

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 1949

By Dean Powell, Publicity Officer
& Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Wednesday January 16th

Workmen's Hall, Ton Pentre

A very busy year in the history of the Choir began with a performance in Ton Pentre. The evening was organised by the West Rhondda Labour Party and as part of the meeting the Choir was asked to perform a selection of items. Addressing the event was the Rt Hon James Griffiths MP.

FEBRUARY

Tuesday February 8

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

At a radio broadcast for the Welsh Home Service in the Park & Dare Theatre the Choir first performed with the BBC Welsh Orchestra and cemented a lifelong friendship with its conductor, Mansel Thomas. This was also the first time that the Choir was conducted by someone other than John Hayd Davies. Also featured was bass baritone Norman Walker. The live broadcast went out between 7.30pm and 8.15pm.

MARCH

Tuesday March 1st

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

A St David's Day Radio Broadcast for the BBC took place called "Songs of Wales" with the Parc & Dare Brass Band, conducted by Haydn Bebb and soloist Trevor Jones.

APRIL

Saturday April 2

Russell Square Gardens, London

Following lengthy discussions with Fred Pullin, the Deputy Press Officer of the National Coal Board, the Choir undertook its first visit outside Wales with a performance at the NCB Boxing Finals in London. Prior to the performance a selection of newspaper photographers asked the Choir, of 150 voices, to perform in Russell Square Gardens.

Saturday April 2nd

Wembley Park, London

The Choir appeared before H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh and an audience of over 10,000 people at Wembley Pool, London, for the N.C.B. Boxing Finals. The 150 choristers filed into their seats unnoticed and as soon as the lights in the auditorium were turned off the singers, who were all dressed in colliery overalls with a helmet, turned on their cap lamps to thrilling effect.

Saturday April 2nd

Statue of Eros, Piccadilly, London

The Choir, on its tour of London, stopped at the statue of Eros at Piccadilly Circus to perform *Nidaros* to a hugely delighted crowd of shoppers.

Sunday April 3rd

Royal Hotel, London

Under the baton of John Haydn, the Choir performed in the Music Room of the Royal Hotel where they had spent their first weekend away from home.

Friday April 18th

Hermon Chapel, Treorchy

The Choir received 20 guineas for its performance on another BBC radio broadcast with soloist Idris Daniels.

MAY

Wednesday May 4th

Rehearsal Room, Treorchy

The Choir first came into contact with BBC radio presenter Alun Williams when they recorded his programme "Wednesday Night At Seven" in the rehearsal room. Following the Choir's performance, Mr Williams interviewed George Neighbour, Stanley Jones, Tom Jenkins and William Wiltshire.

JUNE

Tuesday June 7th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

At the Whitsun South Wales Chair Eisteddfod, a Choir of 157 men walked on stage and claimed the first prize for their performance of Dr Joseph Parry's *Cytgan Y Pererinion*. Soloist for this item was Teifion Williams and the Choir was presented with £50 for its funds. The adjudicators were Arthur Davies (former conductor of the pre-war Choir) and Dr H.W. Sumsion of Gloucester. "A very large choir. Sensitive opening – the singing is always expressive. Phrasing is musical and intelligent – well thought out. Teamwork is first class with every man pulling his weight evenly. Part-singing was accurate inner and lower parts. Balance of choir was very good. Chorus a little too loud against the solo. Intonation and chording – excelling throughout. Tone is very well controlled, musical, expressive and unforced, especially in climaxes. Baritone solo was good but a little free according to the copy. Very brilliant singing."

Sunday June 19th

Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd

In an event organised by the Pontypridd Urban District Council, the Choir performed in Pontypridd's beautiful park with soloists Madam Olwen Jones, Idris Higgon and Tom Griffiths.

Saturday June 25th

Eisteddfod Field, Llanharan

The Choir once again beat Pendyrus to claim the first prize at an eisteddfod held in Llanharan on the test piece of Dr Parry's *Cytgan Y Pererinion*. The adjudicators were Professor Alan Bush (Royal Academy of Music), John Morgan, Roger Jones. Soloist was Teifion Williams.

