

TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



TOUR OF AUSTRALIA 1999

By Dean Powell, Publicity Officer
& Honorary Archivist

ADVANCE, AUSTRALIA FAIR

Sunday October 31

Emotions ran high as the Choir departed the sunny streets of Treherbert at 2.15pm on this bright, but rather chilly day. Emotions of excitement and maybe slight apprehension, and, by the looks of the many faces of those people kind enough to line the streets to wave goodbye, a tearful farewell from many of the wives. Groups of friends and relatives bid adieu on valley street corners and front garden steps, realising the Choir was spreading the good name of the Rhondda and Wales to a far off land. In Ystrad, former chorister Keith Thomas ran from the Greenfield Pub armed with pints of beer for the boys. In Llwynypia good old George Jacob, denied the opportunity to accompany us after suffering a fractured hip, waved his walking sticks and wished them well, with the boys rushing off the bus to see how he was.

After a short stop at the old Severn Bridge Service Station where Brian Bates, our Il Presidente as he was so-nicknamed, and by the end of the tour a dignified salute was even created for his arrival in the room! So the 57 choristers and three music staff eventually reached London Heathrow Airport, with a slight delay for the “Deacons” after their bus broke down and they were forced to await the arrival of a new coach.

A few drinks in the departure lounge, although all in moderation remembering Andrew Badham’s warnings of water-only drinks and early nights, helped choristers relax before the long journey to the other side of the world. Take-off time was drawing near, so a quick pint, phonecalls and a dash through Duty Free by 10.30pm to board the Air Malaysia 747 jet bound for Kuala Lumpur.

The flight took the Choir over destinations many had dreamed of visiting, including Moscow, Calcutta, Singapore and a what seemed like a stone-throw distance from the plateau of Tibet’s Mount Everest. At 9.45am the Choir arrived in Kuala Lumpur’s impressive international airport. Although slightly more sophisticated in its interior, the same shopping, eating and drinking venues found in KL were nothing new to any other airport the world over! Choristers resigned themselves to the £5 a pint tariff and wished Dennis Lethbridge a happy birthday as he produced the remainder of his cake! Three pints later and a decision was made that Joe Harris – once known as American Jo – was now renamed Australian Joey!

Soon enough it was time to re-board the jet and head for Wales, New South Wales that is in the heat of the Australian summer. At 7.45am Australian time, after more than 24 hours of constant traveling, the plane landed in Melbourne International Airport and it was time for mezzo-soprano Helen May and Publicity Officer Dean Powell to say their fond farewells. They were booked for a full two-day schedule of publicity engagements to help advertise the remainder of the tour, before reuniting with the boys. Two hours later and the Choir arrived in Sydney. Following a 13 year absence, the Treorchy Male Choir returned to the beautiful Australian city where they were welcomed by Honorary Member Doug Firstbrook and Concert Promoter Mario Maiolo. On

Arrival at the Koala Oxford Hotel on Oxford Street, choristers headed to the Brighton Bar for late-night drinks and celebration.

Wednesday November 3

A free day was enjoyed by choristers around the city of Sydney. Many headed immediately for the Harbour, taking in the breathtaking views of the Opera House, Bridge and maybe taking one of the ferries to the beach resort of Manly. In the evening Helen May and Dean Powell were reunited with the choristers at the Brighton Bar, popular watering hole for the Sydney-stay.

Thursday November 4

Jet lag is still affecting us all. Wide awake one minute, desperately tired in the middle of the day the next. This bizarre feeling was obviously going to create difficulties for us on the concert stage. For the day ahead, many of the choristers continued their sightseeing of the city. With heads turned skyward, admiring the multi-storey buildings, churches, memorials and banks, coupled with museums, court houses and fountains galore.

Later in the afternoon, the Choir travelled to Panther Evan Theatre in Penrith for an appalling rehearsal and then headed for the bar where choristers took Andrew's good advice and drank copious amounts of water. Such a well-behaved group of men! Sadly the venue itself was not up to the standard expected. Loud air conditioning, poor acoustics, jet-lag and a lack of the Welsh items a multitude of exiles wanted to hear, had a profound affect on the performance. What was performed was well received and even encores were called for by the 600 or more audience.

Friday November 5

At 2pm choristers were on their way, travelling on the choir coach across the impressive Sydney Harbour Bridge. Stuart Hill, better known as "Captain Clec" donned the microphone headset – looking like a Madonna video drop-out – and announced the first part of the Idiot Awards – now renamed the Billabongs for that extra Australian feel! The awards were presented in categories of "Mentions in Dispatches", "Bronze", "Silver" and "Gold" to those choristers or music staff who had literally done or said something "twp" on tour.

