

# TREORCHY MALE CHOIR



## TOUR OF SCOTLAND 2002

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## **TREORCHY'S HIGHLAND ADVENTURES**

THE Welsh pride themselves in the wonderful camaraderie that exists between fellow Celtic nations. That is the fundamental reason why Treorchy choristers have long-since expressed their eagerness to tour Scotland. It seems hard to believe that although the Choir has entertained audiences the world over, this was its first extensive visit to the country.

This was not the first occasion for representatives of Treorchy Male Choir to travel this far north. In fact the original Treorky Choir received an invitation to sing at Edinburgh Castle more than a century ago. Prior to their magnificent royal command performance for Queen Victoria at Windsor in the winter of 1895, the Choir gave a private concert for the Duke of Cambridge at Edinburgh.

It was a further fifty years before this Scottish relationship was rekindled in the Rhondda and it took place between two of Britain's most distinguished choral conductors. John Haydn Davies, the founder-conductor of the re-formed Treorchy Male Choir formed a close bond with Sir Hugh Robertson of Glasgow Orpheus fame while adjudicating a choral competition together in the South Wales valleys during the early 1940s. Their relationship, based on a mutual admiration for demanding musical excellence from their respective choirs, continued for the remainder of their lives. It wasn't until 1953 that the choral giants of Treorchy and Glasgow were first united however, and this took place between Treorchy and that of the Glasgow Police, whose members included former choristers of the Orpheus. Their conductor, Farquhar MacDonald invited the Welsh choristers to Scotland for a long weekend where the Treorchy men sailed up the Kyles of Bute before performing two combined concerts in St Andrew's Hall. During the following year the Glasgow choir undertook the journey to Wales to sing alongside their new-found friends in the Rhondda.

Although fifty years had passed since Treorchy Male Choir performed in Scotland, many of its choristers have represented the Choir as musical ambassadors during particularly gruelling rugby international weekends! This long association between truly illustrates a mutual admiration and love for one another's countries and cultures. Long may this continue. The tour of Scotland undoubtedly cemented such a relationship for although it was badly flawed in so many respects, choristers enjoyed a thrilling week together and revelled in the camaraderie that makes their organisations so unique.

### **Saturday, October 19**

Choristers left Treherbert at 7.30am for the start of a journey that had all the hallmarks of a marvellous week away together. From the very outset, the chorister's excitement was obvious and as they travelled down the valley, this excitement and enthusiasm grew all the stronger. Terrific! A quiz and bingo were to follow in an attempt to shorten the lengthy journey north of the border and before long the immortal Clec Committee was reformed to take note of all the many mishaps throughout the trip. They were assured of plenty of fun

along the way, with Roger calling out bingo numbers in his own inimitable manner (including dropping numbers all over the floor) and resting in Worcester before reaching the beautiful town of Harrogate by late afternoon. They were booked into the Imperial Hotel and attended a rehearsal in the magnificent Royal Concert Hall. This truly awesome building was a wonder to behold from within. The opening night at Harrogate was a brutal disappointment for with a 1,500 seater hall, they had less than 250 in the audience. Bad planning, lack of publicity and the fact that Daniel O'Donnell was performing right next door had all the hallmarks of a failure. Although the Choir proved as magnificent as ever, choristers left the stage with heads bowed in despair.

### **Sunday October 20**

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

At 10am the Choir boarded the buses and sang Happy Birthday to Islwyn Morgan on his 75<sup>th</sup>! The first Bing-Bong awards by the Clec Committee was announced. Also Clive "Guys" Spanswick held the first daily cash draw of the tour. Stopping at Alnwick for lunch, choristers enjoyed plenty of laughs on this long, arduous journey north, Having crossed the Forth Bridge, they eventually reached the King Malcolm Hotel in Dunfermline and settled in before enjoying a bite to eat in the bar, freshening up and returning to the coaches which took them to the beautiful city of Edinburgh. The breathtaking architecture of this city left choristers in awe as they travelled through its streets to the Queen's Hall. Despite being a relatively small auditorium, the acoustics were tremendous and the Choir gave an excellent performance all round. Particular highlights were some of the quieter numbers, along with the rousing chorus of *Men of Harlech*. Following a quick drink in the theatre bar and a nearby pub, we returned to the hotel to discuss the pitfalls of the tour so far, and worry about exactly what lie ahead.

