

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 2013

By Dean Powell
Publicity Officer & Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Saturday January 26th

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

For the first concert of the New Year the Choir was led by its newly appointed Principal Guest Conductor Dr Alwyn Humphreys. With Helen Roberts as accompanist and Kate Woolveridge performing magnificently as a mezzo soprano soloist, the success of the concert was secured from the opening bars. Once again Ray Daniels sang the baritone solo items with colleague Dean Powell fulfilling the rolls of tenor soloist and Master of Ceremonies. The Choir was eager to perform after the Christmas break and with a capacity audience awaiting them at the Royal Spa Centre they prepared for a night to remember. With such an outstanding musical director before them, the Choir performed magnificently and left the stage with a thunderous standing ovation.

With so many highlights to the concert it is difficult to list them all, but suffice to say some of the audience favourites for the evening included “Calon Lan” (to The Rose), “Let It Be Me” and “Nessun Dorma”, three items that certainly tug at the heart strings. Meticulous in his conducting technique, Alwyn’s Choir appeared relaxed and determined to give off their very best, which they certainly did. The rousing Welsh hymns, particularly “Llef” and “Laudamus” thrilled the crowd, along with “Y Tangnefeddwyr” and the clever encore number of the last chorus and “amen” section to “Gwahoddiad” and “Morte Christe”.

Following the concert we enjoyed a supper in a local cricket club before making the return home by 2am.

Sunday January 27th

Acapella, Pentyrch

At 12noon the Choir arrived at the Acapella Recording Studio in the village of Pentyrch to record the track “Me Mum” for Bygum Records. The single had been rehearsed by the Choir for several months and was recorded with 1970s pop star Gilbert O’Sullivan. Famous for hits such as the unforgettable “Clair”, Gilbert had specially invited the Choir to join him on the track which was released on Mother’s Day 2013. The Choir readily agreed and spent a long but productive day in the recording studio with him and producer Laurie Holloway.

MARCH

Friday March 1st

Hotel de Paris, Monaco

See *Tour of Monaco*

Saturday March 2nd

The Playhouse Theatre, Weston Super Mare

Following such a prestigious concert on the previous night and with so few hours slept in the last few days it was a concern that tonight the Choir could have appeared deflated and tired on stage. Fortunately it was anything but! The 64 choristers travelling from Monaco were joined by a further eight from Wales at the Playhouse

Theatre in Weston Super Mare, a venue where they had performed during the previous year. Yet again it was before another sold-out auditorium and this enthusiastic audience appeared absolutely thrilled by the first-class concert. The Treorchy team of Dr Alwyn Humphreys, Helen Roberts, Ray Daniels and Dean Powell were joined tonight by soprano soloist Iona Jones who added another dimension to an excellent concert over all.

The Choir was still in a state of euphoria following the royal concert in Monte Carlo the previous evening and gave off their best to the crowd at Weston. Some of the best received items included “You Raise Me Up”, “Let It Be Me”, “Pearlfishers” and “Calon Lan”. For the first time the Choir opened the concert with a majestic “Men of Harlech”, which helped set the scene for the St David’s Day (plus one!) celebrations. Other notable favourites included “My Way”, “This is the Moment” and Stuart Smith singing the solo section of “Sit Down You’re Rocking the Boat”.

With another standing ovation and loud applause ringing in the ears the tired choristers boarded the coaches and travelled to a local rugby club for refreshments. Many were glad when the call came to return home after what had been an unforgettable weekend of song.

Saturday March 9th **St Mary’s Church, Mold**

It was unfortunate that tonight’s concert was inadvertently booked on the same day as a Welsh Rugby International. As Wales clinched the title from Scotland in a scrappy game played at Murrayfield, the Choir endured a rather lengthy journey to north Wales to perform for the first time in St Mary’s Church, Mold. The occasion was the official opening of the Flintshire Artsfest ’13 and the Choir was delighted to accept the invitation. Unfortunately only 51 choristers made the trip north for the performance and it was clearly a great shame and disappointment to the musical staff and other choristers that they were so short in number.

Those present in the audience were more than pleased by the concert and rewarded the Treorchy choristers with a standing ovation. For those on stage it was anything but a good performance and every one realised it was not their best concert by far. In fact some items such as “Adiemus” were incredibly poor and due to the shortage of tenors, “Nessun Dorma” was removed from the programme altogether. It was a most disappointing performance all round, particularly as only a week before more than 20 more choristers were on stage.

Tuesday March 19th **Treorchy Comprehensive School**

A whole host of inspiring musical schoolchildren from 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 2013. A total of 19 children took to the stage at Treorchy Comprehensive School hall before a packed audience of 600 parents, teachers and supporters for the major event. Attended by West End star Sophie Evans, Mayor of Rhondda Cynon Taf Cllr Doug Williams and BBC presenter Roy Noble OBE, the performers sang or played instruments to the packed crowd.

The winner of the Singing Category was Mia Edwards of Ton Pentre Junior School and the winner of the Instrumentalist Category was Megan Gillard of Parc Primary School in Cwmparc. Now celebrating its eighth year, a total of 20 primary and junior schools in the two valleys entered the competition whose patron is Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel MBE. The competition is funded by a variety of local businesses, supporters and Choir.