JULY

Monday July 24th

Ramah Chapel, Treorchy

This concert in Treorchy featured the first public performance of items to be performed at the Welsh National Eisteddfod in Dolgellau in a few week's time.

Monday July 31st

Hermon Chapel, Treorchy

Another public performance of the test pieces for the Eisteddfod. Soloists were Mair Williams with boy soprano Cennard Davies.

AUGUST

Saturday August 6th

Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales, Dolgellau

The Choir entered the Welsh National Eisteddfod of Wales for the first time. The test pieces were Mordaith Cariad, Full Fathom Five and Tiger Tiger. The National Eisteddfod was held in a field where Owain Glyndwr once pitched his army before battle. Despite the obvious sense of appreciation experienced by every chorister as he stepped on to the stage to be faced by almost 10,000 spectators, from the first note on the piano and the first conducting movement, the tension disappeared.

The display of spontaneous applause before the end of the last song, *Full Fathom Five*, left choristers feeling that their first performance was a creditable one. The Choir came second to the experienced Morryston Orpheus under the baton of Ivor Sims. It was the last time they ever lost to Morryston. Five choirs entered the competition with Treorchy gaining 273 points, just seven points behind Morryston. They were followed by Dincrwic, Manselton and Rhymney male choirs. The adjudicators were E.T. Davies, Haydn Morris, Dan Jones, John Clements and W. Matthew Williams.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday September 11th

Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd

Another event organised by the Pontypridd Urban District Council saw the Choir sing at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park with soloists Marilyn Hughes-Davies, Maud Hughes-Davies and Sam Griffiths.

Tuesday September 13th

Rehearsal Room, Treorchy

A BBC broadcast for the Home Service took place at the rehearsal room. With Idris Higgon as soloist, the programme was broadcast between 8pm and 8.30pm with presenter Alun Williams.

Thursday September 15th

Bethlehem Chapel, Treorchy

A concert was held in aid of the RAF Benevolent Fund with soprano Ada Alsop (the first person to sign the Choir's visitors' guest book) and organist Brynmor Howells. The event was held as part of the Battle of Britain Week.

Sunday September 18th

Libanus Chapel, Treherbert

Soprano Aldyth Jones, tenor David Samuel and contralto Della Jones joined the Choir for a concert in Treherbert.

OCTOBER

Wednesday October 5th

Bethesda Chapel, Ton Pentre

Organised by the Rhondda Cymreigyddion, the concert also featured Maud Hughes-Davies, J. D. Samuel and Tom Griffiths. The evening raised £3.3.0 for the Choir.

NOVEMBER

Saturday November 5th

Polikoff Assembly Rooms

The Choir's first Dinner Dance was held. For three shillings each, cold meat and potatoes was the first course of the night with catering by Higgins of Treorchy Café. A total of 340 people attended the event where presentations of travelling toilet cases were made to the Conductor and Accompanist as mementos of the first National Eisteddfod in Dolgellau. Choir Chairman George Neighbour chaired the occasion and the guests were Choir President Cllr Iorwerth R Thomas, Chairman of Rhondda Borough Council Cllr L Bateman and Rev Hendy Davies gave the Grace. The speakers also included Fred Pullin of the NCB, followed by the Conductor John Davies himself, followed by some lively entertainment with first bass chorister Herbert Evans as compere

Thursday November 10th

Bodringallt Chapel, Ystrad

The Choir was joined on stage by Marilyn Hughes-Davies, D.T Davies and Idris Higgon for the concert in aid of Bethel Chapel, Ystrad.

Friday November 24th

Rehearsal Room, Treorchy

Another BBC Home Service broadcast took place from the rehearsal room. The programme, entitled "Music Hour" was again presented by Alun Williams and featured the BBC Welsh Orchestra, conductor Mansel Thomas and the famous Welsh tenor, David Lloyd.

DECEMBER

Tuesday December 15th

Bethlehem Chapel, Treorchy

A Christmas Carol Concert was held with Idris Higgon, Sam Griffiths, Tom Griffiths and D.J. Samuel. The organist was Haydn Pugh.

Thursday December 22nd

Park Hall, Cwmparc

The Choir recorded the Students Songs programme which was broadcast on the BBC Home Service on Boxing Day. Soloists were John Williams and Idris Higgon.