Stopping for half-an-hour in Woy Woy for refreshments, the Choir passed through the most beautiful scenery of deep blue lakes, lush green forests, mountains, gorgeous harbours and water-side villages. Town names like Swansea and Cardiff caused a few laughs before they reached the predominantly coal mining area of Newcastle at 5pm. The Civic Theatre was beautiful in its 'old tyme music hall' interior with red velvet seats, gold pillars and balconies and a chandelier Claude Rains would have been in his element hanging from in full Phantom regalia. After a brief rehearsal choristers made their way to the nearby Toohey's Bar for a few drinks, before returning to the venue for the concert.

More than a thousand people crammed into the auditorium, armed with tissues for the tears that flowed everywhere! The Choir performed

magnificently, what a completely different sound from last night. What a 'lift' they had by the response to it all. *Deep Harmony*, *Myfanwy* and *Sanctus* went well with the lighter arrangements receiving their just rewards. But nothing prepared them for the response they received for the Choir and Dean Powell's performance of *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl*. The crowd was ecstatic, resulting in three bows for the whistling and screaming admirers.

The choristers were on "top form" in the theatre bar afterwards as the schooners or pots of VB were passed around, while others raised their glasses of Chardonnay! Returned to Sydney by 1am and off to the Brighton Bar for a celebratory evening

Saturday November 6

With a free day many of the choristers started off in Aristotles Café for a full breakfast and then walked to the Sydney Amp Tower – which at 305m is the tallest building in Australia with commanding views of miles around. Many took an elevator to the very top of the observation centre, strolling around to take pictures, look through the telescopes and even see which chorister was swimming in the rooftop pool of the Koala Oxford!

The evening concert was held in the magnificent Sydney State Theatre – what a superb venue with its mix of empire-styles and gothic, Italian and Art-Deco elements. Pavarotti was in town on the same night, performing in the nearby Sydney Stadium. Andrew was not best pleased with *Send in the Clowns* and has decided to drop the song, probably for the rest of the tour along with *Impossible Dream* which isn't sounding its best. Everything else went to plan and after a few 'top and tail' run throughs, choristers were free to go on their way. The evening the concert, before a crowd of 1,400 people, was a great success with some beautifully controlled singing. The audience seemed less responsive than last night, but encores were still called for. *Kwmbayah* and *Crusaders Chorus* were particularly good, although some of the more robust items lacked a little power – probably due to the after affects of jet lag. Following the performance they headed for a nearby university pub as guests of the Sydney Music College Students. Choristers also took the opportunity to meet veterans of the last Australian tour in Linde McPherson, Brian Anstee and Jim Kelso.

After enjoying a few drinks in the beer garden, and sticking firmly to the rule of no singing after concerts, choristers returned to Sydney to sample the Brighton Bar on the big night of the Rugby World Cup – the final between Australia and New Zealand. The Ozzie boys won the day and choristers finally got to bed at 6am!

Sunday November 7

Choristers caught taxis to the famous sands of Bondi Beach once they had arisen from their slumber. A little too commercialised, but a very relaxed surfers-beach with plenty of street cafes, quaint shops and local performers entertaining the passers-by. Many enjoyed a few drinks on the sand and even an ice cream in the sun as they listened to the hilarity of an Irish guitarist-

come-comic entertaining a huge crowd. He even stopped the traffic – by literally standing in front of the cars, hurling abuse and strumming away!

Choristers headed back by 1pm for a swim in the rooftop pool, commanding some impressive 13-storey-high views of the city. The evening was free to enjoy, with some having food in Aristotles before more drinks in the Brighton Bar.

Monday November 8

Waving goodbye to Sydney, choristers moved along with Greg the driver, the slowest on the road no doubt, taking them through the luscious scenery – which, at points looked like a sunny day in Brecon, so no wonder its called New South Wales! While listening to the new choir CD they saw Linde McPherson pass us by in her car, with Welsh flags flying out of the windows!

Stuart took control to announce the awards before finally arriving at the Woollongong Sovereign Motel which looked more like a ranch, typical of the colonial look of so many Australian towns. After dropping off their cases members headed for the nearby Fig Tree Pub for a few drinks and a great afternoon of fun and laughter. The best of the lot was Dai Coleman auctioning a meat pie to Keith Owens for twice its value, then Ron Green finding the Sydney Hotel key in his pocket. Avoiding the torrential rain, they rested for a while, changed by 4pm and were back on the buses!

The atmosphere on the trip is fantastic and after just a week the excitement is as upbeat as ever, with plenty of fun 24-hours a day. Smiles, laughter and sheer enjoyment, mickey-taking, leg pulling and general good humour unites this choir as much as the music itself. All helped by the back of the bus boys and their constant impersonations of sheep – with Tom Jones' lamb causing an uproar every time.

Heading for the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre, a modern venue with 600 tickets sold in advance, they rehearsed briefly, all noticing how dry it was on stage. They ended up in the local Ex-Services Club for a delicious meal and a few glasses of water. These establishments are so unlike the ex-serviceman's clubs back home, with huge restaurants, lounges, bars and lavish casinos in every one.

