



## CHOIR NEWSLETTER

**FEBRUARY issue**

Year 28 February 2023

# NEW YEAR NEW HOME

Welcome to our February newsletter and to the news that the choir have moved to a new base at:

**Nant Bran Centre, Upper Cwmbran Road, Cwmbran NP44 1SN**

The Nant Bran Centre is built on the site of Upper Cwmbran Infants School which was originally opened in 1866 and served the community until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when a modern facility was erected alongside. Remarkably, the Victorian building was not demolished and now forms part of the Nant Bran Centre.

It houses **Growing Space** which is a mental health charity supporting people with mental health issues, autism or learning difficulties and provides them with the opportunity to develop a range of social and practical skills from horticulture to radio presenting and hospitality. **Able** is a life skills centre that specialises in actively supporting those with learning disabilities and autism develop new skills, and has its own radio station, **Able Radio**, that broadcasts daily.

The centre is soon to be the new home of another charity, **Hope UK**, aimed at supporting young people develop life skills. This is a charity that was founded over 160 years ago as "The Band of Hope" – older members with a Sunday School upbringing may well remember that experience!

PMC have now been practicing at the Centre for three weeks and the reaction of the choristers and our music team has been very positive– and there's plenty of parking space! Not only have we settled quickly into our new home, but we have also seen the regular return of established choristers which has meant that attendance at practice has increased markedly and generated a new vibe into rehearsals.

### Did you know:

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

**February's** name is believed to stem from Februa, an ancient festival dedicated to ritual springtime cleaning and washing, and derived from the Latin term *februum*, which means "purification".

No mention of February is complete without reference to **St Valentine** (a gentle reminder to you old romantics out there!) A word of warning though – our own renown florist, Ron Burnett, informs us that a dozen imported red roses will set you back a staggering £67! However, experts within the choir reassure us that Marks and Spencer roses are much cheaper, whilst Cadbury's Roses are cheaper still!

But back to **St Valentine** – in 270AD Roman Emperor Claudius claimed that married men made poor soldiers and consequently decreed that all marriages of younger citizens would be outlawed. Bishop Valentine, however, maintained that marriage was part of God's plan and purpose for the world, and he continued to conduct marriages in secret between young people in the name of love. His success gained him unwelcome notoriety and became his downfall. Valentine was jailed and ultimately beheaded. Beware all you choristers with ambitions of sainthood!





## February birthdays.

Ken Long (T1) Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> Huw Williams (B1) Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> Paul Wellington (T2) Saturday 25<sup>th</sup>

### Chorister updates.

We warmly welcome **Huw Williams**, a new recruit into the ranks of the baritones. Huw has previously sung with the Welsh Hospitals Choir and is a keen walker and photographer. His wife, Vanessa, is chair of Pontnewydd Ladies Choir, which further cements our existing links with the ladies. We wish Huw a long and enjoyable membership of PMC.

Although we appear to have seen the worse 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. However, our Top Tenor section has seen the welcome return of **Alwyn Nutland**, **Graeme Jones** and **Barry Page** whilst in the Second Tenors **Alex Phillips** has returned to the ranks, as has **Mansel Young** – you just can't keep good men down!

In the baritones **Ron Jones** is taking leave of absence as he completes his recovery. Good news in the Bottom Bass that John James has returned following his operation and that **Paul Reynolds** made a very welcome!

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.

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!

### 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 a list of what is already arranged:

Item	Date	Arrival Time	Venue	Address
Combined Concert Caerphilly Ladies Choir	17/02/23 Friday	7:00 7:30 start	St Gabriels Church	Old Cwmbran NP44 3LR
Age Connects Torfaen	23/02/23 Thursday	10:45 11:00 start	Widdershins Centre	East Ave, Griffithstown NP4 5AB
European CA Convention <b>To be confirmed</b>	25/03/23 Saturday	10:00 10:15 start	Celtic Manor	Chepstow Road, Newport NP18 1HQ
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	TBA	Parkway Hotel	Cwmbran Drive NP44 4UW
Annual Concert	20/05/23 Saturday	6:30 7:00 start	Rougemont School	Malpas Rd, Newport NP20 6QB
Fund raising Concert	10/06/23 Saturday	TBA	Church of the Holy Cross	Mark, Somerset TA9 4NN
Combined concert Pontnewydd Ladies Choir	17/06/23 Saturday	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

### **Massed Choir concert St David's Hall**

The Welsh Association of Male Choirs have advised the arrangements for the day:

Choirs arrive 2pm  
 Choir staging 2:15pm to 3:15pm  
 Choir rehearsal 3:15pm to 4:45pm  
 Soloist rehearsals 5pm to 6pm  
 Doors open 6pm  
 Choir seated 6:45pm  
 Concert starts 7pm  
 Ends 9:30pm

Choirs to note that only the WAMC MD, accompanists, soloists and choristers will be allowed into the Hall between 2pm and 6pm.

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.



## Notes from our Musical Director

Sarah writes;

This month I have chosen 2 songs from our January/February repertoire which are from an operetta and a musical; the one we have worked on together extensively, the other we are about to embark on together. Song lyrics are powerful in their own right and I shall delve further into that topic in next month's newsletter. Meanwhile, some background information.....

**Stout-Hearted Men** is an original song composed by Sigmund Romberg with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, from the 1927 operetta **The New Moon**. Set in 1792, shortly before the French Revolution, the story centers on a young French aristocrat in disguise, who has fled his country and falls in love with the daughter of a prominent New Orleans planter. It premiered in Philadelphia in 1927 and played on Broadway in 1928. It spawned several revivals and two film adaptations and remains popular with light opera companies. The piece turned out to be "Broadway's last hit operetta" as World War II and the Golden Age of musicals approached.

**You'll Never Walk Alone** is a show tune from the 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein Broadway hit musical **Carousel**. In the second act of the musical, Nettie Fowler, the cousin of the protagonist Julie Jordan, sings the song to comfort and encourage Julie when her husband, Billy Bigelow stabs himself with a knife whilst trying to run away after attempting a robbery with his mate Jigger and dies in her arms. The song is reprised in the final scene to encourage a graduation class of which Louise (Billy and Julie's daughter) is a member. The now invisible Billy, who has been granted the chance to return to Earth for one day in order to redeem himself, watches the ceremony and is able to silently motivate Louise and Julie to join in with the song.

### Quote of the month

So, having written about a Broadway operetta and musical, here's a motivational Broadway quote from everyone's favourite, **Les Miserables**:

*"Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise."*

### **Do your bit for conservation**

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

#### **Hedgehogs Tip No 4**

Hedgehogs are actually good swimmers, however many will drown as they are unable to scramble out of steep sided ponds or pools. If you have a pond in your garden use a pile of stones, a piece of wood or some chicken wire to create a simple ramp. 🦔

The golden rule for any hedgehogs you see in winter is 'Out in the night, alright' (unless obviously sick or injured), 'Out in the day, not OK'.

Any hedgehogs out in the day will need rescue, so if you spot one or have any questions, please contact me on 07809 227229 and I will do what I can to help.

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

### **Final thought from me:**

One-armed butlers - they can take it but they can't dish it out.

Best wishes  
Ian