



Pontnewydd Male Choir

CHOIR NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER issue

Year 26 November 2022

Welcome to our November newsletter and I hope it finds you all in sparkling form! With Halloween and Bonfire Night (or Guy Fawkes Night to our older readers) all occurring in the same week, I hope it doesn't prove too frightening an experience.

Did you know:

Halloween is in fact a Christian festival which celebrates all the departed saints and religious martyrs throughout the world. The term Halloween is a corruption of All Hallows Eve, which is a vigil on the evening preceding All Hallows Day (All Saints Day) on 1st November each year. The following day, 2nd November, is All Souls Day which celebrates all souls departed. It is primarily a Roman Catholic celebration and is epitomised by Mexico's famous "Dia del Morte" (Day of the Dead) festival – please note all you James Bond fans

Bonfire Night commemorates the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a failed conspiracy by a group of English Catholics, led by Guy Fawkes, to assassinate King James I and VI of Scotland and replace him with a Catholic king. The King's Council allowed the public to celebrate his survival by lighting bonfires

I am delighted to report that a few choristers responded to my plea for help and provided me with some items that I hope will be of interest to our readership and become regular features in future editions. You will see that Sarah Jones has provided an insight into her thoughts on extending our repertoire, John Counsell has provided an explanation for the empty wine barrel, Martin Jones has donned the mantle of our travel correspondent and, for you wild-life enthusiasts, Wendy Reynolds is keeping us updated on the prickly subject of hedgehogs!

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

November birthdays.

A record month with 10 birthdays – Annette will be busy!

Frank Horsell (B2) Saturday 5th
Barrie Page (T1) Saturday 12th
Malcolm Gough (T1) Friday 25th
John Sheppard (B1) Monday 28th

Ian Evans (B1) Saturday 5th
Annette Williams Monday 21st
Derek Williams (T2) Saturday 26th

Ian Roberts (B2) Sunday 6th
John Miller (B1) Wednesday 23rd
Phil Pritchard (T1) Sunday 27th

Chorister updates.

Choir members continue to make good use of the NHS as the ravages of Covid and, more recently, a flu-like infection has continued to affect attendance at practice. Our Top Tenor section has been particularly badly hit with **Graeme Jones**, **Malcolm Gough** and **Alwyn Nutland** succumbing to various infections. Better news of **Barry Page** who has returned home after a few weeks in hospital and hopes to be back in practice shortly. Good news too that **Mansel Young** has returned to practice after his illness.

Haydn Noonan has finally tested negative for Covid and will also be back in practice next week

Roy Fisher remains in Llanyravon Court Nursing Home on Llanfrecha Way, Cwmbran and is good spirits despite being predominantly bed-bound. All visiting restrictions there have now been lifted and I know he would welcome visitors. Our continued best wishes go to Roy.

With holidays now over, we also welcome the return of **Martin Jones (T2)** and **Alan Hopkins (B2)** whilst **Gareth Jones (B1)** is due back from the USA next week.

Given the disruption to practice that all the above factors have caused, it is essential that all choristers make their utmost efforts to attend all practices between now and Christmas.



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Having just returned from an unique 34-day cruise of the North Atlantic, Martin Jones provided a travelogue of the trip and I thought I'd share some of his observations with you would-be intrepid cruisers who may be tempted to do the same.

The no-fly cruise embarked from Tilbury, sailing via the Shetlands to the Faroe Islands and then 4 days sailing to Greenland, viewing spectacular wildlife on the way including Icelandic Eagles, Tufted Plover and virtually every species of whale, except the massive Right Whale. Interestingly, the cruise ship follows a protocol that limits its speed to 8 knots, a rate slower than most whales swim, in order to avoid endangering the mammals. The voyage from Greenland to Newfoundland encountered icebergs, whales, porpoise, dolphins and the occasionally albatross. The sailing onwards to Nova Scotia and the St Lawrence Seaway was interrupted by Storm Fiona and the remnants of Hurricane Ian (no relation!) but offered Martin and Kim the opportunity to indulge their passion for sea shanty and folk singing.

I'm not sure whether this will inspire or discourage potential cruise-lovers, but the good news is that Martin has returned safely to these shores, suitably weather-beaten and bearded and is reported to have rejected lucrative offers to become the new poster boy for frozen fish fingers!

Raiders of the Lost Archive

Following last month's report that this magnificent wooden wine cask has been rediscovered, John Counsell tells me that it was presented to PMC by MGV Buchenau on 11 Sept 2004 as part of the PMC centenary celebrations. MGV Buchenau are a male choir from a suburb of Bruchsal, Cwmbran's twin town.

