

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 1990

By Norman Martin
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Tuesday January 23rd

Arriving at the rehearsal room this evening, choristers found a producer, presenter and a sound effects man. Together they were making a programme for BBC Radio Wales and wanted to record the Choir and interview members for “First Hand” which will be transmitted in February.

Thursday January 25th

Penrhys Community Centre

The engagement fixture list began with a “home tie” as the concert was in the Community Centre, Penrhys. After all these years it was the first time for the Choir to sing there. The day was stormy with gale force winds which caused extensive damage throughout the valley and as the position of the centre is on the top of the mountain, it was in a vulnerable position during adverse weather. At first there was a feeling the concert would be cancelled but conditions improved and the choristers arrived to find everything was ready. The ticket sales were low however, largely due to weather, the venue or apathy, for the Choir performed before the smallest audience in its history. The number of choristers staging was 74 and the number in the audience was 44. Despite all the difficulties, John Cynan, Marion and Mair were on top form and the Choir performed a full concert for the small, but appreciative audience. The turn out must have been a disappointment for Rhondda Borough Council who organised the event.

FEBRUARY

Saturday February 3rd

Dudley Town Hall

The Choir returned to Dudley by leaving home at 4pm and taking the well-trodden route of M4, M50 and M5 to their destination. The effects of the stormy weather was evident with large areas water-logged. On arriving at the Town Hall it was pleasing to see a “sold out” sign on the door of the hall. The concert was organised by Rotary International in aid of charities. A rehearsal was held and the concert began at 7.30pm with everyone on top form – Choir, audience, John Cynan, Marion and Mair. It was a splendid concert and with the presentations of bouquets and wine, the concert concluded at 10.10pm with a delicious meal in the Lodge.

Thursday February 15th

Bethesda Chapel, Ton Pentre

There was a feeling of nostalgia for the older members as we returned to Bethesda Chapel this evening. The last time we performed here was in 1949. It was a wonderful return concert. Jonathan Gulliford was organist and accompanist this evening. The engagement was organised by the PTA of the Upper Rhondda (Treorchy) Comprehensive School with the proceeds in aid of a school bus. In such a magnificent venue with wonderful acoustics and 93 choristers, the rich tones of the organ and the voice of Eldrydd, the concert was a total success. John Cynan thanked the Choir publicly and a most appreciative audience agreed. A pleasing return to the chapel.

Tuesday February 20th

City Hall, Cardiff

The evening concert at City Hall, Cardiff, commenced at 10pm and a familiar line-up of entertainers took place. The Choir, Cory Band and Nigel Phillips of the Christie Tyler Company! The occasion was an inaugural evening for the World Squash Championships. With the Lady Mayoress and world-ranking players present, the evening was a total success. It followed a format similar to “Furniture Fortnight” with the effervescent Nigel in charge. A “proms” atmosphere prevailed with voices, brass and a tremendous response from the capacity audience. It was pleasing to see Mike Doyle on stage and the entire event concluded at 11.30pm. Tonight’s concert was the last for Clifford Chislett as Librarian. He was appointed in 1969 and over the years has been “keeper of the copies” for 1,632 rehearsals and 471 engagements. A truly remarkable record in dedication and loyalty. Cliff did not seek re-election as Librarian but has accepted the Assistant Librarian role. The same is true for Mike Gale, Assistant Secretary, who also does not wish re-election. He was appointed in 1980 and has organised seven dinner / dances, dress suits, Christmas raffles, shirt orders and plenty of support work for the Secretary.

Tuesday February 27th

The 43rd Annual General Meeting was held in the rehearsal room – it was an eventful meeting as several changes were made. With Cliff Chislett and Mike Gale not contesting the posts of Librarian and Assistant Secretary, coupled with the election of a new Vice Chairman, the results of the voting were:

Vice Chairman – Alun Hughes

Assistant Secretary – Ivor Llewellyn

Librarian – Rhyddian Hunt

Assistant Librarian – Cliff Chislett.

This was coupled with new committeemen of Gwyn Morgan (1T), Michael Jones (1B) and Alun Iles (2B). The Committee had indeed gone through a drastic change.

MARCH

Saturday March 10th

The Arts Centre, Warwick University

The Choir returned to one of its favourite venues which is known for the warmth and appreciation of a capacity audience along with the acoustic perfection of the venue. Leaving home at 3.30pm, the Choir arrived at 6.55pm and after a short rehearsal and sandwich it was time to walk on stage for an 8pm commencement. Again in such an environment with everything “falling into place” the concert was an outstanding success, both musically and financially. The Kenilworth Round Table were the organisers and the proceeds were for the Midland Sports Centre for the Disabled. The event was certainly memorable for Mair Roberts as this was her 100th appearance with the Choir while Cyril Bevan celebrated his 57th birthday. To thunderous applause and the presentation of bouquets, the concert finished at 10.30pm. The late bus enjoyed the delights of the Lementonians RFC.