Over the past three months hundreds of schoolchildren have auditioned in a series of preliminary heats, judged by members of the Treorchy Male Choir. Two further Semi Finals were held in Porth County Comprehensive School and Tonypany Community College.

The finalists received a certificate, trophy and tickets for themselves and an adult to see “Hairspray” at the Wales Millennium Centre in August. The two winning finalists of one singer and one instrumentalist each received £200 prize money, a trophy and the Treorchy Male Choir Trophy to be retained by their school for one year. They will also share the stage with the Treorchy Male Choir at the Park & Dare Theatre on Good Friday, March 29th.

The evening was particularly memorable as the Choir performed three items under the conductorship of Helen Roberts who was accompanied by Connor Fogal.

Friday March 29th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

Tonight’s annual Good Friday Concert had a special theme running through the evening as we combined once more with the Parc & Dare Band. This year, the Park & Dare Theatre, our “home” in so many ways, celebrates its centenary. It was with this in mind that collectively we decided to mark the one hundredth anniversary of this prestigious building in music and song. Both organisations have used the theatre since its opening in 1913 and many former members, who were miners in the two local collieries, paid towards its construction from their wages. Therefore it was only fitting that we celebrated the wealth of history in this fine landmark building in the middle of our hometown.

Those who attended the concert will agree that it was one of the best yet. The performance of both the band and Choir was exemplary and will be long remembered by audience and performers alike. A sense of enjoyment and “hwyl” pervaded the entire evening and with the Choir on top form under the direction of Dr Alwyn Humphreys, gave a performance worthy of its international reputation. As always Dr Humphreys demanded the very best from the Choir and the reaction from the packed hall to each of the items made it obvious how exceptional the performance actually was.

Helen Roberts played magnificently on stage this evening. Dean Powell made a welcomed return as compere and also performed “Unwaith Eto’n Nghymru Annwyl” for the first time in Treorchy for many years. It was also a pleasure to welcome the winners of the singer and instrumentalist category of the Junior Musician Competition onto the stage. They both gave splendid performances which resulted in a standing ovation from the choristers. Once again this was a very successful and enjoyable

Good Friday Concert, befitting the magnificent history of the building and the two oldest organisations to have continually used it throughout the last century.

APRIL

Sunday April 7th

Treorchy Male Choir is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of its only surviving founder and pre-war member. Haydn Erasmus B.E.M., passed away at his home in Dumfries Street, Treorchy. He was 93 years old. His contribution to the Treorchy Male Choir over seven decades was massive as he performed the duties of Committee Member and Chairman on many occasions and was a Vice President of the Choir,

Haydn was the last surviving person who attended the first rehearsal of the re-formed Treorchy Male Choir on October 16th 1946 and was instrumental in developing the organisation in its early days. He was one of only forty young men who attended the first rehearsal which featured mainly former servicemen, demobbed following World War II. Together they appointed a Conductor, Accompanist and Committee which saw the transformation of the group of raw musical recruits into an internationally famous Choir. In fact Haydn was involved in the Choir before it disbanded in 1943 and remained a faithful member of the First Bass section throughout his singing career.

During his lengthy membership he joined the Choir on their unparalleled competition success at the National Eisteddfod and undertook tours to Switzerland, Strasbourg, Canada and Australia. Haydn rarely missed a concert and was a stalwart member of his section, becoming a dependable, conscientious mentor to many new choristers. Haydn was a Committee Member from 1961 to 1966 and again from 1977 to 1987. He performed the role of Chairman twice from 1967 to 1973 and 1989 to 1991, guiding the administrative management of the Choir with sheer professionalism.

During his tenure he became a Long Service Member, Life Member and a Fifty Year Member in 1996. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Choir he was appointed Vice President in 2007. Unfortunately owing to ill-health he ended his term as an active chorister in 2005 but he remained in contact with the organisation that had played such a large part of his long life.

Married to Jean with one daughter, Julia, Haydn was employed in Fernhill Colliery and later at the EMI factory in Treorchy for the greater part of his working career. He was a diligent voluntary worker for the Treorchy Boys Club movement during its heyday, for which he received the British Empire Medal in the Queens Honours List. Although a quiet and reserved man, friendship and camaraderie were an important part of Haydn's life. His spare time was usually spent socialising with a close group of friends at his favourite watering hole in The Stag Hotel, Treorchy. Haydn Erasmus made a major contribution to the Treorchy Male Choir. We salute his memory and mourn his passing.

Saturday April 20th

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

The Choir made another triumphant return to the Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury for a concert in aid of its own funds. The splendid journey on this sunny day through the

beautiful countryside, put all of the choristers in a positive, bright mood as they entered the impressive theatre. Although not as many tickets had been sold this year as previously, the audience was nonetheless impressed and delighted by the performance.

