

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 2001

By Norman Martin
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Sunday January 21st

Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

The Choir returned to the record-making scene in the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea. The producer was our old friend, Bob Barratt for his company "Grasmere". How time flies" It was way back in 1984 when the Choir last recorded with him. Leaving the snow-carpeted home at 9.30am and as the Rhigos was closed, the Choir headed to the M4 and down to Swansea. The organist was Janice Ball, who was last with the Choir at the Coal Exchange, Cardiff in 1985. The Choir started at 11.30am and finished six hours later with 18 items recorded.

FEBRUARY

Saturday February 10th

Armstrong Hall, Thornbury

In paying its first visit to Thornbury, the Choir arrived at the venue by 6pm. This was a relatively small hall holding 300 people which had been sold out for more than a month. The artist was harpist and singer Glenda Hexter. The prize draw after the interval was successful as Cyril Bevan won the first prize and Robert Turner won another prize. The concert was organised by the Thornbury Cymmrodorion and the proceeds of the raffle were donated to the Cystic Fibrosis unit at the Bristol Children's Hospital. The overwhelming response to the evening's performance left no doubt of the audience's complete satisfaction. An excellent start for David Holley and John Lewis who made their first concert appearance

Friday February 23rd

Holy Rood Church, Swindon

A return was made to Swindon after 29 years. It was a problem finding the venue and the Choir arrived with ten minutes to spare. Soon it became obvious the staging was not appropriate and the choristers gathered more chairs for the concert. Helen May performed as soloist. This is a fine building with excellent acoustics and one of the best venues the Choir has performed in. In such conditions the performance left the audience in a state of wonderment which they transmitted with their tremendous appreciation. Andrew Badham was in his most relaxed form and wandered amid the audience to make the announcements. This relaxed state was demonstrated by his absolute control of the evening's performance.

MARCH

Saturday March 10th

Winchester Cathedral

The Choir renewed its acquaintance with the Hampshire Youth County Band (Conductor Leighton Rich) in this splendid venue this evening. A rehearsal was held at 6.30pm after evensong. The concert was before a sold out audience and it was another wonderfully enjoyable and memorable performance with a tumultuous applause from the delighted audience. A splendid start to Andrew Bateman making his initial concert appearance. The only misgiving is that this is Islwyn Morgan's last

concert as Choir Secretary of the Treorchy Male Choir after 21 years. Later a splendid buffet was available at the Stanmore Hotel.

Tuesday March 13th

The Annual General Meeting so several changes made in the Committee. Chairman: Roger Morse; Vice Chairman: Clive Spanswick; Secretary: Fred O'Brien; Assistant Secretary: Andrew Costin; Treasurer: John Mallin; PRO: Goeff Howard; Registrar: Norman Martin; Librarian: Ivor Lock. In appreciation of Islwyn Morgan's significant contribution to the Treorchy Male Choir he was presented with a suitably inscribed silver tray, a cut-glass combination set and a bottle of his favourite whisky. He thanked everyone for the gift and spoke of his honour and pleasure of being Secretary of the Choir.

Thursday March 22nd

Comprehensive School, Tonypandy

The Choir shared the stage with the school's Junior and Chamber choirs, and the soloist Julian Boyce. This was a very pleasant evening with the choirs displaying all the exuberance of youth in their singing and actions. Some of the school's musicians – piano and drums – played the artists on and off the stage. With tea and biscuits in ready supply the evening was an enjoyable one.

Saturday March 31st

Victoria Church, Weston-super-mare

The Choir made its fifth visit to this venue. With such good acoustics the Choir was assured of another great evening. Soprano Justine Platts teamed with Rhiannon for a joint performance of "Pie Jesu" with Andrew Badham as accompanist. The evening was met with ecstatic response from the elated audience. A pleasant and relaxing hour was spent in the Conservative Club.

APRIL

Sunday April 5th

Pop Factory, Porth

The Choir recorded the "Definitive Tribute to Wembley" CD with Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen at the Pop Factory. This was the old Thomas & Evans mineral water building which has been transformed into a recording studio and was officially opened by Tom Jones. The Choir was the first one to record there. The CD featured the tunes from the football terraces – a wide range of songs connected to individual teams, arranged by Richard Stilgoe. The recording began at 10am and with breaks for food and refreshments, the recording finished at 5.30pm. The long day's efforts ended with congratulations to everyone for a successful day.