Catching a taxi back to the concert hall, avoiding the heavy rain, the performance began at 8pm for the predominantly Welsh audience. *Myfanwy* went down an absolute treat. *Speed Your Journey* and the theme tune from *Titanic* was good too. Choristers all stood terrified when *Crossing the Plain* was about to begin and Andrew suddenly walked off stage. They stood and waited, and waited, wondering whether he had collapsed off stage. A call from the audience of "You're worth the wait boyo", relieved the tense choristers on stage. Then, gripping the podium for support, a pale-faced Andrew returned, managing to conduct the whole piece through. Afterwards they learned that it was due to jet-lag, and a feeling of the room spinning around him, a frightening experience no doubt. Returning to the Fig Tree pub for a few

drinks and laughs with the music staff, the joke stuck that Andrew had jet lag while Crossing the *PLANE!*

Tuesday November 9

Breakfast was served and they were out of the hotel by 8am, with the owner of the Sovereign Motel coming on board to wish them well. As she left and the doors closed, Alun Lewis called out: "Yeah, thanks love. Do you want your cockroaches back?"

Choristers slept soundly for a while before reaching an out-of-the-way roadhouse for a sandwich, then it was back on the road again. Sleep overtook many until they reached Marrundi for a stop of "one half of one hour", as Greg kept telling them in no uncertain terms.

After a long 10 hours drive they eventually reached the cold climates of Armidale, stopping in the luxurious Cattlemaine's Motel. What a place! Complete with indoor pool, sauna, jacuzzi bar and restaurant – how could you possibly wish for more! Settling in their rooms, changed and then headed for the multi-million dollar Ex-Services Club for a meal before settling into the bar to exchange funny stories of the trip.

Wednesday November 10

An early morning start with breakfast by the swimming pool and a walk through Armidale. Shopped, shopped and shopped, enjoying the old colonial atmosphere of the town. On reaching the Armidale Ex-Serviceman's Memorial Club Hall, choristers rehearsed a few songs and then enjoyed a meal before a performance for the capacity crowd of 550. Armidale was undoubtedly the best concert so far. The response to each item was incredible, with *Cavatina* being especially memorable and the *Crusaders Chorus* was equally as good. The audience absolutely adored *Men of Harlech* and *Click Go The Shears* had its usual ecstatic response - in fact it begins almost immediately with the funny theme tune of *The Wizard of Oz* running through the introduction! Choristers enjoyed a few more drinks in the club afterwards, with the audience applauding us until the last man left the stage. On return to the hotel they settled into the bar for a few more hours before calling it a day.

Thursday November 11

Leaving the hotel at 7.30am, the Choir headed east towards Glen Innes, a town proud of its Celtic ancestry – the Celts themselves being the largest ethnic group of people in the whole of Australia. Together the many descendants of early pioneers got together to form the Celtic Council of Australia and they decided to erect a megalithic circular standing stones – the only one of its kind in the southern hemisphere. Choristers viewed the stones, ate Welsh cakes and drank tea before singing *Deep Harmony* and *Harlech* for the very enthusiastic crowd. The event concluded following a presentation of a town plaque to the Choir by the mayor of Glen Innes.

The journey further north allowed members the opportunity to enjoy some breathtaking views of lush green fields and rolling hills. The sight of a kangaroo eluded them – a live one at least, but the area was abound with

other wildlife. After arriving in the sleepy little town of Lismore they reached our accommodation for the night – the Motor City motel. Unfortunately the sight of this run-down establishment from the outside was enough, but inside it was even more horrendous.

Promoter Mario Maiolo sent a tour manager on the road with the in the form of Bill Rowe. Known for his expertise in this field (he just finished a tour with the Rolling Stones), Bill was a true professional in every sense of the word. Schedules were pinned up in every hotel, noting what time to leave, arrival, outfit – the lot! Bill was not impressed with this hotel, in fact he was furious and refused to allow choristers to stay. So after 30 minutes of reorganisation they were transported to two neighbouring hotels, the Centrepoint and Kalinga.

It was a short walk to the city hall for a reception with the mayor of the city, some food, and the opportunity to listen to a local singer / guitarist perform. Then it was a rush back to the hotel to change and return to the hall to sample some of the exquisite champagne before the evening concert with a capacity crowd of 1,000 people. Many others offered to pay for 'standing room' only apparently, but were refused entry at the door.

The concert was a great success. Every item received massive applause and there were plenty of giggles after *Ole Time Religion* and *Click Go The Shears* to boot! Once again *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl*, brought the house down and received the best applause of the night – a fact which reoccurred on several occasions during the tour. Choristers met the audience afterwards and then visited the Maggie Moone Bar for a celebration drink with all the music staff. A great event.

