

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 1995

By Norman Martin
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

FEBRUARY

Saturday February 4th

Dudley Town Hall

Scheduled to leave at 4pm, only one bus arrived in Treorchy, so a 20 minute delay took place before the Choir set off for Dudley for a concert which commenced at 7.40pm. The stage was shared with the Bristol Easton Salvation Army Band, Cranley Heath Salvation Army Timbrel Group and soprano Rosemary Phillips. In this happy atmosphere and with a packed house, an excellent concert took place. The Proms section, where everyone joined in the singing and waving of flags and handkerchiefs, was most enjoyable. The concert finished at 10.30pm and a pleasant interlude was held in the Town Hall Bar. The proceeds of the concert were in aid of the Salvation Army.

Thursday February 16th

St Martin's Church, Caerphilly

After a period of 15 years the Choir returned to St Martin's Church, Caerphilly. Despite the inclement climatic conditions, the Church was full, which was pleasing for the choristers and gratifying for the organisation as the proceeds were in aid of the church restoration fund. The engagement saw Christopher Lear assist Marion by accompanying the Choir in "Gwahoddiad" and "Roman War Song". An excellent buffet was provided and many choristers furthered their enjoyment with a visit to Caerphilly Golf Club.

MARCH

Saturday March 11th

Llandaff Cathedral

The Choir was honoured and privileged to accept the invitation to attend the Memorial Service for Sir Cennydd George Traherne at Llandaff. He supported the Choir and attended several engagements, while in 1970 he wrote the Foreword for "Excelsior". As expected the Cathedral was full of people from varying spectrum of society. These included dignitaries in high positions in the church, national and civic authorities. After the procession of representatives from the family, Church, civil dignitaries, organisation, a dignified Memorial Service ensured. Each of Wales's eight Lord Lieutenants were there, also five peers (including former Prime Minister Sir James Callaghan), seventeen knights, four High Sheriffs, fifteen Civic Leaders, four chief executives and four MPs.

The Choir's contribution was from under the magnificent edifice Christ in Majesty which brought the Service almost to its end. The congregation's singing of the hymn "Sine Nomine" and the Blessing ended this most impressive final tribute to Sir Cennydd. The Queen was represented by Lord Callaghan; The Prince of Wales by Sir Brooke Boothby; Princess Royal by William Legge-Bourke; Princess Margaret by Mrs Charles Vyvan; Princess Alice and Duke & Duchess of Gloucester by Lord Aberdare and the Duke & Duchess of Kent by Lieutenant Commander Sir Richard Buckley.

Tuesday March 21st

The AGM was held in the rehearsal room and David Trembath and Roger Morse were presented with their Long Service certifications. The statement by the Treasurer, John Mallin, that he was considering his position as Treasurer left the choristers in a state of deep concern.

Saturday March 25th

Royal Forest of Dean College, Coleford

The spirit and challenge of a first visit was engendered when the Choir paid its initial visit to Coleford. Leaving Treorchy at 4.30pm the Choir reached the college to find the staging was not suitable and with his usual efficiency, Fred O'Brien (Marshall) soon put things right! The concert was promoted by the Forest of Dean Council and sponsored by Girobank. The concert started at 7.30pm in the intimate college theatre where there was not a vacant seat to be found. Mair Roberts performed a lighter programme than usual. Marion was typically brilliant on the splendid piano the choristers certainly raised to the challenge. John was in a jovial, efficient mood and the response from the audience displayed the enjoyment of the performance. With such a response, the choristers proudly felt that had many new friends and supporters.

APRIL

Tuesday April 4th

The choristers were deeply saddened by the announcement that John Mallin will not seek re-election as Treasurer, a post he has held since 1979. His expertise will be greatly missed.

Friday April 14th

This was the 30th consecutive Good Friday Concert with the Parc & Dare (British Fuels) Band but the first concert for its newly appointed Conductor Jeremy Wise. Over the years the support for this engagement has been first class and this year was no exception.

