FOREWORD

(By J. L. BRACE, Esq., Director of Education,
Mid Glamorgan County Council)

I SUSPECT that never before has the foreword to "Excelsior" been written by a musical illiterate. This description of me was coined by one of the many conductors of third-rate choirs whom I have driven to the brink of despair. He had been before the War a cathedral organist, an experience which left the vocational guidance experts of the Royal Navy no alternative but to make him a stoker. In between tending the boilers of H.M.S. Adventure, a minelaying cruiser, he assumed command of the ship's choir to whose tenor section I was admitted on the strength of my Welsh accent and without benefit of audition. The coup de grâce came after a particularly apalling rendering of Drake's Drum and was delivered more in sorrow than in anger. The aesthetic stoker was understandably anxious about his future because the Captain, who was known to take pride in the choir, was, not like Drake, in his hammock and a thousand miles away, but in the front row some six feet from the tenors.

The cold Saxon brutality of the remark left its mark on me and for a time I retired from the choral scene, full of self-pity and nostalgically recalling my musical upbringing. Had not my father been the accompanist of the Pontardulais Chief Choral Society when they won the Port Talbot National? Did he not conduct sundry choirs in the area? Had I not spent hours before the modulator, the only visual aid I remember from my primary school days?

But native resilience ultimately triumphed and I eventually found my niche in the local church choir. I am reasonably confident now that my place is secure and I no longer lie awake in anticipation of a repeat of the stoker's strictures. This is because of three factors. The church, at full strength, can muster only three basses of whom I am nominally one; I am the Vicar's Warden; and our conductor is a Mid Glamorgan teacher. He knows, and I know, that my notes are a trifle unsure and my register limited. As a bass I cannot reach the low notes in much the same way as I could not reach the high notes as a tenor. The conductor is inordinately fond of 18th century anthems and I am convinced that male voices were an octave lower in those halcyon days. I find myself effective in terms of sound produced for roughly half the time. For the other half I mouth soundlessly whilst attempting to look intelligently musical. I am told by one of my fellow choristers, a retired headmaster, that the conductor would dearly wish me so use my mouthing ploy all the time.

FOREWORD—*continued*

I have bared my a-musical soul merely to illustrate the depth of my envy of those who can sing. I admire even the most ordinary of choirs You can imagine my absolute sense of wonder when I hear the Treorchy Male Choir sing. You have given me immeasurable pleasure and I am deeply honoured by being asked to contribute this foreword.

You are more than a great choir; you are Rhondda in microcosm and Rhondda is unique.

Your 1975 dinner was an experience I shall always remember. It was as if all the best qualities of Cwm Rhondda, warmth, classlessness, charm, good humour, had been encapsulated in a room in the Angel. I wondered whether "Cythraul y canu" was after all peculiar to the banks of the Llwchwr.

The conception of "Excelsior" was a stroke of genius on someone's part. I have enjoyed reading the past issues almost as much as listening to you sing. They do very much more than record your activities: they capture your ethos. The practice notes are marvellously laconic and should be required reading for all bureaucrats and Rhondda novelists. The conductor's notes bear the stamp of that essential quality of any conductor worth his salt, modest arrogance. Who but a conductor would dare to describe a famous soccer referee as the son of a first tenor? How right are his values.

The Treorchy Male Choir is a national institution. You have impeccable standards, you display a disciplined vitality, you are a group of dedicated individuals who fuse together into a unified virile organisation. The Mid Glamorgan Authority lays great stress on music in education. As well as a wide range of musical activity in schools of all kinds, we have three County orchestras—senior, transitional and junior, two district orchestras, one at Bridgend and one at Pontypridd, a County brass band and a County youth choir. We hope our standards, too, are high and we are grateful for the inspirational example of choirs like yours.

May I wish you every success in the coming year. I know you will give great pleasure to very many people. I trust you will enjoy yourselves in the process.

I have just remembered that your conductor, like mine, works in a Mid Glamorgan school. I wonder whether he would admit me, without audition of course, to the bass (or tenor) section of the Treorchy Male Choir?

EDITORIAL

WITHOUT any doubt 1975 was a successful year for the choir, which enables us once again to reflect on those exciting moments, both at rehearsals and engagements. It is particularly pleasing to know that both conductor and secretary considered it to be one of their best years—apart from Donna's spell in hospital, of course. With this comment coming from our two experts both from the musical angle and the administrative one, we choristers can feel happy that we've done our bit in 1975.

In "Excelsior" this year, we decided to leave out the practice diary, this of course done with the approval of our registrar. However, a number of the more interesting items are included separately. When first starting work on this year's "Excelsior" the name of **John Brace** immediately came to mind regarding the foreword. Little did he know he'd be paying for his dinner at this later date—in words, of course. Quite seriously though, we are pleased and honoured that he so readily agreed to write the foreword to this edition. I thoroughly enjoyed his humorous musical outlook, as I know our readers will too.

Kelvin Thomas, conductor of the Silver Ring Choir sent us an interesting article which, after reading it will make us choristers very concerned about the chap next to you or the one behind you who may keep in touch with the conductor. Kelvin asked me in his letter to wish the conductor and choir a very happy and successful 1976

The Corwen Ladies' Circle obviously enjoyed our visit to them, and we will remember their hospitality which was excellent and made it a very memorable weekend. It's always nice to please our hosts, particularly ladies, which reminds me of some advice I was given by an old friend of mine, who was 10 years my senior. He used to say, "Keep the women happy and everyone's happy."

Max Boyce—Last but by no means least, for sparing us a little of his vaulable time to add some amusing stories to our pages. We are most grateful to him and wish him continued success in all his future ventures.

On behalf of the Editorial staff, may I thank you all for your contributions to this, our annual magazine, including those of course from within the choir. I'm sure they will be read with great interest by our many readers, adding also my personal thanks to sub editor W. J. (Donna) Griffiths for his great assistance in putting "Excelsior together again, registrar Norman Martin, whose meticulous logging of the year's events allows me an unlimited source of information.

THE CONDUCTOR'S NOTES

1975 proved to be the busiest and most interesting year in my association with the Choir. I must immediately pay tribute to the Management Committee of the Choir for providing us with such wonderful venues for the concerts—large buildings with glorious acoustics such as the Colston Hall, Bristol; the Albert Hall, Nottingham; the Guildhall, Portsmouth; the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea; and, of course, Bath Abbey—thereby enabling the Choir to perform before its biggest ever audiences.

We broke new ground with visits to Haverfordwest, Exeter, Llanidloes, Fleet, Bath, and Corwen. At Fleet we were guests of the local branch of the R.A.F.A., and after a concert in the compact civic hall, I was presented with a silver salver to commemorate the occasion. Our visit to Corwen was clouded by the illnesses of Donna and Gwynne, but who amongst the choristers will ever forget the wonderful scenery as we travelled through the beautiful Vale of Llangollen, with the trees in their autumn glory? The evening concert was given before a capacity audience of almost 2,000, many of whom had travelled from as far afield as Anglesey and Yorkshire. Our special thanks go to my hosts, Mr. and Mrs. D. Corbin, of Hafryn, and to William Davies (2T) who averted a major disaster with his professional expertise when the beer pump failed to function at the reception afterwards.

Once again we gave a number of band concerts. At Portsmouth we joined forces with the Portsmouth Salvation Army Citadel Band in front of another 2,000 audience. This proved to be a wonderful weekend of glorious sunshine for the choristers and their wives, who were entertained for the week-end at the luxurious Portsmouth Management Centre. The return visit to the Colston Hall for a combined concert with the Stanshawe Band was marred by an illness which prevented Walter Hargreaves from conducting. Prof. Hargreaves will be remembered by Rhondda music lovers as the conductor of the Cory Band during the early 1950's. We are most grateful to Prof. Hargreaves for arranging "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" for band, and also to Roy Newsome, conductor of Black Dyke Mills Band, for making his band arrangement of Weber's "Huntsmen's Chorus" available to the choir. The band event of the year, however, was the success of the Band of Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School, who, under the baton of Ieuan Morgan, won the Welsh Youth Championship, and then gained second place at the National Championships at the Royal Albert Hall, London. We congratulate Ieuan and John Davies (Headmaster) on their success, especially as we have a number of proud parents in the Choir. Our third visit to

Chippenham provided the Choir with another moving experience. After the usual visit to Greathouse Cheshire Home, where we received another wonderful welcome, we sang at St. Andrew's Church. We were delighted to welcome back as soprano-soloist Gillian Petheram-Davies, now living in Bristol. The concert was recorded by Swindon Local Television and was later shown on the local TV. network. Once again the concert had been arranged by our dear friend Reg. Coates, and before our recital to the residents on the lawn at Greathouse, the Choir chairman, Mr. William Jones, formally handed over the bedside lockers purchased with the proceeds of our last concert at Chippenham. I was able to pay another fleeting visit to Greathouse on the day following our visit to Bath. Many choristers have expressed the opinion that our concert in the Abbey Church was the highlight of the year's music-making. As guests of the Silver Ring Choir, we were entranced by the glorious architecture of the Abbey. The long period of reverberation—some 4 seconds—tested the choristers' musicianship to the full, but such are the acoustics of the church that even the most whispered pianissimos could be heard in every corner of this gigantic building. It was a great thrill to witness the vast audience, some of whom stood at the back of the nave throughout the concert.