Dr Alwyn Humphreys conducted the concert with Helen Roberts as accompanist, Iona Jones as soprano soloist and Gareth Evans performing the role of compere – while resident MC Dean Powell sat in the ranks and enjoyed the opportunity of a slightly more restful evening! All of the ingredients were in place for another memorable concert under the inspiring baton of Dr Alwyn and the rapturous applause received following each item was evidence of the success of the night.

Following the concert the Choir was delighted to retire to a local cricket club where a special celebration was being held in the main hall. In typical Treorchy style, the choristers marched into the hall and gave a first-class performance, culminating in a rendition of “Gwahoddiad” conducted by their Assistant Conductor, David Hutchings.

Tuesday April 23rd

The Orangery, Margam

Over a two day period travel experts, community ambassadors, restauranteurs and hoteliers joined for the Valleys Tourism Conference at Margam Park. At the close of the opening day it was decided to hold a special dinner in the beautiful surroundings of The Orangery at the entrance to the park. The dinner guests were treated to several guest speakers who were introduced by the compere, Treorchy’s own Dean Powell. Following the dinner the Choir quietly gathered in the anti-room and amid loud applause marched into the Orangery and gave a thirty-minute performance. Although relatively low in number, this had little effect on the standard of performance as displayed by the enthusiastic audience. Dr Alwyn Humphreys and Helen Roberts led the musical team through a repertoire of largely Welsh items to inspire and celebrate our heritage and unique tourism opportunities.

MAY

Saturday May 11th

Octagon Theatre, Yeovil

Following a period of 17 years the Choir returned to the Octagon Theatre for a concert in aid of their own funds. It was a pleasant journey to the venue and following a short rehearsal choristers mingled in the bar area where they were delighted to meet Honorary Member Mel Absolam who for many years organised concerts in the Parr Hall, Warrington. A large audience attended the concert which was certainly a huge success given the quality of performance and lengthy applause.

Dr Alwyn Humphreys led the Choir this evening with Helen Roberts as accompanist, Iona Jones as soprano soloist and Dean Powell as compere. The large Choir excelled themselves once more and the incredibly enthusiastic audience, who revelled in the performance of every song, from the very outset made this a memorable night. In fact they applauded every single chorister as he marched on the stage and back off again at the end of the evening!

Once again Iona made a huge impact, particularly with a performance of “Holy City” and a beautiful rendition of “O Mio Babino Caro”. Helen also performed brilliantly this evening and as always Dr Alwyn’s roll as conductor was truly inspiring. Collectively everyone had a memorable and enjoyable concert.

Tuesday May 14th

At the rehearsal room this evening Chairman David Bebb welcomed Elvira Henry of Ystradgynlais. In addressing the Choir and Miss Henry, David said: "During the past few years the Choir has recognised individual ladies who have contributed greatly to our success. Honorary Lady Membership has been presented to former soloists, accompanists and supporters. However, one such individual appears to have gone unrecognised for far too long. That lady is Elvira Henry. It was only by sheer luck... that a lady who attended a concert in Shrewsbury explained that she was Miss Henry's niece and that our special guest this evening was living in Ystradynlais and still have a great respect and interest in the Choir. In fact earlier this year she celebrated her 90th birthday and it was the intention of a group of choristers to visit her home and with her a "happy birthday" in song. Sadly, adverse weather made this impossible which is why tonight is a double celebration for not only do we offer Miss Henry a belated birthday greeting, but also remember the contribution she has made to the Treorchy Male Choir.

"Elvira Henry came from Treherbert and was taught music through Sunday School classes at her local chapel. By the time she reached her teenage years it was obvious that she possessed a beautiful soprano voice, making her very much in demand for public performances. In 1962 she was noticed by John Haydn Davies, Conductor of the Treorchy Male Choir and invited to appear with them at a concert in Caerphilly on May 1st. So the relationship between the Choir and the young soprano began and continued in this vein for the next six years during which time she enchanted audiences throughout Wales and beyond its borders. She appeared in a total of fifteen concerts with the Choir over the coming years, mostly held in the South Wales area and was a firm favourite with audience and Choir alike.

"She retired not long afterwards and moved to the Swansea Valley where she currently resides. In 2010 she made a welcomed return to the Treorchy Male Choir by attending the unveiling of a Blue Plaque in honour of the organisation at the Red Cow Hotel where it was first formed in 1883. Since then she has remained in close contact with the Choir and has also made several financial donations to our organisation for which we are very grateful. Therefore on behalf of the Treorchy Male Choir it gives me great pleasure to present Honorary Lady Membership to Miss Elvira Henry."

Amid rapturous applause Miss Henry walked through the Choir to receive her certificate. To the delight of all concerned this very lively individual then proceeded to conduct a performance of “Calon Lan” before giving an impressive rendition of a monologue, much to everyone’s absolute delight and admiration.

Tuesday May 14th

Tonight it was announced by the Chairman that Helen Roberts has been made the new Assistant Conductor of the Treorchy Male Choir. Unfortunately she relinquished the title later in the year.

Friday May 17th

Parc Primary School, Cwmparc

Annually members of the Choir visit Parc Primary School in Cwmparc to attend a Memorial Service for those residents and evacuees who were killed by the Luftwaffe during an air raid in 1941. A dozen or so choristers attended the service in the school where pupils and local residents gathered to pay their respects.