Thursday March 22nd

Village Hall, Pentyrch

The Choir paid its first visit to Pentyrch with a concert in the Village Hall, commencing at 7.30pm. The hall was small, seating 200 people, and it was due to the efficiency of the marshall that the choristers were well staged. It was obvious from the start that something was amiss with the piano. After the first group John Cynan decided that the instrument was incurable and a reserve piano was wheeled in. While all this was going on the organisers of the concert were upset and apologetic, particularly as they had hired the piano for £86! The concert continued successfully and without any trials and tribulations. The concert was of special interest to G. Gibbs (2B) who lives in the village, also Colin Rogers (2T) whose parents live there and Mair Roberts, who also resides in Pentyrch. Despite all the difficulties, the capacity audience showed its enjoyment of the performances in no uncertain manner. The proceeds were in aid of the Village Hall Restoration Fund and with the presentation of bouquets, concluded at 9.45pm with the choristers enjoying the refreshments of Pentyrch RFC.

Saturday March 31st

Holy Trinity Church, Stratford Upon Avon

Leaving home at 3.25pm, the Choir travelled in convoy for a short period passed Monmouth with the buses of Pendyrus Male Choir who were also on their way to an engagement. During the journey the choristers were told of the death of Cyril Howard (former 2T). The concert started at 7pm to a capacity audience – it had been sold out for three months. The church also included the Welsh-born Mayor of Stratford. In such a splendid venue, filled with such an atmosphere of history, with the remains of William Shakespeare a few feet away, one could imagine the bard smiling and applauding from his resting place in the chancel. The singing of “Arglwydd Mae Yn Nosi” was in memory of Cyril. The concert concluded at 9.30pm. The evening was organised by the local Rotary Club and the proceeds were in aid of the Home Farm Trust, so the evening’s efforts were both financially and musically successful. After a buffet in the church hall, one bus returned to ales whilst the second sampled the pleasures of the local rugby club.

APRIL

Thursday April 5th

Bridgend Leisure Centre

The Choir returned to Bridgend Leisure Centre to perform in a concert to raise funds for a local Rotary Club. The proceeds were in aid of local charities. Leaving home at 6pm the concert started at 7.3pm. Whether is it coincidence, or just “jinx” the performance at this venue was once again marred by extraneous forces. This was not apparent at the start of the concert but as time went by there was an increased noise from the adjoining sports hall. In attempt to lessen the noise it was discovered that at Semi Final in a County Volleyball competition was taking place! In view of this John Cynan decided not to sing certain numbers. As always, despite all the difficulties, limited acoustics and restricted staging, the enjoyment of the singing was displayed admirably by the response from the capacity audience. The late bus enjoyed refreshments at the Mackworth Hotel in Laleston.

Friday April 13th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

This was the “silver” Good Friday Concert – celebrating 25 years of the Choir and Park & Dare (National Fuel Distributors) Band. The engagement proved as popular as ever with the demand greater than the supply of tickets, so again it was a capacity audience. Sadly following the concert it was discovered that Robert Turner (1T) had his car stolen.

MAY

Friday May 11th

St David's Hall, Cardiff

Owing to the fire which gutted the Cory Band's rehearsal room in Pentre, destroying the music sheets, arrangements, instruments and trophies won over its long history, the Choir was caught in traffic and arrived at St David's Hall at 5.35pm. On the way through Cardiff Mr Alun Williams was spotted and “tooted” to his obvious amusement. On arrival at the hall a rehearsal was held with baritone Donald Maxwell and organised Robert Court. This was a prestigious concert for the Choir, sponsored by Barclays Bank, as it was the first time for the Choir to perform its own concert in this hall. The popularity of the Choir and that of Donald Maxwell was evident as the hall was filled with capacity. “Happy Birthday” was sung to David Rosser and when John Cynan announced that Barclays were donating £500 to the Cory Band, it was met with thunderous applause. The professionalism of Donald Maxwell, the inspiring singing the Choir, Marion's magnificent playing and Robert Court's sensitive accompaniment, all under the inspired conductorship of John Cynan, combined to make the concert one of the best given by the Choir. The response from the audience was proof of this. The Choristers retired to the Level 3 bar, leaving for home at midnight.