It was another busy year for recording and television work. Our latest record, again produced by Bob Barratt, with David Bell at the organ, will be called "Treorchy Male Choir's greatest hits" and will be released early in February, 1976 as EMI SCX 6585. Of particular delight to us was that we were at long last able to record the Ringwald arrangement of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" spoiled in 1973 by a disastrous cipher on the Brangwyn Hall organ. The Choir's appearance on the B.B.C. "Max Boyce Show" gave us the opportunity to appear with Julie Felix and Max at the splendid new Leisure Centre at Pontypool, where Max's individual brand of effervescent Welsh humour had choristers and audience rolling with laughter. An equally satisfying experience of a different kind was the recording of the programme in the series "Dechreu canu, dechrau canmol," from St. George's Church, Cwmparc. It was a pleasure to invite the choir of Ysgol Gymraeg, Ynyswen, who had performed so well in last year's Urdd Gobaith Cymru Eisteddfodau, to share the programme, so much so that on this occasion your conductor was outshone by his wife. The organist was Huw Tregelles Williams, and the programme gave an opportunity for a wide audience to appreciate the beauty of this little gem of a village church, unknown even to some of the local residents. We are most grateful to the vicar, Rev. Laurence Miles, for inviting the Choir to St. George's Church. Our final television appearance

THE CONDUCTOR'S NOTES—*continued*

of the year, in the H.T.V. series, "Sing Aloud" saw Jennifer emerge as deputy conductor, as I was confined to bed with bronchitis. This programme was notable for the Choir's performance of "Where shall I be?" an arrangement by Bryan Davies of an old negro spiritual. Due to Jennifer's non-availability for the concert at Porthcawl and the recording at Pontypool, we found ourselves without an accompanist until Bryan offered his services. Bryan will, of course, be remembered as a past accompanist of Pendyrus Male Choir, and latterly, as conductor of the Royal Welsh Male Choir.

I had been for some time aware of the need to reinforce the music staff of the Choir, and so I was pleased that the Management Committee had appointed Mr. Neil Johnson as Assistant Accompanist from January, 1976. As his music teacher at Pentre Grammar, and Upper Rhondda Comprehensive Schools, I had taken a great interest in Neil's progress, and his academic distinction and wide musical experience at University were a great joy to me. I am sure that Neil has a great contribution to make to the musical life of the community and I wish him every success in his work with the Choir and in his new post as a member of the music staff of Upper Rhondda Comprehensive.

I wish to thank all who have made 1975 such a successful and memorable year in the history of the Choir, particularly Donna and Gwynne, both now happily restored to health; Islwyn, who made such an able deputy for each during their absence; Cliff Chislett and Alun John, our indefatigable librarians; our soloists, Sam Griffiths, Harry Price and Herbert Jones; Jennifer, who in addition to accompanying Choir and soloists in her impeccable style, also appeared as harpist and deputy conductor; and every chorister for their loyalty, humour and hard work. I am proud and happy to be your conductor.

Diolch yn fawr—John Cynan.

A SUCCESSFUL DECADE

October 30th recorded another milestone for the choir and, hopefully, a happy occasion for our conductor. It was ten years ago when he first conducted the choir as associate conductor during a weekend in London. with concerts at Acton and Ealing Town Halls. Congratulations, John, from all choir members, as we look forward to the next ten years.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

(C. T. TAYLOR, Esq., F.C.A.)

WITH our country fighting for its very life, or less dramatically, fighting to maintain its standard of living, there is an increasing tendency to look on the black side. In fact, when I look at B.B.C. or I.T.V. News, I wonder why all news has to be bad news. One would gain the impression that nothing was happening from day to day of which we could be justly proud. One has only to consider the way the youth of today is sadly maligned because of the bad publicity earned by the unruly minority.

Recently, I was having lunch with a German business colleague, and after a relatively short stay in this country, he was prepared to generalise about the attitude of British people. It seems he had watched "Upstairs, Downstairs" on TV, and being mindful of it having recently been voted "Top of the Pops," he concluded that we as a Nation believed in class distinction. This, I told him, was merely a form of entertainment—a means of escape from day to day problems. My own preference was for cowboy films because they always had a happy ending. If I've been slogging away all day at work, I want my leisure hours to be spent getting away from it all. Some of us re-charge our batteries watching television, others enjoy a few noggins at the local, while an increasing number prefer to listen to good music, or better still, to make good music.

I often think of a chorister's dedication—a couple of evenings and Sunday afternoons at practice—as they say "if a thing's worth doing . . . . . "

Long may the Treorchy Male Choir maintain its present high standard of performance and long may it give pleasure to the many thousands who attend the concerts and, at the same time, raise money for one worthy cause or another.

I am so pleased that my very good friend "Donna" Griffiths has fully recovered from his operation—one of those running repairs that I've somehow got used to over the past few years.

May I now wish all our readers every success for 1976.

THE SECRETARY REPORTS

THE PASSING OF 1975 marks another year in the continuing story of the choir, and 1976 will be noteworthy as the THIRTIETH YEAR since the choir was re-formed in October, 1946.

The year 1975 was one of progress and much success, due to an excellent team spirit in all departments of the choir's activities. The Music Staff have done a first-class job. I am sure that I am expressing the wishes of choristers when I extend grateful thanks to our very worthy Conductor and much admired Accompanist, for their dedicated service throughout the year. We welcome Neil Johnson, a young teacher in the Music Department of the Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School, who was appointed Assistant Accompanist of the choir in December. I am sure he will be a very useful addition to our Music Staff. Thanks to Officers, Committee Members, and Choristers, who by their labours have kept the choir vigorous and healthy, and to concert audiences for their warm and enthusiastic appreciation of choir performances.

Congratulations to Will Jones who has completed a very successful year as Chairman of the choir. It was a fitting tribute that during his year of office Life Membership of the choir was bestowed upon him. He is followed by another stalwart chorister Cas. Powell, who is also a Life Member. I am sure that Cas. will worthily carry out his duties with quiet efficiency and dignity, serving at all times the best interests of the choir. Several times over the years sometimes at short notice, he has deputised for the Conductor.

It is with regret that we note the death of T. J. Dilwyn Jones. He joined the choir in 1950, but was compelled to resign his membership in 1960 because of indifferent health. He was Publicity Officer of the choir and Editor of "Excelsior" from 1955 until 1960, The "Excelsiors" he edited, and the excellent Scrap Books he compiled, are a legacy which will serve to remind us of the great service he rendered the choir.

It is good to see Life Members Idris Thomas and David Galliford attending rehearsals even though for health reasons they are unable to join the ranks of choristers. Life Member Haydn Thatcher has been prevented by illness from attending, and at the moment is undergoing treatment in hospital. We wish him improved health in the future. Conductor Emeritus John Davies keeps very much in touch, and when required takes rehearsals with all the old zest and enthusiasm.

Registrar Norman Martin our very capable 'facts and figures' recorder reports that recruitment is good—16 new members and 9 resignations. New members are always welcome, especially if they are tenors.

THE SECRETARY REPORTS—*continued.*

Assistant Secretary Islwyn Morgan deserves very special thanks. Throughout the year he has helped Treasurer Gwynne Williams with financial matters while he has been making a good recovery from illness, and for the last three months of the year he also took on my work during my enforced absence through illness. The greater the work load the more efficiently and cheerfully he copes. We are both very grateful to him.

Towards the end of the year Tom Jones had to give up the post of Contribution Secretary for health reasons. We are indeed grateful to Tom for his conscientious service in this office for the past seven years.

