



Pontnewydd Male Choir

CHOIR NEWSLETTER

Year 25 APRIL 2021

This month's birthdays.

Paul Reynolds (B1) Tuesday 6th

Graeme Davies (T2) Thursday 15th

Rob Crowley (T1) Monday 19th

Mike Phillips (B1) Tuesday 27th

John Walding (T1) Friday 9th

Mark Homan (T2) Sunday 18th

Mike Mayled (T2) Monday 19th

I apologise if three of our choristers felt aggrieved that their birthdays were not shown in the March newsletter. Mike O'Dwyer, Kieron Mahoney and Mansel Young were all originally included but somehow were deleted during an editing process for the delayed publication of the newsletter. These computer bugs get in everywhere.

Latest on choristers.

Our sincere condolences go out to **George Doherty** (B1) whose brother died recently.

Peter Davies (B2), Publicity Officer, after a brief period in hospital is now back home and recovering slowly under the watchful eye of his wife Sue. We send him our very best wishes for a speedy recovery. Two of our choristers, **Iain Thomas** (B1) and **Rob Powell** (B2) are on the waiting list for surgery but have had positive news from their consultants that procedures are likely to be undertaken within the next couple of months. Vice Chairman **Lyn Birch** is working hard on recovery but is not yet ready to resume his marathon training.

Alun Wilmot (T1) is rapidly improving as a cook while his wife **Lydia** is in hospital. Present reports are encouraging. Young **Ben Taverner** (T1) is now back in College after his 10 days isolation for Covid. He didn't enjoy being isolated in his bedroom and has not yet fully recovered his senses of taste and smell. After Easter he returns to his work-place.

Our best wishes to all.

Have you sent it?

Chairman Ian tells me that several choristers have expressed an interest in becoming journalists. The Times, The Guardian, The Daily Mail, The Sun, The Mirror, The Daily Express and The Socialist Worker (just seven of many top publications) can expect to receive newsworthy articles in the next few months. But the Pontnewydd Male Choir Newsletter will benefit before any of them. We

might be the first to get to know (here I speculate wildly) the following? What sort of sex life does a hedgehog have? Speculation about the location of the Nant Bran can be put to rest because a former choir General Secretary has already sent an article that is reproduced later in this newsletter. Is the plea for contributions from choristers about to produce a plethora of material? Apologies to anyone whose article has not yet been received in the newsletter offices. Postal services during the pandemic period are quite erratic.

But watch this space!!!!

Skip this if you are not interested in sport.

On the evening of Friday 26th March 2020 a group of baritones faithfully logged in around 7:30pm for a zoom practice on *Anfonaf Angel* and *O Happy Day*. (Your editor can only speak with confidence about the baritone rehearsal and not the Bass2 rehearsal that followed.) The importance of the date is that a rugby match was due to start in Paris at 8 o'clock that evening. No-one openly expressed an interest in the match because presumably, like your editor, plans had been made beforehand – but timing was involved because some wanted to be in bed before midnight. Our dedicated Musical Director had made his plans too, but they didn't seem to have any connection with Paris. Then for some reason or other Martyn didn't start us *being happy* until about 7:55pm. To be fair there were eventually no problems - our various plans worked and who wanted to listen to the experts after the game? This lengthy paragraph is simply to record the fact that baritones (and possibly a couple of B2s) turn up for practice even if a vitally important international sporting occasion is being played. The result, incidentally was **we are the champions!!!!** - thanks to our friends in Scotland. We'll forgive them for ignoring several easy chances to take the lead.

The round ball boys are also doing well lately.

Did you go there?

This picture was taken on a choir trip – but you might have been sat in a pub instead of taking the air.

Some of you can probably identify the location.



Why Upper Cwmbrañ?

Thanks to **Roy Dixon** (B2) – former General Secretary.

We are probably all aware of the history of PMC thanks to Phil Evans' regular posts and pictures. I thought it might be of interest to look at the area that spawned Upper Cwmbrañ Male Voice Party in 1904.

The area now known as Upper Cwmbrañ was shown on early maps as Cwmbrañ – the valley of the Nant Brañ, the brook that runs off the mountain at Blaen Brañ and joins the Afon Lwyd near Ponrhydyrun.

There is plenty of evidence of coal being extracted from the mountain using Bell Pits and Adits, some for use in the few cottages and later evidence of commercial extraction.

In 1677 some of the mountain was declared as Manorial waste or Common land, this attracted a small increase of farmers. In 1698 Little Green Meadow mine was sold to Major John Hanbury and by early 18th century coal and iron was being transported down the valley. This caused a further increase of inhabitants. In the middle 18th century a small development grew around this junction with a pub, *The Crown*, and several cottages for farm and mine workers. Craig Road was the main road up the valley from Risca to Pontypool with a road from a junction near the Bush Inn running down to Pontnewydd, a settlement on the Afon Lwyd.

In 1837 Mr. James Blewitt of Llantarnam Abbey became interested in the possibility of opening a mine to extract coal and developed a Mine Slope Colliery – Cwmbrañ Colliery. This attracted many families to move into the area and Cwmbrañ grew into a thriving community with churches (3), school (1), pubs (3), shops (several, one of which was owned by a Mr. Hutchings whose son was our conductor).

Of course each of the chapels had their choirs and I'm sure that there was much singing in the pubs, which led to the first meeting being held in The Bush to form a choir – Upper Cwmbrañ Male Voice Party – the rest is History.

Henllys boys take note.

Thanks to our **Chairman Ian Evans** (B1).

Red Kites



At one time confined to Central Wales as a result of persecution, a reintroduction scheme has brought red kites back to many parts of the UK. This graceful bird is Wales' largest bird of prey with a wingspan of almost 2m, so it's larger than the more common buzzard and unmistakable with its reddish-brown body, angled wings and deeply forked tail. Over the last few years Red Kites have been spreading south

from Mid-Wales. You'll regularly see them around Abergavenny and **they have been sighted over Twmbarlwm and Mynydd Maen and more recently over**

Henllys village and Henllys Vale as new birds look to establish their hunting territories.

So keep an eye out, they are a magnificent sight. Let me know if you spot any.

March teasers.

Chased and chaste. Completely different words that sound the same *Bungalow* and *dessert*. Both these words are imported from foreign languages.

Minute and tear. Both words can be pronounced differently and then change their meanings.

Quire. Two meanings but same pronunciation (more or less).

Here's that sentence completed with six homophones.

*Esmeralda is a **good** girl and she went into the **wood** wearing her **hood**, as she said she **would** and I only wish I **could** but I'm too full of **pudding**.*

April relaxation..

Here's a couple of easy teasers:

Who included the homophones **good** and **wood** in a famous prayer?

What does a mnemonic and a pterodactyl have in common?

Here's a tricky question.

What do *Alexander the Great* and *Winnie the Poo* have in common?

A man and his wife were dining in a top restaurant when a gorgeous woman came up to their table, put her arm around the man, gave him a passionate kiss and said "I'll see you tomorrow darling". The wife indignantly said "Who is that?" to which the man replied "That's Fifi, my mistress".

The wife then said "I thought so, proceedings start tomorrow for a divorce". Calmly the man said "Please yourself. But I'll keep the second home in Nice, the Mercedes and Range Rover, no more skiing holidays in Austria and you'll lose the use of the credit cards." T

Just then a close friend came into the restaurant with a gorgeous woman on his arm and the wife said "Who's that with Bob?". The husband said "Oh, that's his mistress" to which the wife said "Ours is prettier!"

For the season:

What do you get if you pour hot water down a rabbit hole?

Hot Cross Bunnies!

Roy Fisher.....Editor