Thursday May 24th

Vale Hotel, Hensol

At the invitation of Honorary Member Robert Harris, the Choir visited the Vale Hotel in Hensol to attend the Wooden Spoon Golf Tournament between the Barbarians and British Lions. Helen Roberts conducted the large Choir while her colleague Caradog Williams performed the roll of accompanist. The Choir gave two short performances, the first in the Morgannwg Suite dining room for around 150 guests who collectively raised funds for the Wooden Spoon charity. Following their meal the guests heard the Choir perform at second time on the balcony overlooking the main foyer of the building.

Sunday May 26th

Stag Hotel, Treorchy

A very memorable afternoon was spent in Stag Hotel, Treorchy to film a scene for a forthcoming Australian network TV show. Featuring Australia's foremost Vietnamese comedian, Ahn, the purpose of the show was to follow its star around the UK. On his visit to Wales he wanted to meet with a male voice choir and so the filming took place in Treorchy. Choristers, dressed in casual clothes, met at the Stag at 12pm for the 12.30pm filming to commence. With a very efficient film crew, helpful director and cameramen, the entire experience was fun and fast!

In the scene Ahn walked into the bar to be served by Selwyn Jones no less. At that point Selwyn Jones sang "Do you come from the land down under?" Following which the barman, played by Dean Powell, responded with "Where women glow and men plunder". The funniest moment came as the entire Choir, chatting away in the bar, stopped and looked at the star and sang "Can you hear, can you hear that thunder? You better run, you better take cover" and quickly turned back to talk. Choristers could only envisage how hilarious this scenario would look on film! Following which they performed "Cwm Rhondda", "Calon Lan", "Advance Australia Fair" and Dean Powell sang "Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl". It was a "wrap" by 2.30pm, making for one of the fast television recordings in the Choir's history!

JUNE

Saturday June 15th

G Live Theatre, Guildford

Following a period of 17 years the Choir made a return visit to Guildford to perform for the first time at the impressive G Live Theatre. This large auditorium enjoyed excellent acoustics and the choristers looked forward to the opportunity of singing there. On arrival however there was no piano and only a stage large enough for 16 choristers! So arrangements were made and the concert eventually began on time. This evening marked the welcome return of Ros Evans as soprano soloist and once

again her good humour and superb voice made it a concert to remember. Dr Alwyn Humphreys led the small Choir of 55 men, through a first-class repertoire of music and despite the rather small audience of 300 people, the concert was well received by all present. Some of the highlights included “Let It Be Me”, “Nessun Dorma” and the many Welsh items in the concert programme. It was also a pleasure to see Beryl Thomas in the audience with her husband Jack. Beryl is the daughter of the late Tom Jones, accompanist of the Choir from 1946 to 1971. With a finale of Welsh favourites, the Choir left the stage to the ring of applause, assured they had indeed conquered Guildford one more time.

Friday June 21st

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

To mark the centenary of the Park & Dare Theatre in Treorchy, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council’s Arts Development Department organised a celebratory concert called “100 Not Out”. The evening featured some of those organisations that used the theatre on a regular basis to great success due to their many supporters in the community. This included various operatic and theatrical societies including Selsig, Mid Rhondda and Spotlight. The Parc & Dare Band was also in attendance and to conclude the concert a performance by the Treorchy Male Choir was given. This evening the Choir was accompanied by young Connor Fogel, while Helen Roberts performed the duty of Conductor. A great finale to a splendid centenary concert in honour of our hometown landmark.

Saturday June 29th

Torch Theatre, Milford Haven

A return to Milford Haven after such a successful concert the previous year was something of a concern as the Choir had yet to appoint a new Musical Director. However, the wonderful support shown by the Chorusmaster of Llandaff Cathedral, Simon Lovel Jones, allayed all previous concerns. With only one visit to the rehearsal room he did a magnificent job taking the Choir through its paces for this very enthusiastic audience. A large crowd was present at the Torch Theatre to welcome the return of the Treorchy men and they were certainly not disappointed by the performance. Although on occasions a few problems arose, they were minor mistakes when realising the huge success of the evening despite the difficult circumstances. As always the Choir rose to the occasion and with Helen on the piano and Iona Jones acting as soprano soloist, the concert was well received.

JULY

Tuesday July 16th

College Chapel, Malborough

The Choir made a return visit to the beautiful College Chapel in Malborough to perform at the town's summer festival. On this occasion the Choir was required to perform at the venue on a Tuesday evening which is often a problem for choristers. However, a Choir of 57 were able to attend the event which was a total success from start to finish. It was a memorable occasion for many reasons. Firstly the sheer beauty of the College Chapel itself, with its incredible gothic columns, stained glass windows and ornate ceiling. Secondly it was a venue that was absolutely full to the rafters with more than 800 people who applauded the Choir as they marched through the chapel to reach their places. Thirdly it was an evening Helen Roberts will never forget as she

performed the duties of Musical Director in a full concert for the very first time, ably assisted by David Geoffrey Thomas. The evening was extra-special for Helen as not only were her parents in attendance, but also her grandfather who was once the curate of the college chapel. Finally the evening was memorable for the young soloists chosen by the Choir – Lucy Elson and Luke Davies, who were Treorchy Comprehensive School students and had performed with the Choir at their Annual Concert in 2013.

