

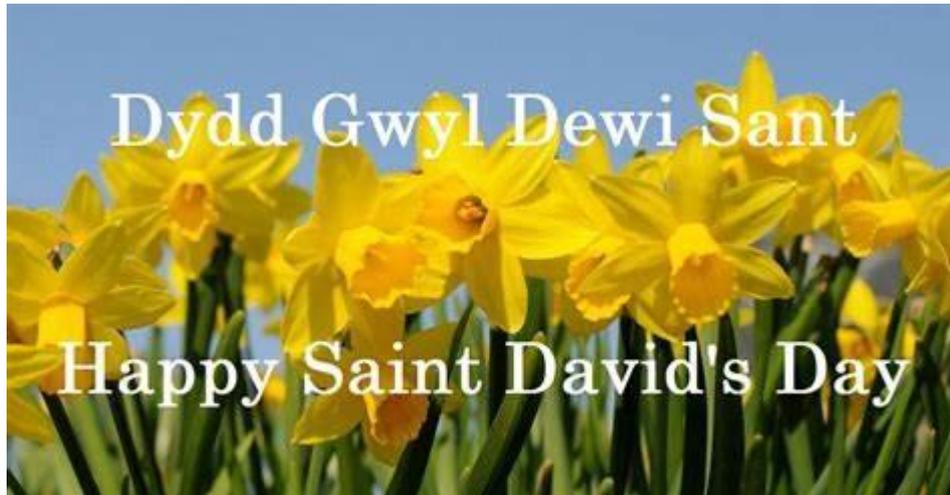


CHOIR NEWSLETTER

March issue

Year 28 March 2023

Welcome to our March newsletter as we celebrate St David's Day



Did you know:

Following on from last month's newsletter and the theme of the naming of the months of the year:

The month of March was named after Mars the Roman God of war, and marked the beginning of the season for warfare in the ancient world when active military campaigns resumed. In the Northern Hemisphere, the meteorological beginning of spring occurs on the first day of March whilst the March Equinox (literally the date of equal daylight and night time) on the 20th or 21st of the month marks the astronomical beginning of spring. On this day, the Sun stands directly over Earth's equator.

No mention of March is complete without reference to **St David's Day**, our patron saint. It falls on 1 March because this was the date of Saint David's death in 589 AD.

The nickname '**Taffy**' for a Welshman links back to **St David** as the original and ultimate Welshman – the term dates to the 17th century and derives from '**Dafydd**', the Welsh for David.

Legend has it that St David suggested Welsh soldiers wear a leek on their helmets to distinguish them from the invading Saxon soldiers who wore similar uniforms. The leek features in the uniforms of Welsh regiments to this day

March birthdays.

Mike O'Dwyer (B1) Wednesday 1th Mansel Young (T2) Friday 10th Chris Howard (T1) Sunday 12th
Mike Willis (B1) Tuesday 14th Gareth Jones Friday 31st





Chorister updates.

We warmly welcome **Phil Batty** back into the ranks of the top tenors. Phil has previously sung with PMC about 20 years ago and has returned to Cwmbran to live after spending 10 years living in Cyprus. We wish Phil a long and enjoyable return to PMC.

Although we appear to have seen the worst of Covid, choristers are still succumbing to various other infections that affect attendance at practice. Whilst most absences are limited to a week or so, others frustratingly linger. Our Top Tenor section has been in robust good health whilst in the Second Tenors **Mansel Young** is recovering after a brief period of illness. Amongst the baritones **Jeff Williams** has had an extended absence with a persistent cough but otherwise remains in good health whilst **Ron Jones** has returned to practice following his recovery. Bottom bass **Keith Jones'** return to practice has been delayed a little.

However, generally, choristers have had a good month health wise and attendance at practice has responded accordingly.

To all those sick and suffering choristers we extend our best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery and look forward to welcoming them back into the fold.

Choir uniform

With the return to concert performance choristers may find that the combined effect of Covid lockdown and the recent Christmas and New Year festivities have resulted in some difficulty fitting into their uniform. If there are any of you that fit (or rather don't fit!) that bill, the good news is that we have a good stock of suits, trousers, blazers etc that may provide the solution. More than that, confidentiality is assured!

