was asked who her favourite singer was, she would reply, "I've got two – Rod Stewart and Treorchy Male Choir" and I'm sure the Choir was in first place.

Carol was given the ultimate honour of having choristers sing at her funeral service at St Peter's Church, something, myself, our sons Christopher and Lee and the huge congregation will never forget – Thank you so much.

Throughout my 56 years I have been lucky to have met lots of lovely people and attended many prestigious events, enjoyed a rugby career and played at some famous venues, but to be awarded Honorary Membership of the Choir, is definitely one of my proudest moments and being presented with my certificate on a practice night in front of so many choristers almost left me speechless! This award I will cherish for the rest of my life.

In closing, I would like to pledge my absolute support of this wonderful Choir. You have appeared all over the world representing Treorchy and Wales with pure style and professionalism, making you the famous choir you definitely are and I am proud to call each and every one of you 'my friend'.

MORRISTON ORPHEUS CHOIR

75 YEARS OF SONG

A TRIBUTE



Ivor Sims

In 1935 the landscape of the lower Swansea Valley was virtually unrecognisable from what it is today. Centuries of over-industrialisation which had made Swansea the metallurgical capital of the world had ravaged the lower Swansea Valley, leaving it a desolate place where green was conspicuous by its absence. The town of Morriston, sitting at the heart of this area, was to a large extent still dependent on heavy industry, in particular steel and tinplate. This industry, however, coincided with a strong musical and cultural life centred to a great degree in the local chapels. Each chapel had its choir, most being capable of performing the great oratorios and choral pieces of the time. They were also mainly Welsh in language.

This was the society into which the Morriston Orpheus Choir was born in 1935. Its membership was mainly comprised of manual workers, most probably in the steel or allied industries, living in or in close proximity to Morriston. More than 90% were Welsh-speaking and came from chapel backgrounds with experience of choral singing and able to read tonic sol-fa.

In 1935, the chief male choir in the village was the Morriston United which had existed as the “Gwalia” choir until its name change in 1924. In 1926 Ivor Sims had become the United’s Conductor but in 1934 had left following a disagreement over its future direction. Following a request from members who had left the United with him in 1934, the Morriston Orpheus Choir was formed, with Ivor Sims as its first Conductor, and held its first rehearsal at the Wesleyan Chapel vestry on 23rd April 1935.

In those early years the new Choir concentrated on local concerts and eisteddfodau. The two main events in the year were the Annual Concert and the National Eisteddfod, both of which were given great prominence in the local press. This was especially true of the chief male voice competition at the National Eisteddfod where the “Evening Post” would give a detailed account of the competition, the adjudicators’ comments and the marks gained by the respective choirs. What a contrast to the situation today when the press in general have difficulty in even finding space for the festival itself, let alone individual competitions.

The Choir achieved its first National success at Machynlleth in 1937 barely

two years after its formation, and the "Evening Post" recorded the scenes at the Morryston Cross when the Choir arrived home to a rapturous reception from the large crowd that awaited it. Those scenes and newspaper reports are today reserved for football successes.

The Choir continued to rehearse and give concerts without interruption during the war years. Following the end of hostilities, it continued to compete and this resulted in successes at the National Eisteddfod in 1947, 1948, 1949, 1955 and 1960. During this period Ivor Sims also introduced the Choir and South Wales audiences to a more classical repertoire which included Cherubini's "Mass in D Minor" Brahms' "Rinaldo" and the first performance in Britain of Max Bruch's "Frithjof".

New media started to influence choral tastes and demand. Initially, these took the form of radio broadcasts – the Choir became a regular performer on the weekly BBC Radio programme "Welsh Rarebit", and recordings. The Choir was one of the first Welsh choirs to record for "Columbia" records on the old 78 rpm discs. In 1956 it was given the then singular honour of appearing in the Royal Command Performance at the London Palladium. The performance was cancelled because of the Suez hostilities but the Choir was again invited in 1957, performing with the local Swansea star Harry Secombe. The Choir certainly left its mark on the London Palladium audience with one newspaper reporting:

"The audience which up to the Choir's appearance had been sparing with their plaudits, gave them the first genuine applause of the evening. The Royal Party clapped enthusiastically, the Duke leaned forward appreciatively."

Following the untimely death of Mr Sims in 1961 the Choir's accompanist Eufryn John became the Conductor. The increasing importance of the record industry was reflected in the increased recording commitments of the Choir with an average of one long-playing record a year for EMI and the forming of a long-lasting and happy relationship with its producer Bob Barratt. In 1969 Eufryn John resigned and was replaced by Lyn Harry, a native of Llanelli who had been Conductor of the London Welsh Male Choir. He followed the same pattern as his predecessor by carrying on recording for EMI but also introducing a newer repertoire. This was also a period when the Orpheus really became an international choir.

In its early years, most of the concerts given by the Orpheus were local, mainly because of transport difficulties. A concert in Cardiff meant allowing two hours for travel in view of the possible (probable) hold ups at Neath, Cowbridge and, in particular, Port Talbot. The 1960s brought about the

change which has possibly affected the Choir more than anything else since its formation. This was the development of better transport links between Morriston, Wales (apart from North Wales), and the rest of Britain via the new motorways, together with the growth of air links between Britain and the rest of the world. It now became possible to give concerts in London, Birmingham and other English cities without the need for an overnight stay with its accommodation costs. It also gave an opportunity for the Orpheus to carry out one of its long held ambitions – that of giving concerts abroad.

It was on the 20th April 1965, that the Choir first ventured away from the mainland. It was under the baton of Eufryn John and with Jennie Sims at the piano, that the Choir took to the stage at the City Hall in Cork as part of “Welcome to Wales” week in the Irish city. The programme for the day shows the Choir opening its performance with “Arise o Sun” by Maude Craske-Day and ending with Daniel Protheroe’s “Nidaros”. This was followed in the following year by a visit to Swansea’s twin city Mannheim in Germany. It is worth noting that the journey to Mannheim took almost 48 hours and necessitated an overnight train journey to London followed by an overnight stay in Ostend whereas the more recent visit to Geneva only took 5 hours in total.

Under Lyn Harry, the Choir undertook two visits to Canada and the USA in 1973 and 1975, on both occasions flying from Cardiff via Shannon. During the visit in 1975, the Choir sang in the lobby of the World Trade Centre’s South Tower in New York and was taken to its top floor before it was opened for business. In 2001, the then Chairman and Tour Manager of the Choir were in New York preparing for the Choir’s visit to Carnegie Hall when that same South Tower was destroyed in the terrorist attack of 9/11.

It was during Lyn Harry’s time as Conductor that the idea of a formal Supporters’ Group gathered momentum and in 1974 the Morriston Orpheus Choir Subscribers’ Association was formed. Today MOCSA, with the S now standing for Supporters rather than Subscribers, continues to support the objectives of the original Association:

“To support the Choir in all its endeavours, and to encourage the development of young singers with the aid of the Choir.”

Rarely does the Choir perform to a concert audience which has no MOCSA members present and the Orpheus will always be grateful to those who established the Association and to those who have subsequently helped to run and support it over the years.

To many classical singers in Wales MOCSA is synonymous with “The Young Welsh Singer of the Year Competition” which is now in its 34th year and

widely considered to be the premier competition of its kind in Wales.

Initially, the Competition was open only to those studying singing at the then Welsh College of Music and Drama. The winner was selected by the Principal of the College and sang at the Annual MOCSA Concert in that same year. Later the Competition was held at the Choir's Rehearsal Room and in 1983 developed into the format we know today, but with just one Guest Adjudicator at the Final.



Morrison Orpheus Choir

In 2001, an Adjudicators` Panel was established for the Final, consisting of three persons of eminence in the field of music. The composition of the Panel varies from year to year and we are most grateful to all the adjudicators who have contributed in the past so notably to the continuing success of the Competition.