Saturday April 29th

Victoria Hall, Hanley. Stoke

Leaving Treorchy at 3pm the Choir arrived at 6.30pm at one of their favourite concert venues. A splendid concert took place, finishing at 10.10pm. After a pleasant time the choristers went to the Ray Reardon Snooker Club for the evening. On the way home it was the first time for the Choir bus to be stopped by the police. The reason being that the video playing (Only Fools and Horses) was distracting for overtaking drivers! After a 15-minute discussion between police and driver, the bus pulled away with the video still showing.

MAY

Saturday May 13th

Town Hall, Walsall

The Choir returned to another favourite venue. On the way to the Town Hall the buses stopped at Walsall Rugby Club to be met by Honorary Member John Tucker and his wife Diane. After an excellent meal and relaxing hour the buses journeyed to the

Town Hall for 6.25pm. a short rehearsal was held and the concert commenced at 7.30pm. the proceeds were to help the cost of converting St Paul's building to "The Crossing at St Pauls", a community and church initiative that will transform an under-used building into a centre of celebration of life. Within the building there will be a much needed childcare facility, speciality shops, restaurant and a help and advice centre. The Chapel of Prayer will also be opened all day.

The Master of Ceremonies for the evening was Mr Mel Thomas, the returned Headteacher of Sandwell School in Smethick and originally from Penclawdd. He was exceptional. At the start of the second half he brought a chair and a red book and microphone. His next statement left one chorister bemused, bothered, bewildered, weak kneed and totally embarrassed as he said, "This is Your Life Norman Anthony Martin". This was unknown to everyone excepted Dean Powell who had planned this evening as part of the evening's entertainment. After the initially shock had partially subsided and amid the laughter, the gentle banter of choristers and the applause of the audience saw a similar, restricted pattern of the television programme.

The pleasure derived from the evening's performance was amply demonstrated by the most appreciative audience with long, loud applause and shouts of "encore"! An unforgettable evening for one unsuspecting, but grateful chorister – Norman Anthony Martin.

Saturday May 27th

Village Green, Little Ditchling, Sussex

Ditchling is a beautiful little English village with a large village green below a quaint church and village hall. Famous residents include Donald Sinden and Dame Vera Lynn no less. The audience for tonight's concert numbered over 700 and with £5 entry fee in aid of the British Legion, a great deal of money was raised. The audience arrived armed with their own deck chairs so they could sit comfortably in the evening sun and enjoy the show.

Master of Ceremonies for this evening was the flamboyant Bob Mayston (whose family originate from the village) who announced Huw Wade's (1T) birthday and Paul Brabham's (2B) wedding anniversary to the enthusiastic audience. It was also the first engagement of Andrew Costin (2T).

The concert began with a performance by the Jolly Roger Big Band who played big band and Glenn Miller-style music of the war period. Community singing of war tunes was close to follow! The Choir gathered in the small village hall near the green for a large buffet and a cup of tea served by Dame Vera and her daughter! She was certainly kept busy clearing up after the choristers! Along with her husband and other members of the family she sat in the front row of the audience for the show.

With the sun shining and amongst these picturesque surroundings the Choir walked onto the green, stood on a small banking with Marion sat behind them on the keyboard. From the first note under John Jenkins, the audience was enthralled, many of whom rewarded the performance with a standing ovation. Marion's keyboard broken down but was soon repaired while Roger "Lucky" Morse avoided a message from a low flying pigeon! The songs performed were "Soldier's Chorus", "Speed Your Journey", "Roman War Song", "Gwahoddiad", "Unwaith Eto", "Myfanwy",

“Cwm Rhondda”, “Cyfri’r Geifr”, “A Valley Called The Rhondda”, “Send in the Clowns” and “Softly As I Leave You”. Dame Vera and others were deeply moved by the Mike Sammes arrangement of “For the Fallen” and was quick to join the singing of “We’ll Keep A Welcome”. She followed the Choir back to the hall and congratulated them all individually, posing for photographs, signing autographs and chatting amongst the crowd. A delightful lady, she was obviously impressed by the Choir and received a Choir tape and CD from John Jenkins and a copy of “Excelsior” from Dean Powell. Let’s hope it isn’t long before “we meet again”!

