

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 1976

By Norman Martin, Registrar
& Honorary Archivist

January

Tuesday January 6th

The year started well as with the first practice, the newest member of the music staff, Mr Neil Johnson, started his association with the Choir as Assistant Accompanist. He is a young man, 23-years-old, an ex-student of Mr John Cynan Jones and he teaches in the Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School. When not required as the Accompanist he sings in the First Bass Section.

Sunday January 11th

Tonight the Choir's contribution to the HTV programme, "Sing Aloud" was shown.

Thursday January 15th

Bethany Chapel, Treherbert

The year's engagement programme commenced at Bethany Chapel. Mr and Mrs John Davies were present in the audience and the song "Oh Mary Don't You Weep" was given its first public performance. The proceeds were for the Treherbert Hospital League of Friends.

Tuesday January 27th

Again history was made at tonight's rehearsal. Owing to the unavoidable absence of Mr J.C.Jones, Mr Neil Johnson, the newly appointed Assistant Accompanist, conducted the Bass section in single practice and then the full Choir rehearsal. With Jenny at the piano, the Treorchy Male Choir can be justly proud of its musical staff.

February

Thursday February 5th

Central Hall, Tonypany

The concert at Central Hall, Tonypany was held to raise funds for the Fairfield House project. The soloists were Sam Griffiths and Herbert Jones.

Thursday February 12th

St Mary's Church, Abergavenny

Tonight with a concert at St Mary's Church, the Choir paid its first visit to Abergavenny. The concert was organised by the Loyal Order of Moose and the proceeds were in aid of a children's charity. The Choir, Conductor and Accompanist were photographed before the concert in this fine church. With a capacity audience, the concert proved to be a very successful one both musically and financially. One disappointing feature was the low attendance of the Choir with 69 members. After the concert the Choir was welcomed at Abergavenny Rugby Club.

Sunday February 15th

At the Annual General Meeting Mr Cas Powell became Chairman and Mr John Davies was elected Vice Chairman. The Chairman's Plaque was given to each chairman at the end of his term of office, was presented to Mr Robert Griffiths (Chairman 1974-75) and Mr William Jones (Chairman 1975-76). The Long Service Certificate was presented to Mr Alwyn Phillips (1B).

Tuesday February 17th

The Choir's latest record, "Treorchy Male Choir's Greatest Hits" was on sale.

Saturday February 21st

Today the death occurred of Mr Haydn Thatcher, Life Member of the Choir. Haydn was a founder member and held his place on the first committee in 1946 to 1972. during this period he served ten years (1956-1966) as Contribution Secretary and six years (1967-1972) as Vice Chairman of the Choir. He was extremely active on the social side of the Choir and was instrumental in organising the first trip to Scotland when the Choir stayed at the Adelphi Hotel and many following Scottish trips. He was a helping hand in many of the Choir's Dinner Dances, Social Dances and weekend trips. He inaugurated the sick-visiting scheme of the Choir and was, until the time of his illness, a faithful member of the 1st Tenor section. To those who knew him, he was a gentle, helpful person and he will be sadly missed but never forgotten.

Wednesday February 25th

The cremation of Mr Haydn Thatcher took place today. There was an excellent attendance of choristers (more than 60) as well as many former choristers. The organ was played by Mr John Cynan Jones and the Choir's choral tribute of "Close Thine Eyes" was conducted by Mr John Davies. It was a fitting tribute to an old chorister and a respected member of the community.

Saturday February 28th

King's Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

The Choir made its first visit to Stoke-on-Trent with a concert in the King's Hall, The Choir arrived at the hotel, Post House, changed into the concert uniform and went to the hall for tea, sausage, egg and chips! We shared the programme with our old friends of the Coventry Brass Band. They are now under the conductorship of Mr Ray Farr, aged 27 years, who incidentally was conducting them for the first time in a concert. The concert was a success with one of the main contributions being the very fine King's Hall. There was a large audience of approximately 1,500 people and the concert was organised by the Independent Order of Forresters and the proceeds were in aid of Spina Bifida. During the interval a cheque of £500 was presented to the fund. The Mayors of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-Under-Lyme were present and Mr John Hicks (1T) made his concert debut. There was a congenial (get-together" in the Grand Hotel, Hanley after the concert and in fulfilling this engagement the Choir travelled 332 miles.

March

Monday March 1st

The television recording made last June in Dumfries Street, Treorchy was show on BBC 2 tonight. The programme was called "How Great Was My Father – A Welsh Odyssey for 1976". The stars were Ryan Davies and Max Boyce.