The first MOCSA Trophy was donated to MOCSA by the British Steel Corporation and was designed by the Chief designer, Mr Harold Christie. The current trophy was designed by the Architectural Glass Department of the Swansea Institute of Higher Education in 2006 and is sponsored by Gravell's Renault of Kidwelly.

Regular followers of the Choir and MOCSA will remember past winners and how they have progressed. Some are now the 'greats' of the classical music

world; Bryn Terfel, and Rebecca Evans, to name but two of many. Many of the winners subsequently toured with the Choir.

When Lyn Harry decided to remain in Canada following the Choir's visit in 1975, the musical directorship of the Choir was handed to Leslie Ryan who had been the Choir's accompanist. His period as Musical Director is notable for three important occurrences. Under him the Choir first became involved with Major Sir Michael Parker and consequently appearing in the Berlin Tattoo, the recording of two albums with the Band of the Royal Marines School of Music under Colonel Paul Neville, and for his own composition "Sing Ye Merrily" which is the only original piece of music composed and dedicated to the Choir.

Leslie Ryan was succeeded in 1979 by a young North Walian, Alwyn Humphreys. This was the beginning of a 26 year period when the Choir went from strength to strength in the recording field, averaging a record a year for that period with EMI in its various guises, Bob Barratt's own company Grasmere, and with the independent producer Gordon Lorenz.

After a gap of some 14 years following the 1975 tour to Canada and the USA, a visit to the UK by the Hamilton Orpheus Male Choir from Canada helped to rekindle the transatlantic "wanderlust" amongst choristers. The President of the Hamilton Orpheus, Dr Wally Landers, had approached the Morriston Orpheus to host and organise a concert for his choir when they were touring the UK. This was arranged and a friendship developed which has lasted to this day. He was responsible for arranging concerts for our 1989 and 1991 tours of North America and further visits to Canada and the USA took place in 1997 and 2001.

It was also a period of further visits to Berlin, representing Britain at the 1992 Expo in Seville and appearances in front of Royalty and the Pope. The touring reputation of the Choir was enhanced with visits to Australia, New Zealand, Oman, Poland and Taiwan.

When Alwyn Humphreys decided to relinquish the baton in 2005 he was succeeded by Sian Pearce who became the first female Director of the Choir. During her reign, the Choir made a further trip to the Antipodes, visiting New Zealand for the fourth time and making its fifth visit to Australia. The Choir also recorded its first CD under the SAIN label. On her resignation in 2007, our present MD, Joy Amman Davies, who had served as the Choir's accompanist since 1991, was appointed. In 2009 came the release of the Choir's first CD recorded under her baton, "Nella Fantasia", followed later in the year by a performance in front of the Queen and other members of the Royal

Families of the UK and Qatar.

During the 75 years of the Choir's existence, not only have its members and musical staff changed but also the town of Morriston and its environs. The heavy industries so important at the time of the Choir's birth have long gone, being replaced with more modern manufacturing and service industries. Felindre steelworks has been replaced by the DVLA and the Enterprise Park, leisure facilities are far more numerous and available, the Welsh language and chapel attendances have declined and musical tastes have changed. These changes have been mirrored with the Orpheus. Its membership is now largely English-speaking living in an area ranging from Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire to Bridgend and beyond in the East.

The aims and values of the Choir, however, remain unchanged. During the whole of its existence it has striven to follow the advice, attributed to Sir Walford Davies in a speech in Swansea on that same April week in 1935 when the Choir was formed, to "make music joyously". Long may it continue to do so.

The Choir is grateful to Alun Howells for compiling this history of the Choir, with contributions from Huw Madoc-Jones, Roy Pugh, Dudley Williams and Alan Lewis. To read more about the Choir visit www.morristonorpheus.com

LONG SERVICE MEMBERS



Paul Evans receiving his award

During the year the Choir honoured two dedicated choristers in celebration of their many years service to the world-famous organisation.

Long Service Membership Awards were presented at the Annual General Meeting by Choir Chairman Gareth Evans.

The title of Long Service Membership is awarded to a chorister for 21 years service and this year it was presented to baritone Paul Evans of Llwynypia and tenor

soloist Dean Powell of Llantrisant, who is also their Publicity Officer and

Archivist.

The Choir stood to applaud them for their continued commitment to the musical ensemble.

Gareth said: “Treorchy Male Choir remains one of the most famous musical organisations in the world and this is due to the continued commitment of key choristers whose very heart and souls are filled with pride at being members of the Choir.”



Dean Powell receiving his award

JENNIFER'S ROYAL HONOUR



Jennifer Jones

Harpist Jennifer Jones's 40-year investment in musical talent was recognised in the New Year's Honours List. Former accompanist with the Treorchy Male Choir for 17 years and now an Honorary Lady Member, who has also undertaken the role of guest conductor, received the Order of the British Empire for services to music.

Jennifer, who is married to former Treorchy chorister Glyn Doolan and lives in Ferndale, discovered her passion for music when she was taught to play the harp and the piano as a child. She studied music at the Royal Academy of Music in London and completed a post-graduate teacher's certificate before returning to her hometown.

She was senior tutor for Mid Glamorgan Music Services, dedicating four decades to teaching the harp in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil. Jennifer, is also a senior tutor with the National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain, training children aged 10 to 14 nationwide in the hope of producing the next generation of professional musicians. In 2010 she was also given a community recognition award from the Welsh Assembly.

“I've spent my life learning and teaching music because it's something I love

to do, music is a part of my life - I've loved every second of it," she said "To receive the honour is of course a huge privilege, but when you enjoy doing something it's not a chore is it? It's lovely to put youngsters on their first steps and see them go on. It's about keeping music alive within the community.

"Some of the highlights of my career took place during my time with Treorchy Choir; moments I shall always treasure. The Choir is an important part of Welsh culture and our valleys heritage, long may you continue to be ambassadors for traditional choral music of Wales."

MUSIC AND SONG

A Review of the Concert at Derby Assembly Rooms

By ROY W. POOLE

'Oh what a night it was, it really was, such a night' - the night that the Treorchy Male Choir came to town at the invitation of Derwent Brass for their second visit which proved to be every bit as good as their first.

Mountaineer and adventurer Nigel Vardy was the welcoming compere for the evening. Nigel has undertaken many expeditions across the world despite losing fingers and toes to frostbite resulting from his climb up Mount McKinley in 1999.



Derby Assembly Rooms

Nigel introduced Derwent Brass under MD Keith Leonard, as they opened with 'Walking with Heroes', to immediately signal that we were in for a great evening - even more so when the Treorchy Male Choir gave the audience their first taste of the Welsh language.

The Choir under their MD Janice Ball opened with 'With a Voice of Singing' followed by 'Y Darlun' and 'Gwahoddiad'. It was a pity about the lighting though, as one occasion we lost Janice completely.

Derwent Brass returned with Smetana's 'Dance of the Comedians', followed by 'Hejre Kati' which showed us the virtuosity of David Neville. Their last piece was 'I'll Walk with God', and was a tribute to Lady Hilton who died recently. She was involved with many organizations and patron of a lot more including Derwent Brass.

The Choir returned once more to bring us 'You Raise Me Up' also in tribute to Lady Hilton, before Bizet's 'From Far inside the Shrine' which showcased tenor and baritone soloists Dean Powell and Ray Daniels. Their final piece of the first half was 'Nessun Dorma', which everyone was aching to join in with.

Derwent returned in style with their 'Big Band Sound' set - starting with 'Valero', 'South Rampart Street Parade', a fine trombone solo from Martyn Johnson with 'Blue Jeans' and to finish, Louis Prima's 'Sing, Sing, Sing'.

