

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



BRIEF HISTORY 1996

By Norman Martin
Registrar & Honorary Archivist

JANUARY

Monday January 15th

A very sad beginning to the new year with the death of Mal Johnson. The choristers will remember his desperate dash home from California Tour in October 1994 to receive the news of his wife's serious condition. Unfortunately she died before he reached the hospital. Soon his health began to fail and after a short period of time following an operation he died. Mal was one of the old guard of the Choir who joined in 1956 and became a Long Service Member in 1977, thus giving 40 years invaluable contribution to the success of the Choir.

Thursday January 18th

St David Church, Tonyrefail

For the first concert of the year the Choir returned, after a period of 12 years, to Tonyrefail. A memorable night for Derek Langley (2T) and Terry Coulthard (1B) who made their concert debut. Katherine Acrmon and Nicola Ridley were the delightful artists. "Arglwydd Mae Yn Nosi" was sung in memory of Mal Johnson.

Saturday January 20th

Mal was put to peaceful rest at Llwydcoed Crematorium. The splendid attendance of choristers, past and presents, including John Cynan Jones, along with friends, work colleagues, showed the popularity of Mal. Peter Jones, Gareth Evans and Gwyn Phillips were the bearers and "Llef", "Gwahoddiad" and "Arglwydd Mae Yn Nosi" were sung as the choristers said their last farewells to him.

FEBRUARY

Saturday February 24th

Parr Hall, Warrington

The Choir paid its third visit to the Parr Hall, Warrington. As this engagement was an "up and down" one, so to eliminate the driver's break, two extra drivers were booked. The buses arrived at the Town Hall for 4.20pm and were welcomed by Deputy Mayoress Mrs Roblings. After a buffet was served, Vice Chairman Gareth Evans responded. The concert was memorable for John Weaver (1T) and David Williams (1B) who made their initial stage appearance. Also the Choir gave its first performance of "Portrait of My Love" and "Pan Fo'r Nos Yn Hir". The choristers were saddened to hear of the death of Edward Owen's wife and "Cavatina" was performed in memory of her. The concert was most successful musically as the audience reaction amply displayed. It was also a success financially as evident from the presence of a capacity audience, which resulted in the funds of the St Rocco Hospice being greatly enhanced. An added benefit was that the concert was being broadcast to the local hospital.

MARCH

Friday March 1st

Grand Theatre, Swansea

On this St David's Day the Choir travelled to Swansea to contribute to the radio broadcast "Friday Night Is Music Night". The programme was transmitted from the

Grand Theatre, where incidentally the Choir was performing for the very first time. Leaving Treorchy at 3.30pm, the ensuring rehearsal with the BBC Concert Orchestra finished at 6.40pm and the broadcast began at 7.30pm. The artists taking part were the Orchestra under the conductorship of Robin Stapleton, Beverly Humphreys and Jason Hoard and the Master of Ceremonies was Robin Boyle. At the end of the broadcast there was a satisfying feeling that another media programme was a tremendous success. It is interesting to note that the last time the choristers were present on “Friday Night is Music Night” was in May 1963 in Cardiff.

Wednesday March 3rd

In the Tremains Hotel, Cwmparc, a limited number of choristers appeared in the broadcast of the “Iechyd Da” programme.

Monday March 11th

Rhondda Heritage Park, Trehafod

The Choir returned to the cameras once more with a television broadcast for the “Gwahoddiad” series. It was filmed in the Rhondda Heritage Park Museum in Trehafod in cold, wet and miserable weather conditions. Filming commenced at 7.45pm and was concluded by 9pm. Such was the climatic conditions that the producer, fully appreciating the choristers concern at singing in such dismal weather, sent a message that if the Choir didn’t want to continue then he understood. As always in the face of adversity the unanimous verdict was to carry on! When the choristers fathered for this song, the indomitable spirit shone forth as they spontaneously burst into “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” and “Singing in the Rain”. The programme ended with cold, wet but cheerful choristers dashing home for a hot bath!

Thursday March 14th

Haberdasher’s School for Girls, Monmouth

The Choir returned to the Haberdasher’s School to give a concert for the same organisers as previously – the 1st Wyesham Scout Group. The venue, organisers and the Choir were all the same as the last time, although the musical staff had changed. On this occasion it was Andrew Badham and Marion Williams. During the programme, as a mark of deepest sympathy to the people of Dunblane, Scotland where 16 children and teacher were shot yesterday, the Choir sang “The Lord’s Prayer” which was followed by a moving silence. The concert was a musical and financial success as the scoutmaster announced the proceeds were around £2,000.

Tuesday March 19th

At the Annual General Meeting Daryl Stacey was elected Assistant Secretary

APRIL

Saturday April 27th

Octagon Theatre, Yeovil

On the first visit to Yeovil, the Choir sang at the Octagon Theatre. The venue was a cosy, intimate place. Mair Roberts returned as artists. Despite the “flat staging” of the Choir, the response from the large audience left no doubt that the performance was thoroughly enjoyed and that the first visit here had won new admirers. During the concert the founder members, Haydn Erasmus and Cliburn Willis, were introduced to the audience and “Portrait of My Love” was performed to celebrate the 50th wedding

anniversary of a couple in the audience. The late bus enjoyed the pleasures of the Fleet Air Arm Club.