With all of these ingredients in place, the concert went smoothly and without a single hitch. The choristers followed Helen intently and were so well rehearsed of the well known repertoire that not a note went wrong. Dean Powell performed his duties as Master of Ceremonies as usual and the warm audience were entertained from start to finish. Some of the more magical moments came with the rousing religious items, especially “Llef” and “Gwahoddiad”, while “Nessun Dorma” certainly rose the roof along with “What Would I Do Without My Music” and “You Raise Me Up”. Following the concert the single coach returned immediately for home – another ‘first’!

Wednesday July 24th

University of South Wales, Treforest

The Choir was invited to perform at the Conference Dinner of UK Caterers at Treforest's University of South Wales. Held in a specially erected marquee the choristers performed post-dinner for TUCA Conference who were clearly overjoyed by the standard of the singing. Once again Helen took the baton whilst David Geoffrey Thomas was accompanist for the evening and the short programme of ten items was well received. Despite the difficult acoustics of a marquee and the shocking sound of rain after weeks of hot weather, the performance was first-class and received a rapturous standing ovation.

Saturday July 27th

The Choir was deeply saddened to hear of the death of chorister Tom Belmont. Tommy joined the ranks of the First Bass section in 2008 and was a faithful chorister throughout his relatively short time in the Choir. He embarked on the 2009 tour of Australia and New Zealand and rarely missed a concert throughout the British Isles. Tommy also enjoyed the opportunity of visiting Berlin and appeared regularly at wedding engagements with the "Minstrels". He was a dedicated Assistant Librarian and Librarian.

AUGUST

Thursday August 8th – Sunday August 11th

Tour of Scotland

See Tour of Scotland

Sunday August 25th

Y Senedd, Cardiff

The Choir was deeply honoured to be invited to participate in such a prestigious occasion as performing at the opening of the much-publicised Walk on Wales event. The concept was the brainchild of two veteran Welsh Guards, Jan Koops and David Graham, both of whom served in the Falklands War. As a result, they were keenly

aware of the devastating impact that active service can have on soldiers and their families, as they cope with bereavement, life-changing injuries or the long-term effects of psychological trauma. The vision for Walk on Wales was to remember and acknowledge the contribution of the 50 Welsh Guardsmen who have died on active service since the end of World War II, and to create a legacy for the veterans of tomorrow, by raising £1m for the Afghanistan Appeal and Combat Stress.

Choristers gathered on the steps of the Welsh Government building, Y Senedd on Cardiff Bay to officially launch the Walk with a selection of songs. Following a number of speeches from leading Government Ministers the Choir – under the direction of Helen Roberts – sang “Speed Your Journey” to begin the first of 11 Walk on Wales relay teams to set off to walk the 870-mile long Welsh Coast Path. The teams carried with them a specially commissioned silver baton the entire length of the stunning Welsh Coast Path before arriving back at Cardiff Bay.

Saturday August 31st

Chepstow Castle

Although the month of August has traditionally been one of rest in the Choir, 2013 will be remembered as the year when the Choir didn't take much of a break for the duration of the summer! With a short tour of Scotland behind us, the Choir returned to the concert platform just a few weeks later for a truly unforgettable evening in the company of two of Wales's finest entertainers. The setting couldn't have been more perfect. As twilight approached on this fresh summer's evening, more than 1,200 people arrived at the ruined splendour of Chepstow Castle. Seating was arranged in the main courtyard of this impressive Norman stronghold and a large stage was erected below the ancient towers.

The Choir took to the stage under the baton of Dr Haydn James with Helen Roberts as accompanist and Dean Powell as compere. They were given an hilarious introduction by Welsh-born comedian Rod Woodward who certainly raised the enjoyment of the evening. The Choir responded with almost half an hour of favourite items, culminating in a thrilling rendition of “Nessun Dorma” which resulted in a tumultuous applause.

The performance was followed by Welsh soprano Sian Cothi whose terrific, electrifying presence on stage was recognised from the first. She gave an inspiring concert performance which thrilled and entertained. However, the highlight of the evening was of course the star himself – Max Boyce, who had especially asked for the Treorchy Choir to be his guests of honour. As always, this legendary entertainer, who is approaching his 70th birthday, brought the house down with another unforgettable performance.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday September 14th

Atrix Theatre, Bromsgrove

The Choir made another return visit to Bromsgrove this evening for a concert arranged by theatre agent Jeanne Grey. The evening saw yet another “full house” of admirers who appeared overjoyed with another excellent performance. The Choir, although low in number, gave a first-class concert under the baton of Dr Haydn

James. With the wonderful talent of Ros Evans as soloist, it had all the hallmarks of being another successful evening. Helen Roberts performed the duties of accompanist with Ray Daniels as soloist and Dean Powell as Master of Ceremonies.