The second half opened with 'I Will Follow Him', with the three cross dressing scallywags on trombone, followed by 'Minstrel Boy/Toss The Feathers' with Dave Neville, Graham Johnson, Adam Rutter and Adrian Drewitt joining forces.

Joint forces came together for 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' with two members of the percussion at the front of the stage building the atmosphere, whilst the Choir provided further entertainment with 'Let It Be Me', 'One', 'The Wonder Of You' and ending with 'What Would I Do Without My Music

The band's final segment of the concert saw a lovely change of style with Monteverdi's 'Fanfare Orfeo' followed by 'Reels & Jigs' with euphonium soloist Adam Rutter showing unbelievable dexterity. Leonard Bernstein's 'One Hand, One Heart' was followed by Saint-Saens wonderful 'Bacchanale' to close.

This then led into the Choir's final solo spot with tunes from 'Les Miserables' before the finale to a marvellous evening came with both ensembles combining for 'Morte Criste'.

It was an evening of music and song that will be remembered for a long time.

SONHEIM ON SONDHEIM

How Treorchy Gave Its Regards To Broadway!

Stephen Sondheim is undoubtedly the most famous American composer of his generation. In the world of American musicals he is indisputably the best, brightest and most influential talent to emerge during the last half-century. No other songwriter to date has challenged his eminence, and it seems unlikely that anyone will in his lifetime.

In 2010 Stephen Sondheim celebrated his 80th birthday and to mark this milestone, American theatre company Roundabout produced 'Sondheim on Sondheim', a new review of his lifetime's achievement on New York's Broadway at the Sondheim Theatre. Opening on March 19th, the show starred Barbara Cook, Vanessa Williams, Tom Wopat, Leslie Kritzer, Norm Lewis, Euan Morton, Erin Mackey and Matthew Scott and hopes are high for the production to reach the West End of London in 2011.



However, what was most significant about this production for the Treorchy Male Choir was the fact that they actually appeared on the Broadway Show! Earlier in the year the producer of the show contacted Dean Powell and Frederick O'Brien with a proposal of using television footage, taken from the Choir's website of our version of 'Send in the Clowns'. Treorchy Male Choir enjoyed the use of a specially arranged version of the song being

presented to them by Mike Sammes in the early 1980s. It was subsequently recorded with EMI and also appeared on the Leo Sayer Show in 1983.

While researching the review of Sondheim's life the producer came across the Choir's website and recognised the superior performance of the Choir of this song, which came from the composer's classic "A Little Night Music" Broadway hit. With an agreement signed and delivered, the footage of the Treorchy Choir performing this item appeared in the new Broadway review, along with Barbra Streisand, Elizabeth Taylor and Liza Minelli to name but a few.

Although millions of fans know his songs by heart, few know much about Stephen Sondheim himself. Sondheim on Sondheim was an intimate portrait

of the famed composer in his own words and music. Through the use of exclusive interview footage, audiences got an inside look at Sondheim's personal life and artistic process.

The show was nominated for two Tony Awards including Best Featured Actress in a Musical (Barbara Cook) and Best Sound Design of a Musical (Dan Moses Schreier). The show also received a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Musical Revue, four Outer Critics Circle Nominations for Outstanding New Broadway Musical, Outstanding Actress in a Musical (Barbara Cook), Outstanding Set Design (Beowulf Boritt) and Outstanding Lighting Design (Ken Billington), one Drama League Award for Distinguished Production of a Musical and two Drama League nominations for Distinguished Performance (Barbara Cook & Vanessa Williams).

YOU DON'T BRING ME FLOWERS

by JEANNE GRAY

Chord Theatrical

For the last five years, my husband Phil and I have had the privilege of organising concerts in England on behalf of Treorchy Male Choir. We never consider it to be work; it is always a great pleasure because we get to see the most famous Welsh choir in the world perform on stage. Also, we usually get to see them perform at the “afterglow”, usually a Royal British Legion or a local rugby club where those choristers with any left, let their hair down.

I guess what we enjoy most about the Choir is the awesome harmonies and wall of sound that only they can produce during a concert, but running a close second to the vocal talents is the lovely humour that is rife within the Choir. Our office is just twelve miles from Liverpool City Centre so we appreciate quick, sometimes a little cruel scouse humour, but these Treorchy guys have the edge.



Jeanne Gray

One example that comes to mind was at a concert in Bedworth, Warwickshire, some 160 miles from our office. Fred O'Brien, Choir Secretary asked us for a favour, he explained they needed a large bouquet of flowers for a presentation on the night but to ensure the recipient (who would be on the

coach from Treorchy) did not see the flowers and spoil the surprise we were to make the purchase and transport the bouquet from Liverpool down to Bedworth. So, along with the sandwiches, sausage rolls and buffet for seventy persons, we carefully laid down the largest bouquet money could buy.

During the second half of the performance at Bedworth, M.C. Dean Powell called for Phil and I to come onto the stage, where, to our most pleasant surprise, we were presented with certificates and made Honorary Members of the Choir, an honour that words alone cannot describe. We were truly overwhelmed.



Phil Gray

Then came the second surprise, the bouquet that had accompanied us from Liverpool to Bedworth was presented back to me. Now we had to take it all the way back to Liverpool! Certain members of the Choir thought it was hilarious!

It reminded us of that wonderful duet from Neil Diamond and Barbra Streisand “You don’t bring me flowers”; if you deal with the boys from Treorchy “You Bring the Bloody Flowers Yourself”. Thanks fellers.

Proud to be associated with Treorchy and honoured to serve you.

A CHOIR FULL OF ‘BEBBS’



John Bebb

When David Bebb was elected Chairman of the Treorchy Male Choir it secured a relationship between his family and this world-famous organisation that goes back 127 years.

David, aged 43, was elected the Choir’s youngest chairman since it reformed following the Second World War in 1946. But his pedigree is unique in the Choir because his ancestor, Thomas Bebb, sang on the first night that the original Treorky Male Choir was formed in 1883.

The Choir originated in the Red Cow public house, Treorchy when a group of miners got together to hold a farewell party for one of their friends who was emigrat-

ing to New Zealand. A local eisteddfod was being held and the group of twenty young men entered the competition with a performance of “Myfanwy”. They won £1 for their efforts and it was the start of a glorious future.

Mr Bebb’s family have remained synonymous with Rhondda music-making over the decades. His relatives also performed with the Choir before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in 1895. His great-great-uncle, John Bebb conducted the Choir from 1895 to 1897. John Bebb’s son was the respected Haydn Bebb, who from the 1930s was the successful conductor of the Parc & Dare Band.

David, whose own father sang in the Royal Welsh Male Choir, joined the Treorchy Male Choir in 2005. An officer in the Wales Probation Trust, David is a member of the First Bass section and spent two years as Vice Chairman before being elected into the new post.

PROUD CHORAL CONNECTIONS

By EDWARD SPRAGUE
Treorchy Primary School

I have always known of the Treorchy Male Voice Choir since being in school myself. My parents and grandparents always had Choir CD's or records in the house. “Treorchy Sings Queen” was always a particular favourite of mine as I play rock music myself and absolutely idolise Brian May as a guitarist and Freddie Mercury as a singer.

I was appointed as a class teacher in Treorchy nearly five years ago and from the moment I started, became aware of the links with the Choir the school has, from the display case in the foyer, the locker rooms and their rehearsals



on a Tuesday and Thursday night. My wife's uncle, Ian Reynolds, is a current singer with the Choir, and my uncle, Lee Sprague, is a former member.

The school is very proud to have special links with the Choir, as we all know, it is now the official home of the Treorchy Male Voice.

The children and staff were very proud recently when we were asked to perform for the Mayor, Choir and dignitaries in the Blue Plaque ceremony, which took place at our school. The plaque symbolises the school as the current Choir rehearsal space since 1946. A very special moment for the children and staff indeed as this was the first Blue Plaque unveiled anywhere in the country, if not the world, to a male voice choir.

