



# Pontnewydd Male Choir

*Celebrating 120 Years*

**1904 - 2024**

## CHOIR NEWSLETTER

**March issue**

Year 29 March 2024

I slightly belated Happy St David's Day to you all and what a start the choir had to the new month as we sang to an enthusiastic audience at The Parkway Hotel, Cwmbran to support their St David's Day celebrations.



This month we celebrate:

- March 1 is St David's Day and, despite rumours to the contrary, St David was definitely a Welsh man, born in Caerfai, a small village not far from St David's, Pembrokeshire, and he is buried in the grounds of his monastery where his Cathedral now stands.
- March 15 is the Ides of March! Legend surrounds this ill-fated day. However it is also Red Nose Day when join forces to raise money for brilliant causes in the UK and around the world, by having a good laugh!
- March 17 is St. Patrick's Day.
- March 24 is Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week which ends on 31 March Easter Sunday and the last day of Lent.
- Here's one for Annette - March 28th is Piano Day - a day for piano players and lovers to share the joy of the piano. It takes place on the 88th day of the year, for the number of keys on a piano.

### **Did you know:**

- It might not feel like it but 1st March is the meteorological beginning of spring whilst the March equinox on the 21st sees the Sun rise exactly in the east and set exactly in the west—a good thing to know if you get lost in the woods! From this date the hours of daylight will increase.
- However, this year we don't turn your clocks forward an hour until 31st March.



**PLEASE CONTACT PONTNEWYDD MALE CHOIR AT**  
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- You may have heard the weather proverb, “If March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb,” which means that if the month starts off stormy, it will end with mild weather. There is, however, a different interpretation: The constellation Leo, the lion, rises in the east at the beginning of March. Thus, the month “comes in like a lion,” while Aries, the ram, sets in the west at the end of the month, and hence, the month “will go out like a lamb.”

### March birthdays.

Mike O’Dwyer (B1) Friday 1<sup>th</sup> Mansel Young (T2) Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> Chris Howard (T1) Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup>  
Mike Willis (B1) Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> Gareth Jones (B1) Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>

### Chorister updates.

As a group we choristers continue to both suffer and recover from coughs, colds and chest infections and it has not impacted too much on our numbers attending practice. The Baritone section has been particularly badly hit with **Mike Willis** recovering at home following his hospitalisation whilst **Haydn Noonan** and **Peter Binding** have also been notable absences. Second tenor **Paul Wellington** is also suffering with a severe chest condition that continues to keep him away from practice.

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.

### 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. The membership package 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](mailto:lyndonbirch@gmail.com)

### Recruitment

On the back of this, we are also relaunching a publicity and marketing drive to recruit new members and increase the choir’s profile across the area, so look out for our new posters and banners, and please like and share 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.

Thanks

**Engagements.**  
**PMC - Confirmed Concert bookings**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Arrival Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Address</b>
Joint Concert with Morryston RFC Choir	24/02/24 Saturday	6:30 7:00 start	Victory Church	Central, Greenforge Way, Cwmbran. NP44 3BA.
Parkway Hotel	02/03/24 Saturday	7:30 8:00 start	Parkway hotel	Cwmbran Drive, Cwmbran NP44 3UW
TOUR	8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	TBC	Palace Hotel Paignton	The Palace Hotel, Esplanade road, Paignton, TQ4 6BJ
Annual Concert	27/04/24 Saturday	7:00 start	Congress Theatre	Congress theatre Cwmbran Town Centre
Hollylodge nursing Home	09/05/24	3:30 4:00 start	Hollylodge Nursing Home	1 Ton Road, Cwmbran, NP44 7LF
Caerleon Festival	05/07/24 Friday	5:45 6:15 start	Caerleon Amphitheatre	Broadway, Caerleon, Newport, NP18 1AY
Joint concert with Pontnewydd Ladies for GOSH	27/05/24 Friday	6:30 7:00 start	St. Johns Church Wainfellin	Penywain road, Wainfelin Pontypool NP4 6DY
Wedding	25/08/24 Saturday	TBC	Ho;y Trinity Church	<i>44 Church Rd, Pontnewydd NP44 1AT</i>
120 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner	31/08/24 Saturday	TBC	Parkway Hotel	Cwmbran Drive Cwmbran NP44 3UW
Concert at Ledbury	28/09/24	Coach leaves at 5:00pm TBC	Ledbury Theatre	The Market Theatre Market Street Ledbury HR
New Inn Pensioners	10/10/24	7:00 start	New Inn Hall	New Inn Hall NP4 OPZ