John further explains that MGV = Manner Gesang Verein = Male Singing Society i.e Buchenau Male Choir and that members were his guests during their visit. He remembers the party so well and is not surprised the barrel is empty!!!

So there we have it – an admission of complicity and guilt! Does anyone else want to purge their conscience with their recollections?



More from the archive

Following much rummaging in his drawers by Phil Evans, a copy of 'Pontnewydd Male Choir – A History 1904 – 1979' has come into my possession and after some scrutiny a particular paragraph stood out. It related to the Welfare Hall (now demolished) but which was the regular practice venue for the choir for many years up until 1957. It is described as "draughty, ill-lit with heating that left much to be desired. Two large stoves augmented a primitive central heating system. Coupled with a crude cardboard screen, a life-sustaining temperature was achieved in winter, but often, when the wind blew the wrong way, an imminent grand climax to a chorus evaporated in a paroxysm of coughing as a pall of smoke enveloped then choir."

I don't think we'd put up with those conditions now, but perhaps our predecessors were made of sterner stuff. It makes you appreciate our current practice room!



Engagements.

With all the postponements and cancellations we have received recently, here is the amended list of engagements:

Item	Date	Arrival Time	Venue	Address
St Gabriel's Fundraiser	18/11/22	18:30	St Gabriel's Church	Clomendy Rd., Old Cwmbran NP44 3LR
Lovelight Concert	06/12/22	TBC	St Woolos Cathedral	105 Stow Hill, Newport NP20 4SZ
Rural Concierge of Herefordshire	21/12/22	15:00	Parkway Hotel	Cwmbran Dr, Cwmbran NP44 3UW

Choir repertoire

Our MD, **Sarah Jones**, explains that, since the return to full practice following the Covid lockdown, her priorities for the choir have been:

- To get us all back singing as quickly as possible by focussing on those pieces that had formed our core repertoire pre-Covid
- To include additional pieces that will be sung at the Massed Choir event in St David's Hall next year
- To add a small number of easy-to-learn songs, such as Autumn Leaves, that broaden our repertoire
- To prepare a programme for our Christmas engagements from our previous repertoire

Sarah says that, "with regards to the choristers who have asked about music we will be singing from January, in all honesty, I haven't given much thought that far ahead as we currently have 4 new pieces (Softly, Some Enchanted, En Route & Autumn Leaves) on the go, in addition to the Christmas rep and I feel priority has to be given to that."

However, amongst the pieces that Sarah is considering for 2023 as she seeks to extend the range and appeal of the choir are:

Back to the 60's	New York New York
Comrades in Arms	I've only got eyes for you
16 tons	For your eyes only
Nessun Dorma	Rhythm of Life
What a wonderful world	Cole Porter medley
Moon river	Wake up Little Susie
Pretty Woman	The first time ever I saw your face
Blue Moon	Eli Jenkins

Ladies Committee

Our Ladies Committee exists to support the choir through their fund-raising activities, so I was disappointed to be informed that they have had to cancel their next event, a concert evening with Pashy Pops on Saturday 26th November, due to very poor ticket sales. It's in all our interests to support the efforts of our ladies and I'll be meeting with them soon to discuss their plans for next year, so please let me know your ideas for the type of events you would like to see organised.

Christmas

Just a reminder that a few of our choristers are actively preparing for that seasonal event. **Alun Wilmot** has booked the Cwrt Henllys for our Christmas Dinner for Thursday 15th December and is asking choristers to indicate their choice of meal, whilst **Mike O'Dwyer** has posted his request-list of donation items for our Christmas Hamper raffle and is asking choristers to indicate those items they can provide.



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

Do your bit for conservation

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

Hedgehogs Tip No 2

Put Out Food and Water

This time of year hedgehogs are bulking up in readiness for hibernation. You can put out food and water to encourage hedgehogs to your garden and supplement their natural diet. Any meaty dog or cat food is loved by hedgehogs; however I prefer to use meat-flavoured cat or kitten biscuits as they don't attract flies, and also the crunching helps keep their teeth healthy.

You can find further information and guidance on how to make a feeding station at <https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/feeding/>

***If you see a hedgehog out in daylight this time of year, it is a clear indication it is unwell. If you believe a hedgehog needs help or you want advice I can be contacted on 07802 227229.

You can also follow my rescue on Instagram @huffinghedgehogs.

If anyone else is passionate about conservation in any of its elements, please let me know.

Quote of the Month

Here's Sarah's musical quote of the month:

One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.

- **Bob Marley**

Christmas Present advice

Think twice if you are planning on buying your wife a trampoline bed for Christmas. She'll hit the roof !

Best regards
Ian