Friday April 13th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

For the 36th time the Choir and Band performed their Good Friday concert. The engagement marked the first concert appearance of Adrian Tame and Mark Pumford. The Second Tenor section was at full strength. "Softly As I Leave You" was sung in memory of the most ardent supporter from Carlisle, Harry Errington. In the programme, for the first time, was the Choir biography written by the new PRO, Geoffrey Howard. This engagement captured the public support as once again the

large audience displayed their enjoyment of the participants performance in no uncertain manner.

Saturday April 21st

Civic Hall, Aylesbury

The Choir paid its third visit to this venue again in aid of the RSPCA Blackberry Farm Animal Centre. Organised by Robin Woodruff and with Helen May as soloist, it was before another full house. The concert received a tremendous reception. During the concert “Myfanwy” was sung for all the people in the audience celebrating their birthday, one being 94 years old. At the end the Chairman’s remarks about bringing the Choir to Aylesbury once again were met with loud approval.

MAY

Saturday May 5th

The Cathedral, Wells

The Choir paid its first visit to Wells Cathedral. Unfortunately no rehearsal was held and choristers strolled around the town. The concert started at 7pm and amid the inspiring atmosphere, the wonderful acoustics, the magnificent structure and the performance of Justine Platts and the Choir reflected this ambience to the audience as each item was greeted with enthralled response. One incident that was new to the choristers was that the magnificent echoes of the “Amens” of “Tydi a Roddaist” echoed around this superb cathedral in complete reverent silence – the audience was asked not to applaud. The concert was organised by the City of Wells Lions Club with proceeds for the Childrens Hospitce South West. One amazing occurrence was the presentation to the Choir of the programme of the Queen Victoria concert from November 29th 1895. A treasured addition to the archives.

Thursday May 24th

Soar Chapel Centre, Penygraig

In answer to the charitable cause, the Choir gave a concert in support of Penygraig Boys and Girls Club. This concert, on a glorious summer’s evening, surprised even he seasons choristers. With such a warm evening, some 95% of the audience were women. The amazing and absolutely thunderous ovation give by them, prolonged and loud, left choristers blushing with joy! Never has the Choir received such a laudation from such a limited audience of only a hundred people.

JUNE

Saturday June 2nd

Town Hall, Cheltenham

The Choir gave its fourth performance at the Town Hall for the Lions Club of Cheltenham in support of charitable organisations, including the Oncology Centre. The concert before a packed audience resulted in overwhelming appreciation.

Friday June 8th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The Parc & Dare Band pioneered the first national bass band festival in Wales supported by the “Arts for All” Lottery Grant from the Arts Council of Wales. The

concert featured the Parc & Dare Band, soprano Denise Leigh (who was blind), Jacqueline Boucher and MC Vincent Kane. The evening's guest conductor was Dr Roy Newson, a legend in the brass band world. It was pleasing to see Jennifer Jones featured in the band. The item "Ar Hyd y Nos" was dedicated to Eluned, the 90-year-old aunt of Craig Roberts.

Saturday June 30th
Civic Hall, Bedworth

The Choir returned to one of its favourite venues. The concert was in a warm, humid atmosphere causing some of the audience to use the programmes as fans! Despite these uncomfortable conditions and the fact this is the eleventh visit to this venue, the vociferous acclamation for the performance from the elated capacity audience left no doubt the Choir had not outstayed its welcome in Bedworth. The concert was organised by Brian Bates and afterwards a relaxing period in Bedworth Liberal Club.

JULY

Saturday July 14th
The Cathedral, Derby

After a decade the Choir returned to Derby and the long walk uphill to the cathedral was too much for Reg Stephens who suffers with chest problems and he didn't stage in the first half. The performance saw Mayor and Mayoress Till present in the audience. With such excellent acoustics the performance of all concerned, was so enjoyed by the delighted audience that they displayed their complete satisfaction with a standing ovation. "The Lord's Prayer" was sung in memory of Eifion Evans. It was a memorable first concert for Byron Goodwin (1B). Proceeds were in aid of the Myasthenia Gravis Association, celebrating its 25th year.

Monday July 16th

Eifion Evans died on Monday July 9th and choristers bid him a final goodbye. The funeral took place in Carmel Chapel, Treherbert which was full and then to Llwydcoed Crematorium which was overflowing. Because of his long association with the Selsig Company the funeral arrangements were carried out by them. The Choir sent a floral tribute and forty choristers attended the funeral.