Friday November 12

A steak breakfast greeted the Choir. Followed by a bus ride further north along the coast reaching the stunning gold coast and deep blue sea and white sands of Surfer's Paradise. The Choir stopped in Tweed Heads during the journey, all rushing to the beach for picture-taking and a light lunch in one of the many beach-side cafes. It really is an incredible place – paradise found! Leaving the tropics they travelled to the luxurious Isle of Palms, a village of 150 houses on a tropical island in the middle of the Gold Coast with beautiful views of the beach nearby. Each house is designed to accommodate five people in the three bedrooms with two bathrooms, a kitchen, lounge, dining room, garage, verandahs, patio and a private part of the stingray-infested (maybe sharks too!) beach. Oh, what a wonderful place!

The Choir travelled the two-hour journey up the coast to the stunning bright lights of the big city of Brisbane, we they arrived at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre. This astonishing concert hall, which sat a capacity crowd of 2,300 people – with some of the seats being behind the choir! – was sold out weeks in advance. Rehearsal went well and following a meal in the green room before enjoying a glass of champagne in the theatre foyer.

The choristers were on a high, but as they stepped onto the stage to take their places before this mighty crowd of smiling faces, some waving Welsh flags high in the air, there was certainly an air of nervousness about the ranks. With a sight as awesome as this, it's no wonder. It was simply amazing.

March of the Peers, Speed Your Journey, Crossing the Plain and *Steal Away* all received an excellent response, while *Click Go The Shears* provided an unforgettable ending to the first half. The Welsh selection, such as *Myfanwy* and *Gwahoddiad* obviously hit the high spots, but nothing prepared them for *My Way* – wonderful. Coming towards the end of the programme Andrew announced *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl*. The applause was simply awesome. Choristers left the stage safe in the knowledge that we were the victors of Brisbane.

Saturday November 13

An early rise for choristers who wandered over to the reception for a delicious breakfast, accompanied by the island's security guard from Neath called Paul. On a sweltering hot Gold Coast day, choristers visited Carumbin Beach with its white sands and crashing waves on Elephant Rock nearby. At 5pm they made their way to the glitz and glamour of the Seagulls Club in Tweed Heads, another of those popular multi-million dollar establishments!

A crowd of 700 people crowded the plush red lounge for the concert, including Welsh comedian Stan Stennett's younger brother, Peter. The concert went very well, with the choir singing better than last night, although the atmosphere was far different of course! *Music of the Night, Cavatina* and *Titanic* were high on the list as the crowd screamed for more, which we responded too with the earth-shattering *My Way* followed by *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*.

Sunday November 14

Early rise and with great reluctance the Choir left the Isle of Palms at 9am! Travelled back south again, stopping in Yamba for lunch where they were amazed at the amount of parrots flying overhead. The weather was incredibly warm and after a long five-hour journey they reached Coffs Harbour, yet another gorgeous resort with the sun reflecting of the bobbing-boated lakes. Staying at the Big Windmill Hotel where the choristers settled in their rooms before boarding the coaches once more and headed for the town's Ex-Serviceman's Club – yet another casino / club venue – we're like a proper cabaret act these days! All 600 tickets were sold out.

Beforehand Andrew congratulated the Choir on a marvellous trip so far before the arrival of a dozen extra choristers tomorrow. Once more the concert was an outstanding success, with *Comrades in Arms, Ole Time Religion* and the hilarity of the piano-led *Click Go The Shears* receiving such mighty applause. *For the Fallen* was very touching, while *Cavatina* and *A Valley Called The Rhondda* was excellent. The Choir finished off with *Fantasia* and encoored with *My Way* – a typically wonderful response to this long-standing showstopper. Many retired to the theatre bar to hear a country and western band and drank heartily until midnight.

Monday November 15

Choristers were up for breakfast inside the windmill itself and waved goodbye to Ken Lewis (2B) who was flying home because he was unwell. Then it was back on the road again in the sweltering heat. It's just so absurd to see all Christmas decorations everywhere in the midday sun! At noon they stopped in Taree for fish and chips and then continued to make their way south. The trip ticked on with a video, a book and some music before arriving in Gosford to stop at the Ramblers Inn Motel.

They were greeted by 12 fellow choristers who arrived there that day, complete with Welsh flag hanging from the hotel balcony! A quick change and off to the Gosford Central Coast League Club to entertain the 600 capacity crowd – filled to the brim – of course! The Choir – complete with nine of the newcomers – marched on stage to a rousing applause – a taste of what was to come. The first-half highlights included *Speed Your Journey*, *Steal Away* and *Click Go The Shears*, while the second half saw magical moments in *Gwahoddiad*, *Titanic*, *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl* and *My Way* finished off the proceedings on such a high note. To respond to their shouts for encore the Choir sang *Harlech*, which resulted in such an applause that they all walked off stage and through the crowd to the bar – and they were still clapping!

Tuesday November 16

Up in time for breakfast and horrified to find it was raining outside! Eeek! Then it was on the road again, heading towards Sydney. After a brief stop in yet another of the over-crowded motorway restaurants our driver keeps going to, and the announcement of the Billabong Awards, they reached Australia's capital city of Canberra and booked into the Forest Motor Inn Motel.