### **Monday, October 21**

On this wet and windy day, choristers took a walk to Dunfermline which is not the mecca of Scotland! On returning to the hotel they settled down to a quiet afternoon of reading newspapers and chatting before boarding the coaches for a two hour journey to the sleepy town of Hawick. It was a delight to see our old friend Ken Alderson and his companion Jill in the audience, but it was an even bigger delight for the choristers when they realised that legendary rugby commentator Bill McLaren had accepted their invitation to attend the performance. Accompanied by his wife Betty, this wonderful couple were a joy to entertain. Bill entertained the Choir in return by posing for photographs, signing programmes and answering rugby trivia. The concert performance was enjoyable, despite the pitiful turn-out of the audience and during the event choristers made a presentation to Mr McLaren on stage. By the end of the evening they returned to the King Malcolm for a night-cap in the bar!

### **Tuesday, October 22**

With most of the morning free, the choristers eventually gathered once more and travelled to Dundee. At 4pm they were ushered into the Mayor's Parlour in Dundee where they enjoyed a delightful Civic Reception in the grand Municipal Buildings. Gifts were exchanged and as a vote of appreciation the

choir performed *Men of Harlech* for the civic dignitaries of Dundee. Choristers walked across the main square to the magnificent Caird Hall with its truly outstanding auditorium. The choristers gave another brilliant performance for the enthusiastic crowd.

### **Wednesday, October 23**

Following an early breakfast, choristers lounged around the hotel for most of the morning before heading to Glasgow by noon. Dressed in choir tour shirts, they went to the Royal Concert Hall, undoubtedly the most impressive auditorium in Scotland. After surveying the scene they were ushered to a local shopping precinct to perform a selection of items for the passing crowd in a last-minute effort to sell more tickets for the evening performance. For the remainder of the free time in the city, members walked Solihall Street before ending up in the Horseshoe Bar for a great meal, drinks and some fun. The afternoon passed by relatively quietly.

Saw the few sights that Glasgow had to offer and returned to the Royal Concert Hall to hear that once again only a small number of tickets had been sold compared to the maximum capacity of the auditorium. However, there were some very special guests in the audience, namely the Glasgow Phoenix Choir. It is this organisation that, as its name suggests, rose from the ashes of the old Glasgow Orpheus Choir. Its legendary conductor, Sir Hugh Robertson was a close friend of Treorchy's founder conductor, John Haydn Davies. Therefore it seemed apt that tonight the organisations rekindled their friendship and invited their conductor on stage to receive a Choir shield. A presentation was also given to the Lord Provost and a Member of the Scottish Parliament. The Choir's performance was superb as choristers really sang their hearts out to ensure a top performance for the specialist crowd.

### **Thursday, October 24**

The only free day of the tour was enjoyed by one and all. Many hired minibuses and travelled into Edinburgh for a whole lot of fun.

### **Friday, October 25**

Choristers packed their bags and left the King Malcolm Hotel for the next section of the tour. This time it was a two-hour journey to Anstruther where they were booked into the Crow's Nest on the windy seafront! Undoubtedly this was the highlight of the tour as far as concert performances and audience reaction was concerned. They travelled to the Rothes Hall in Glenrothes to find the auditorium packed to capacity and the crowd were on an absolute high throughout the entire performance. It was simply superb. The audience went mad for it. They stomped their feet, called for more, cheered and really showed a tremendous appreciation. The second half was even better and the final items caused chaos amongst the crowd who simply didn't want us to leave the stage.

### **Saturday, October 26**

Choristers walked the streets of Anstruther and ended up at the harbour wall, before returning to the hotel and preparing for their journey to St Andrews. Memories of those two wonderful rugby weekends came back to mind in an

instant! A group walked the streets of the lovely golfing capital and got together for a return visit to the New Golf Club where choristers saw a number of old friends from previous rugby tours. Then it was over to the hall, dodging the rain en route. The last concert of the tour was a total triumph. The choristers were on top form and their performance was absolutely superb. The audience cheered throughout the concert The applause was deafening. Following a victorious final night members visited the New Golf Club for a buffet and an enjoyable hour with old friends, sampling their finest whiskey, singing a host of songs and ending the tour on a high note.