Thursday April 30th

It was announced at tonight's rehearsal that Alun Hughes had left the Choir £1,000 in his Will

MAY

Saturday May 4th

Central Methodist Church Hall, Paulton

Owing to the illness of John Jenkins, Andrew Badham conducted the Choir for its first visit to Paulton in Somerset. The rehearsal was held in the local church while the concert was performed at the Central Methodist Church Hall. Another "hiccup" was the fact that Mair was unable to appear and with Mr Badham fully occupied with the Choir, Meurig Hughes (Chairman) acted as Master of Ceremonies. Despite all the problems the concert was a total success as demonstrated by the response to the evening's performance by the satisfied audience.

Saturday May 18th

Royal Forest of Dean College, Coleford

The Choir returned to the College to assist with fundraising for the Betty Meredith Laser Fund. The concert started at 7.30pm and despite the fact the John Jenkins was unable to attend the last four rehearsals, the performance maintained the standard of Treorchy, to the delight of the capacity audience. The concert was full of pleasant instances. The Conductor announced the 81st birthday of Ivy Brown and "Happy Birthday" was sung to her. At the end of the concert the flower arrangements on stage were auctioned and Lyn Feldon (1T) won the £20 bid for them, which he presented to Ivy! Eric Morgan was welcomed back following his serious operation and "A Valley Called The Rhondda" was performed for him.

Thursday May 23rd

Leisure Centre, Newport

Returning to the Leisure Centre after nine years the Choir assisted at the Chernobyl Children's Fund. With an audience of 1,000 the fund received a considerable boost. There was no artist and the evening's proceedings were admirably organised by the Master of Ceremonies – John Jenkins. The value of discipline and training was shown in the concert. The accompanist was Heather James and Wendy Jenkins was "page turner". During "March of the Peers" she inadvertently turned two pages, leaving the Conductor and Choir waiting for the entry that had long gone. Here the discipline showed as no choristers attempted to "come in" and the item finished with the longest piano ending ever of this song. Very few, if any of the audience, noticed!

JUNE

Friday June 7th

St Mary's Church, Usk

The concert was held to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the church. This was the third visit to this venue and as previously, it was full. The arrival of the Choir was

greeted with a thunder storm and the response to the evening's performance was electrifying! The Mayoress thanked the Choir, in Welsh, and with the presentation of bouquets the concert concluded at 9.30pm. One bus left at 9.45pm while the other re-visited a hostelry near Risca

Saturday June 15th

The Guildhall, Axminster

Paying its first visit to Axminster, the Choir performed at the Guildhall on this lovely sunny day. Following a splendid buffet, the concert commenced at 7.30pm. Owing to holidays and illness the Choir was restricted in number, but those that were there rose to the challenge, and gave the most appreciative capacity audience a rewarding performance. The concert was held in aid of the Flamingo Swimming Pool.

Saturday 29th & Sunday June 30th

Embassy Theatre, Skegness

Returning to Skengess, the Choir made a break at the Maypole in Birmingham before reaching the Embassy Theatre at 5pm. After a short rehearsal and excellent buffet, the choristers were taken to the Serena Hotel, Sea Croft Hotel or the Maryland Hotel before returning to the venue for the 7.30pm start. As in 1993 the same organisers – East Lincolnshire Arts Promotions – organised the event. The Choir received a tremendous reception from the enthralled audience. They were pleased to renew the acquaintance of Ros Evans who was the artists in Treorchy in 1993. In the post-concert reception at the Embassy bar old friends were met and new ones were made. On the following day the buses left for Skegness at 9.40am, with one going straight home and the other visiting the Royal Oak in Coventry.

JULY

Thursday July 11th

St George's Church, Cwmparc

In celebration of its centenary the Choir returned to St George's Church, Cwmparc. Ten years ago the Choir was privileged to perform at its 90th anniversary celebrations! It was an extra enjoyment to the choristers as the organist was John Cynan Jones, Conductor Emeritus. "Gwahoddiad" was sung in memory of Reg Coates, the instigator of the Greathouse, Chippenham, for many years.

Saturday July 13th

Victoria Church, Weston-Super-Mare

The Choir paid its third visit to Victoria Church in celebration of its 60th anniversary. The concert started at 7.30pm and it was pleasing to see President Cliff Taylor in the audience. Owing to ill health he has been unable to take an active role in the Choir activities for some considerable time. John Jenkins paid tribute to him for all of his contributions to the success of the Choir and "Myfanwy" was dedicated to him. There was also a 91-year-old man who had sung in the pre-war Choir when he was 16 and "Happy Birthday" was sung to the delighted Bob Griffiths. Before such an enthusiastic, in such a wonderful acoustical church, the concert was a huge success musically and financially with a considerable contribution to the British Diabetic Association Weston-Super-Mare Branch. The late bus enjoyed a convivial time at Weston Rugby Club.

