



Pontnewydd Male Choir

Celebrating 120 Years

1904 - 2024

CHOIR NEWSLETTER

April issue

Year 29 April 2024

Welcome to our April newsletter as we celebrate the arrival of British Summertime, although you wouldn't believe it with the weather we're experiencing.



This month we commemorate:

14th April 1536. The act of union between Wales and England received royal assent by Henry VIII. The act divided Wales into 13 counties and established the modern borders of Wales. Despite being Welsh speaking, the border territory (the Welsh Marches) was annexed to England and explains the Welsh names of many villages "the other side of the border"!

April 23rd St George's Day. St George is truly an international saint as England is not the only country or region to claim him as its patron saint. England shares St George with Venice, Genoa, Portugal, Bulgaria, Georgia, Ethiopia and Catalonia among others as their patron saint

According to tradition he was born around 280 AD in what is now modern-day Turkey, of Greek descent, and was an officer in the Roman army, who was sentenced to death for refusing to recant his Christian faith.

William Shakespeare was also born and died on this same date - born in 1564 and died in 1616.

April birthdays.

John Walding (T1) Tuesday 9th Martin W Jones (B2) Saturday 13th

Graham Davies (T2) Monday 15th Mark Homan (T2) Thursday 18th Mike Phillips (B1) Saturday 27th

Chorister updates.

As a group we choristers continue to both suffer and recover from coughs, colds and chest infections and health issues have certainly impacted us this month and that has been reflected in numbers attending practice.

In our Top Tenors, continued health concerns have unfortunately cost us the services of **Phil Batty** who has been forced to withdraw as a chorister. However, Phil has become a Vice President and will continue to take an active role in choir affairs. In the Second Tenors, **Paul Wellington's** absence continues as hospital investigations try to uncover the cause of his health issues. In the Baritones, chest and lung infections have inflicted **Steve Spokes** and **John Sheppard** whilst **Ron Jones** has been hospitalised a couple of days

On a more positive note, we have welcomed back to practice **Mike Mayled** in the Second Tenors and **Haydn Noonan** and **Mike Willis** into the Baritones.

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.



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Vice Presidents

As we embark upon our anniversary celebrations, a reminder to encourage family and friends to support the choir by becoming a Vice President. This month we have already recruited 5 new Vice Presidents in Mr and Mrs Phil Batty, John Counsell and Mr and Mrs Graham Jones.

Recruitment



We are also relaunching a publicity and marketing drive to recruit new members and increase the choir's profile across the area, and to that end Graeme Davies organised a publicity event at Morrison's in Cwmbran to promote the choir. This will be followed by further similar events at ASDA and Sainsbury's over the next few weeks.

We followed this by singing in Cwmbran Shopping Centre, suitable wrapped in our red jackets, on a cold but thankfully dry Saturday, to an appreciative crowd of happy shoppers. Their reaction will encourage us to repeat this over the next few months.

Pontnewydd's "Red Wall"



All our choristers and supporters can play a part in helping us recruit new members by liking and sharing our new Facebook page. 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.

Sponsorship

We have produced a sponsorship letter on behalf of the choir which asks local companies, both large and small, to support us through donations, sponsorship etc in continuing our charitable fund-raising efforts. If you have contacts with any such businesses, please let Graeme Davies (second tenors) or me know so that we can approach them for such support.

Thank you.



Engagements.