Bill Thomas of Sault Ste. Marie, Canada, now over 80 years of age, made another trip "home" this summer, and as always, didn't miss a rehearsal of the choir during his stay. His Christmas Card to greet the choir is always the first to arrive. He is a great friend and admirer of Treorchy Male Choir. Hir oes, a iechyd da, Bill.

May Treorchy Male Choir continue to prosper and give pleasure in 1976.

Congratulations and thanks to Editor John Mallin for producing another interesting and informative "EXCELSIOR."

A MEMORABLE EVENING

(By Mrs. JACKIE SANDERSON, Editor, *Newport Times*)

Recently, I had the pleasure to be a guest at one of your performances with Max Boyce, at Pontypool Sports Stadium. Well, what can I say, it was an absolute knock-out. The boys, as always, were in good voice and their rendering of "Comrades in Arms" was far superior to that of any other choir I have listened to.

The whole atmosphere that night was electric, the audience were glued to their seats, and when the choir joined in with Sospan Fach, I believe they were heard in Cwmbran and, indeed, they sang with such warmth and enthusiasm that any Welsh man or woman would be proud of.

After the show I was indeed proud and honoured to be able to sit and talk with many of the Choir members and, being English, to hear the lilt of their Welsh accents really did something for me. Of course, after we all had a few drinks, we then heard the men singing without accompaniment the songs we all love to hear. I hope you will excuse this short piece of Editorial, as I also have to get a newspaper to press, but would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thanks to the Choir for a most enjoyable and memorable evening.

PIANOFORTE'S

(By the Accompanist—Miss JENNIFER JONES)

PIANO'S come in all sizes, shapes and colours, each having something unique—the sound it produces: a sound which is enhanced or marred by the person who sits at the keyboard and plays.

Pianoforte making was first stimulated in England by J. C. Bach when he came to this country in 1762. At that time the instruments were rather large and square and having a limited compass of only five octaves. The "workings" of a piano are most intricate, suffice it to say that when a key is pressed down, after many mechanical happenings, a "hammer" is thrown forward to hit the string and produce the sound.

And so, over 200 years later and despite many technological advances, laminate formica soundboards, high tension steel strings, etc., why does it fall to my lot to come across pianos which, if not actual originals are very near approximations! The full seven-and-a-half octaves might well be there but are **not** in full working order. Would the choir kindly think of the times our conductor has given the signal for the note—paused—raised an eyebrow enquiringly, only to find the note doesn't sound and, consequently, I have to find another that does. (Hope none of the Tenors have ever tried to sing at the actual pitch I have subsequently given).

As for the "hammer action," the only sound some of the piano's would make would be when physically attacked with a carpenter's hammer.

Perhaps my favourite pianos are those which have been stored against radiators with consequent warping of soundboards and strings. Oh for an unaccompanied group of songs.

And then there are the pianos with keys and pedals that "stick." A pianist usually develops very supple wrists and ankles with this type of piano, having to cultivate a sort of reflex action when flicking note or pedal **upwards** after pressing it **down.** And what about the pedal that falls off when touched.

Of course the gem of all pianos is the one that "fell" over when being pushed into position, consequently breaking off one of the castors. It was propped up with a brick (red, for household use of . . .) Unfortunately, the brick was placed

PIANOFORTES—*continued.*

on a loose plank and I spent the entire evening rocking back and forth hoping the keyboard and my hands would come together simultaneously.

"Sharp" pianos, "flat" pianos, all have been encountered during my time with Treorchy Choir and, of course, there have been superb instruments which have been played by very famous concert pianists as well as by me (!) But once, and only once, have I ever asked, "Where's the piano?" only to be told, "Piano? Nobody said you wanted a piano!"

Here's to another year of music-making—Jenny.

P.S.—Would the committee like to consider buying a "portable piano" to match the portable piano-stool?

NEIL JOHNSON

MR. JOHNSON was born in Rhondda and attended the Ton Pentre Junior School. It was during his stay at this school that he first took an interest in music, when he began learning to play the recorder. He began pianoforte lessons at the age of nine, which he continued for a number of years and later, while at Pentre Grammar School began to play the violin.

It was at Pentre that he first fell under the "tender" care of John Cynan Jones, who at that time was Head of the Music Department at the school. Neil's musical abilities were further developed by persuasion and example.

While studying at Sheffield University, his musical life expanded, covering choral, orchestral and chamber music, which he was able to pursue in and around the University, where he gained an honours degree in music.

While at Birmingham University, where he obtained his post graduate Education Certificate, he sang with the City of Birmingham Choir, furthering his practical knowledge of choral music. After a teaching post in Walsall, he returned to Rhondda to take up a music post at the Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School.

In December, 1975, he was appointed assistant accompanist to the Choir and has also joined the singing ranks. We are pleased and honoured to have him with us, where I'm sure his fine musical training will no doubt be a great asset to the Choir.

We wish him a long and successful association with us.

SOMEONE'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT YOU

(By KELVIN THOMAS, Bath Silver Ring Choir)

I AM SURE it was with the best intentions and they certainly had no wish to offend you in any way, so they told me. I listened, I could do no other, or I might have seemed unsympathetic. "It's your voice that troubles them," everything else seems in order, in fact they went so far as to say you were a very nice person. If only you could do something about your voice. It's quite a nice voice; your words are good and your facial expression leaves little to be desired. What about loyalty, I asked? First class, they replied. What's wrong then, I said, does he sing out of tune? Oh no, it's not that! He sings too loud? I could tell by the expression of my informant that I had knocked the nail on the head. Too loud, I repeated? Well yes; you see I stand right in front of him and can't hear myself sing. I know it's difficult for you he added, but really! It's obviously difficult for you, I replied.

For many years I have been the recipient of confidences of this kind, brought to me in sincerity, and how I've longed for the wisdom of Solomon to deal with this kind of situation. There was the Tenor who was the pillar of his church. His verve and vitality were tremendous, his loyalty unquestionable, a leader undoubtedly, and you could hear his voice just above the rest of the section. There was the Bass, a Welshman, although close on 60 years of age, had a beautiful resonant voice, was on the committee, a vast experience of choral singing. He was the Bass section. The Soprano who had seen better days, whose voice had deteriorated, and what had been a firm sweet voice was now mostly tremulous—a sweet woman. An Alto with a voice as big as a house who could sing pianissimo and ff—both gradations of tone were always slightly flat.

All choirs have such singers, the ranks still possess such imperfect folk.

We won 'Let the People Sing' with that Tenor. Our very first Eisteddfod contest with the Bass. The Soprano with the tremolo was in the ladies' section when they gained 3rd prize at Llangollen. The time we won the mixed voice class in the Welsh National Eisteddfod we had lost these good folk, but somehow had managed to foster a crop of singers with equally imperfect voices. And so the cry for perfection goes on, and as the years go by the singers who inform me of the faults of others become a little more perfect, learning to give a helping hand, learning patience and seeing in others the singing potential, standing by their conductor in the difficult but rewarding task

SOMEONE'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT YOU—*continued.*

of reclamation, realizing that the imperfect singers so often move along the road to perfection much more quickly than the singers who have nothing to learn, only perhaps humility and wisdom.

I have seen good singers deteriorate, not realising that they must always care for their instrument, ever listening to the still small voice of the soul, caring for the very essence of tone which springs from the virtues of loving kindness, a deep sense of gratitude and utter selflessness, for unlike the mechanical instrument whose tone is tempered by the loving hands of the players, the human voice relies upon other elements and unless the inner beauty is cared for, the voice will lack richness, sympathetic expression, tenderness of tone. The strings vibrate but the tone is dead, no joy is experienced by the listener, no tears are wrung from their hearts.

I thought I ought to tell you someone's been talking about you. I told them as long as you were willing to give me your spirit the song would follow.

MORE STRINGS TO HER BOW—OR SHOULD I SAY HARP ?

The Sunday afternoon rehearsal of November 23rd, saw Jenny on the rostrum conducting the full choir for the first time, owing to the illness of John Cynan Jones. Previously she had taken sections of the choir in part practices, but later in the year, even conducted us through our T.V. recordings, which was particularly difficult for her as the sound track was previously recorded. If you care to know how to "mime" choral conducting, please seek the advice of our talented accompanist Miss Jennifer Jones.