Wednesday July 17th

St David's Hall, Cardiff

Combining with the Cwmbach Male Choir once again, the massed voices performed in the Welsh Proms "Opera Night" at St David's Hall. The Choir rehearsed until 5.45pm before the Concert which featured two excellent artists, Susan Bullock (soprano) and Arthur Davies (tenor). This was before a full house. The stage was shared with the Halle Orchestra and the entire proceedings were conducted by Owain Arwel Hughes, making for a rip-roaring success of a night. Following the concert the late bus enjoyed the welcome of Canton Rugby Club.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday September 21st

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

This was the first appearance here and with such a fine venue and "full house" audience, the scene was set for a memorable night. Ros Evans, the excellent soprano, joined the Treorchy Team for another successful debut performance, winning new friends and admirers. The concert concluded at 10.10pm and both buses enjoyed an excellent buffet at Leamington Spa Rugby Club.

OCTOBER

Thursday October 10th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

The 15th Annual Concert was the first engagement in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the reformed Treorchy Male Choir. Tonight's artists were the Treorchy Comprehensive School Orchestra with Conductor Philip Hier. The stage was full with 60 instrumentalists in the orchestra, a large Choir and a full audience in the auditorium. Their expectancy was fulfilled as it was a thrilling performance. John Jenkins set the scene by reminiscing about the Choir's progress and dedications to the two previous conductors, John Haydn Davies and John Cynan Jones. Messages of "good wishes" were made from notable people. The two founder members, Cliburn Willis and Haydn Erasmus were presented with a suitable engraved gold wristwatch in appreciation of their 50 years service in the progression of the Choir. This pleasant incident was tinged with sadness, as it was the last engagement of Cli before he moves to Milton Keynes. This happy evening finished with the knowledge that the anniversary year had commenced with a splendid effect.

Sunday October 20th

Brangwyn Hall, Swansea

On the day of incessant rain, the Choir travelled to Brangwyn Hall for a concert to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Reformation of Treorchy Male Choir. Fellow artists were Jason Howard, Ros Evans, West Glamorgan Youth Brass Band and conductor Andrew George. This was a prestigious event, organised by John Jenkins and sponsored by Barclays Bank and the capacity audience treated each item with tremendous appreciation. A happy atmosphere pervaded the hall, with a large banner announcing the anniversary. The proceedings were admirably and amusingly compered by Roy Noble of the BBC. During the interval photographs were taken of choristers in

groups for the Daily Telegraph, as organised by Dean Powell. The late bus retired to the Star Hotel in Fforestfach.

Saturday October 26th

Blundell School Hall, Tiverton

The Choir paid its first visit to Tiverton with a concert in the Blundell School. After a short rehearsal with Heather James, as John Jenkins was due to arrive late, the concert started at 7.30pm. It was obvious from the audience reaction that new friends and admirers were won over. The concert was sponsored by four local firms and the proceeds were in aid of Holberton Methodist Church.

NOVEMBER

Saturday November 9th

Cheltenham Town Hall

The concert was organised by the Lions Club of Cheltenham, with proceeds aiding the Meningitis Trust and local charities. These were greatly assisted by the presence of the capacity audience. The concert was a huge success. Timothy Richards was the tenor soloist, enhancing his reputation and brilliantly accompanied by Marion. The Choir responded splendidly to the wonderful acoustics and the audience's reception. A splendid feature of the evening was the presentation of a carved wooden spoon from the Choir to Brian Bates (Honorary Member). A memorable night for Peter Morris as he was introduced on his 58th birthday. The post engagement reception was held in the Victory Club.

Thursday November 12th

The rehearsal room was a mass of equipment to broadcast the HTV programme "Prime Time" organised by Dean Powell

Saturday 23rd & Sunday November 24th

Milton Rooms, Malton

The Choir made its first visit to Malton, north of York. Arriving at the Mount Hotel at 4.35pm, the choristers went to a variety of hotels before returning for a short rehearsal in the venue. This was a small hall, accommodating only 350 people. Despite the long bus journey, the choristers rose to the challenge and the performance won over many new admirers as displayed by their very warm reception. The concert was organised by the Malton and Morton Arts Council in celebration of their 21st anniversary. On the following morning the Choir left Malton at 9.45am, through cold, snowy weather. The late bus tarried-a-while in Worcester. Regardless of the cold weather, long journey and difficulties of accommodation, the warm and generous reception given to the choristers made a most enjoyable weekend in this fascinating old market town.

DECEMBER

Saturday December 14th

Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

For the fourth time in three years the Choir appeared in the Park & Dare Theatre in support of the Rhondda Boys Club. Sharing the stage were Cory Band, Sera Evans, Ysgol Gymraeg Ynyswen and Spotlight Theatre.

Sunday December 22nd

Cardiff Castle

Leaving home a 9.30am, the Choir reached the Banquet Hall of Cardiff Castle to record a radio programme for broadcasting on Christmas Morning on BBC Radio 2. In such splendid surroundings Su Pollard and Don Maclean largely contributed to the very pleasant atmosphere. The recording passed smoothly and quickly on its merry way. A special day for Jack Knapgate who was celebrating his Golden Wedding Anniversary. Also for Gary Horgan, Alan Bowen and Ray Tippett, who made their engagement debut.