### **Sunday, October 27**

Choristers boarded the choir bus at Anstruther amidst gale-force winds and began a lengthy journey back home to Wales. Choristers slept, chatted, ate and stopped off for a few drinks in Moffat and after a few hours sleep began climbing the road to the Rhondda by 9pm. The end of a thoroughly enjoyable Choir tour.

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## **Tour of Scotland** **Bing-Bong Awards**

### **Mentions in Dispatches**

- A member of the audience received a mention after the choristers were chatting about the Bee Gees and asked her who the Gibb twins were. She said they were brothers.
- Roger Morse for claiming that Max Bygraves never sang Rhondda Grey. Well, he was right, it was Max Boyce, but that's exactly what the boys had said in the first place only he misheard them
- During the bus quiz someone asked "Who led the Argonauts to the Golden Fleece", to which Alun Morris replied "Little Bo Peep"
- Gwyn Morgan thought he could see camels in a field. They were cows.
- Paul Kay for having higher-heeled shoes than Alun Lewis.
- Roger was heard screaming from the bathroom while using his electric razor. But there was no foil on it, he was just using the bare blade. No wonder it hurt.
- Dean was caught out for getting the boys to sing "Flower of Scotland" minutes BEFORE we actually crossed the border
- Len Gale thought he'd won a t-shirt in a pub raffle, but it was a mobile phone holder.
- Alun Davies for spotting seals in the sea. They were surfers.
- Islwyn was surprised we sang "God Save the Queen" in Harrogate. But Issie, we were in England...not quite over the Scottish border!
- John Jones was told by Paul Kay that "we are all getting old". And John quipped, "Yeh, but at least I don't dye my hair."
- Daryl said the most important thing about concerts was to get "seats on bums".
- Rocky for singing "Bleddyn be strong" in Martyrs. It should be "brethren"

- When Norman Buckland was told that Bill McLaren was coming to the concert he said, “Oh, the Formula One Driver?”
- Andy Costin and Derek Langley were looking for a house in Dunfermline, but had the map upside down.
- Roger left the bedroom window wide open and went to breakfast - leaving Daryl freezing cold in bed.
- Keith Owen said Bill McLaren “didn’t sound like his voice”
- Mike Russ ordered a “haddock plaice” in a restaurant
- Bryn asked for a taxi to the Imperial Hotel. But we were staying in the King Malcolm. The Imperial was 150 miles away in Harrogate
- Dennis Lethbridge gave Reg a birthday present. But it was Islwyn’s birthday
- Wally said the early bus was “like driving a mobile chapel of rest.”
- Andrew Badham forgot “Memory”
- Alun Morris was taken ill. So the boys asked Wally what the update was. “Oh, the funeral is next Wednesday and men only at the crem”, he answered. Ouch!
- The UGC cinema in Glasgow has six floors. Alun Bowen thought the screen must be hellish high. Not realising there are 12 screens in there.
- Gareth Evans asked “What time is the one o’clock gun in Edinburgh?”

### **Bronze**

- Lee Sprague for making a rude comment and not realising Ivor “the engine” Williams’s grandson was standing next to him
- Paul Kay said on stage that his dad was a singer. And John Jones quipped, “yeh and his mother was a cocker spaniel”.

### **Silver**

- Andy Costin for putting his pants on and wondering why he had a bum-bag attached. Turned out his wife had bought new pants and they were still clipped together in a pack. He had five others attached to the back!
- Daryl’s “pink slipper” joke.
- Bridgey told the boys he got attacked by a shark that had its teeth embedded in his leg so far that it had to get in the ambulance with him
- Stuart was talking to a couple in a concert in Glenrothes and said to this bloke that he should come to a concert again and “bring his mother with him”, indicating to the lady on his left. Sadly, it was his wife.
- Alun Bowen thought all the buses parked on Prince’s Street must mean a “factory outing”.
- Dean was talking to dignitaries in Glasgow and managed to shove my finger into the top of a coke can. He was almost in tears, trying to talk to them and also pull the coke can off at the same time

### **Gold**

- Mike Russ for turning the clocks back an hour at home because he thought it was the end of British summer time. He was a week too soon. Rang home to find the alarm clock had gone off late and his wife was late for work.
- The O'Brien mafia. Roger and Daryl convinced them they had a grill for bacon and eggs in the room. The O'Briens got quite shirty that they didn't have the same facilities. You guessed it, the boys were talking about a trouser press.