To celebrate this occasion, the school worked on two different projects, involving pupils and staff alike, and more importantly, the members of the choir. Geraint Jones, along with his class in J7 decided to invite a film producer called Katrina Kirkwood to school to work on a DVD entitled 'Voices Of Today, Echo Into Tomorrow.'



The Treorchy Primary School Mural

The children worked with Katrina on the idea of choir members talking about their upbringing as children, which were to be intercut with the children of J7 talking about their current life. How very different their lives were! The DVD is compiled of children interviewing Choir members, along with images and photographs from the children and the Choir. The result is a beautiful representation of Old Rhondda and Modern Rhondda, people's love of the Choir and the children of the future. A thoroughly entertaining watch which often borders on emotional. The Choir, along with parents and the children were invited to school to watch the DVD. It was an instant hit and was followed by requests for copies of the film, much to the delight of the children! The second project was a project that I, along with the School Council produced. I obtained my degree from UWIC in Cardiff and it was a BA(ed) in Art. I have loved to sketch and make models since I can remember and I

thought I would use my expertise to produce a piece of art with the children, to celebrate the school's link with the Choir. The School Council met to decide on the content of what was to be a mural of celebration. We looked at old Choir photographs, Choir magazines, listened to their music and thought of symbols associated with Wales, and in particular, the Rhondda.

During our study sessions, we noticed the Choir had performed in some very special locations all over the world. This was the 'lightbulb moment' which sparked the creativity in me and the children. The mural would feature the travels of the Choir on one side, along with the Choir's more local venues to sing on the other. The children sketched places including The Golden Gate Bridge, Sydney Opera House, Canadian flag, New Zealand Kiwi and fern etc. Another group sketched Cardiff Castle, the Park and Dare and of course, Treorchy Primary. I simplified the designs so that they could work together as one mural. The final sketch was sent to 'Adva-Sign' in Gelli and they scanned and made the large mural which now sits proudly alongside the blue plaque on the side of the school building.

The children along with the headteacher Louise Evans, Geraint Jones, the Deputy Head and I feel very proud to have been involved with and in completing these projects, as they contribute and become a part of Treorchy Male Voice Choir's history.

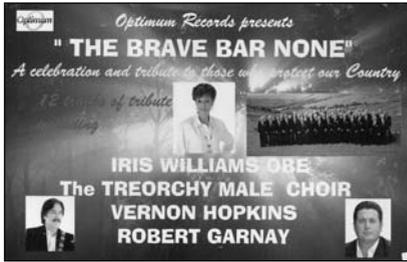
The most important aspects of these projects, however, are the new skills the children developed and learned in the process. Teamwork, communication, research, make-links and most importantly, respect. These will stand them in good stead for the future and I am sure they will never forget the time they worked with the Choir. Special memories for our school and I'm sure, the members of the Treorchy Male Voice.

BRAVE BAR NONE

One of the most prestigious and rewarding events to occur in the recent history of the Choir was the opportunity to record "The Liberation Hymn". Composed by former Tom Jones guitarist Vernon Hopkins, the CD single was released by Kevin King of Optimum Records in 2008.

All of the proceeds of the CD single have since been donated to the Help for Heroes campaign which raises funds for wounded British soldiers in Afghanistan.

This year the single appeared on a new album by Optimum Records. The 12-track CD, which also features the Choir's Honorary Lady Member Iris



Williams OBE, Vernon Hopkins, Rob Allen and Robert Garnay, is called "The Brave Bar None".

This album is another fundraising project by Optimum Records with all of the proceeds being donated to British Red Cross and Welsh Regiments to provide after-care for wounded Welsh servicemen and women.

RECORD BREAKING PERFORMANCE

by SARAH GILBERT

Internal Communications Manager at the Royal Mint

On Saturday 16th October, the Royal Mint opened its doors to its employees, their family and their friends, as a thank you to everyone for their contribution during the year. This was a rare chance for family members to get to see what goes on behind the gates, including a short tour of parts of the Coin Production process.

The event was timed to co-incide with the launch of the London 2012 50p sports series, a range of 29 50ps, to represent each of the Olympic and Paralympic Sports. To celebrate the launch, everyone who was there was able to take part in a Guinness World Record attempt for the most people to simultaneously toss coins!

A section of Treorchy Male Choir, including a number of Royal Mint employees who are members, were invited to the event and gave a rousing performance, building the anticipation and excitement before the record attempt. Much to the audience's delight, they extended their performance when the Guinness World Record adjudicator was delayed making her way from London to Llantrisant.

By virtue of their attendance at the event, Treorchy Male Choir members are also record breakers and can claim their rightful place in the Guinness World Records as they participated in the successful record attempt which saw 1,697 people toss a coin at the same time.

On behalf of all your friends at the Royal Mint, we thoroughly enjoyed your performance and are grateful that you were able to be a part of our Family Open Day.

A TREORCHY WISH FULFILLED

by WENDY THOMAS

In 2010 I managed to fulfill a wish to visit the Treorchy Male Choir at a practice session. Although I was born in Wales, I grew up in London and have been living in Germany for over 20 years. Finding time to return is never easy and I'm grateful that at long last I managed to arrange the trip. It was a journey to discover the wealth of my heritage, one that has lain dormant for over 50 years. It covered the past of both my mother and my father.

My mother was the last child of tenor soloist William Todd Jones from his marriage to Maud - maiden name, Arberry. She was a young girl when her father died in the village of Pencader close to Camarthen. My mother does not like to speak of her childhood. They were without doubt difficult times. However one of her early memories was her father's funeral.



Todd Jones

Todd, as he was known, was a tenor soloist with the Choir that sang for Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. The public loved him for his voice and he was given a final farewell by the crowds as they lined the road whilst his coffin was carried seven miles to his grave in Morryston. His young daughter had very mixed feelings. The man who in many ways had the world at his feet, left his family in dire straits. The family moved from Pencader for Swansea and it was there that I learnt of the reverence that people held for my

grandfather. As a child visiting Swansea from London, the curtains would twitch as we arrived with people peeping out to see Todd's family arriving from London.

Being in Treorchy and hearing the Choir practice brought home the everyday atmosphere of a normal community. People arriving, possibly direct from work, to take part in the weekly session. Individual lives joined together by music combining a passion and power that is electrifying. Men of all ages singing tenderly and giving all to create an unforgettable sound. Somehow a Choir symbolises all that is good in humanity. People together creating harmony and beauty in the world with feeling and depth of spirit.

Having grown up in the anonymous world of London, the cultural heritage in Wales seems really quite remarkable. My mother tells me of life in the small village of Pencader where they were always organising competitions for drama and song. She recalls the family taking the different operatic parts at home in the kitchen. It just shows what talent is lying within each one of us.

My trip included my first ever visit to my father's childhood home. Whilst there's little drama within my father's family the setting of the farmhouse is breathtaking. Set on the edge of the Brecon Beacons and directly opposite Carreg Cennen Castle, the old farmhouse has now been restored and is the retreat of the Hollywood actor Damien Lewis and his family. Wales has a heritage of producing world class performers. Perhaps the dramatic landscapes provide the inspiration.

I love returning to Wales and I love hearing the sounds of Wales which for me are somehow synonymous with the sound of the Treorchy Male Choir. Thank you all for your welcome, your warmth and most of all for your passion.

GOLDEN CHORISTER'S AWARD

The Choir honoured a "golden" chorister for fifty years unbroken service this year. Reg Stephens, aged 88 of Ystrad Road, Ystrad was presented with a suitable inscribed gold wristwatch on stage during the Annual Concert at the Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy.

Reg spent ten years as a chorister with the Morgannwg Gleemen Choir which disbanded in 1959. His love of singing had begun while a child worshipping in the local chapel and in later years he was an active member of Madam Danford George's well-known operatic society in Ton Pentre.