LOCKERS FOR GREATHOUSE

During the choir's visit to Greathouse Cheshire Home, at Chippenham, where they have already adopted a room, a further donation was made when the choir chairman, Mr. W. Jones, presented the patients with 30 bedside lockers. They were purchased from the proceeds of our previous concert there.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

If ever an award were to be introduced by the choir, I'm sure the name of William Davies would be prominent. During a concert in Corwen, where excellent refreshments were provided, tragedy struck, with a beer failure. However, quickly on the scene Bill applied the necessary thirst aid and all was well.

"ABSENT FRIENDS"

(THE EDITOR)

IT IS some time now since Haydn Thatcher was one of our sick visitors, and since then, he too has been one of the many choristers who have been visited during the year by our current visitors, Dan Williams, 2nd bass and Ben Griffiths, 2nd Tenor. To list them all would be pointless particularly as many of them don't want reminding now that they are fit and well again. We missed them all when they were away and are pleased to see them back and in good form. However, at the time that this edition goes to print, the following choristers are still on the sick list. Eddie Rowe, 1st tenor, Will Davies, 2nd tenor, Eddie Jones, 1st bass and Ken Hughes, 2nd bass. We wish them a speedy recovery to the ranks. I have been assured by our sick visitors that there is no truth in the rumour that they are starting a quartet.

We are deeply indebted to our two "party whips" Dan and Ben for their continuous strife in helping to get the choristers back and singing again.

One instance comes to mind while thinking of these choir members who have been unwell. Norman Martin, Tom Jones and myself were sitting in the "committee room" one rehearsal, when Tom, who has suffered some loss of vision recently, was asked, "How are things, Tom?"—referring to his progress. "Looking a bit dim at the moment," he replied. Quite an amusing reply which typifies Tom's light-hearted outlook and his humorous and pleasing personality which have always been foremost, both as a chorister and as a member of the committee. It's good to see him in the practice room again, even if only on the "trainer's" bench, and look forward to his return to the second tenor section.

5415 Conn. Ave., N.W.,
Washington, D.C., 20015

November 6, 1975.

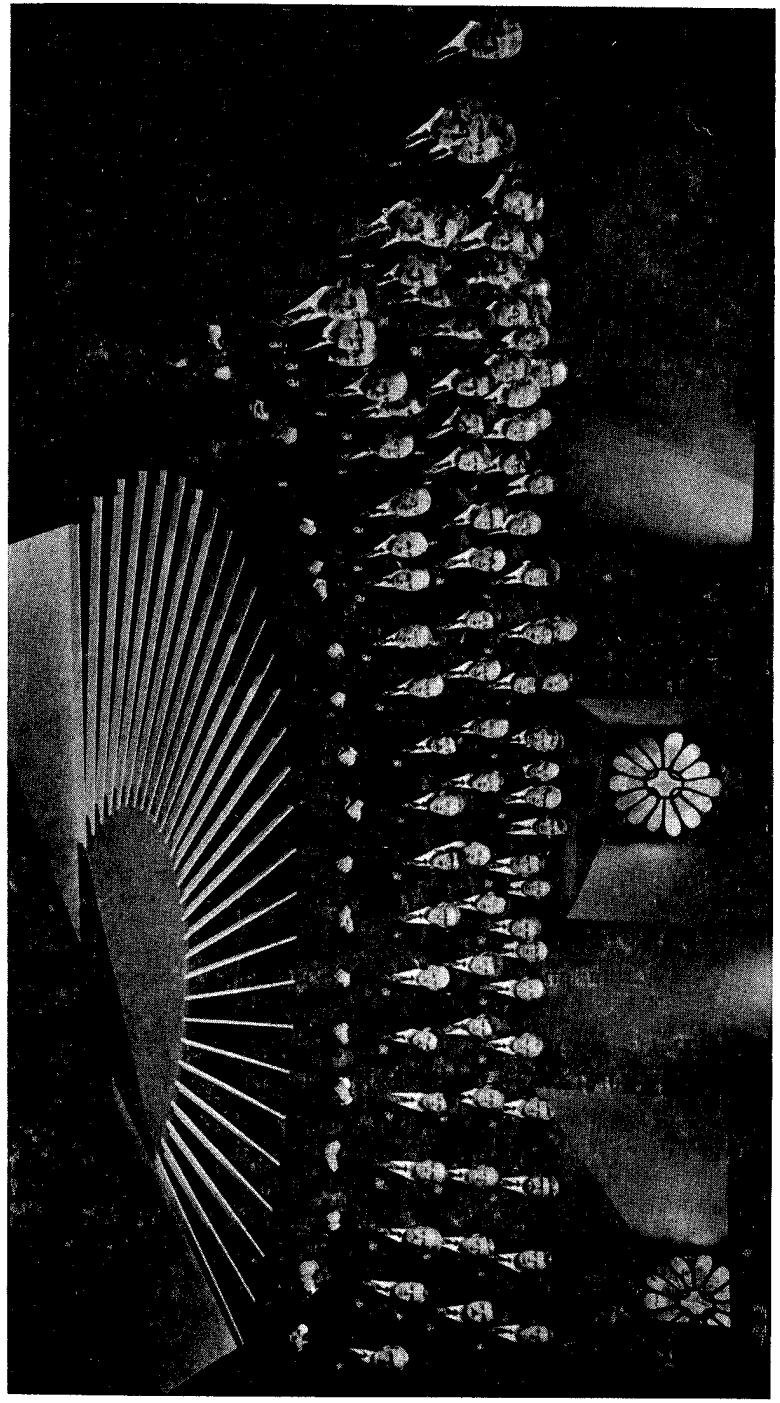
Gentlemen,

The evening you so kindly permitted me to spend with you will always remain a splendid memory.

As you lulled me with "All throught the Night," I was reminded of, "Goodnight, sweet Prince, and flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest."

Affectionately,

Pauline Sherman.



TREORCHY MALE CHOIR—Setting from the "SING ALOUD" Series on H.T.V.

1975
TREORCHY MALE CHOIR ORGANISATION

Compiled by Norman Martin (Choir Registrar).

President :
Mr. C. T. TAYLOR, F.C.A.

Vice-President :
Mr. JOHN DAVIES, M.B.E.
(Life Member)

MUSICAL STAFF

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

Conductor Emeritus :
Mr. JOHN DAVIES, M.B.E.
(Life Member)

Accompanist :
Miss JENNIFER JONES, G.R.S.M., L.R.A.M.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Chairman :
Mr. WILLIAM JONES
(Life Member)

Secretary :
Mr. W. J. GRIFFITHS
(Life Member)

Treasurer : Cty. Councillor
GWYNNE WILLIAMS, J.P.
(Life Member)

Vice-Chairman :
Mr. CAS POWELL
(Life Member)

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Mr. ISLWYN MORGAN

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Mr. NORMAN MARTIN

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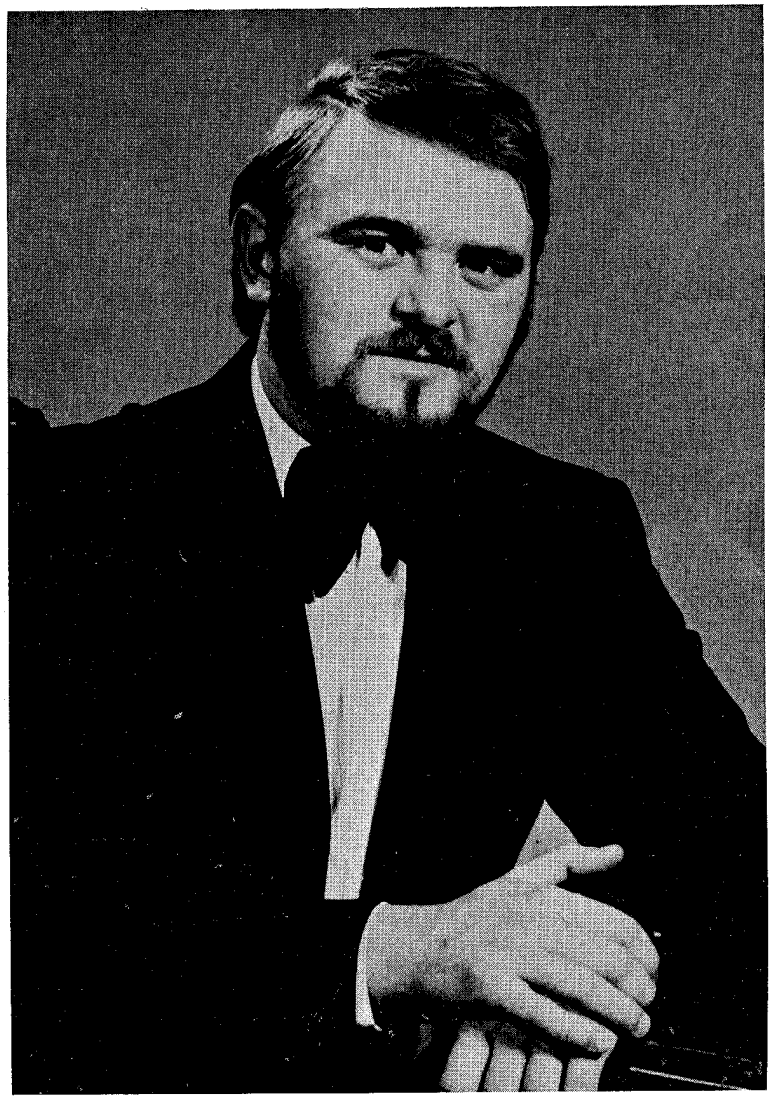
Honorary Members—John Barker, Herbert Jones, D. O. Griffiths, Tom Jones, Gordon Mills, Ronald Cass, Jon Scoffield