Although the Canberra audiences are renowned for their 'conservative' approach, they warmed considerably towards us at the Llewellyn Hall. In fact, some of them shouted for 'more' and in Canberra terms this is considered riotous! *Crusaders Chorus* was particularly memorable tonight and *Titanic* also seemed that extra bit special. Totally enthused by the Welsh National Anthem, more so than *Advance, Australia Fair* which the Choir always starts a concert with, they left to loud applause and retired to the theatre bar to socialise with the enthusiastic audience. Returning to the hotel later in the evening, they changed and raced back to the Italiano Club next door until 3am!

Wednesday November 17

A free day in Canberra, one of the quietest cities on the earth! Many choristers enjoyed visited to the several local war museums, shopping mall or to Koala Forest and see the kangaroo and koala bear wildlife.

Thursday November 18

With another early morning start, the Choir headed to Albury, stopping at the Tuckerbox Bar enroute for food and coffee. At 2pm they reached their destination, the Green Tree Hotel in the picturesque 1930s style town of

Albury. Following the rehearsal at the Albury Performing Arts Centre, choristers visited the Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen Club for dinner. Five hundred people turned up for the big event and were somewhat subdued at the beginning, but warmed considerably by the second half. *Music of the Night*, *Titanic*, *Peers Chorus*, *Speed Your Journey*, *Steal Away* and *Ar Hyd y Nos* were definite highlights.

Friday November 19

At 10am the Choir began a short two-hour journey to Shepparton. En route Dean gave one of his many (30 in total!) live radio interviews and the choristers finished it off with a rendition of *Men of Harlech*. They reached the Park Lake Motor Inn and settled into the tranquil surroundings, complete with a luxurious indoor and outdoor pool, jacuzzi, sauna and plenty of sunbathing to be done! Later in the afternoon the Choir headed for the Town Hall with its capacity audience of 500 people. Rehearsed and popped into Paddy's Irish Bar where they enjoyed a few drinks before the performance. Once more, the concert was exceptionally good, with *Crusaders Chorus* coming out tops along with *A Valley Called the Rhondda* and *Cwm Rhondda*. Afterwards it was back to the hotel for drinks in the bar and bed by midnight.

Saturday November 20

Choristers woke up to hear the saddest of news over breakfast. Clive Spanswick's father has suddenly died, so he is now heading home, accompanied by John Mallin. On the road to Melbourne Dean was interviewed again by Welsh-speaking John Alwyn Jones about the choir's billing as "The World Greatest"! They reached the splendour of the Bayview on the Park hotel in Melbourne by about noon. Choristers walked into town to view the many statues and monuments - from giant discarded purses, to time machine and metallic men queuing for a bus along Burke Street Shops and Flinders Street.

Choristers reached the Regent Theatre by 7pm. Left derelict for almost 30 years, the interior was simply superb in typical gothic-style architecture. Choristers rehearsed, fled to the Duke of Wellington bar nearby and returned to entertain the 1,300 members of the audience in this glorious setting. The concert performance was first class, with *Gwahoddiad* emotionally performed in memory of Clive's dad. *Steal Away* was also very touching and *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl*. Of course, the lighter items went an absolute storm, but nothing prepared them for the response to *My Way*! Returned to the hotel for a celebratory drink in the bar, accompanied by founder member David Skym who now lives out here, until 1am.

Sunday November 21

Choristers were up early and went to the Victoria market, a large indoor area full of stalls selling such a massive variety of items and St Kildas harbour where they enjoyed a few drinks in the Elephant and Wheelbarrow Pub for a colossal meal! By late afternoon they boarded the coaches and headed for the Frankston Cultural Centre, a nice auditorium for the sell out audience of 700. They rehearsed and then visited Flanagan's Irish pub. Dressed in rugby

jerseys and waving Welsh flags, the audience gave the Treorchy a terrific welcome on stage and knew this would be a terrific night. And it was.

Andrew was on his usual top form and the Choir sang its heart out. The Welsh items were well received, especially *Myfanwy* and *Llef* to the tune of *Deep Harmony*. Just before *Click Go The Shears* brought the house down Dean sang *Unwaith Eto*. Now known by everyone as the choir's "Black Ace", the song went down an absolute bomb. Bonza mate!

Later they entertained the audience in the bar with plenty of conversation, especially to a family from Cwmparc who were members of Cor Meibion Awstralia.

Monday November 22

The Choir's last free day began with awful news. Gareth Evan's mother has suffered a brain hemorrhage and he is returning home. Choristers bid him a fond farewell, with wishes of good luck for his mum. For the remainder of the day there was plenty to visit in the beautiful cosmopolitan city of Melbourne – its erratic weather meaning you can literally experience all four seasons in one day!

Tuesday November 23

Up at 9am, the buses set off for the quiet town of Morwell where the Choir stayed in the Coal Valley Motor Inn. Rehearsals were held in the Kernot Hall - an excellent venue where the acoustics are concerned, then returned to the motel to change and have lunch in the Morwell Club. The venue was packed with 750 people and the response was fantastic. How else can you describe this tour but in superlatives!