Saturday May 19th

Parr Hall, Warrington

A weekend away! Leaving home at 11.35pm the Choir stopped in Ross on Wye for lunch before arriving at the Lord Daresbury Hotel in Warrington at 5pm where they changed into their dress suits and travelled to the Parr Hall. Members had a short rehearsal and walked to the Town Hall. As last time the Warrington Youth Band welcomed the Choir with the playing of Welsh Airs. The Mayor of Warrington, Cllr Stokes, welcomed the Choir and presented Mr Erasmus with a plaque to commemorate the visit. After a splendid buffet, it was back to the Parr Hall for the concert at 7.30pm. Adversity brings the best responses. This was true for although it was a small Choir, the concert was first class due to the magnificent introduction by Mel Absolam, Mair, Mario, Choir and John Cynan with a warm, friendly atmosphere of the appreciative audience. With the presentation of bouquets, the concert finished at 10.30pm and members returned to the hotel for 11.15pm. A splendid debut for Gareth Day (2B). Also the first public performance of “Bring Him Home” with soloist Wyn Davies.

Sunday May 20th

Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford

After a hearty breakfast the Choir had the day to themselves. Some went swimming, sauna, played snooker or walked around the town. The coaches left the hotel at 4pm for the village of Lymm for a walkabout before arriving at the Gatehouse Theatre. The concert started at 7pm and was another enjoyable performance. Thus ended another successful weekend both musically and financially as all of the proceeds went to the Multiple Sclerosis. Reference must be made to choristers who made a special effort to attend wherever possible. Geoff Morris drove up for the Saturday concert as did Jack Moses and John Davies for the Sunday concert. Islwyn Morgan came straight to Stafford from holiday!

JUNE

Saturday June 9th

Park & Dare Theatre

The Choir agreed to perform with the Parc & Dare Band at their hometown theatre to welcome the civic dignitaries of Landkreis Wolfenbuttel in Germany. The Mayor of Rhondda, Margaret Chard, welcomed the German delegation and the visitors responded with a presentation to John Cynan. On such an occasion the Choir and band responded with a first class performance, which obviously pleased both visitors and audience. After the concert John Cynan and Mary Jones, John Mallin, Norman Martin and Alun Hughes were invited to the Mayor's Parlour and a splendid time was had by all.

Sunday June 24th

Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

It was album-making time again with a visit to Swansea for another recording session. The album was called "Showstoppers" and was being made for the EMI label. The recording went well. Lunch was enjoyed and tea and biscuits. Cliff Taylor and his wife visited for their first experience of the recording, while Marion made her first record as Choir accompanist. "Happy Birthday" was sung to Rupert Hull (1B) and with thanks to all concerned in making a first class recording, the session finished at 6.20pm.

Thursday June 28th

Hope Chapel, Gelli

The Choir paid a return visit to Hope Chapel with proceeds in aid of chapel funds. John Cynan decided to conduct from the pulpit and after the first song he changed the positions of the Choir and brought everything to rights. The concert provided a "starting block" for 12-year-old Louise Jones who played the organ. The relaxed atmosphere of the chapel and an appreciative audience, ensured a most enjoyable evening.

Saturday June 30th

HTV Studios, Culverhouse Cross

The engagement at Culverhouse Cross was off to a frustrating start as the wrong bus times were given and as they ran an hour late, many choristers went home. The evening was held to broadcast on the "Canwn Moliannwn" programme which started at 7pm and finished at 9pm. The presenter of the programme was Alwyn Humphreys

of the Morriston Orpheus Male Choir and the organist was our old friend Robert Court. Despite all the troubles and tribulations the performance was as smooth as silk.

JULY

Saturday July 7th

Great Hall, Exeter University

After a 15-year gap the Choir returned to the Great Hall at Exeter. With such a splendid hall, an enthusiastic and appreciative audience, Bryan at his brilliant best on the piano (as Marion is in hospital), Mair and Choir in sparkling form, it was a triumph indeed. Wyn Davies brought the house down with his solos in “Kalinka” and “Bring Him Home”. The Choir, under the relaxed control of a smiling John Cynan, ensured an outstanding evening. The event was held in aid of the Dawlish Hospital Fund. It was a most enjoyable concert.