First Tenor	Second Tenor	First Bass	Second Bass
John Hopkins	Keith Thomas	David Brown	Dan Williams
Ben Jackson	Ben Griffiths	Gwyn Phillips	John Callagan

Above—Committee Members of each Section.

Walter Breeze	Roy Bobbett	Cliff. Chislett	Reg. Davies
Ieuan Davies	Elwyn Davies	Edward Davies	W. J. Griffiths
Edmund Evans	Norman Martin	Haydn Erasmus	William Jones
Ken Elliott	Cas. Powell	Sam Griffiths	Peter Morris
John Francis	David Pritchard	Erfyl Lewis	Robert Griffiths
Lewis Francis	Frank Smith	Alwyn Phillips	Gwyn Jones
Islwyn Morgan	David Powell	Eilir Wright	Vernon Thomas
Michael Gale	Cyril Howard	Len Gale	Ken Baldwin
Derek Fear	William Davies	Gwyn Hopkins	Harry Price
Reg. Stephens	Cliburn Willis	Allen John	Bryn Jones
Myrddin Bowen	Michael Wade	William Watkins	Ieuan Lawrence
David Howley	Derek Watkins	Wyndham Rowe	John Mallin
Edward Rowe	Malcolm Beynon	Geoffrey Howard	Myrddin Hopkins
Tom Pate	Ken Simcox	Derek Devinett	John Davies
Bryn Howells	Will Roberts	Vivian Payne	Peter Jones
Ieuan Evans	Norman Matthews	Cyril Pritchard	Alun Hughes
David Roberts	Godfrey Morris	David Rees	Ken Hughes
Adrian Jones	Mansel Evans	Mal Johnson	Rhiddian Hunt
Brian Jones	Selwyn Croudace	Ivor Hitchins	Graham Gibbs
Cyril Bevan	Huw Williams	Rhys Thomas	David Trembath
G. Cambourne	Islwyn Jones	Edward Jones	Stephen Cox
Wyn Davies	Jack Newman	Tom Thomas	Michael Peachey
D. Lethbridge	Terry Hale	Edward C. Jones	Alun Davies
John Hicks	Ivor Townsend	Glyn Doolan	Gwynne Williams
	Keith Hopkins	Wyn Pritchard	Islwyn Jones
	Tom Jones	John B. Lewis	
		Bryn Davies	
		Rupert Hull	
		Ken Davies	
		Neville Blandford	
		Roger Morse	
		Richard Mills	
		John Lewis	
		David Davies	
		Ainsley Davies	

My grateful thanks to Mr. Norman Martin—Editor



NEIL JOHNSON, Assistant Accompanist

"BOB THE BUS"

OUR OLD FRIEND, Bob Barratt, who has now recorded most of our L.P's for E.M.I. and has written on some of these experiences in a previous edition of "Excelsior" has a rather unusual pastime. If he were Welsh, I'm convinced he'd be known as "Bob the Bus." Anyway, judge for yourself from this article by Sid Gillingham, which appeared in "Reveille," June 27, 1975.

When top record producer Bob Barratt isn't working with hit-making discs stars he's out on the buses.

Or else he's sifting through some of the 1,000 photographs he's taken of buses.

Buses in Balham and Barcelona. Sleek Greyhound buses in America, and nippy mini-buses in Gibraltar.

Sometimes he's checking his hundreds of bus time tables and route maps, or his collection of bus tickets.

"It all started when I was five," says 37-year-old Croydon-born Bob.

"I always wanted to work for London Transport, but when I was seven I got interested in pop music. And when it came to getting a job, pop music won."

To make up for it, Bob joined the London Omnibus Traction Society and studies buses.

On his last day off he spent the time riding on buses in Southampton. "I started at 10 a.m. and packed up about seven in the evening and covered about three-quarters of the routes," he said.

Even on Coronation Day in 1953, instead of watching the Queen drive through the streets of London, young Bob spent his time watching scores of buses turning round in strange places because their routes had been changed for the day.

Bob's wife Annette, and their daughters, Julie, eight, and six-year-old twins, Holly and Joanne, own up that their hearts don't exactly miss a beat at the sight of a red double-decker.

"I find it difficult to understand," says Annette, "but I humour him." She has to . . .

For instance, the other Sunday morning a double-decker bus passed their house in Coulsdon. Buses don't normally go that way. So before you could say "Hold tight please!" Bob was out in the road investigating. Still in his pyjamas . . .

"I ONLY DRINK MILK PLEASE"

(BALA & CORWEN LADIES' CIRCLE)

OH, what an honour, to bring the renowned Treorchy Male Choir to Corwen. Twenty-four members of Ladies' Circle put their heads together to organise how they would cope with ninety men! Beds were found, advertising started and tickets printed. Cattle markets were invaded by Ladies' Circle with our 'Treorchy Stand.' The farmers did not stand a chance—we had only two thousand tickets to sell. Shops of every description were taken over for our booking office, and with success.

Food—to arrange for arrival, and food and liquid refreshment for after the performance, no need to hustle and bustle, everything must run smoothly.

A week before the concert a telephone call wanting another ten beds. Help! Where are we going to sleep? Problem soon solved in a few hours.

Two days before the concert the number of choristers dropped to ninety-two. Too much food! too much beer! but we had been told that the Treorchy Choir would do justice to liquid refreshment, so no cuts were made.

Treks were made up the mountains for greenery to decorate the Pavilion Stage, and we were all getting fitter each day.

At last, Saturday, 18th October arrived, the Ladies' Circle catering force moved into the Pavilion and pumps and barrels were connected. Round Table sampled the liquid refreshment—nothing must go wrong.

Shouts were heard! Our Guests had arrived! Face after face scurried to the stage where Mr. John Cynan Jones had them in harmony in seconds. How excited we all were. The acoustics were fantastic. Choristers counted. Down to eighty-two! Alas, a "bug" had hit Treorchy.

Tea was served and the rooming list presented and off they rushed by foot or coach to their destinations. One chorister remarked that "he only drank milk." Had we been misinformed, did we need all those barrels of beer?

Doors opened, crowds pushed their way through to the booking office. What atmosphere, waiting to hear the first notes of this superb choir. The performance of the singers proved

"I ONLY DRINK MILK PLEASE"—*continued.*

perfection and the audience sat enchanted. The central heating fans in the Pavilion spoilt the acoustics, so off the switch went. The audience left the concert after an unforgettable evening.

The beer flowed, food was digested and the time had come for one of our members to play the piano to start that superb singing yet again. The hour was late the evening was drawing to an end. The choir gave us ladies a beautiful rendering of "Good Night Ladies" and we all gave our farewell wishes. Back to billets, collecting a few from the local hotels on the way. What a great success the whole evening had been.

It was rather sad to see the Treorchy Choir leaving us on the Sunday morning, after making so many friends.

May Bala and Corwen Ladies' Circle wish you every success wherever you go, and hope you will rejoin us in Corwen again soon.

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

(WILLIAM JONES, Esq.)

FELLOW CHORISTERS, we are at the end of another eventful year in the history of the Choir. We have achieved some very good performances in our concert and T.V. appearances. One of the highlights for me was the concert at Bath Abbey. The excellence of the performances is evidence of how lucky we are to have the use of the talents of Conductor John Cynan Jones and Accompanist Jennifer Jones. I offer them grateful thanks.