March of the Peers opened on a high, while *Nabucco* was splendid. *Fantasia'* *Harlech* section was marvellous. *Click Go The Shears* went down a storm, as did *Cwm Rhondda*, *Ar Hyd Y Nos* and *Titanic*. *Cavatina* was excellent and *My Way* drove them wild, with loud applause continuing until well after the Choir had left the stage.

Wednesday November 24

A long five-hour drive was ahead until they reached the old gold-mining community of Ballaratt with its beautiful buildings and quaint streets. Drove around the area before finding the Bell Tower Motel a few miles outside.

At 5pm they returned to the town to perform in the Regent Theatre. Only 300 people were there, but it was still a great concert, starting with *Sanctus* and continuing with some really rousing pieces like *Gwahoddiad*. The second half was equally as well received with *Myfanwy*, *A Valley Called the Rhondda* and *Memory*.

Thursday November 25

Leaving Ballaratt at 9am, the tour party travelled four hours to Mount Gambier where they were accommodated in the International Hotel, a few miles from the centre of town. The evening concert was in a super hall called the Sir

Robert Helpmann Theatre with an audience of 550 people. *Titanic, Music of the Night, Ar Hyd Y Nos* and *Harlech* were great. While *Click go the Shears* was raved about and people made such a racket over *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl*. Leaving the stage as victors of Mount Gambier, they returned to the hotel for a drink in the bar and then off to bed.

Friday November 26

Leaving the hotel at 7.30am the Choir made a brief stop in Taddibein before reaching the western city of Adelaide, staying at the Chifley. The Choir visited the Parliament Buildings for a press shoot on the steps. Dressed in smart blue polo shirts and grey trousers, they really looked spectacular and sang a few songs for the 6pm News on Channel Nine!

After the rehearsal at the incredible Adelaide Festival Theatre, choristers stopped for a drink in the Earl of Aberdeen pub for a few glasses of Coolers. Nerves almost got the better of them tonight as we stood on stage - measuring at 532 square feet, making it twice the size of the Sydney Opera House, and waited for the curtain to rise. A capacity audience of 2,300 people were there in the splendid auditorium lined with chamfered mahogany blocks to enhance the acoustics. A sea of upturned faces, loud applause, screams for more, waving Welsh flags, red rugby jerseys. The atmosphere was unforgettable.

The concert opened with *Sanctus*, followed by the spiritual *My Lord What a Morning* which was exceptional and *Gwahoddiad* simply beautiful. *Crusaders Chorus* went well and *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl* which received tumultuous applause before the song ended. The second half opened with *For the Fallen*, with other highlights in *Myfanwy, Memory, A Valley Called the Rhondda* and of course, *My Way*, which just about lifted the roof of. *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* was wonderful.

Saturday November 27

At 10.30am the Choir began the journey through the beautiful vineyards of the Barosa Valley to the affluent little town of Tanunda and lunched at their local club. Choristers wandered around the street and then caught the coach to the Brenton Langbein Theatre for a somewhat rushed sound check before the 2pm afternoon performance. For the first time in the history of the theatre, all 1,000 seats were sold on this sweltering hot day. It was undoubtedly the best performance of the trip. The audience was screaming with delight before and after every song.

This was the best audience for singing *Advanced Australia Fair*, the Choir opened the programme with *March of the Peers* and the delicate, hush of *Speed Your Journey*. *Fantasia* really got them going and *Unwaith Eto'n Nghymru Annwyl* was well received. As for *Click Go The Shears* - wow! The second half was superb with *Cwm Rhondda, Myfanwy, Ar Hyd y Nos, Titanic, Music of the Night* and the fabulous *My Way*. It was soon time to go back to Adelaide. The bus broke down on the way, but they reached the hotel in time to change and return to the Festival Theatre for the second performance of the final day. More than 1,700 people were present for the second night - this

was the final performance on this wonderful tour. *Speed Your Journey* was excellent, *Gwahoddiad* and *Cwm Rhondda* too - the Welsh items always going down the storm.

Afterwards it was time for a celebratory party hosted by millionaire concert promoter Mario Maiolo, his family, friends and even the director of Air Malaysia! This was it, our victory meal to finish off the victorious tour of Australia. Mario opened the event, thanking them music staff, John Mallin and Dean Powell for their contribution to the events. Bob Griffiths also reiterated the same words, presenting Mario and Bill with choir shields. "Captain Clec" Stuart Hill presented the final Billabong Awards - the gold trophy to the man who said *My Way* was sung by Strank Finatra and *Myfanwy* was from the Operabella (instead of opera, *Arabella!*) had jet lag before "*Crossing the Plain*", tripped over before "*For the Fallen*" and forgot the title of "*Memory*" from Cats! Andrew Badham took the trophy and wore the cap to huge applause. Back at the hotel the party continued until the weary hours, Andrew hammering the piano as the Choir sang *The Dawn*, *Rhys* and everything in between!