Thursday March 11th

Comprehensive School, Tonyrefail

In the concert in the Comprehensive School in Tonyrefail, Sam was unavailable to attend owing to illness. The ever-faithful Jenny filled the gaps and played a double role again as accompanist and harp soloist. Wyn Davies and Dennis Lethbridge both

made their concert debuts. The proceeds were in aid of the Pontypridd & District Society for Mentally Handicapped Children.

Thursday March 25th

Town Hall, Maesteg

At the concert in the Town Hall, Maesteg, the Choir gave their first performance of “The Turtle Dove”. The proceeds were in aid of the Royal British Legion.

April

Saturday April 3rd

The Choir held its Annual Dinner Dance at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff. The Chief Guest was Professor William Mathias.

Friday April 16th

Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The 11th Annual Good Friday Concert was performance by the same team of the Choir and the Parc & Dare Band, including Mr Alex Jones MP, to a full house. This year the concert appeared to be more enjoyable for two reasons – firstly the band was celebrating their win at Swansea and so played as champions. Secondly the hall has been renovated making it light, airy and a pleasure to look at. The Choir gave their first performance of “The Bandit’s Chorus” from Ernani and Norman Cox (1B) made his first concert appearance. With a Choir attendance of 96, the 2B section were there in full strength, the concert proved once again to be a successful one.

Saturday April 24th

St Batholemeth Church, Wooton Bassett

The Choir paid its first visit to Wooton Bassett when they appeared in the splendid St Batholemeth’s Church. The Choir gave their first performance of “In Nomine Jesu”. A most appreciative audience made the concert a very enjoyable one. After the concert the choristers were treated to a ploughman’s lunch. A total of 166 miles were travelled in fulfilling this engagement and the proceeds were in aid of Cystic Fibrosis.

Thursday April 29th

St Martin Church, Roath, Cardiff

After a period of seven years the Choir returned to St Martin’s Church in Cardiff. The Choir gave its first performance of “Domine Non Sum Dignus” and “Haec Dies”. The meal after the concert was excellent, with cans of beer for the choristers. “Myfanwy” was sung to the ladies in appreciation of their efforts.

May

Friday May 7th

Capitol Theatre, Cardiff

To assist in the building fund of the Welsh Rugby Union, the Choir appeared in a Grand Celebrity Concert in the Capitol Theatre, Cardiff. The stars of the show were Harry Secombe, Max Boyce, with excellent support from the Dowlais Male Choir, Scope, John Luce and Neil Lewis and the Benny Litchfield Orchestra. The show was compered Alun Williams in his own inimitable style. With the theatre full and tickets

at £3.50, the fund received a tremendous boost. The show was to be held originally on the National Stadium ground, but was transferred. Ainsley Davies (1B) made his first concert appearance.

Saturday May 15th

Comprehensive School, Bishop's Cleeve

The Choir paid its first visit to Bishop's Cleeve near Cheltenham with a concert in the Comprehensive School. This was a pleasant concert in pleasing surroundings and an appreciative audience. The proceeds were in aid of the Parent Teacher Association. Ivor Townsend (2T), Roger Jones (1B) and Mal Jones (2B) made their first concert appearance. After the concert the Choir was entertained at the Hotel De Le Beve in the medieval room where food and drink were provided. The report of the concert in the newspaper was one of the best written tributes to the Choir's performance and deportment it has ever received.

June

Thursday June 10th

Comprehensive School, Brynmawr

To assist the RNLI and local charities, the Choir gave a concert in the Brynmawr Comprehensive School. It was organised by the Rotary Club and Donald Guy (2T) made his first concert appearance.

Saturday June 19th

Town Hall, Dudley

The Choir paid its first visit to Dudley with a concert organised by the Rotary Club. It was held in the Town Hall which proved to be a wonderful hall to sing in. With 800 people present, including the Mayor, it was a most enjoyable concert. The evening was not without incident as during the singing of "Where Shall I Be", Geoffrey Howard (1B) collapsed. The adjacent choristers did the necessary attendance on him while the Choir finished the song. He was fully recovered by the end of the concert. The Rotary Club presented with Choir with a marble plaque to commemorate the visit and many new friends were made at the "get-together" after the concert. A total of 250 miles were travelled to fulfil this engagement.

July

Saturday July 3rd

Tabernacle Chapel, Aberaeron

In glorious weather the Choir travelled to Aberaeron for their first appearance there. The concert was held in the Tabernacle Chapel, and because of the hot weather the choristers discarded their jackets. Ben Jackson (1T) who had mislaid his tie was probably the coolest chorister as he appeared in "open neck shirt" order. John Preece made his first appearance and page 17 of "Iesu o Nazareth" was sung for the first time by the first tenor section. Proceeds were in aid of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and hospitality was provided by the Yacht Club. A total of 172 miles was travelled to fulfil the engagement.