I am sure we are all very glad to see the old stalwarts, Secretary W. J. Griffiths, and Treasurer Gwynne Williams, back with us after their illness. Assistant Secretary Islwyn Morgan was thrown in at the deep end coping with the extra responsibility, but came up smiling. Diolch yn fawr Islwyn.

I am conscious of the great honour you bestowed upon me in appointing me your Chairman for 1975. I offer my thanks to the hard working Committee for the valuable part they have played during a very busy year.

Finally, my thanks to you, my fellow choristers, for making this possible. May we all enjoy many years of music making in the future.

REHEARSAL AND ENGAGEMENT REPORT

(By NORMAN MARTIN, *Registrar*)

IN 1975, there were 92 Rehearsals, comprising of 22 Sundays, 39 Tuesdays and 31 Thursdays. The best attendance was Tuesday, 30th September and Thursday, 2nd October, when on both occasions 96 choristers were present.

Norman Martin, 2nd tenor, attended all rehearsals, while the following choristers achieved 90 plus—Cliff Chislett, Richard Mills, Haydn Erasmus and John Callagan.

The choristers balance sheet showed a net gain of 7 at the end of the year, bringing our strength to 116. There were 16 new recruits, as opposed to nine resignations. New members are Cyril Bevan, Graham Cambourne, Wyn Davies, Dennis Lethbridge, John Hicks, Islwyn Jones, Jack Newman, Terry Hale, Ivor Townsend, Keith Hopkins, John Lewis, David Davies, Ainsley Davies, Michael Peachy, Alun Davies, Islwyn Jones.

The following resigned during 1975—Jack Knapgate, Ceri Rees, Gwyn Reynolds, Alun Long, Allan Parker, Mel Parker, John Bartlett, Peter Hayes, Stephen Davies.

The yearly average attendance at rehearsals came out with, 2nd Tenors, 77 per cent; 2nd Bass, 69 per cent; 1st Bass, 65 per cent; 1st Tenors, 64 per cent.

Regarding engagements, there were 30 fulfilled in 1975, which included four television appearances and one commercial recording. A number of new items were introduced to our extensive repertoire, and performed for the first time in 1975. They were: Three Hungarian Folk Songs, "The Easter Hymn," "Morte Christe," "Diniweidrwydd," "Comrades in Arms," "Sara," "Oh Mary don't you Weep," and "Where shall I be."

The following choristers attended all engagements—Islwyn Morgan, Neville Blandford, Vernon Thomas, John Callagan and David Trembath. Those with 90 plus were Edmund Evans, John Hopkins, Mike Gale, Reg Stephens, Eddie Rowe, Tom Pate, Roy Bobbett, Norman Martin, Frank Smith, Ben Griffiths, Haydn Erasmus, Sam Griffiths, Eiril Wright, Alun John, Wyndham Rowe, Ivor Hitchings, Richard Mills, Gwyn Jones, John Mallin, John Davies, Alun Hughes and Graham Gibbs.

The best attended engagement was our concert at the beautiful Bath Abbey, when 98 choristers staged, while the least attendance was for the T.V. Recording in Dumfries Street, when only 52 choristers were present.

REHEARSAL AND ENGAGEMENT REPORT—*continued*

In fulfilling our engagements, we travelled some 3,012 miles and sang to total live audiences of 19,880, appearing with 18 different artistes—which included Max Boyce, Julie Felix, Alun Williams, The Silver Ring Choir, and also four joint band concerts, two with Park & Dare, and one each with the Portsmouth Citadel Band and the Stanshawe Band.

The yearly average attendance at engagements shows the same trend as rehearsals, but of course with higher percentages. The 2nd Tenors top the league again with 82 per cent, followed by the 2nd Bass and 1st Tenors, each with 77 per cent, and 1st Bass with 74 per cent. Congratulations to the 2nd Tenors who topped both rehearsal and engagement attendances.

Organisations which have benefitted from our efforts during the year are—Spina Bifida, Kidney Research, Lifeboat Institution, Cheshire Homes, Boys' Club Movement, Dr. Barnardo's Homes, The Silver Ring Choir, Porthcawl Rest Home, Dunvant Male Choir, Stanshawe Band and various Chapels and Churches.

It was particularly pleasing to see the excellent attendance at concerts during the very busy period of November and December, and let's hope they can be maintained, or better still, improved in 1976.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

By DAN WILLIAMS, 2nd Bass
(Executive member of the National Association of Male Choirs)

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR has a proud record in its work with the Association of Male Choirs. A number of choristers have served previously on the association. Cly Willis was its first secretary, Bob Griffiths a former chairman, Will Jones was an executive committee member and others who have since left the choir ranks have also served and represented us there.

The association is divided into two bodies, 'North' & 'South,' which gives it the advantage of being "local" so to speak. But from time to time, joint meetings are held, to share ideas and make progress nationally. The main aim of course, being the furtherance of Male Choirs. The association is of course recognised by various bodies such as the Arts Council and the Amateur Music Federation, and regularly Eisteddfod Courts and Committees meet with the association to discuss all aspects of male choir competitions, such as test pieces, staging numbers and also

KEEPING IN TOUCH—*continued*

time of competition, which in the past years has been a bone of contention to many choirs. Through this close link now formed between the Association and the Courts and Eisteddfod Committees, new channels have been opened and an example of this, is that a massed male choir of some 600 choristers will now appear in the opening concert of the Cardigan Eisteddfod, which is to be conducted by Owain Arwel Hughes.

Many and varied are the activities of "our union," more than room permits me to mention, but they include certain contacts with B.B.C. and I.T.V., summer music schools, conductors' day and not forgetting the quarterly gazette, where ideas and information can be exchanged.

Mr. J. E. V. Fisher was recently appointed President of the South Wales Branch, and we in Treorchy offer him our best wishes on his new appointment and also to Mr. Glyn Jones of Aberafan Male Choir, the new Secretary. May they continue their untiring work on behalf of Male Choirs.

My thanks to the Editor for allowing me to keep you in touch with "our union"—The Association of Male Choirs.

"IN VERY GOOD COMPANY"

On the sleeve of his latest album "Tom Jones' Greatest Hits" (subtitled "Tom among friends"), is a photograph of the choir. Other photographs on the sleeve include the following, who should all feel duly honoured having a spot in the same gallery as "Treorchy Male Choir."

Her Majesty the Queen, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Engelbert Humperdink, Raquel Welch, Perry Como, Paul Anka, Tony Bennett, Anthony Newley, Sammy Davis, Jnr., Joni Mitchell, Harry Secombe, Victor Borge, Dusty Springfield, Jose Feliciano, Bob Hope, Ray Charles, Vikky Carr, Bobby Darin, Charles Aznavour, Little Richard, Matt Munro, Wilson Pickett, Smokey Robinson.

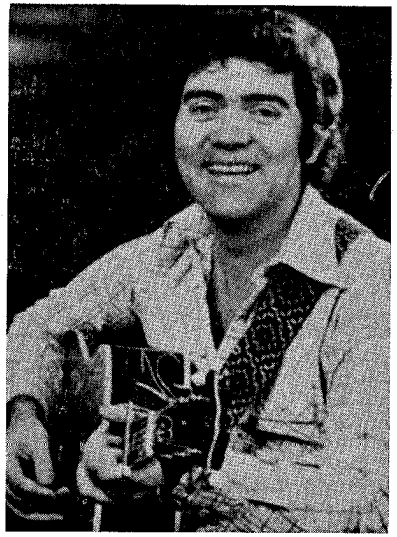
"WHAT WE DID TO THE RAIN"

On May 13th, a number of visitors from the Water Board were present at our rehearsal and to mark their visit, we sang a few numbers to them. They included "What have they done to the rain." Good thinking on the conductor's part indeed, but it didn't end there. The result was staggering. What followed was the warmest and driest summer we've had for years. Well done John the Witchdoctor, or should I say, John (Cunning) Jones.

WHY WE ENJOY OUR MUSIC MAKING

(By MAX BOYCE)

WE were coming back from an Eisteddfod, after being placed eighth—I am not saying out of how many, because no Welsh choir ever came last—when an old 'bottom bass' who was known as 'Babylon' because he had 'wavy' hair, turned over the pages of the Cardigan Eisteddfod Programme and muttered, "Who was that adjudicator again?" I replied "Madame Clara Smythe Fitzgibbon (L.R.A.M., Mus. Bac., A. R. C. M. (Oxon.), F.R.C.M.). "Umph," he said, "What does she know about 'music'.