The packed audience were clearly determined to have an excellent, fun-loving evening and they certainly weren't disappointed. With plenty of favourite tunes, coupled with good humour and laughter, the concert was another success. It culminated in the "Les Miserables" medley which resulted in calls for an encore and a "audience participation" of "Delilah" brought the concert to a rousing climax.

Saturday September 28th **Grove Theatre, Dunstable**

Tonight's concert marked the last performance of Dr Haydn James as Guest Conductor of the Treorchy Male Choir. Once again he came to the aid of the Choir when it was without a Musical Director and during the year made a positive impact on the performances of the men throughout the UK. This evening was no exception as the Choir made its first ever visit to Dunstable to perform in a charity concert in aid of Luton Rotary Club.

Once again Helen Roberts performed as Accompanist, with Ray Daniels as soloist and due to the ill health of Dean Powell the roll of Master of Ceremonies fell on the confident shoulders of Gareth Evans. This evening the choristers and audience alike were overjoyed with the performance of their guest artists, the young ladies of Luton Cantores. They sang beautifully and left everyone in no doubt of the brilliance of their singing. With all of these ingredients combined, it made for a memorable night and despite the lengthy journey and the small Choir of only 51 voices, the debut performance in Dunstable was first-class.

OCTOBER

Thursday October 3rd **Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy**

It was an historic night in the history of the Treorchy Male Choir as its new Musical Director, Jeffrey Howard, took to the stage to conduct his first concert engagement. What better setting than in our own hometown with an audience full of family and friends. It was befitting that Conductor Emeritus John Cynan Jones and Choir President Brian Bates were also among the crowd – all of whom were clearly thrilled by the performance. The Annual Concert also welcomed international tenor Rhys Meirion to Treorchy for the very first time and with a mixture of Welsh music and operatic arias, enchanted the valley audience.

The Choir performed brilliantly under the direction of Jeff. This incredibly talented musician appeared calm, confident and totally in control of the men before him. He was relaxed, humorous and someone who put the choristers at ease, while always keeping them on their toes and demanding the best possible performance. The outcome was a truly splendid concert, possibly with the first half being performed to a better degree than that of the second.

The opening item of "Llanfair" brought a response from the packed house that is indeed rare in Treorchy – that of whistling, shouting and rapturous applause. In fact

this display of thrilling applause and delight continued for many other items, particularly “This is the Moment”, “Llanfair” and “Soldier’s Chorus”. In the second half pieces such as “Men of Harlech”, “You Raise Me Up” and “Nella Fantasia” were all enthusiastically received.

Helen Roberts performed the duties of accompanist this evening while Dean Powell carried out his role of Master of Ceremonies, ensuring Jeff Howard had the warmest of introductions to the hometown audience. It was also a debut performance for Gareth Davies (2B) and “Happy Birthday” was performed for Gareth Evans (2B). The finale came with Rhys Meirion and the Choir joining forces for a performance of “You’ll Never Walk Alone” which left the audience and choristers alike in no doubt that this had been a first-class annual concert.

Saturday October 5th **Cardiff City Football Stadium**

Sometimes there are circumstances well beyond your control! Such was the thought of many choristers as they undertook what should have been a prestigious event at the Cardiff City Stadium in Leckwith. The Choir officially launched the Stadium some years before and were invited to return for a game between the Bluebirds and Newcastle FC that would raise funds for the Help for Heroes campaign. With this in mind the Choir was asked to perform “Liberation Hymn” and a new piece composed again by Vernon Hopkins (of Tom Jones’s band “The Senators”) called “The Bridge of Sails”. For the first time the Choir was able to meet Mr Hopkins who actually joined the ranks for the performance of two of his items.

As the crowds began to arrive at the Stadium Jeff Howard took up the baton for the second time and led the Choir through a stirring “Men of Harlech” before performing the two Hopkins’ compositions, which of course the audience had not heard before. The game was soon to commence and everyone seemed appreciative of the Choir’s performance. Sadly the situation didn’t continue!

When half time was called the Choir was instructed to walk to the Newcastle supporters section of the stadium and sing their theme song, “Bladon Races” before walking to the other end of the stadium, and sing “Cwm Rhondda” to the Welsh football supporters. Things didn’t turn out quite as expected because the Cardiff supporters – who were losing 1-0 at half time – began hurling abuse and chanting at the Choir for entertaining their sporting rivals. The abuse continued with the singing of “Cwm Rhondda” which was very unfortunate.

As a consequence the Welsh media contacted the Choir for a statement on the affairs of the day and this was issued: “Treorchy Male Choir is disappointed to learn that Cardiff City Football Club supporters were unhappy with the choice of music performed at the game on Saturday. The Choir, which opened the stadium in 2011, was invited to return to this particular game as funds were being raised for “Help for Heroes”, one of the Choir’s designated charities.