It was with the Treorchy Male Choir that he excelled as a chorister, joining in 1960 with his friend Len Gale and spending the next half a century in the ranks. Since then he has appeared in over 1,500 concerts and toured Canada,

USA and Australia where he appeared at the Sydney Opera House.

"The Treorchy Male Choir has always been a massive part of my life," Reg explained. "I've met some great friends, performed in incredible venues and travelled around the world. It's all because I'm a chorister with a world-famous choir."

After leaving school at the age of 15 Reg began working



underground at the Fernhill Colliery. Despite suffering several accidents in the most atrocious of working conditions, Reg remained at the same pit for 45 years before retiring.

In 1946 Reg married May and together they brought up three daughters at the family home on Ystrad Road. With the passing of his wife, Reg resided with his mother who lived to the grand age of 101.

Chairman of the Choir, David Bebb, explained, "We regard Reg as one of the great statesmen of the Choir. He is a first-class chorister who possesses a beautiful singing voice and rarely misses a rehearsal or concert.

"Reg is one of ten choristers who have reached their fifty-year milestone and they have all been honoured with the presentation of a gold watch as a token of our respect and admiration for such incredible service."

TREORCHY ON FILM

Moments from Youtube

When the Choir launched its new state-of-the-art website, www.treorchymalechoir.com in 2009, one of the major features of the site was a selection of television clips being downloaded for the first time. This allowed users the opportunity to view a series of archive footage from as far back as 1957 and has attracted literally tens of thousands of users in less than a year.

Each of the television clips, featuring Tom Jones, Julie Andrews, Ella Fitzgerald and Harry Secombe are posted on the Choir's Youtube group which is then linked to the Choir website. Visitors to Youtube are able to make comments on each of the clips. Please find below just some of the glowing comments received to date from all parts of the world:

"Carol of the Bells" with Julie Andrews (1971)

Number of Views: 971

"Comfort and Joy!"

"Amazing!"

Treorchy Male Choir Performing "My Heart Will Go On" from Titanic (1999)

Number of Views: 1,951

"I grew up in Wales and these guys are even better when you see them in person – fantastic".

"There's something about a male choir that is absolutely beautiful!"

"The Lost Penny" with Tom Jones (1970)

Number of Views: 1,556

“Absolutely perfect!”

“Awesome!”

“Just A Closer Walk” with Ella Fitzgerald (1970)

Number of Views: 691

“Beautiful!”

“Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head” with Burt Bacharach and Tom Jones (1971)

Number of Views: 1,451

“Absolutely wonderful video”

Treorchy Male Choir and John Haydn Davies Learn Tonic Solfa (1975)

Number of Views: 356

No Comments to Date

“Amazing Grace” with Tom Jones (1969)

Number of Views: 6,606

“Absolutely incredible”

“For all you Elvis fans, check out this version with the Choir, then you will understand why Tom has always been the better of the two.”

“Fantastic!”

Treorchy Male Choir Performing “My Way” (1986)

Number of Views: 1,125

“Wonderful!”

“Sound of Silence” with Leo Sayer (1983)

Number of Views: 3,670

“I love this!”

Treorchy Male Choir Performing “Send In The Clowns” (1983)

Number of Views: 2,330

“Beautiful singing”

“Amazing, amazing”

“How do you find a hundred voices that are so exceptional?”

Treorchy Male Choir Early Footage (1957)

Number of Views: 540

No Comments To Date

Treorchy Male Choir Performing “Myfanwy” (1987)

Number of Views: 6,020

“This is beautiful, it makes me cry”

“Unmatchable singing”

“One day I must return, I cry to breath sweet Cymru's air, I vow I'll go before I die To a land that's sweet and fair. To hear that ancient tongue once more. The invaders could not quell. I yearn to cross that rocky shore, Sing the songs I love so well”

“Whoever dreamed up this presentation, well done, its first rate.”

“Hiraeth, gentlemen, hiraeth”

“Sheer Beauty”

Treorchy Male Choir Performing “Myfanwy” in Victorian costume (1986)

Number of Views: 845

“Still brings a tear to my eye. Brilliant”

“Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn” with Tom Jones (1987)

Number of Views: 2,059

“Absolutely beautiful”

Treorchy Male Choir Performing “Men of Harlech” on Australian TV (1986)

Number of Views: 7,139

“Brilliant”

“Ardderchog, da iawn!”

Treorchy Male Choir Performing “With A Voice Of Singing” (1991)

Number of Views: 577

No Comments To Date

“Cwm Rhondda” with Sir Harry Secombe (1991)

Number of Views: 9,258

“Wish I could sing like this!”

“Lovely!”

“My home, I cant wait to be back”

“Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau” with Aled Jones on This Is Your Life (2000)

Number of Views 1,043

“One word, brilliant”

“Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau” on Match Of The Day (1986)

Number of Views: 584

No Comments To Date

THE MAGIC OF TREORCHY

By MARCELLE BERRY

Honorary Lady Member

Like so many parents of children at school, I was involved in PTA activities

and it was in the capacity as Secretary that I came into contact with the Treorchy Male Choir. I wrote to Mr. “Donna” Griffiths asking if they would consider coming to Bishop’s Cleeve to perform for us as we were fundraising for equipment. His reply was eagerly awaited and we were delighted to know that the Choir could give us a date in May 1976.

Preparations were made, tickets organised, programme received and we awaited the Big Day. It entered my mind that some hospitality should be arranged, at which stage Brian Bates made contact and explained what that hospitality should be! With the generous help of a parent at school, I was able to arrange a buffet at a local hotel and passed on this information to Donna. Soon enough, the big day arrived, the Hall was ready and every ticket sold. Needless to say the concert was a great success, enjoyed by



Marcelle Berry

all. Rousing choruses, hymns, spirituals, solos by Sam Griffiths and wonderful “recitations” by Herbert Jones, a total delight. He came to just that one concert for us but never has been forgotten. Oh yes, the “buffet reception” went well too!

There were two more concerts at Cleeve School before my committee work came to an end, both as enjoyable as the first, and lasting friendships were formed with members of the Choir. As a family we became keen followers and attended many concerts, some in Wales and various venues in England. In the early 1980s I approached Tewkesbury Abbey and was able to organise a concert there, raising funds for operating theatre equipment at St. Paul’s Hospital in Cheltenham, plus a donation to the Grove Organ Fund in the Abbey which had been undergoing restoration. To hear those wonderful voices filling the Abbey sent shivers up my spine, it was indeed a memorable concert. Following the tradition, a buffet was arranged at a “hostelry” in Tewkesbury - still talked about!

I have been particularly pleased that my family is as enthusiastic as I am and keen to go to concerts to enjoy the music and meet Choir members. I recall mentioning to John Cynan Jones it would be good to hear “Memory” from “Cats”, but it wasn’t in the repertoire, so imagine my surprise when at a con-

cert in Wolverhampton some months later, when John announced from the stage the new item – “Memory” – and dedicated it to me!

At a committee meeting at St. Paul’s Hospital I was asked if the Choir would consider another concert, again for theatre equipment, and to our joy they were able to give a date. I was in negotiations with a venue in Cheltenham when I discovered that another (local) male voice choir was giving a concert at the Town Hall, just a couple of hundred yards away...PANIC... With help from Mr. Stan Stennett and his staff we were able to have the concert at the Roses Theatre in Tewkesbury, it was a great success and the hospital was able to purchase the equipment with our contribution.

As well as Choir members, I have made many friends and acquaintances with fellow Choir devotees, particularly Brian Bates and Judy and Nigel Chivers; helping Brian on occasion with posters, selling tickets, programmes and even being dragooned into escorting the Mayor and the Mayoress at a concert in Buxton! So many memories, so many tales...