Wedding	20/04/25	TBC	Sant Fraed House	LLanvihangel Gobion, Abergavenny NP47 9BA
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### Joint concert with Morryston RFC Male Choir



Our first major concert of our anniversary year was a significant one for PMC as we were delighted that the renowned Morryston RFC Male Choir accepted our invitation to perform a joint concert at the Victory Church, Cwmbran on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February. Formed in 1979, Morryston Rugby Club Male Voice Choir (Côr Rygbi Treforys) has a hard-earned reputation for a very high standard of performance, with its repertoire ranging from traditional choral hymns associated with male voice choirs to songs from West End musicals, operatic choruses, spirituals and much more.

Both choirs sang their individual sets of songs in each half of the concert, during which PMC introduced two new songs for the very first time, "Sinner Man", an Afro- American spiritual, and the icon Beatles song, "A Hard Day's Night".

The two choirs joined together to sing "You'll Never Walk Alone", "Rachie" and "Calon Lan" and closed the concert with a rousing rendering of "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau".

What a great night and a great start to our anniversary celebrations!

### Musical background

Here is the background to some of the new songs in our repertoire:

**Uptown Girl** comes from Billy Joel's ninth album, An Innocent Man. The lyrics describe a working-class "downtown man" attempting to woo a wealthy "uptown girl", and was initially written about his relationship with Elle Macpherson, but it ended up also becoming about his soon-to-be wife, Christine Brinkley, both women being two of the most famous supermodels of the 1980s. (It must have been a tough time for him!).



**A Hard Day's Night**, from the film of the same name which portrays 36 hours in the lives of the Beatles as they prepare for a television performance. The title was taken from an expression Ringo Starr used to say. In a 1964 interview Ringo explained that he said, "It's been a hard day..." after working all day and night, and then looked around and saw it was dark, so he said "Night!" It's about going off to work hard all day but being glad when you come back to your woman at night. I think Sarah may have got a slightly different interpretation!

### **Memorable experiences – Roy Dixon remembers.**

Roy joined the choir in 1989 and has served as its secretary and chairman. He was made a Life Member in 2023. He writes:

I consider my decision to join Pontnewydd Male Choir one of my better ones. Membership has given me so many good memories, many new friendships and, I believe, improved my health.

A few of my outstanding memories –

My first foreign tour was to Canada, an excellent tour organised by Ernst van Eijkern and the committee.

For me one of the many highlights was a visit to Notre Dame Cathedral in Montreal where we sang an impromptu concert on the front steps (much to the dismay of the local Buskers) followed by our singing from the organ loft in the Cathedral Mass – a very moving experience in the most beautiful setting.

The members then gave me the honour of being the next Secretary, this gave me so many good memories that to list them would be difficult and probably boring to read.

A few of the outstanding ones –

The exchange visits to and from MGV Harmonie, Buchenau, Germany. These visits were always looked forward to and provided many choristers with the opportunity to make lasting friendships with members of MGV. Visits to the R.A.H. London for the Thousand Voices Concert, a very hard day at rehearsals and at the concert in the evening. But really enjoyed by the members and their guests.

Similar visits to St. Davids Hall, Cardiff for the Annual Remembrance Concert, again hard work but great rewards.

Perhaps the highlight of my secretaryship was the Centenary Year celebrations in 2004:

April – Centenary Concert with Willard White as our artiste.

June – Joint Concert with all Torfaen Male Choirs (250 voices) with Evelyne Nicholсан. I remember they sang "Happy Birthday" to me.

August – Centenary Dinner at the Celtic Manor with Owen Money and his group.

Dec.- Centenary Christmas Concert with Pontnewydd Ladies Choir, Pontnewydd Junior School and Pontnewydd Senior Chorale.

A very busy but successful year.

Another good memory was our "Thank You" to Walford for 40 years of leadership in 2012. We held a Dinner at the Parkway Hotel where we held a mini-concert, presentations and Walford handed over the Leadership of the choir to Pauline.

There are so many other events, concert exchanges with other tours choirs, welcoming choirs from America to join us in concert.

Perhaps my darkest memory was the effect 'Covid' had on the life of the choir. I trust that with a lot of commitment we will recover and enjoy our membership of P.M.C. to the full.

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 social evening at The Forgehammer Club (formerly the RAFA Club) on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 7pm. Tickets cost £8 and include a buffet.

Just seen a sign in Tesco's "Turkey £29" – that's £300 cheaper than in Thomas Cook.



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

Best wishes  
Ian