At 9pm the Choir followed Bob Mayston back to the green for the grand finale. The Choir performed “Nw York” with the band, complete with swinging of arms and kicking of legs with the crowd. The evening concluded with a combined “Land of Hope and Glory” A very happy and successful engagement.

Sunday May 28th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

At 4pm choristers gathered at the Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy. Cory Band was on stage and the Choir was in the stalls. After five rehearsals, the local producer Dewi Morris had the thrill of telling the Choir and Band that they had to wait until 6.45pm before we could record. Under the conductorship of John Jenkins “Cwm Rhondda” was sung for the “One Voice” programme which was broadcast at 101.15 on BBC Radio 4 introduced by Richard Baker. This was done in one take and could be heard on loud speakers in Birmingham Town Hall where the programme was being recorded.

JUNE

Thursday June 8th

St Mary Priory, Abergavenny

The Choir returned to Abergavenny to perform in the 900-year-old Priory of St Mary’s. The artist was Timothy Richards, a music student in Manchester University who pleased everyone with his splendid renderings and his pleasant tenor voice. The proceeds were in aid of building a new Church Hall, and the fund received a substantial boost with the presence of a capacity audience.

Wednesday June 14th

Queen Street, Cardiff

Through the good offices of the Western Mail, Dean Powell organised for a representation of the Choir to welcome the famous American rock band Bon Jovi to Wales. This promotion took place in the bandstand at Queen Street, Cardiff where several thousand people gathered to hear the performance.

Saturday June 17th

Civic Hall, Bedworth

A splendid buffet welcomed the Choir at this favourite venue before the concert commenced at 7.15pm. The reception received at the finale proved that yet another successful and enjoyable concert had been performed. The concert finished at 9.15pm and after a pleasant interlude in the Liberal Club the early bus left for home while the other travelled to the Royal Oak in Coventry.

JULY

Monday July 10th

The Choir suffered another sad loss with the death of Ken Thomas (1B)> He had borne his illness with fortitude and courage which was admired by all who knew him. On Thursday 13th the choristers paid their last respects at Glyntaff Crematorium. Many current and former choristers attended and “Arglwydd Mae Yn Nosi” was sung in final tribute to him.

Saturday July 15th & Sunday 16th

Norwich Cathedral

The buses left Treorchy at 9am for a return visit to Norwich Cathedral. They stopped at Aust Services to pick up Brian Bates before reaching the Cathedral (after a break in Reading) at 5.30pm. After a short rehearsal the choristers went to their accommodation for the night – East Anglia University. A hurried and confusing period ensued as they struggled to get keys, find rooms, change and return to the buses for a quick trip back to the Cathedral in time for the concert. It will be remembered that the Concert in 1988 was the last for Jennifer Jones as Accompanist. In such a magnificent venue with a capacity audience, the concert was another outstanding success. “Cavatina” was given its first public performance. Tonight’s charity, the Malcolm Sarjent Cancer Fund for Children, received a considerable financial boost. After the concert a hot meal was served and the choristers returned to their “digs” for 1am. On Sunday morning, the buses returned home, with one stopping once more at the Royal Oak in Coventry for a refreshing afternoon/

SEPTEMBER

Saturday September 9th

Queen’s Theatre, Barnstaple

The Choir’s first visit to Barnstaple was thwarted with problems. The buses, National Express, were over an hour late and at Cardiff Mair Robert said she was too ill to travel. Finally the buses reached the venue for 7pm and despite the loss of a soloist, John Jenkins carried out extra duties with great panache and had the audience in the palm of his hand with his stories, anecdotes and amusing manner. The choristers met all the difficulties and gave a performance that had the audience delighted and asking for more. The first engagement in Barnstaple proved an outstanding success. Afterwards a buffer was available at the Police Club where a plaque was presented to the Choir.