In November 2010 my sons Trevor and Clive with his two boys Johan and Anders came with us to the concert in Stroud. Clive decided it was time his boys were introduced to choral singing! As always we were greeted by Choir members and settled down to listen. The children were captivated, listening very carefully and particularly enjoying the Abba selection. After the interval we listened to the new Chairman telling us of Choir activities and of the awards of Honorary Membership to two people in the audience. One was to David Green, organiser of the concert in aid of the “Acorns” children’s hospice, one of a number of such events he has organised, and the other person to receive the Honorary Lady Member - was me.

A great honour indeed, how wonderful to receive an honour for doing something you enjoy. Particularly pleasing for me was to have my family there to share the moment.

I have been asked just what it is which makes me an enthusiast of the Choir. I suppose the answer is a keen interest in music, especially singing, and appreciating the special sound of “Treorchy”, the diversity of the repertoire, and who could not be moved by the magical sound of “The Lonely Steppe” when sung by Wyn Davies?

It has been a privilege to have known the Choir for all these years and I am deeply honoured and humbled to receive their thanks in making me an Honorary Lady Member.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

2000 – Ten Years Ago

A busy year began with a BBC radio programme at Bethlehem Chapel in Treorchy followed by a succession of concerts in Southampton, Gloucester Cathedral, Caerphilly Castle, Ilfracombe, Barnstaple, Kidderminster and the Colston Hall, Bristol. The Choir returned to the Parr Hall, Warrington and also undertook a weekend visit to Doncaster to perform two concerts with the Wheatsheaf Girls Choir in celebration of their 50th anniversary. In September the Choir undertook its “Can-Am” overseas tour, performing in Vancouver, and following the west coast of Canada and the USA to San Francisco. Organised by Honorary Member Ed Fraser, the tour included visits to Seattle, Mount Saint Helens and Portland in Oregon before concluding with three performances in California.

1990 – Twenty Years Ago

Beginning with a concert in Penrhys Community Centre, where the Choir outnumbered the audience 2-1 (!) the Choir performed in a variety of venues throughout the country during the year. At the AGM Cliff Chislett (Librarian since 1969) and Michael Gale (Assistant Secretary since 1980) retired from the positions. The Choir held a celebrity concert at St David’s Hall with soloist Donald Maxwell, the start of which was delayed because a fire devastated the Cory Band rehearsal hall. In support of their appeal fund, the Choir returned to St David’s Hall a few weeks later to hold a fundraising concert for their fellow Rhondda musicians. The Choir also made its first album totally devoted to popular light music, entitled “Showstoppers” with EMI and performed the third annual Christie Tyler Furniture Fortnight series at City Hall with Ray Allan – and Lord Charles of course!

1980 – Thirty Years Ago

After almost thirty years in the post, WJ. “Donna” Griffiths did not seek re-election as the Choir Secretary. His successor was Islwyn Morgan. To identify his long service, the choristers who appeared in the first official photograph in 1949 were presented with Life Membership. The Choir made its debut performance in Fairfield Hall, Croydon and filmed the Two Ronnies Show. Following a concert in Eton College, the Choir undertook its first overseas

tour in 17 years to Canada, with performances in Barrie, Gravenhurst, Kapuskasing and Niagra Falls.

1970 – Forty Years Ago

Due to John Cynan's hospitalisation, John Haydn Davies, the Conductor Emeritus, returned to lead the Choir for a period of time. The Choir made the Harry Secombe TV Show in BBC Studios, Shepherd's Bush, London, spent a weekend in Sheffield and led the community singing at the official opening of Cardiff RFC. Later in the year the Choir returned to Elstree ATV Studios in Borehamwood to make the second This Is Tom Jones Christmas Show. The Choir performed "Just A Closer Walk With Thee" with Ella Fitzgerald, who was so impressed with the singing that she signed the copyright of that arrangements to the Choir.

1960 – Fifty Years Ago

At the concert in Cwmbran, elocutionist Herbert Jones appeared for the first time. Following the Choir's third trip to Ipswich, they performed at the UK Diving Championships in The Empire Pool, Cardiff. John Haydn Davies also led the community singing at the Wales vs Scotland football international at Ninian Park, Cardiff.

1950 – Sixty Years Ago

The Choir recorded the Choral Exchange radio programme, linking with three French choirs in Lille. They also made the first of 32 "All Together" BBC radio broadcasts with presenter Alun Williams. Over the coming years the Choir recorded 93 songs for the programme. Following a radio show with presenter Wilfred Pickles, they lost the Sennybridge Semi-National Eisteddfod (controversially!) but later won at Treorchy and Llanharan and came a creditable second at the National Eisteddfod in Caerphilly.

1930 – Eighty Years Ago

The Choir competed at the South Wales Chair Eisteddfod, Treorchy, in aid of Pentwyn Hospital, where one of the adjudicators was Arthur E. Davies FRCO of Swansea, who would later become a conductor of the Treorchy & District Male Choir. Pendyrus gained the first prize with 95 points, followed by

Treorchy with 90 points. In August, Treorchy once more entered the Royal National Eisteddfod at Llanelli – the site where the original Treorchy men claimed the Blue Riband almost forty years earlier. The winners were Morryston United Choir under Ivor Sims.

1920 – Ninety Years Ago

Tom Jenkins, who later played such a pivotal role in reforming the current Choir, was the first secretary but resigned in favour of Mr G. Picton Williams. The accompanist at the time was Mr E.T. Thomas and rehearsals were held in Park Hall, Cwmparc. One of their public performances that year was at Bethania Welsh Congregational Church, Treorchy on August 19th with Treorchy Choral Society, the highlight of which was a performance of “Martyrs of the Arena”.

1890 – One Hundred And Twenty Years Ago

The seven-year-old Choir, under the baton of William Thomas, continued to bask in the glory of the Royal National Eisteddfod win at Brecon. It also saw the start of the bitter rivalry between Treorchy and its neighbouring Choir, the Rhondda Glee Society, which dominated the Welsh choral tradition for a decade.

TOP ATTENDANCE

For sixty-four years Norman Martin has been a faithful and dedicated member of the Treorchy Male Choir. As one of the Choir’s eldest statesman, his commitment remains unwavering despite the passing of the years.

Norman’s contribution to the Choir has been immense, not only as Registrar and Honorary Archivist for forty years (making him the longest-serving officer in the history of the Choir), but also as a chorister, member of the Management Committee and latterly as one of our Vice Presidents.

This year’s *Excelsior* is paying tribute to Norman because once again he has achieved 100% attendance in both rehearsals and in engagements. This is remarkable in itself, but what makes Norman’s story even more impressive is the fact that this is the eighth consecutive year that he has achieved this accolade.

That means that apart from the 2010 Tour of Australia and New Zealand, when ill health prevented him from attending, Norman has not missed a concert or rehearsal since 2002!

Since his enrolment in the Choir in 1947 Norman's attendance has always been exceptionally high despite work and family commitments. Since 2002 he has attended every one of the 491 rehearsals and 171 engagements! Now that's what you call commitment!

ATTENDANCES

"There remains the central core of the choir, those faithful ones, regular in attendance, attentive and alert in rehearsals, with the music in their heads and not with their heads in their music, singing at concerts with confidence and courage, cheerful at all times and ever patient and long suffering despite the idiosyncracies of the conductor. They in truth are THE Treorchy Male Choir."