Our grey suits were supplied by Slater's in Cardiff who offer an alteration service.

Please don't wait until a few days before our concerts to tell me that jackets or trousers don't fit!

While I'm on the subject, we have a vacancy for a chorister to take on the responsibility of managing our wardrobe, so if anyone is interested, please let me know. You could say we're looking for a suitable person!

Choir role vacancies

We currently have a number of other role vacancies within the choir, namely:

- Section representative Bottom Bass - committee position
- Registrar - non-committee position
- Ticket sales officer - non-committee position

If you would consider fulfilling any of these roles, please let me know.

Vice Presidents

Now that the choir has returned to a full rehearsal and concert programme, we are relaunching our Vice President's membership which will include:

1. A Vice President identification of pin badge
2. A copy of our monthly newsletter
3. Advanced notification of all choir events
4. Complimentary ticket to our annual concert to include reserved seating in prime position
5. Complimentary concert programme
6. Invitation to exclusive Vice Presidents social event - cheese and wine/buffet evening to include short concert and afterglow
7. Meet and greet with Choristers

An annual Vice President membership will cost £30 for individuals and £50 for husbands/wives/partners.

Lyn Birch has taken on the role of Vice President's Secretary and all enquiries should be directed to him.



His contact details are:

Mobile number: 07972 760660

Email: lyndonbirch@gmail.com

Engagements.

Now that the choir are firmly back in concert mode, the intention is to maintain that momentum throughout 2023 with some form of concert each month. Here's the latest list of what is already arranged:

Item	Date	Arrival Time	Venue	Address
Combined practice for St Davids Hall	02/04/23 Sunday	12:30 13:00 start	St Julians School	Heather Rd, Newport NP19 7XU
Cystic Fibrosis	4/05/23 Thursday	6:00 6:30 start	Parkway Hotel	Cwmbran Drive NP44 4UW
Annual Concert	20/05/23 Saturday	6:30 7:00 start	Rougemont School	Malpas Rd, Newport NP20 6QB
Holy Cross Church Mark	10/06/23 Saturday	7:00 TBC	Holy Cross Ghurch	Church St. Mark TA9 4NF
Joint Concert Pontnewydd Ladies	16/06/23	TBA	TBA	
Make Music Day	23/06/23 Friday	7:30	Practice Room	Nant Bran NP44 1SN
WAM Combined Concert	24/06/23 Saturday	TBA	ST Davids Hall	The Hayes, Cardiff, CF10 1AH
Wedding	20/07/23 Thursday	12:30 1:00 start	St. Gabriels Church	Old Cwmbran NP44 3LR

St Gabriel's charity concert

Our concert on 17th February to raise money for the Hope GB charity proved a very eventful occasion to say the least! With accompanist, Annette Williams, feeling unwell prior to the concert commencing and having to return home, our MD, Sarah Jones, and Caerphilly Ladies Choir accompanist, Beverley Baker alternated in accompanying PMC for our selection of songs for the first half of the concert. I must congratulate our choristers for their concentration and the excellent performance of our repertoire during those unsettling circumstances.

Harpist Bethan Cole and Caerphilly Ladies Choir performed beautifully to complete the first half of the concert. However, during the interval, two members of the audience were taken ill and required medical assistance and as a result the decision was taken to cancel the remainder of the concert. Both casualties thankfully have made complete recoveries and the concert will be rearranged at a future date.

Massed Choir concert St David's Hall

Ticket sales to the general public will be available from the St David's Hall Box Office, however the choir do have a pair of tickets priced at £27.50 each that are surplus to requirements. Please contact our chairman, Ian Evans on 07985 1650089 if you are interested.

PMC Ladies Committee

The next fund-raising event organised by our hard-working Ladies Committee is a concert with Pashy Pops on Saturday 15th April at Cwmbran RAFA club, Greenhill Road, Forgehammer, Cwmbran NP44 3DQ
Tickets are £10 each and includes a buffet.