Sunday September 17th

A representation of the Choir contributed to the Rhondda NHS Trust Hospital Service in Bethany Chapel, Treherbert

Saturday September 23rd

Civic Hall, Guildford

Leaving Treorchy at 2pm the Choir made its second visit to Guildford Civic Hall. The concert started at 7.30pm and with Mair returning in a healthy condition, Marion being spoilt with a splendid piano, the “Treorchy Team” rose to the occasion, with a very enjoyable performance. It was pleasing to see such a large audience as the

proceeds were in aid of the Wessex Children's Hospice. The engagement was organised by Guildford Rotary Club. Afterwards the choristers enjoyed the large pasties served at Guildford Rugby Club!

Friday September 29th

Cardiff International Arena

The Choir returned to the CIA to perform at an Insurance Broker's Dinner. The buses left at 7pm and after some light refreshments, the Choir sang from 10.10pm to 10.35pm before returning home.

OCTOBER

Friday October 6th

Margam Park

With the first visit to Margam Park, the Choir returned to the world of television. Leaving Treorchy at 3.45pm, they arrived for a short rehearsal and buffet, but were told they wouldn't be required again until 10pm! It was a very wet day and conditions were muddy and uncomfortable, but the marquee where the filming took place as an Aladdin's cave! The revolving stage, festooned in Christmas decorations, fairy lights, colour lights, modern technical equipment, audience seating etc. all contributed to a memorable recording of the S4C television programme "Codi'r To" which will be transmitted at Christmas. To fill in the long wait choristers sat with the audience or visited a local hostelry. Amongst the many talented artists were Ray Gravell, Llandaff Singers, Cantable, West Glamorgan School Band and Nantgarw Dances. Owing to the lateness of finishing, the choristers left at 10.35pm.

Thursday October 19th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The 14th Annual Concert saw the first appearance of Heather James as Assistant Accompanist. The artists were Timothy Richards (tenor) and Martyn Parkes (accompanist) who impressed the choristers when they performed in Abergavenny. He was also the soloist the Choir's new items – "Cartref" and "Once Voice".

Friday October 27th

Worcester Cathedral

After a period of 15 years the Choir returned to Worcester Cathedral. The concert was organised by the Acorns Childrens' Hospice and it was gratifying to see a full cathedral. Heather James made her first appearance as accompanist for a full concert. Dean Powell made his debut as soloist in "Cartref" and "Once Voice". In such inspiring surroundings, with superb acoustics, the performance was an enjoyable and successful one as displayed by the enraptured audience. The late bus enjoyed the atmosphere of the Police Club.

NOVEMBER

Saturday November 4th & Sunday 5th

CTS Wembley Studios, London

After a decade the Choir returned to the CTS Wembley Studios in London. There was an excellent meal provided in the restaurant and the choristers assembled in the

recording studio to be welcomed by Gordon Lorenz. The Chairman, Meurig Hughes, addressed the Choir, stating the significance of this recording which was being made to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Choir. The album, "Fifty Golden Years of Song" was named by Dean Powell. The recording started at 1.20pm and finished at 5.50pm with the coaches transporting the choristers to the Hilton Hotel in Watford. An enjoyable evening as shared by all. On the following morning the recording recommenced at 10am and was finished by 1pm. With thanks all round for a job well done, the buses left at 2pm. A memorable experience for new choristers Derek Langley, John Weaver, Terry Coulthard and David Williams.

Friday November 10th

Gloucester Cathedral

Leaving home at 4.30pm, the Choir returned to Gloucester Cathedral, the fourth cathedral the Choir has performed in this year. Proceeds from the concert were in aid of the Sue Ryder Homes and the charity greatly benefited from the full house. For the first time the Choir shared the stage with the Flowers Band and to conduct "Roman War Song", Mr Jenkins used the baton that conducted the original Choir in the Queen Victoria Concert in Windsor a century ago on November 29th 1895. the excellent concert finished at 10pm with a buffet at the Flowers Band Social Club.

JUNE

Saturday December 3rd

Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

The Choir returned to the Brangwyn Hall to perform in a concert with the Welsh Philharmonic Orchestra. It was a "Jenkins" night as the orchestra was conducted by John and his wife Wendy played in it. It was pleasing to see Jenny Jones playing the harp also!