John Haydn Davies
Founder Conductor, 1954

Rehearsals

Engagements

CENTURY CLUB (100% Attendance)

Ernald Brooks
Norman Martin
Will Thomas
Keith Bevan

Ernald Brooks
Norman Martin
Will Thomas
Frederick O'Brien
Michael Wood
Gerald Emanuel
John Jones
Keith Newman
Alun Davies

NIFTY NINETIES CLUB (90% Attendance)

Graham Cox
Jeff Priday
Tony Davies
David Bebb
John Radford
Cyril Bevan
Dilwyn Llewellyn
Ivor Lock

Graham Cox
Jeff Priday
Tony Davies
David Bebb
John Radford
Dean Powell
Alwyn Lewis
Gary Horgan

Arthur Miles
 Gwyn Morgan
 Michael Wood
 Derek Langley
 Frederick O'Brien
 John Jones
 David Powell
 Gerald Emanuel

Nick Jenkins
 Haydn Powell
 Tom Belmont
 Alan Bowen
 Ray Daniels
 Selwyn Jones
 Roger Watkins
 Alan Iles
 Ceri Warren
 William Watkin
 David Birch
 Alun Davies
 George Jacob
 Bryn Jones
 Peter Jones
 Dennis Young

CHORISTERS BALANCE SHEET

IN

Glynne Nicholls
 Gareth Thomas Davies
 Ceri Warren
 Keith Husband
 Philip Evans
 Paul Knight
 Lee Sprague

OUT

Keiron Hill
 Richard Danahar
 Alan Lewis
 Rennie Phillips
 Terry George
 Lee Lanciotti
 John Jenkins
 Keith Phillips

IN & OUT

Stephen Davidson; Idris Morgan; Colin Maddy; Tim Saunders; David Hughes; Ian Dickson;

NUMBER ON BOOKS – DECEMBER 2010

IT	2T	IB	2B	TOTAL
31	19	26	22	98

ENGAGEMENTS**January**

- Saturday 17th The Anvil, Basingstoke - "A Glorious Parade of Music" with The Band Of Her Majesty's Royal Marines CTCRM in aid of The Rotary Club Of Basingstoke Deane
- Saturday 30th Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

February

- Saturday 20th Fairfield Hall, Croydon – in aid of British Rugby Charity Wooden Spoon

March

- Saturday 6th No. 8 Community Arts Centre, Pershore
- Sunday 21st Llantrisant Parish Church – reaffirmation of Wedding Vows by Carole & David Powell *
- Wednesday 24th Treorchy Comprehensive School - Grand Final of the Treorchy Male Choir Junior Musician of the Year Competition 2010.
- Saturday 27th Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

April

- Friday 2nd Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy
- Saturday 17th The Pavilion, Wolverhampton

May

- Saturday 15th St John's Church, Clevedon – in aid of the Elton Hall Restoration Fund
- Thursday 20th Parc Primary School, Cwmparc – performance at the Annual Memorial Service to Commemorate the Cwmparc Bombing of 1941 *

June

- Saturday 12th Amey Theatre, Abingdon – in aid of Rotary International
- Tuesday 22nd Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen
- Saturday 27th Parc & Dare Ex-Servicemen's Club. Cwmparc – in aid of Ty Hafan Children's Hospice *

July

Saturday 3rd	The Guildhall, Axminster – in aid of the Cloakham Lawn Sports Centre
Saturday 17th	Garrison Theatre, Tidworth in aid of Help For Heroes
Sunday 25th	Brecon Beacons – filming the Sky Sports Ryder Cup TV Advertising Campaign
Monday 26th	St German's Church, Adamsdown. Cardiff – recording the new album, "Timeless"
Tuesday 27th	St German's Church, Adamsdown. Cardiff – recording the new album, "Timeless"
Wednesday 28th	St German's Church, Adamsdown. Cardiff – recording the new album, "Timeless"
Friday July 30th	Red Cow, Treorchy – unveiling the Blue Plaque *

September

Sunday 17th	Rhondda Heritage Park, Trehafod – performance at the Cordell Festival *
Saturday 25th	Atrix Theatre, Bromsgrove

October

Thursday 14th	Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy – Annual Concert with the Maesteg Children's Choir
Saturday 16th	The Royal Mint, Llantrisant – Family Day and Guinness Book of Records Event *
Saturday 23rd	Civic Hall, Bedworth

November

Saturday 6th	The Great Hall, Assembly Rooms, Derby with the Derwent Brass Band
Sunday 14th	Cenotaph, Blaencwm & Cenotaph, Treherbert – Remembrance Sunday Services *
Saturday 20th	Subscription Rooms, Stroud – in aid of the Acorn Hospice
Saturday 27th	The Hayes, Cardiff – performance for Wooden Spoon *
Monday 29th	The Cathedral, Llandaff – in aid of Tenovus

December

Thursday 9th	The Lion, Treorchy – performance to raise funds for the Junior Musician Competition *
Saturday 11th	Assembly Rooms, Ludlow

* Denotes unofficial engagement where no attendance record was taken.

Treorchy Male Choir Appreciation Society

Mrs. V. Dix (Cheltenham)
 Mr. A. Dix (Cheltenham)
 Mr. J. Cooper (N. Ireland)
 Mr. S. Nicholas (Cheshire)
 Mr. D. R. Murphy (Hertfordshire)
 Mr. J. C. Wharton (Cardiff)
 Mr. D. Halstead (Treorchy)
 Mr. C. Rowland (Cowbridge)
 Jennifer Jones (Cornwall)
 Mr. L. Ball (Wolverhampton)
 Mr. D. Downton (Porthcawl)
 Mrs. C. Merriman (Ystradgynlais)
 Mr. J. E. Little (Dorset)
 Mr. H. Windsor (Pencoed)
 Miss. D. Perkins (Ipswich)
 Mrs. N. Absalom (Warrington)
 Mrs. M. Windsor (Pencoed)
 Mr. J. Gallacher (Gillingham)
 Mr. M. Gleadall (Yorkshire)
 Mrs. S. Reynolds (Treorchy)
 Mr. A. Bladon (Cardiff)
 Mr. H. Errington (Carlisle)
 Mrs. J. Jennings (Devon)
 Mrs. J. Smith (Telford)
 Mrs. I. Oak (Blaenrhondda)
 Mr. B. C. Simpson OBE (Hereford)
 Mr. K. Alderson (Cumbria)
 Mrs. T. A. Curl (Thrapston)
 Mr. C. King (Haverfordwest)
 Mrs. G. Graham (Carlisle)
 Mrs. S. Knox-Lecky (Barton St. David)
 Mrs. D. Cook (NSW. Australia)
 Mr. N. Chivers (Cheltenham)
 Mr. W. J. Clarke (Stafford)
 Dr. B. Williams (Derbyshire)
 Mrs. A. Childs (London)
 Mr. G. Humphreys (N. Somerset)
 Mr. S. Drummond (Pontyclun)
 Mr. J. Lee (Essex)
 Miss. K. Lawrence (Ton-Pentre)
 Mr. G. Neighbour (Southampton)
 Mrs. G. A. Turner (Coleford)
 Mr. J. Morgan (Bristol)
 Mrs. J. Lawrence (Blanechw)
 Mr. R. Hobbs (West Sussex)
 Mrs. F. A. Colebourn (Chester)
 Mrs. M. J. Webb (Abergavenny)
 Mrs. J. Willetts (Cheltenham)
 Mr. W. Fink (Chicago, USA)
 Mrs. G. Jones (Treorchy)
 Mr. R. Hill (Cwmparc)
 Miss. C. Spencer (Chelsea)
 Mr. R. Green (Treherbert)
 Mr. L. Hill (Cardiff)
 Mrs. P. H. Roberts (Wilts.)
 Mrs. P. Howells (Gelli)
 Paul Lewis Evans (Hove)
 Dr. R. Hinton (Andover)
 Mr. K. Harries (Clwyd)
 Philip David Evans (Heathfield)
 Mr. R. Middleton (Monmouth)
 Mrs. O. Bobbett (Treorchy)
 Mr. T. Davies (Staffs.)
 Mr. L. Hall (Pencoed)
 Ms. H. M. Vereker (Hereford)
 Mrs. M. Gosling (Surrey)
 Mr. J. Randall (Edinburgh)
 Mrs. M. Coles (Somerset)
 Mr. M. James (Cardiff)
 Mr. D. Reynolds (Ton-Pentre)
 Mr. R. Perry (Glasgow)
 Mrs. M. Baxter (South Africa)
 Mrs. G. Reynolds (Ton-Pentre)