Sunday November 28

The Choir made their last bus journey to the airport glad to leave the buses they had spent so many hours travelling 3,000 land miles on! On reaching the airport it was discovered that the Director of Air Malaysia gave the choristers a free bar as a terrific send-off for what had been a truly unforgettable tour of Australia.

The 1999 Australian Tour Billabong Awards As Collected By The Official Clec Committee of: Stuart Hill, Gareth Evans and Dean Powell

Mention in Dispatches

- **Dewi Jones** for telling everyone his dog was dead and Derek Langley said: "It's okay Dew, you can come and walk mine."
- **Dean Powell** for falling asleep in the concert in Penrith while Helen was singing solo.
- **Mike Russ** was backstage in Newcastle and saw a statue of Venus and thought it was a seal.
- **Bob Hopkins** for spending \$150 to repair the jacket he burned on hot bulbs in the dressing room in Sydney
- **Ernal Brooks** for saying he was trying to learn the words of Anthem from "Tess"
- **Mal Morgan** for sorting out the lotto money and had \$82. Someone gave him another \$2 and he said: "Okay, that's \$83 we've got then."
- **Norman Martin** was in the lift in Sydney hotel and pressing to go down – which is funny since he was in the basement at the time, so he got out and walked.
- **Mike Russ** had a shower and placed gel on his toothbrush.

- **Mal Morgan** in a Woolongong pub said: "Can anyone give me a lift back to my hut?"
- **Ceri Rees** walked into the women's toilets.
- **Mal Morgan** was looking through the bus window at a cemetery and said: "There are dead people buried there you know."
- **Bob Hopkins** said about the fields in Armidale "I'd like to walk across a horse there." Poor horse.
- **Ron Green** walked straight into the mosquito door in the Woolongong hotel.
- **Alan Lewis** watched the Discovery Channel and said: "Look at those herd of ducks."
- **Gareth Evans** walking towards the swimming pool in the hotel, dressed in swimming trunks and holding a towel and **Bob Griffiths** said: "Where you going then?"
- **Ceri Rees** said: "It goes cold when the wind goes in."
- **Alun Davies** gave some helpful advice about the poppies were wore on stage: "Put them in water to last the three concerts," he said. They were plastic.
- **Rhiannon Williams** for asking what we wear on stage. After a year she just can't remember!
- **Alun Davies** rushed off stage and went through the wrong door – right into a wall.
- **Ken Lewis** having a thick pork dinner and said: "They must have used half a lamb".
- **Alun Davies** walked into a glass door and smashed his glasses.
- **Gareth Evans** said his voice was suffering because of the "central heating" on the bus.
- **Len Gale** was dressed in his tuxedo for the concert in Tweed Heads and everyone else was in blazer and greys!
- **Mal Morgan** for pointing to a submarine in the bay in Brisbane – it was a boye!
- Dean asked **Ron Waldron** if he had seen a telephone and Ron said: "No, but Stu and Gareth are over there."
- **Paul Brabham, Mike Russ, Bob Hopkins** for swimming in a lake in the Isle of Palms which was full of stingrays.
- **Ceri Rees** said he would go for drinks in the Blue Room after the concert – it's called the Green Room!
- **Helen May** for mixing up the title of Showboat and its composer - twice.
- **Allan Bowen** for doing his washing and turning on the tumble dryer at 4.50am, then waking Leighton to ask what time it was.
- **Meurig Hughes** took his clothes off on the beach and the tide came in and washed them away.
- A member of the audience in Gosford, called **Sandy** said the hall had "great autistics."
- **Mal Morgan** for constantly sleeping on the bus.
- **Doug Firstbrook** forgot Andrew's name on stage.
- **Derek Moore** had trouble with his camera and photographic expert Geoff Howard spent 20 minutes trying to fix it – but there was no film inside.

- **Len Gale** said: "I just can't keep my eyes awake."
- **Gareth Evans** told Helen: "You sang really well tonight Heather."
- **John Mallin** said a pint of schooner in Australia costs "Two dollars and ten pence."
- **Allan Bowen** said he liked reading the pictures in books.
- **Gareth Evans** went to the doctors in Canberra after an insect bite and was told he would have to have a tetanus. He dropped his trousers and the doctor injected him in the arm.
- **Dean Powell** woke up fully clothed – shoes as well after a heavy night in Canberra.
- **Paul Brabham** for playing with a house pipe in the Shepparton Hotel Swimming Pool, the water went over a wall and splashed a man driving his car with the window down.
- **Clive Spanswick** for saying "It's only 175 kilos to Melbourne."
- **Stuart** and **Gareth** for their car impersonation while being served in a KFC drive-thru.
- **Derek Langley** washed his clothes but the tumble dryer not working, so now he has a case full of wet clothes.
- After the concert in Morwell, **John Jones** jumped on the bus and realised it was a trip for the OAPs.
- **Ken Waldin** put his coat on in a restaurant and smashed three plates full of food being carried by the waitress.
- **Dean Powell** after a member of the audience in Albury said how much she enjoyed "The little boy soprano."
- **Andrew Badham** for forgetting Rhiannon's name.
- **Mal Morgan** for buying a saucepan lid in a second-hand shop in Morwell.
- **Alwyn Lewis** for locking Dean out of the hotel in Melbourne by falling fast asleep.
- In Ballaratt **Rhiannon Williams** switched the electric piano off by mistake and was about to start My Way when – NOTHING came out!
- **Geoff Howard** slept fully dressed after a Chardonnay night.
- **Len Gale** walked into the sprinkles in a town lawn and got soaked.