AUGUST

Monday August 23rd

During the summer break the death occurred of chorister Ieuan Davies whose funeral was held in Llwydcoed Crematorium. The bearers were Fred O'Brien, Islwyn Morgan, Reg Stephens and Wyn Davies. The Choir sang "Gwahoddiad". Ieuan was such a dedicated chorister that his obituary notice read, "Family flowers only, donations in lieu to Treorchy Male Choir".

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday September 4th

In rehearsal the choristers were saddened to hear of the death of Brian Moore. Over the years through his commentaries on soccer matches he became known as Britain's

“Voice of Football”. His association with the Choir was the making of the “Definitive Tribute to Wembley” which featured introductions and snippets of his own commentaries.

Tuesday September 11th

Choristers were dismayed by the news of the death of Mike Sammes. His arrangements met the needs and moods of the Choir and greatly enhanced their repertoire. These arrangements still form the basis of the concert programme and “My Way” is the ultimate final number, during the visits to Fairfield Hall, Croydon, he was always invited on stage and introduced to the audience amid the acclamation from the Choir. Such was the friendship and admiration between us that he dedicated a chapter of his book, “Into the Limelight” to the Choir.

Thursday September 13th

At the rehearsal room Mel Absolam was presented with his Honorary Membership. This award was well earned since the first coupling with him and the Choir in the early 1980s. Mel has organised concerts and accompanied the Choir on overseas tours. Following the presentation the Choir went to Treorchy RFC Clubhouse for the launch of Dean Powell’s new book “Treorchy Male Choir”, a fascinating photographic history of the organisation. He has signed all royalties over to the Choir.

Saturday September 15th

Sir Thomas Picton School, Haverfordwest

A return visit after 26 years to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Pembrokeshire Crossroads Caring for Carers Association. Before the start of the concert, “Star Spangled Banner” was sung to a packed audience who all stood and thought of those who suffered the worst terrorist attack ever recorded – 9/11 at the World Trade Centre. With the destruction of the twin towers, and the third plane hitting the Pentagon, the performance was followed by silent prayer. The MC for the evening was BBC Radio Wales presented Brian Harries and the artist was mezzo soprano Beverley Humphreys. She thanked Rhiannon for stepping into the breach at such short notice. Beverley not only entertained with her singing, but provided a fashion show for each of her four spots – she wore a different flowing dress. The last group, “Impossible Dream”, “Memory” and “My Way” were all arranged by Mike Sammes and sung in his memory.

Saturday September 29th

The Pavilion, Llandrindod Wells

After the passing of 27 years the Choir returned to Llandrindod to perform in a fine hall with excellent acoustics. During the concert a pleasant surprise for John Mallin and Alwyn Lewis and the Conductor announced it was their special day and “Happy Birthday” was performed. The singing in this hall brought rapturous applause after each song and a standing ovation followed.

OCTOBER

Saturday October 6th

Southerhay Church, Exeter

The concert in Exeter was another successful one. The soloist was our old friend Ros Evans and the acknowledge from the capacity audience for her performance, and that

of the Choir, demonstrated their complete satisfaction. It was doubly pleasing as the concert was being recorded by the BBC for future transmission. It was organised by the Devon Air Ambulance Trust and their efforts were undoubtedly rewarded. The second bus stayed at the local rugby club. A pleasurable return to Exeter after 11 years.

Thursday October 11th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The 20th Annual Concert saw the renewal with an old friend, Ieuan Morgan, as he was the Conductor of the Treorchy Comprehensive School Band. Time has not weakened his enthusiasm as he moulded these young people into a fine musical group and conducted them with fervour and warmth. The overwhelming reaction from the audience confirmed the popularity of this event. A memorable night for John Fletcher who made his first stage appearance.

Thursday October 18th

City Hall, Cardiff

The Choir recorded "Friday Night is Music Night" in City Hall. The other performers were the BBC Concert Orchestra (conductor Robin Stapleton) with Eirian James (mezzo soprano) as artist. The compere was Ken Bruce.

Saturday October 20th

Magnet Leisure Centre, Maidenhead

Sallying forth to perform at a new venue, the buses headed to Maidenhead where unfortunately a police incident on the motorway junction resulted in a long diversion. The Choir reached the venue with twenty minutes to spare and despite the problems of not enough chairs on stage and speaker system, all was finished by 7.30pm. The concert was organised by Brian Bates and the proceeds were in aid of the Mencap Society. The singing of "Fantasia on Welsh Airs" was dedicated to the memory of the late Derek Robins, a tireless worker for the society for 30 years. Haydn Erasmus received just acclaim when he was introduced as the Founder Member of the Choir from 1946. Despite all the problems the exuberant response to the performance left no doubt of the success of the first visit to Maidenhead.