That is the typical sort of humour found in male choirs in Wales and, indeed, in the mining valleys. I remember another instance of a world famous London Conductor, who accepted an invitation to conduct the local orchestra in the valley.

On arrival at the first rehearsal he finds only one musician has turned up. When he asks where the others are, the musician explains that they've gone over to the next valley to compete in the Semi-National Eisteddfod. The conductor is a bit put out, but determined to be 'Professional' decides to hold the rehearsal anyway. He soon discovers, however, that the musician is 'tone deaf' and doesn't respond to the famous man's exhortations. At last, in desperation, the conductor loses his temper and shouts, "You're just no good, you haven't got any idea" to which the musician answers, "Aye, I know." The conductor is perplexed by the reply. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Well," said the man, "If I was any good, I'd be over in the Eisteddfod with the boys."

Anyway, lads, I'm glad I've had the opportunity to say a few words as it were, and to thank you for appearing on the "Max Boyce Show" back in October, 1975.

As my mother put it, Now you've arrived—singing with "Treorchy." Do you know, my mother's right.

Unwaith eto, diolch a phôb dymuniad da yn 1976—Max.

"SOSBAN FACH"

Contrary, perhaps, to popular belief, "Sosban Fach" did not originate in Llanelli; in fact, it came into being, not in industrial South Wales at all, but at the spa of Llanwrtyd Wells, Breconshire, during August, 1895. The song's close association with Llanelli is likely to have been brought about initially by the Town's tinplate workers, large numbers of whom spent their holidays at Llanwrtyd every year.

The well-known first verse was an adaptation of four lines from a song published nearly twenty years earlier by the Montgomeryshire poet 'Mynyddog' (Richard Davies, 1833-77). Where the remaining verses, their 'Chorus' and the entire music of "Sosban Fach" came from is harder to establish. Authorship of the song has been publicly claimed by two Welshmen, Mr. Talog Williams of Dowlais, and the Reverend D. M. Davies of Waunarlwydd, Swansea, but it remains unclear whether or not these claims concerned the music of the song as well as its text.

(The former might be based on a traditional folk melody)

"OES GAFR ETO?"

The most widely known version of the song which is usually called "Cyfri'r Geifr" ("Counting the Goats"). This title is misleading. In fact, the song appears to have little, if anything, to do with counting; it is, however, known to have been used as a feat-song in Candlemas-singing on the 2nd February. During the eighteenth century, for example, wassailers in Anglesey (and possibly elsewhere as well) would engage occupants of houses in a vocal contest at Candlemas. This involved the alternate performance of songs which were designed, between them, to test the agility of imagination, of memory, and of tongue, as well as capacity of lungs. The outcome of the contest would decide whether or not the wassailers were to be allowed indoors, to perform an additional Candlemas ritual there.

D. ROY SAER,
Welsh Folk Museum.

A HAPPY REUNION

Our concert in Hermon Chapel, Treorchy, was marked with a pleasant reunion. The Chairman for the evening was Mr. Cennard Davies, who appeared as a boy soprano with the choir in the chapel way back in July, 1949.

FROM THE POST BAG

"Black Horse Farm,"
Densole,
Folkstone.
28th November, 1975.

Dear Sir,

Today, just before 1.00 p.m., I heard the most beautiful sound I have heard for many a long day.

It was your choir bringing to an end a programme of Welsh singing and, although I only heard the last four or five "Amens," it so moved me that I had tears of joyful emotion running down my face all the while I later listened to the B.B.C. 1.00 p.m. News.

Will you please extend my sincere thanks to your choir and please accept the enclosed P.O. to assist with your expenses.

Also, would you advise if the song whose end I heard is available on Tape or Record, for I **must** hear it many times again.

Yours sincerely,

H. Pengelly.

"Ivy Leaf,"
29 Gedling Road,
Carlton,
Nottingham.
7th April, 1975.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to tell you how much we enjoyed the singing of your choir, at the Albert Hall, Nottingham on the 5th of April, it was a wonderful memorable evening.

We would both love to come to hear you again, and wondered if it would be possible for you to send us a programme of you future engagements, to enable us to come to another concert, if you are appearing anywhere near Nottingham.

Yours sincerely,

Avril D. Henton (Mrs.) & Barbara Wilkinson.

LETTERS—*continued*

75 Elstree Drive,
Apsley,
Nottingham.
5th March, 1975.

Dear Sir,

It is with great pleasure that my husband and I have heard that the Treorchy Male Choir is to visit the Albert Hall, Nottingham again on April 5th.

We have attended all the concerts given by the choir and heard them on the radio and television, and my husband and I count it a great privilege to be able to listen to such beautiful singing, and the joy and happiness the choir brings to thousands of people is wonderful.

Along with many other people our favourite song is Myfanwy, but after listening to your latest record we think 'The Lily of the Valley' arr. by Emrys Jones is a most beautiful song and we never tire of hearing it.

We wish the choir every success in the future and we are looking forward so much to our evening with the Treorchy on April 5th and if its possible to include 'The Lily of the Valley' in your programme it will be wonderful, but if not, we shall still enjoy every minute of the evening.

Yours sincerely,

Irene Richardson (Mrs.).

75 Elstree Drive,
Apsley,
Nottingham.
8th April, 1975.

Dear Mr. Griffiths,

On behalf of my husband and I may I thank the Treorchy Male Choir for the wonderful, wonderful evening we spent listening to them at the Nottingham Albert Hall last Saturday, April 5th. We enjoyed every item, especially "Lily of the Valley."

I don't think we will ever tire of listening to the records we bought.

I am enclosing the write up that was in the Nottingham Evening Post, it puts into words all that I would like to say.

Thank you again for all the pleasure the choir is bringing to many, many people.

Yours sincerely

Irene Richardson (Mrs.).

LETTERS—*continued*

35 Abbey Way,
Farnborough,
Hants.
18th, May, 1975.

Dear Sir,

As an ordinary member of the audience at Fleet Civil Hall yesterday would you convey my appreciation to the choir for a memorable evening.

I enjoyed immensely the introductions by John Cynan Jones—the movingly beautiful range of the chorus singing, the superb ease and singing of Sam Griffiths, and what a super accompanist in little Jennifer Jones. As for the recitations of Herbert Jones well they were just marvellous.

All adding up to that very rare thing, something perfect, it was a great joy and uplift and is still with me today.

Thank you, Treorchy, long may you continue to make music.

Yours,

Michael Faulkner.

P.S.—At the door afterwards Sam Griffiths was good enough to autograph the record I had bought—before he would do so he made me take the record from the cover so it would not be damaged—"There's kindness for you."

Ystrad Fechan,
Home for the Aged,
Treorchy,
Rhondda.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

On behalf of all the residents of Ystrad Fechan, please convey to the Gentlemen of The Treorchy Male Voice Choir, our sincere thanks for the most generous donation sent to me at Xmas Time. I can assure you that it went a long way to help my staff and I to give that extra lift to the Xmas Cheer for the elderly at Ystrad Fechan. The generous action by your organisation, and others in the locality, has made our work at Xmas that much more pleasant, when you see the smiles on the faces of my elderly, many of whom have little or no family to brighten their Xmas, thank you all for helping us to help them,

On behalf of all, many, many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Glenys T. Lewis,
Matron.

LETTERS FROM AMERICA

Elliott Co., of Chocolatetown, U.S.A.
1531 Fishburn Road, P.O. Box 70
Hershey, Penna. 17033 U.S.A.
December 28th, 1975.

Director,
Treorchy Male Voice Choir.

Dear Sir,

May I congratulate you on the excellent performance by the Treorchy Male Voice Choir on a recent program with Julie Andrews aired recently on television in this Pennsylvania area, I am in possession of records by The Male Voice Choir.

It gives me great pleasure to write this testimonial since my cousin Trevor Elliott (now deceased) once sang in this great choir.

I myself attended the Blaenrhondda schools many years ago.

Once again many thanks for the choir's par excellence performance.

Yours sincerely,
Fred W. Elliott.

Mr. W. J. Griffiths, Secretary
Treorchy Male Choir
Treorchy, Rhondda, South Wales.

October 15th, 1975.