Notes from our Musical Director

Sarah is in a reflective mood this month and writes;

Music, with or without lyrics, is an all-encompassing tool of emotion and reflection. Many found comfort in reaching for music during lockdown, indeed, particularly noticeable was the number of new admirers to this powerful art form. Fast forward a few years, where have all those 'new' musical admirers/budding musicians gone? Amateur music groups are suffering a lack of input/interest resulting in poor attendance and even disbandment in some cases; from a personal choral perspective, we know how this has hit us. But, let's rewind and reel in all those people who 'turned to music and the power of song' 3 years ago now, and we should all be benefitting from a more fruitful membership. With this in mind, last month I wrote that I would delve into the use and power of lyrics in songs. There are a plethora of interesting articles relating to the topic of music and lyrics, the following is amongst my favourite

What is important in a song, the lyrics or the music?

By Dr. Vidya Hattangadi 26/9/2022

"There are many songs with such great hummable music but are weaker in lyrics. There are also some songs which have great lyrics but are weaker in music. And there are songs with good music and good lyrics but are sung pathetically by the singer. While we all would agree that it is music that gives our ears the feel, rhythm, vibrancy etc because music has the power to lift each word of the lyric. However, lyrics give the message of the song. Lyric gives a song its heart. Thus, songs are all about combination of magnificent lyrics with great music composition and we get those master pieces.

Since our move to our home at Nant Bran Community Centre there has been a significant increase in the numbers and regularity of choristers attending practice and there is certainly a very positive and much more relaxed atmosphere in the practice room. In her monthly report to the committee Sarah states that she is very happy with that but also with the level of concentration demonstrated by choristers. So well done, boys!

Meanwhile, some background information on songs in our current repertoire:

Ar Hyd Y Nos – a song that is sung as a folk song, Christmas carol and lullaby and has been recorded many times by a variety of artists as diverse as Paul Robeson, Olivia Newton-John and Cerys Matthews, and has featured several TV and film productions such as Proud Valley and The Corn is Green. First annotated in 1784 by Edward Jones, who was harpist to the Royal Family, it is most frequently sung to Welsh lyrics by John Ceiriog Hughes, although it has been translated into several languages including English.

World in Union is a theme song for the Rugby World Cup. Its melody is taken from the middle section of "Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity", a movement from Gustav Holst's 'The Planets', and was originally adapted by Holst for its use in the patriotic hymn, "I Vow to Thee My Country". First recorded by Kiri Te Kanawa for the 1991 Rugby World Cup jointly hosted by England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, it was subsequently re-recorded by Hayley Westenra and Paloma Faith for RWCs in 2011 and 2015 respectively.

Recruitment

On the back of this, we are also relaunching a publicity and marketing drive to recruit new members and increase the choir's profile across the area, so look out for our new posters and banners. Equally, if you know of friends who may be interested in joining PMC, please encourage them to come along and sit in during practice. They'll be assured of a warm welcome.

Those silver surfers in our midst will also notice that we are actively advertising for an Assistant MD/Accompanist – so again if you know of anyone with the requisite skills, please let us know

Quote of the month

"When you're happy, you enjoy the music. But, when you're sad, you understand the lyrics" (Frank Ocean)



Do your bit for conservation

Following on from last month's item, Wendy Reynolds writes:

Hedgehogs Tip No 5

It's that time of year again when we are all thinking of tidying up our gardens. Hedgehogs won't run if they hear a mower or a strimmer. Please check for hedgehogs before carrying out any tidying. If you uncover a hedgehog, quickly cover it back up and keep your distance.

If the worst has happened and you find an injured hedgehog, then use gloves to pick it up and place it in a high sided box. Cover with an old towel or t-shirt and phone your nearest rescue centre or, if seriously injured, take directly to a vet.

I was asked recently whether we should provide nesting materials for the birds in the garden because when brushed their dog it has lots of excess hair which they thought the birds would like.

As far as I'm aware, no birds are negatively affected by a lack of supplementary nesting materials. Feathers, sticks, grass, webs and moss are easily found by birds but we could end up doing more harm than good by trying to provide alternatives, for example long hairs can become entangled around a chick's feet, cutting off the circulation and killing the foot or toes. Our pet's hairs are often treated with strong pesticides from flea and worm treatments, which can cause further harm to young birds.

Please let me have your ideas on what we should include in future issues of our Newsletter.

Dydd Gwyl Dewi Hapus
Happy St David's Day

Best wishes
Ian