Thursday October 25th

Haberdasher School for Girls, Monmouth

The return to Monmouth after five years, saw the Choir perform in the same venue as before. Sharing the stage was the Wye's Guys Barbershop Quartet, the first time the Choir has appeared with this type of musical body. The tribute to Haydn Erasmus continued and unfortunately Rhiannon lost her spectacles during the interval and somehow managed to continue accompanying the Choir! The proceeds were in aid of the society for the welfare of horses and ponies and this successful concert was followed by a relaxing interlude in the Royal Oak.

NOVEMBER

Saturday November 3rd

Theatr Hafren, Newton

The Choir reached Theatr Hafren for a concert with tenor Andrew Matthews. As with the last visit eleven years ago, another capacity audience welcomed the Choir with

joyful acknowledgement to the performance. A pleasant post-concert hour was spent in the British Legion Club

DECEMBER

Saturday December 8th

St David's Hall, Cardiff

The Choir returned to St David's Hall to perform in aid of the Leukaemia Research Fund. The other artists were the Bedwas Trethomas and Machen Band and Ysgol Gerdd Ceredigion. The presenter were Nicola Heywood Thomas and Arfon Haines Davies of ITV. With a full house £7,000 was raised for the fund. A thrilling night for Will Thomas on his concert debut.

Wednesday December 12th

Grosvenor House, London

Once again the choristers enjoyed the opulence of this hotel and performed in support of the Motor Trades Benevolent Fund, or "Ben" as it is known. This was their annual fundraising dinner and when the Choir was due to perform the festive spirit and atmosphere was abroad. But during the performance the sound of silence usurped the conversation. The response from the large gathering made it abundantly clear of their enjoyment of the concert.

Saturday December 15th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The Choir continued to support the Rhondda Group of Boys and Girls Club by appearing once again in their Christmas concert. This time it was something extra special as owing to Andrew Badham's unavailability, John Cynan Jones rose to conduct the Choir. Until Rhiannon arrived he filled in time with the audience with some of his experiences while Conductor. He had not lost any of his conducting expertise and the performance was most memorable.

Monday December 17th

LWT Studios, London

The Choir enjoyed the opportunity to appear on Cilla Black's popular TV show "Surprise Surprise" which on this occasion was to be broadcast on Boxing Day. The estimated national audience would be more than 22 million people. The ever popular programme reunites long-lost relatives as well as spring surprises on unsuspecting members of the audience. It was recording in "The Studio" on London's Southbank, A double decker bus took the Choir on the journey as it was unlikely a large Choir was needed. A total of 46 men arrived at the studio by 1pm where a buffet was served. Conductor Andrew Badham brought his electric organ for the duration of the recording. For the broadcast the Choir was to perform "White Christmas" and as an added bonus a recording of "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" was also required. At 2.15pm the Choir went to Studio 2 and the set of "Cilla's Christmas Surprise Surprise". Dominated by the large purple sofa, where guests opened their hearts to the Liverpool artist, there was also a set of sliding doors, behind which the Choir hid! Bright lights, cameras, auto-cues and with typical professionalism the Choir sailed through the rehearsals. The only problem being the sticking of the sliding doors!

The choristers were then ushered to the LWT Canteen and another rehearsal followed at 6pm. For the second rehearsal Cilla Black welcomed the choristers, wishing them a Merry Christmas and thanking them for appearing on her show. For the next few hours the choristers stood in the corridors, taking the opportunity to welcome Alastair McGowan, Gabby Logan, Russell Watson, S Club 7 members and Ally McCoist who were also on the show.

Finally at 9pm the time had come to return to the studio and surprise Stanley Hood of St Albans who would be 80 on Christmas Day. As a special surprise Cilla invited him to come to a Choir concert and gave him CDs of the Choir before singing "Happy Birthday" and presenting an enormous cake. But the surprise didn't end there. Cilla surprised him a second time and explained that he wouldn't have to wait until he went home to hear the Choir as they were there in person! The doors opened and the Choir sang "White Christmas" to thunderous applause. Owing to a slight error it was re-recorded later on (the technical mistake shown many times on subsequent editions of "It'll Be Alright on the Night". The look of surprise on Mr Hood's face was a joy, making it all worthwhile