Bronze Award

- Alun Lewis and **Bob Turner** were in the Sydney tower and Bob said he'd walked to Melbourne Cricket Ground that morning. Long walk.
- **Derek Langley** was told it would cost \$10 to go up the Sydney ATM Tower and asked whether that was a "return" fair!
- While in the Armidale club **Ron Green** caught a taxi back and asked for a lift to the Oxford Koala. Bloody long way – that was Sydney.
- **Lee Sprague** bought a birthday card for Ken Lewis and Allan Bowen and wrote on it before he realised it was a get well card.
- **Islwyn and Mal**. Islwyn rang his 84-year-old sister but it was 3.40am in Treorchy and he said "Oh, hello – here's our Mal for you..!"
- **Dean Powell** for beating the Morgan Brothers to the bar – TWICE!
- **Alun Davies** for saying: "Back home it's nearly Christmas."
- **Lee Sprague** for asking whether Bill Rowe was from Australia after knowing him for almost three weeks.

Silver Award

- **Keith Owens** watched *Notting Hill* on the plane and couldn't understand the words because he was switched onto the Spanish channel.
- **Alwyn Lewis** of Lewis' Laundry – went into the wardrobe, took a concert shirt, washed it and ironed it. Dean came into the room looking for his shirt – yep, Alwyn had washed his instead!
- **Eifion Evans** – playing the piano in Woolongong Performing Arts Centre after the rehearsal and the microphone was turned on. He was swearing when he got the music wrong and it was heard all over the theatre.
- **Brian Bates** did his laundry in Armidale but the launderette wasn't open in the morning so we had to leave without his clothes. They were posted on.
- **Andrew Badham** for stumbling off the podium before "For the Fallen".
- **Doug Firstbrook** for pointing 'right' and saying 'left' and visa versa
- **Allan Bowen** left his hotel key in his trainers which were in the sauna and refused to go back in to fetch it: "It's too bloody hot in there," he said.
- **Cyril Goodfield** – arriving with the second group of choristers, the boys waited for him at the agreed pick-up point in Talbot Green but he wasn't there. They rang his home and he expected to leave a day later.
- **Keith Owens** said the volume of a bottle of wine was "About four and a half glasses."
- **Andy Costin** said he wanted to see the American War Museum in Canberra – bloody long way away.
- **Mal Morgan** said it would be nice if everyone bought the same canary-yellow tops like him and Islwyn to travel home in. Stu ventured: "Yeh, so we can all look twp".
- **Ceri Rees** walked on stage without pants on – he'd washed them and left them in the last hotel before travelling on to the next city. Now known as "Nickerless Rees".
- **Brian Bates** for asking a taxi driver to take them to the Mount Gambier Carousel Club – really meant the RSL club.

Gold Award

- **Don Hillman** – Will Wham jumped into the swimming pool – excellent diving with a 5.2 for presentation – and still had his glasses on.
- **Tom Jones** saw a girl limping off the Sydney ferry and he said: "On an 'obble are you love?" She answered: "No, in actual fact I've got an artificial leg."
- **Andrew Badham** for feeling faint and suffering jet-lag as he was about to conduct "Crossing the *Plain*"!
- **Islwyn Morgan** for wearing a bright green belt on his grey trousers on stage.
- **Dean Powell** tried ringing home with a phone card, but it was actually the hotel key for the Oxford Koala - which we had left two weeks beforehand.
- **Wyndham Phillips** standing by the bus, armed with cases an hour too early.
- **Andrew Badham** – on stage he couldn't remember the name of the song from *Cats* – it's called 'Memory'! How apt!
- **Len Gale** was asked how he liked his steak and he answered: "Cooked."

- **Rhiannon Williams** found her key to the Sydney Hotel two weeks after leaving there. And when someone started singing "Advance Australia Fair" she asked what show it was from!
- **Peter Morris** for leaving his alarm go off on his watch all the way through *Myfanwy*.
- **Mal Morgan** overheard someone discussing lingerie and said: "Yes, Islwyn and I have both down our laundry."
- **Wyndham Phillips** leaned against a curtain backstage in Mount Gambier, thought it was a wall and fell flying.