“The music was requested by Cardiff City Football Club itself, including “Men of Harlech”, which received an outstanding applause, although the stadium was half empty at this point. It was followed by “The Liberation Hymn” and “Bridge of Sails”, both written to raise funds for Help for Heroes by composer Vernon Hopkins who

sang in the Choir on the day. Cardiff City Football Club expressly asked for “Blaydon Races” to be performed at half-time for the Newcastle supporters, who have since thanked the Choir on their social media site. The performance was followed by a time-honoured Welsh hymn for the Cardiff City supporters, being “Cwm Rhondda”. Originally the Choir requested they sing “Delilah” but were informed by Cardiff City that this was inappropriate as it is sung by Stoke City Football Club.

“The Choir has performed in venues throughout the world in aid of many charities during its 130-year history and it is unfortunate that such negative comments have been expressed against the organisation.”

Saturday October 12th

St Clement’s Church, Hastings

The Choir went into a musical “battle” of the nicest possible kind when they visited the famous British seaside town of Hastings, the site of the 1066 Battle which signified the start of the Norman invasion a millennia ago. Treorchy’s invasion of the town was far less dramatic, although some would say unforgettable at least! With their first visit to Hastings the Choir undertook a concert organised by a college friend of baritone soloist Ray Daniels with proceeds being raised for the rather magnificent church as part of “Hastings Week.” Having recently undergone a massive refurbishment programme, St Clement’s Church has razor-sharp acoustics which added value to the evening.

A sell-out concert audience welcomed the Treorchy men as they marched down the aisle to the positions near the altar. Jeff Howard led them through the concert, accompanied by Helen Roberts and with Dean Powell as Master of Ceremonies. It was also a joy to welcome soprano Ros Evans, with her quick wit, charm and engaging personality, onto the stage. With all the ingredients of a first-class performance, how could it possibly be otherwise?

The vast repertoire in the concert programme clearly entertained and thrilled the audience which included members of the East Sussex Welsh Association who were incredibly enthusiastic to say the least! Particular favourites included “Calon Lan”, “Men of Harlech”, “Llef” and “This is the Moment”. Ros accompanied the Choir with “You’ll Never Walk Alone” which brought the performance to a close. A thrilling standing ovation resulted in “Nessun Dorma” being performed before the two National Anthems. The Choir then retired to a local hostelry for an enjoyable evening of refreshments and song, performing for the regulars until the early hours before returning to their seafront hotel for the night.

Saturday October 19th

Town Hall, Bridgwater

For the first time the Choir appeared in Bridgwater with a performance at the Town Hall in aid of the local Amateur Operatic Society. The old Victorian venue sadly had a flat stage without tiers, which made singing a problem from the outset. However, the Choir again gave an excellent performance and were once again joined by former Treorchy Comprehensive School pupils Lucy Elson and Luke Davies as soloists for the evening.

A packed hall welcomed the Choir on stage and a very enjoyable concert ensued, with plenty of positive reaction for the enthusiastic audience. Jeff Howard conducted the Choir with Helen Roberts as accompanist and Dean Powell as Master of Ceremonies. He explained that Bridgwater was the retirement town of the Choir's second president, Cliff Taylor and it was a pleasure to welcome the current President, Brian Bates, to the concert that evening.

Following the same concert programme as the performance in Hastings a week earlier, the well-tested pieces were sung with confidence and acclaim. Once again the Choir was rewarded with a thunderous standing ovation which resulted in an encore of "Nessun Dorma" followed by the National Anthems.

Tuesday October 22nd

Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff

Choristers travelled to the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff to rehearse with Welsh singer Cerys Matthews in preparation for tomorrow's Land of Song concert which will open the Womex 2013 Festival. The rehearsal was straightforward and within an hour the choristers left Cardiff Bay for home! This marked the first engagement for David Harris (2B).

Wednesday October 23rd

Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff

Treorchy Male Choir brought the opening concert of the international world music festival, Womex 2013 to a thrilling climax before a sell-out audience at the Wales Millennium Centre. Organised by Welsh star Cerys Matthews, the Choir was specially invited by the former Catatonia singer to appear in this major musical event. Womex (short for WORld Music EXpo) is an international world music support and development project based in Berlin, whose main event is an exposition held annually in different locations throughout Europe. It integrates a trade fair, showcases, conferences, film market, networking sessions, and awards. Musicians and their works have the possibility to make contacts for international touring and album distribution.

Womex is the most important international professional market of world music that brings together professionals from the worlds of folk, roots, ethnic and traditional music and also includes concerts, conferences, a DJ summit and documentary films. This event provides a chance to experience a world of music on your doorstep through attending as a delegate or as a member of the audience for one of the concerts. Womex 2013 Cardiff included around 60 concerts featuring 300 artists, a trade fair exhibiting in the region of 650 companies from over 90 countries, as well as more than 400 national and international journalists.

The whole event was kicked off by a spectacular lineup of artists in the Land of Song opening concert, curated by Cerys Matthews at the Wales Millennium Centre. The plethora of artists graced the stage for the thrilling opening concert, whether singers, dancers, children or adults from all walks of life and parts of the world. The finale saw Treorchy Male Choir march on to the stage before the opening lines of "Senzenina" were sang across the auditorium by soloist Ray Daniels. His first-class performance was not only heard throughout the theatre, but also live on BBC Radio Wales and again on S4C television the following evening. The Choir then launched

into “Men of Harlech” before a line-up of artists took their final bows to a very appreciative audience. It was an honour for the Choir to be involved in such a prestigious occasion.