Monday July 9th

St David's Hall, Cardiff

“It never rains but it pours!” – such is true with the bus company and the Choir as for the second time in three engagements they failed to fulfil their obligations. Finally the Choir was on the road and reached the venue 1.5hours late! Trying to find the reason for this confusion was impossible. Finally 87 men staged for the concert which was held in aid of the Christie Tyler Cory Band Fire Appeal Fund organised by Nigel Philips who ensured the success of the venture – and with an audience of 1,500 it was obvious this was a great financial success indeed. The music success was ensured by Nigel Seaman and John Cynan Jones respectively sharing the rostrum and Major Kenny came out of retirement to conduct the band in a group of items. Major Kenny surprise everyone by presenting the Band with a replica of the 1984 Championship Plaque lost in the fire. John Cynan presented a cheque of £500 from a collection made up at a recent concert and Choir funds. The band, Choir, audience entered a memorable and happy atmosphere making this a memorable occasion indeed.

Thursday July 13th

St Mary Church, Usk

On a glorious sunny evening the Choir left home for a return visit to Usk after a period of 11 years. A slight hiccup occurred when it was realised the concert was 8pm, not 7.30pm as thought. Such was the popularity of the concert, this time had to be extended to allow the long queue of people to enter the church and eventually the first notes were heard at 8.10pm. the arrangement of the Choir was such that for the first time the second tenors were directly in front of the Conductor, with the first bass behind them and the first tenors and second bass either side. At the piano was Jonathan Gulliford who also accompanied the Choir on the organ for the last group of hymns. The concert was a pleasing one to end the first half year's engagement programme. The late bus enjoyed the haven of the “Star” hotel in Llansoy.

SEPTEMBER

Monday September 3rd

Sadly the choristers bid a fond farewell to yet another faithful old member in Walter “Wally” Breeze (1T) who died on Saturday in Treherbert Hospital. The funeral at

Glyntaff was well attended by choristers and former choristers and the chosen hymns of “Rhys” and “Arwelfa” while the Choir sang “Arglwydd Mae Yn Nosi”. His loyalty to the Choir was unquestionable and the spirit with which he bore his illness was an object lesson to us all.

Thursday September 6th

At tonight’s rehearsal a special meeting was held to discuss the proposed American Tour. The Secretary gave the conditions of the tour as far as they were known. These were:

- The Choir was responsible for travelling expenses to USA
- The minimum cost per head would be £200
- The accommodation, lunch, dinner would be provided along with travelling costs in USA
- The tour would either be 8 concerts in 10 days or 12 concerts in 14 days,
- There was no remuneration to the Choir fund from the tour.
- The date was October 1991.

Given all these facts the members were asked to think it over and return with their answer by next Tuesday.

Tuesday September 11th

At the “American Tour” meeting the terms were restated and after a discussion the proposal that the terms be accepted in principle was overwhelmingly accepted.

Thursday September 13th

Whitchurch Hospital

It was time to make a return visit to Whitchurch Hospital in Cardiff. Leaving home at 6.15pm, the concert was memorable for Carwyn Morris (2T) who announced he was leaving the Choir to further his education at Brighton Polytechnic. Other very pleasing facts was the return of Wyn Davies as a soloist and Marion’s first appearance after her hospitalisation. The bass soloist, Leighton Thomas, is the son of T.R. Thomas, a stalwart member of the First Bass section of the Choir for many years. The proceeds were in aid of the hospital funds and the first concert was successful with the funds doing well.

OCTOBER

Saturday October 6th

Victoria Hall, Hanley

The Choir paid its third visit to Stoke with a concert in the Victoria Hall, Hanley – a magnificent hall acoustically. The concert started at 7.30pm and with a large audience, the hall was even more enjoyable for the singers. The concert proved to be one of the best with the excellent piano playing enhanced by Marion. The Choir responded beautifully to the hall and the inspirational conductorship of John Cynan Jones prevailed throughout. Such was the volume, length and shouts of “encore” and applause from the satisfied audience, that John Cynan returned his appreciation by the Choir singing “Myfanwy”. This was member for the three Ferndale choristers as they were introduced to the audience and for the first time the solo section in “Battle

Hymn” was sung by the entire First Bass section. The late bus enjoyed their evening at the Ray Reardon Snooker Club.

Thursday October 11th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

At the ninth annual Autumn Concert the format was altered. The Choir formed behind the closed stage curtain and remained standing until the music staff appeared. Immediately on the down beat the Choir launched into their overture, “Another Opening Another Show”. This set the tone for the programme as it was based entirely on the “Showstoppers” album which consisted of songs from the music world. The one difference was a group of hymns sung in memory of Wally Breeze. The soloist, Stephine Benavente (soprano) charmed the audience with her delightful singing. Marion excelled as her accompanist. An amusing incident occurred as John Cynan explained the background to a song when a member of the audience yawned. John Cynan said, “I’ll be as quick as possible”, which brought roars of laughter from the audience. It was a privilege to have a VIP from the African country of Lesotho, Joseph Thabane, in the audience.

