



Pontnewydd Male Choir

CHOIR NEWSLETTER

Year 25 MAY 2021

This month's birthdays.

Ben Taverner (T1) Monday 10th

Graham Roberts (B2) Friday 28th

Bill Bebbington (B1) Saturday 15th

Wayne Parfitt (T2) Saturday 29th

Latest on choristers and others.

Our sincere condolences to **Alun Wilmot** (T1) who has recently had two deaths (not covid related) in the family.

Lyn Birch (T2) is still struggling but is gritting his teeth and determined to get properly mobile even if he has to fit an afterburner to his wheelchair.

Margaret Dyer – her husband **Bernard** was a cherished first tenor who died some years ago – having spent Christmas in hospital is now back in her 'home' and improving steadily.

Is there light at the end of the tunnel?

By the time you read this newsletter some of us have probably sampled a glass of something or other while sat outside a local hostelry. Your editor indulged himself outside the Greenmeadow Golf Club on the second day of the relaxation. Even the increase in price didn't spoil the feeling of supreme enjoyment as the amber nectar disappeared. I must confess that in normal times I wouldn't have been sat outside in an outer jacket, hands in pockets and a rug over my knees – but it was worth it after months of restrictions.

The vaccination programme has had a great effect, and, at the moment, there are some positive signs for a return to something like normality. Few of us think that this means that we'll soon be back to where we were in 2019. When will choirs of sixty members be able to sing in a concert hall before an audience of a few hundred? When will we be able to drive to Bristol airport, board a plane for Greece for a fortnight's holiday and return to our home a few hours later? These were things that were nothing unusual in 2019. It's easy to be wise after the event and it's certain that mistakes were made worldwide in the early part of 2020. But what's done is done and it was a learning experience that we hope will benefit us all in the future.

We can only hope that relaxation of covid restrictions doesn't lead to a later surge that will mean returning to square one. Let's be sensible, **follow the rules** and STAY SAFE.

Zoom sessions continue.

Martyn and Lucy are still keeping us up to date with our repertoire and even giving us a flying start on pieces that we've never performed in public – fingers crossed for when you get to hear them. One of the pieces recently rehearsed was “*Fly me to the moon*” and **chairman Ian** provides this bit of information: It was written in 1954 by Bart Howard and is forever associated with Frank Sinatra's 1964 recording – also with the NASA Space programme having been played on the Apollo 11 mission that landed on the moon. (*Thank you Ian.*)

Last month's newsletter.

The photograph on page 2 was of the church of St. Tudno's on The Great Orme, Llandudno. In September 2010 the choir had a concert weekend in Llandudno. On the Sunday some took the train to the top of the Great Orme and also, in the town centre, were able to see a parade by part of the Royal Regiment of Wales. Here they were with “Taffy” leading them.



A Potted History of Llantarnam.

*This item has very kindly been contributed by another of our choristers – **Paul Reynolds** (B1). You will discover that Paul is the proud owner of a listed building in the historic attractive village of **Llantarnam**.*

Thank you Paul.

The Village of Llantarnam (or **Llanfihangel Llantarnam** as it was previously known) can be dated back to the **end of the 10th century** with the establishment of a small Celtic church situated where the church of St Michael's and All Angels now sits.

During the **18th and 19th century** Llantarnam village began to look like we know it today, with the church at the very centre of village life. A blacksmith's shop opposite the church would carry out light industry whilst a wheelwright worked on the Eastern side of the graveyard in a barn, a conversion of which I am involved with at present. There he made certain that needs of travellers were met.

One of the oldest houses in the village is **Brook House** (our old family home) that is situated on the corner of the traffic lights and **Abbey Lane**. Parts of the house were built around the **mid 17th century**. Former owners were the Cory family and it was originally part of the Llantarnam Abbey Estate. A one-time resident was Sir Clifford Cory's secretary, Mr Alfred Robins.

In **1719** the **Greenhouse Pub** was built and opened, but it was not the first or only pub in the village. In Abbey Lane there were some workmen's cottages, a police station (the bars of the cells are still to be seen there today), a schoolhouse and also a small beer house called **The Cooper's Arms**. Unfortunately, Llantarnam had a very bad reputation for noise, music and drunken behaviour. So much so that Sir Clifford took it upon himself to purchase the inn and its licence. His only desire was to close it altogether - which he did.

Past owners of **the Abbey** included monks of the Cistercian order, the Morgan Family (part of the Tredegar House family) who had ownership for a time and, later, the Cory Family.

For most of the twentieth century Llantarnam village could compare with any picturesque village found in Britain. Travellers and locals would see, opposite the Greenhouse pub, the village green on which was a cricket pitch and several magnificent oak trees. Unfortunately, progress has meant the need to develop and I refer to things that are now long gone – although still remembered by some. Nevertheless, Llantarnam maintains the atmosphere of a friendly, welcoming village, albeit an extension of the conurbation of Cwmbran - but it's a place where I am delighted to live.

For anyone that would like more information about the history of Cwmbran a book called Days That Have Been "A Cwmbran History" written by W G Lloyd is a really interesting and illuminating read.

Home town?

Chairman **Ian** contributes this interesting piece.

Following on from Roy Dixon's article in the April newsletter in which he lays bare the myth that the name *Cwmbran* derives from "the valley of the Crows", I just wanted to support his assertion that it derives from the name of the *Bran stream* that flows down the mountainside from *Blaen Bran*. Bran is quite a common name for rivers and small streams, particularly in South Wales.

Also, Welsh place names traditionally take their name from religious settlements, e.g., *Llan* = church, or the geography/natural features of the area, e.g., *Cwm* = valley. But they are never named after birds. The eagle-eyed (!) amongst you will scream "What about *Croesyceiliog*?" ["the cross(road) of the Cockerel"]. Well, having upset the supporters of Cwmbran RFC (The Crows) I'd better balance things up by upsetting the supporters of Croesyceiliog RFC (The Cockerels) with the assertion that the name has nothing to do with cockerels – but you'll have to wait for next month's newsletter for an explanation.

April relaxation.

Homophones **good** and **wood** were the ends of the first two lines of the third verse of Rev. Eli Jenkins' prayer in *Under Milk Wood*.

Mnemonic and **pterodactyl** both start with letters that are silent when the words are spoken.

Alexander the Great and **Winnie the Poo** both have the same middle name! (That's one for a certain second tenor.)

May relaxation.

A board games inventor decided that the dice used would have the numbers 15, 25, 35, 45, 55 and 65 instead of the usual 1 to 6.

If a die was rolled and the number on the top face was 55 what was the number on the face touching the table?

Can you think of a word that is the name of something you can eat, something choristers often look at and something that could be connected with having a fright?

Sunday – Di Sul Monday – Di Lun Tuesday – Di Meurzh
Wednesday – Di Merc'her Thursday – Di Yaou Friday – Di Gwener
Saturday – Di Sadorn **Can you identify the language?**

Two owls are playing in the final of the Owl Snooker Championship. It comes down to the last frame. One of the owls is just about to play his shot, when his wing accidentally touches a ball. "That's two hits," says the other owl.

"Two hits to who?" says the first.