Mr. R. S. Thompson (Glasgow)
 Mr. V. Baxter (South Africa)
 Mr. M. T. Edwards (Birmingham)
 Miss. M. Lawrence (Blaenrhondda)
 Mr. T. C. Ross (Essex)
 Mr. D. Fear (Cwmparc)
 Mr. P. R. Orrells (Treorchy)
 Mrs. T. Ricketts (Treherbert)
 Mrs. C. H. Rogerson (Galashiels)
 Mr. B. Pengeley (Australia)
 Mrs. J. Mann (Florida)
 Miss. J. A. Wright (Staffs.)
 Mr. W. J. Kerslake (Llwynypia)
 Mr. I. Glasby (Dorset)
 Mrs. P. Goss (NSW Australia)
 Mr. A. Smith (Crickhowell)
 Mrs. H. Glasby (Dorset)
 Mr. P. Phillips (Gillingham, Kent)
 Ms. E. O'Neill (NJ, USA)
 Mrs. D. M. Pugsley (Berkshire)
 Mr. G. M. Vaughan-Edmunds (Poole)
 Mrs. G. Baker (Treorchy)
 Mrs. A. Jones (Coychurch)
 Mr. G. D. Jones (Stratford-Upon-Avon)
 Mrs. M. Morris (Bucks.)
 Mr. D. Bowen (Wem, Shropshire)
 Mrs. M. Kerridge (Bucks)
 Mr. H. Den Hartog Sr. (Holland)
 Mr. C. Price (Dorset)
 Ms. P. Barry (Monmouth)
 Mr. A. R. Jones (Devon)
 Mr. D. M. Rees (France)
 Mr. K. L. Vaughan (Nuneaton)
 Mrs. F. Apperly (Bucks.)
 Mr. B. Jefford (Somerset)
 Senator L. D'Allesandro (N.H. USA)
 Mr. R. T. Andrews (Bucks.)
 Mr. C. Griffiths (Halesowen)
 Mr. J. W. Pierce (W. Yorkshire)
 Mr. D. Dilly (Walsall)
 Mrs. J. E. M. Shephard (L. Buzzard)
 Mr. P Kehoe (Sutton)
 Mrs. P. Dilly (Walsall)
 Mr. P. Shephard (L. Buzzard)
 Mrs. R. Jeremiah (Treherbert)
 Mr. J. J. Tucker (Walsall)
 Mr. A. Cotton (Clevedon)
 Mr. G. E. Owen (Worksop, Notts.)
 Mr. A. Pearce (Nuneaton)
 Mr. P. F. W. Hickman (Chadlington)
 Mrs. P. D. Poole (Sussex)
 Mr. A. Butcher (Lincolnshire)
 Mr. D. Shingleton (Southampton)
 Mr. D. S. Poole (Dorking, Surrey)
 Mr. A. Edwards (Rhyl)
 Mr. P. Morgan (Guernsey)
 Mr. J. H. Lewis (Camps.)
 Mr. F. Harry (Cardiff)
 Mr. G. L. Garfield (Newent, Glos.)
 Mrs. D. Lewis (Camps.)
 Mrs. C. Upton (Treherbert)
 Mr. P. Rowland (Cheshire)
 Mr. G. Lewis (Chalfont St. Giles)
 Mr. R. Abel (Bristol)
 Mrs. M. Coughlan (Solihull)
 Mr. M. B. Perry (Gloucester)
 Mr. S. Gould (St. Albans)
 Miss. I. E. Maidment (Cardiff)
 Mr. R. E. Taylor (Northampton)
 Mr. P. Webb (Cheshire)
 Mrs. H. Yates (Isle of Wight)
 Mr. J. M. Thomas (Banbury)
 Mr. P. M. Murphy (Treorchy)

Mr. D. Howell (Worthing)
 Mr. R. J. L. Harris (Huntingdon)
 Mr. A. Sadler (Berks.)
 Mr. B. Boulton (Gt. Yarmouth)
 Mr. R. G. Carr (Rhydymy Gwent)
 Mrs. P. Hudson (Lydney, Glos.)
 Mrs. S. H. Raulik (Brazil)
 Mrs. J. M. Heffer (Buckingham)
 Mr. A. Morton (St. Albans)
 Mrs. C. J. Evans (Southsea)
 Mr. R. E. Morris (Sutton Coldfield)
 Mr. C. Clare (Tonyrefail)
 Miss. E. Osborne (Devon)
 Mr. D. Hillman (Porthcawl)
 Mrs. L. Whitehead (Linslade, Beds.)
 Mr. K. A. Rowlands (Wrexham)
 Mr. I. R. Harris (Bristol)
 Mrs. P. Berritta (Chesterfield)
 Ms. M. Monks (Waitakere, New Zealand)
 Mrs. M. Hawtin (Worcestershire)
 Mr. D. Floyd (Birmingham)
 Mrs. B. Berry (Worthing)
 Mrs. I. Cartwright (Newent, Glos.)
 Mr. R. Walton (Talbot Green)
 Mr. R. C. Miles (Tuffley, Glos.)
 Mr. A. Smith (Worthing)
 Mrs. J. Organ (Merthyr Tydfil)
 Mrs. J. Willetts (Cheltenham)
 Mrs. J. Wilson (Newport)
 Mr. E. Slade (Horsham)
 Mr. E. Samuel (Rugeley)
 Mr. R. M. Edmonds (Tyne & Wear)
 Mrs. G. Andrews (Wendover)
 Mr. A. R. Wateridge (Worthing)
 Mr. K. Thomas (Wotton-under-Edge)
 Mr. Thomas S. Strickler (CA, USA)
 Mr. A. R. Watts (Newport)
 Mr. A. Thompson (Bristol)
 Mrs. K. Newington (Barry)
 Mrs. J. Davies (Treorchy)
 Mr. P. Partridge (Sutton Coldfield)
 Mrs. G. Harty (Ramsden Heath)
 Mrs. C. Reaich (London)
 Mrs. M. C. Barry (Shoreham-by-Sea)
 Mrs. L. Evans (Cwmparc)
 Mr. T. E. Harris (Hurst, Berks.)
 Mrs. G. King (Worthing)
 Mr. E. O. Jones (Worcs.)
 Mr. H. J. Wood (Treherbert)
 Mr. A. Thomas (Birmingham)
 Mr. P. I. West (Lancing)
 Mrs. P. Ilett (London)
 Mr. N. Clawson (Penarth)
 Mrs. R. Jones (Bettws)
 Mrs. M. Bowell (Glos)
 Mrs. M. Reynolds (Newton Abbott)
 Mrs. P. Davies (Gillingham)
 Mr. J. D. Thomas (Bury St. Edmunds)
 Mr. B. Holden (Wrexham)
 Mr. K. Allchin (Worthing)
 Mr. J. Abbott (Eastleigh)
 Mr. D. A. Cheeseman (Bournemouth)
 Mrs. G. Cox-Barber (Totnes, Devon)
 Mrs. I. Grimmer (Hereford)
 E. Jones (Cardiff)
 C. Jones (Florida)
 Mrs. L. M. Crick (Coventry)
 Mrs. E. Allman (Atherstone)
 Mrs. J. Gardner (Southampton)
 Mr. T. Saunders (Cardiff)
 Mr. C. Evans (Tetbury)
 S. Hollin (Bridgend)
 Mr. I. Llewellyn (Treherbert)