NOVEMBER

Saturday November 2nd

Y Senedd, Cardiff

In August the Choir performed at the start of the Welsh Guards Afghanistan Appeal and Combat Stress Walk on Wales on the steps of the Senedd in Cardiff Bay. Today the Choir returned to the same venue to welcome the fundraisers back to the Welsh capital after spending 61 days walking 870 miles. The vision for Walk on Wales was to remember and acknowledge the contribution of the 50 Welsh Guardsmen who have died on active service since the end of World War II, and to create a legacy today for the veterans of tomorrow, by raising £1 million.

The finale proved another magical and emotional event, befitting the end of an amazing journey. Crowds of walks and supporters gathered on the steps of the Senedd for the homecoming ceremony which included performances by the Treorchy Male Choir. The Dean of Cardiff, the Rev Bob Capper, led the short service and the Deputy Presiding Officer, Mr David Melding and President, Field Marshal Lord Guthrie, addressed the crowds thanking all those who took part in this unique event and contributed to its success.

Sunday November 10th

The Cenotaph Blaencwm / Treherbert

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

Tuesday November 12th

City Hall, Cardiff

The Choir was invited to perform at the pre-dinner reception for the International Small Business Conference organised by the University of South Wales, Treforest. Choristers gathered in the upstairs foyer area of City Hall to sing to more than 100 delegates at the drinks reception before their banquet in the main ball room. Although the “order” was poor, those who did stop and listen to the Choir were clearly thrilled by the performance which last half an hour.

Thursday November 21st

Parc Hall, Cwmparc

Tonight the Choir returned to a venue where it last performed in 1949, the Parc Hall on the main road going through Cwmparc. The event was to help raise funds for the Hall which was in fear of closing and local residents came to support the concert. It featured drama and music pupils from Treorchy Comprehensive School while the finale took place thanks to the Choir itself. Choristers finished rehearsals early and drove to the neighbouring village to perform their half-an-hour section of popular music under the baton of Jeff Howard and accompanied by Helen Roberts. The

audience was clearly thrilled although the quality of the singing was questionable at times!

Friday November 29th

Stag Square, Treorchy

As in previous years members of the Choir were invited to attend an RCT Council event in the town with the lighting of the Christmas Tree. Around 20 choristers met at the bridge from Stag Square and performed a selection of carols as Mayor Cllr Ann Crimmings lit the tree behind the Park & Dare Theatre. With a festive atmosphere, Christmas parade and costumes, it made for a memorable and enjoyable family evening.

DECEMBER

Sunday December 8th

St David's Hall, Cardiff

The final official engagement of 2014 couldn't have been in more prestigious circumstances than before a capacity audience in one of Wales's foremost concert halls. The return visit to St David's Hall saw the Choir share the stage with the Orchestra of the Welsh National Opera under the baton of Anton Inglis. However, it was the special guest star that drew the 2,000 people out of the wintry night – none other than Welsh superstar Katherine Jenkins. The beautiful soprano graced the stage with incredible elegance as she performed a selection of much-loved festive songs for this Celebration of Christmas concert. With atmospheric lighting, glistening ball gowns and wondrous music, the audience was transported to a festive fantasy world in this memorable concert.

Treorchy Male Choir received outstanding accolades and huge applause for its performance of three items in the first half of the concert. With the inspirational leader Jeffrey Howard at the helm, accompanied by Helen Roberts, the Choir launched into a rousing "Llanfair" to open their section. This was followed by the debut performance of Jeff's arrangement of "What a Wonderful World" and undoubtedly the delicate pianissimo singing saw the audience hold their breaths for the ends of phrases. To ensure a memorable finale, the Choir burst into "You Raise Me Up", which did exactly that to the thrilled thousands before them in the auditorium.

The second half saw the Choir relax in the stalls high above the stage to watch the performers entertain the audience. The grand finale saw them join Katherine under the baton of Anton Inglis and make their debut performance of "I Wish You Christmas" which brought this magical evening of Christmas song to a delightful close. It was a memorable night, particularly for John Whital Williams (2T) who made his debut concert performance.

Friday December 13th

The Lion, Treorchy

Every year members of the Choir perform on the main street through Treorchy to help raise funds for the designated charity appeal of Treorchy Chamber of Trade. A group of choristers performed carols to the passing crowd of shoppers during the afternoon

and were rewarded with plenty of hot soup and refreshments in The Lion public house.

Thursday December 19th

Ty Hafan, Sully

As with previous years a large section of the Treorchy Male Choir made their annual pilgrimage to the Ty Hafan Children's Hospice in Sully where they performed in the incredibly emotional Candlelit Memorial Service. Attended by the parents and siblings of those children who spent the end of their young lives at this remarkable place, the service is musically led every year by the Choir. As choristers clasped candles on the cold wintry night they marched into the marquees and sang for the families as the memorial service unfolded. A very emotional final engagement for 2014.