September

Sunday September 19th

Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad

The Choir made its first appearance in the Rhondda Sports Centre when it appeared in a programme organised by the Rhondda Keep Fit Association. Also appearing were Parc & Dare Band, Tylorstown Co-op Children's Choir, Rhondda & Mid Glamorgan Keep Fit Associations, Maerdy Gateway Club, Carmarthen Wheelchair Dancing Team. Present was the Mayoress of Rhondda. There was a capacity audience and the proceeds were in aid of local handicapped children.

Saturday September 25th

Secondary Modern School, Haverfordwest

The Choir paid a return visit to Haverfordwest with the same arrangements as the previous visit last year. The concert was advertised on HTV and the proceeds were in aid of the local cricket club.

October

Sunday October 3rd

For the first time the Choir held a Special General Meeting. This was at the request of at least 20 choristers to discuss the question of the Choir's re-entry into the competitive field. The committee discussed it on the minute of the last AGM and brought the meeting its recommendation that "The Re-entry into the competitive field at the present time was not in the best interests of the Choir." After a long and interesting discussion the meeting accepted the committee's recommendation.

Thursday October 7th

University Hospital, Cardiff

The Choir paid a return visit to the University Hospital, Cardiff with a concert in No.1 Lecture Theatre. Again this proved to be a popular engagement and all the tickets were sold well before the concert. With a capacity audience the contribution to the Leukaemia Research Fund must have been substantial.

Sunday October 10th

The Choir rehearsed for the first time the song "The Impossible Dream" which had been arranged for the Choir by Mike Sammes, the noted conductor of the Mike Sammes Singers.

Saturday October 16th

Birmingham Town Hall

The Choir made its eighth visit to the Town Hall in Birmingham. The usual pattern was carried out, tea in the Victoria Restaurant with the Lord Mayor and members of the Birmingham Cymrodorion followed by a concert in the Town Hall. The artists appearing with the Choir was the Powys Harp Party which is a group of young people singing and playing harps to good effect. With a "full house", including Mr Dennis Howell, Minister of Sport, the concert was a successful one. Although this was the eighth visit this one was something special to the Choir as on October 16th 1946 the Choir was reformed after the War, and so this was the 30th Anniversary engagement.

Saturday October 20th

City Hall, Kingston-on-Hull

The Choir paid its first visit to Kingston on Hull with a concert in the City Hall. This engagement was the greatest distance covered by coach – 630 miles – to fulfil the engagement and it necessitated a spare driver for the buses. This was an engagement with a strange coincidence. On the journey Will Roberts (2T) was taken ill and was taken into Newport to catch a taxi home. When he arrived in Newport he was feeling better and carried on. After a seating rehearsal John Preece (2T) was taken ill and went straight to the hotel and to bed. Immediately after the commencement of the second half of the concert Keith Thomas (2T) was taken ill and left the stage to go back to the hotel. So three second tenors were taken ill! The City Hall was a magnificent place with marvellous acoustics and a very appreciative audience. The Lord Mayor being present, the concert was an excellent one. The Choir stayed in the Central Hotel.

November

Thursday November 18th

Parc & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The Choir as privileged to appear with the Upper Rhondda Comprehensive School Bass Band in their celebration concert at the Parc & Dare Hall. The concert was in honour of the Band who won the Great Britain Youth and School Competition at the Royal Albert Hall, London in October. The Choir has a new staging arrangement, which brought it forward outside the proscium apron. This appeared to improve the sound heard by the audience and with the band playing so well, a full house and the concert was an enjoyable one. The proceeds were in aid of the band.

Sunday November 20th

The Choir rehearsed for the first time the song “A Valley Called The Rhondda”. The words of the song were written especially for the Choir by Mr Bob Barrett, Recording Manager for EMI and producer of our records. Mr John Cynon Jones gave a short synopsis of the item, stating that the music was of French origin, and the arranger, Mr Gordon Langford, arranged several items for our record “Songs You Love”. He is the current arranger for the King Singers. Mr John Cynon Jones felt that Mr Barrett had completed this song out of respect and admiration for the Choir.

December

Thursday December 16th

Parc Hospital, Bridgend

The year's concert programme finished with a most rewarding and self-satisfying concert given to the less fortunate people and the devoted staff of Parc Hospital in Bridgend. Mr John Cynon Jones took advantage of the concert to introduce several new items, “Hava Nagila”, “Kalinka”, “Mae D'Eisiau Di Bob Awr”, “What Have They Done To The Rain” and “The Impossible Dream”. It was also the first appearance of Wyn Davies (1T) as a tenor soloist.