Sunday October 21st

City Hall, Cardiff

It was another Christie Tyler Show for the Choir at City Hall, Cardiff. There were a few slight changes from the format. The Choir and Cory Band (conducted by Nigel Seaman) was the same. The effervescent personality Nigel Phillips, dressed in white trousers, black velvet jacket, cravat and hat. The artist this time was Ray Allen, hindered, hassled and harassed by “Lord Charles”. The first show in the Furniture Fortnight got off to a cracking start.

Monday October 22nd

City Hall, Cardiff

As above! The concert finished a little earlier.

Tuesday October 23rd

City Hall, Cardiff

Musically ditto. However the late bus made a detour to Gilfach Goch for Meirion Pengelly. Unfortunately Mervyn John had to leave the stage as he wasn’t well.

Wednesday October 24th

City Hall, Cardiff

The bus stopped in Pontrhondda on the way and had to wait for Edward Owen to appear. He had returned home because he’d forgotten his teeth! At the Hall a “get well” card was signed for Tom Pate.

Thursday October 25th

City Hall, Cardiff

Present amongst tonight’s guests were Mr and Mrs Cliff Taylor. When Nigel Phillips made them guests of honour with a champagne toast, the Choir stood and applauded. Mr Allen made the choristers’ night when he drew attention to the much-needed hair cut of John Cynan! Tonight the band was conducted by Howard Jones

Sunday October 28th

City Hall, Cardiff

On arrival a committee meeting was held to discuss Nigel Phillips's proposal for a "last night at the hall".

Monday October 29th

City Hall, Cardiff

"Happy Birthday" was sung to Danny who was in charge of the kitchens!

Tuesday October 30th

City Hall, Cardiff

"Happy Birthday" sang to two guests. Musically the same concert with John Cynan conducting "We'll Keep A Welcome".

Wednesday October 31st

City Hall, Cardiff

"Happy Birthday" sung to one of the guests. Nigel looked resplendent in his attire again tonight. A new "low" record with only six second tenors staging.

NOVEMBER

Thursday November 1st

City Hall, Cardiff

It was a "last night at the (City Hall) proms tonight. Mike Doyle, the artist in the very first Christie Tyler Furniture Fortnight was in attendance and sang "A Boy From Nowhere". Ray Allen maintained and excelled his magnificent act. Nigel was again resplendent in his attire and with flag waving, bangers, stompers, whistlers, and "Land of Hope and Glory" sung three times, the season came to an exhilarating conclusion.

Tuesday November 6th

The information was given regarding the American Tour and it was agreed that the contract to be signed was overwhelmingly carried (80-4).

Saturday November 10th

Theatre Hafren, Newtown

After a period of 29 years the Choir returned to Newtown. This was a rare occasion when the buses travelled up the valley, with a long and winding journey through mid Wales. At rehearsal it was obvious that the heavy curtained stage and no sound boards would be a problem. Despite all the difficulties the response from the capacity audience amply demonstrated their enjoyment at the performances of Mair Roberts and the Choir by their volumetric and sustained applause, together with many complimentary comments. The proceeds were in aid of the Leukaemia Research Fund. After an excellent buffet the buses returned home by 1.40am in Treherbert.

Thursday November 15th

St Peter's Church, Pentre

The Choir was honoured and privileged to give a concert at St Peter's to mark the centenary of the building – known locally as the "cathedral of the Rhondda". The concert included the Deputy Mayor, Air Commodore Kyle along with other RAF

Officers from St Athans. Also present was David Hammond Williams and Norman Kay, producer and musical director of the television programme “Highway”. John Cynan Jones delivered a programme suitable for the occasion and before an appreciative audience the choristers, filled with pride, gave a first-class concert performance. The Cory Quintet played some very enjoyable music. The choristers accepted an invitation to a social night at the RAFA in Treorchy. The connection with the RAF is that Rev Malcolm Davies of St Peter’s is an ATC padre.

DECEMBER

Saturday December 1st

Fairfield Hall, Croydon

The Choir paid its seventh visit to Fairfield Hall thanks to Bob Barrett. Some choristers decided to make it an overnight stay at their own expenses and therefore the buses left at different times to reach the venue for rehearsals at 7pm in preparation for the 8pm start. With a splendid hall and a large audience the concert was a great success. David Bell (organist) raised the roof. Whether it was tiredness or a long programme, the Choir’s singing of “Myfanwy” as an encore fell below John Cynan’s necessary standard and was sung again.