PMC - Confirmed Concert bookings

Item	Date	Arrival Time	Venue	Address
120 th Anniversary Concert	27/04/24 Saturday	6:30 7:00 start	Congress Theatre	Congress theatre Cwmbran Town Centre
Dedication Service	28/04/24	2.00 2.30 start	14 Locks Canal Centre	Cwm Lane Rogerstone NP10 9GN
Holly Lodge Nursing Home	09/05/24 Thursday	3:30 4:00 start	Holly Lodge Nursing Home	1 Ton Road, Cwmbran, NP44 7LF
Joint concert with Pontnewydd Ladies for GOSH	17/05/24 Friday	6:30 7:00 start	St. Johns Church Wainfellin	Penywain Road Wainfellin Pontypool NP4 6DY
Leadon Court	11/06/24 Tuesday	3:30 4:00 start	Leadon Court Nursing Home	Thornhill, Cwmbran, NP44 5TZ
Caerleon Festival	05/07/24 Friday	5:45 6:15 start	Caerleon Amphitheatre	Broadway, Caerleon Newport NP18 1AY
Wedding	24/08/24 Saturday	TBC	Holy Trinity Church	44 Church Rd, Pontnewydd NP44 1AT
120 th Anniversary Dinner	31/08/24 Saturday	TBC	Parkway Hotel	Cwmbran Drive Cwmbran NP44 3UW
Concert at Ledbury	28/09/24 Saturday	Coach leaves at 5:00pm TBC	Ledbury Theatre	The Market Theatre Market Street Ledbury HR
New Inn Pensioners	10/10/24 Thursday	7:00 start	New Inn Hall	New Inn Hall NP4 OPZ
Wedding	20/04/25 Sunday	TBC	San Fraed House	LLanvihangel Gobion, Abergavenny NP47 9BA

Annual Concert repertoire

With our Annual Concert fast approaching, Sarah explains the background to the repertoire we will perform. The music team have reviewed our annual concert programmes as far back as 1961 and have selected several frequently recurring songs that represent the seven decades since then and added some of the songs we have learnt in the past 12 months. The selection also covers a number of different song genres from classic Welsh hymns, opera, film and stage musicals, Afro-American spirituals to pop songs, all of which is designed to demonstrate the breadth of the choir's repertoire.

In preparation for the event, Graeme Davies our Stage Manager, also offers the following advice:

Did you know this about singing? Some tips:

- a) Breathing lies at the core of good singing. Posture is important. Stand tall with your feet hip width apart, keep your shoulders relaxed, your chest lifted, and your head balanced. Avoid slouching or leaning as it restricts airflow.
- b) open your mouth wider. This helps with diction and will allow a fuller richer tone and make it easier to hit high notes.
- c) stay relaxed. Tension in shoulders neck or jaw hinders your voice.
- d) hydrate

You could consider this sound advice!



Memorable experiences – Alwyn Nutland remembers.

Well, as you can imagine after 45 years there are a lot of memories that come to mind.

This being the 120th annual concert it made me think back to my first annual concert. It was the 75th and was held in Cwmbran stadium. I had only been in the choir for 6 months. As I had never sung in public, I was very concerned that I would not remember the words to any of the pieces that we were to sing, but like they say " It was alright on the night"

Over the years we have sung in some fantastic places, both home and away, place like Guilford Cathedral. After that concert I remember the choir finished the night at a local wine bar (actually drinking the bar dry). Another trip was the one to Scotland where I remember Walford coming down in his dressing gown at 3am telling everyone in no uncertain terms that it was TIME FOR BED.

Needless to say, the concert the following day was a complete disaster and Walford said that the choir would never go back to Scotland again.

The tours abroad have also been very memorable. The first trip to Germany where the choir was accompanied by the BBC Panorama program to document the meeting between the two choirs in the European Community twinning program. We even had to wait on the seven bridge to wait for the sun to rise, so it could be the opening shot on the program, I felt sorry for the Buchenau choir, they were a little intimidated at first but we soon became good friends. Some of those friendships have lasted to this very day,

One of my greatest memories was the tour to Poland where we sang in Auschwitz concentration camp. I for one found it very emotional and extremely challenging. Something that I will never forget.

My greatest and proudest memory was standing on stage at the Royal Albert Hall with Ben my 15 year old grandson by my side. A very, very proud day.

For all the above I must mention the people. The friends that I have made in the last 45 years some still going strong, unfortunately some now passed but each one a fine character.

There are so many more memories of times and friends past. It's been a wonderful 45 years.

If any chorister or ex-chorister has such special memories of their time in the choir, please contact me and I'll be only too happy to share them in our newsletter.

Ladies Committee

Continuing their fund-raising activities for the choir, our hard-working Ladies Committee have arranged a coach trip to Weymouth on Sunday 9th June, departing Cwmbran Railway Station at 9am and returning from Weymouth at 5pm. Tickets are £18 each.

Please contact Gwyneth Nutland on 01495 200551 or Sarah Sheppard on 07825 899797 to book your seats.

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

Best wishes
Ian