Dear Mr. Griffiths,

On behalf of my husband and myself, I want to extend a heartfelt thanks for the privilege of listening to your marvelous choir last month when I made my first visit back to the valley where I was born.

When my aunt, Mrs. Dill Lee, suggested that we sit on your practice session I was thrilled at the prospect, but little did I realize the waves of pride, great sense of heritage, and warmth that I would feel just sitting listening to your choir under the direction of such a master as John Cynan Jones.

As you may remember, I came back the second time and had the privilege of meeting Bill Davies, and Harry Price, personally and listening once again to your practice.

Listening to Mr. Jones' comments and seeing his direction brought so vividly to my mind all the things my dear father, Oliver Jones, had told me about the wonderful choirs of his beloved Rhondda. I remember how he stressed diction, the

LETTERS FROM AMERICA—*continued*

hwyl, the hiraeth, in his own singing thru the years, the singing which led him to make his living in San Francisco opera, Gilbert and Sullivan, etc., in this country. Now I know more than ever why he loved so much all the beautiful things he was taught about music, and why he was so complimented thru the years on his Welsh basso profundo.

You'll never know what joy you gave me to hear you all, and I'm deeply grateful to have been able to be present at such heavenly singing.

Please extend a special thanks to Mr. Bill Davies for his warm welcome, for giving me a copy of EXCELSIOR, with signatures of all of you. I shall always remember him especially for his time and efforts to make a transplanted Welsh girl really feel " at home " again.

Please come to America someday!

Mrs. Mair Jones Trammel
68 E Central St.
Orland, Ca., 95963
USA

A LEGEND CONFIRMED—RICHARD RUSH, Loveland, Colorado

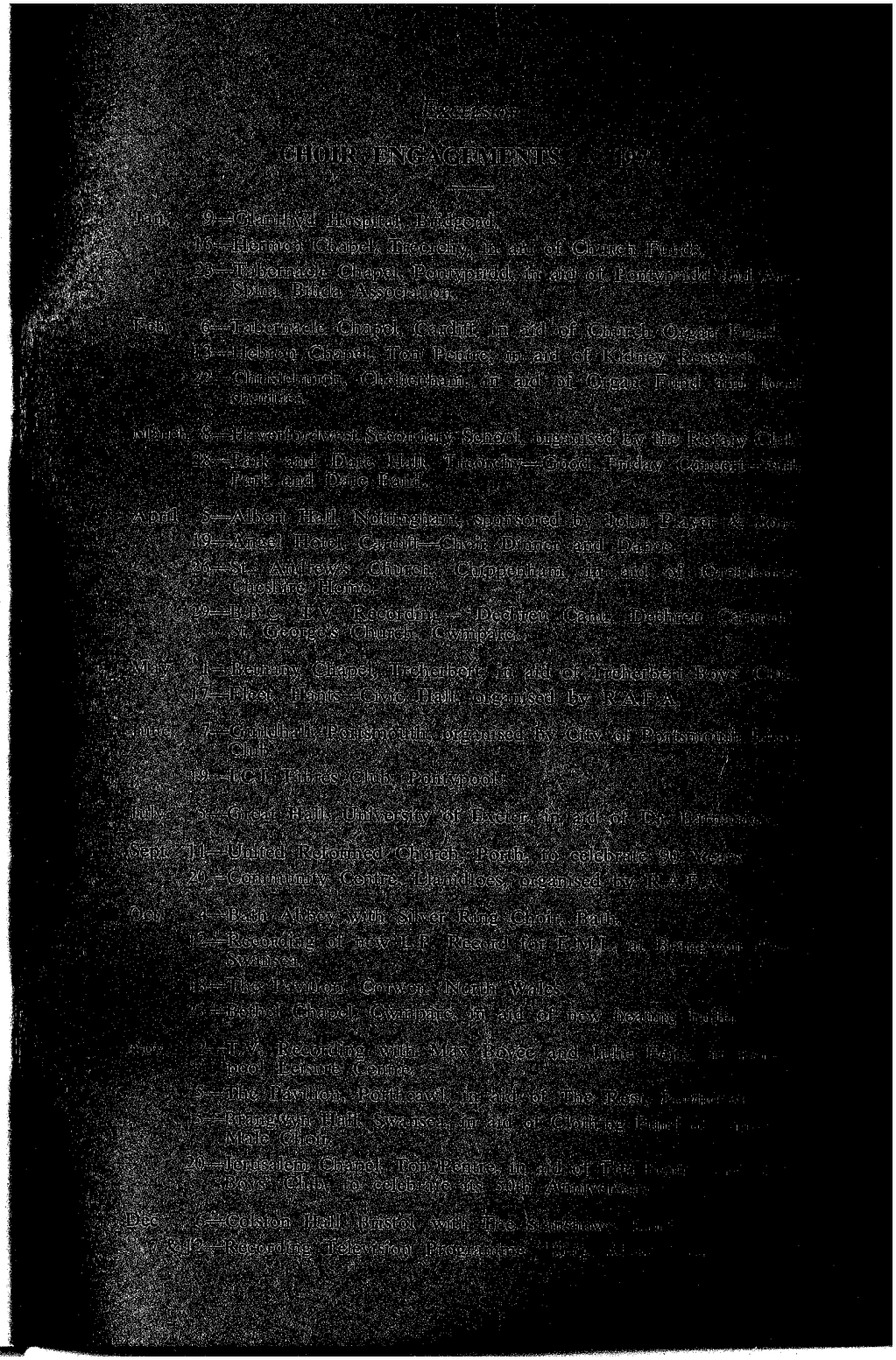
Somewhere in the dim recesses of memory I have an image of a train crammed with Welsh coal miners going on a trip to who-knows-where, filling the car and surrounding air with the strains of Pantycelyn. That image of virile beauty comes from the same stock of American boyhood remembrances as Thanksgiving harvest celebrations at grandparents' house, practising football in a muddy backyard, waking to the wonder of the winter's first snowfall . . . very far back. And I well recall the quiet Sunday afternoon that my father, who loved music as life itself, reprimanded me for humming along with John Charles Thomas, interfering with that Welshman's golden tones as they came from the radio. So when my family and I found that we were coming to spend a year on a teaching exchange in a valley of South Wales, and when acquaintances in Colorado told us they were certain a very famous male choir still existed in the Rhondda, the old legend of green hills, blackened faces and vibrant song was awakened.

In the weeks between notification and arrival, the thought often crossed my mind that it would be great fun to sing in a male choir for the year, enjoying the inspiration of an occasional

LETTERS FROM AMERICA—*continued*

practise and the camaraderie which music promotes. Shortly after we settled in Pontypridd and had been given a warm welcome to the Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School, John Cynan Jones mentioned that the Treorchy Male Choir would be singing at the Bridgend Festival in case we would be interested! We eagerly joined the multitude at that memorable concert where heaven responded to the pianissimo of a spiritual by pelting the roof until the music was stopped and John Cynan apparently asked for special favours. So the wonderful music resumed, excitingly rendered . . . and my hopes of singing along were dashed. Such training and precision! Three rehearsals a week! Performances, trips, recording sessions! I found that a healthy male choir organisation was no casual thing but a serious social as well as musical obligation, unlike any similar group I had known in the U.S.A. because it combined singing with several other facets of life. So we would enjoy from the outside.

That we did and are still doing. With John Cynan's help, we purchased recordings for some American friends at Christmastime, and soon letters with exclamation marks began appearing in our mail. "What heavenly tenors!" "Our neighbours ask us to turn the hi fi system UP!" "We bathe in the sound by the hour!" "How could you be so lucky?" Shortly before leaving Wales, we went to a Tuesday evening choir rehearsal and were honoured by a mini-concert at the end, including "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." We appreciate that gracious giving, done so many times before but nevertheless fresh for us. It will remain yet another indelible impression of warm Welsh hospitality. Now, back in the United States, we share our memories and recordings with friends and neighbours, and nothing stirs our feelings about Wales so deeply as Calon Lân, or Cwm Rhondda, or The Consolation of Music. So, once again, diolch yn fawr iawn i Gôr Meibion, Treorci—a legend confirmed.

EVER SO POPULAR "ALLEN"

It is accepted that Treorchy Male Choir are well known throughout the land and also the conductor is known by name, but it is rather surprising to find that each chorister is applauded individually. Well it happened at Haverfordwest last March, when Allen John, assistant Librarian walked on the stage to place the music stand. He received a tremendous applause and being rather modest, he hurried off to enable the conductor to take advantage of the applause.