



Pontnewydd Male Choir

CHOIR NEWSLETTER

Year 25 OCTOBER 2021

This month's birthdays.

Alun Wilmot (T1) Saturday 2nd

John Counsell (T2) Friday 8th

Martyn Jones (M.D.) Wednesday 6th

Martin Jones (T2) Friday 15th

Bernard Morgan (B2) Friday 22nd

Peter Binding (B1) Saturday 23rd

Late item - New appointment.

Following the resignation of Lucie, the Management Committee have appointed a **new Deputy Conductor**. **Sarah Jones** lives locally, with experience in conducting male choirs. Sarah has recently taken some Tuesday practices and both she and the choir are looking forward to her taking Tuesday practices.

Welcome, Sarah!

Some Good News from chairman Ian.

We have had a response from Fairhill Church Leadership Team to the revised Risk Assessment that we submitted and as reported in September's newsletter. They have agreed that:

- *That we can reduce the social distancing requirement to 1 metre which means that we can occupy every other seat. Seats to be occupied will still be marked.*
- *This means that we can increase the number of choristers present to a maximum of 40.*
- *This gives us the opportunity to get back to 4-part practice especially with the numbers who have been attending recently.*
- *We must ensure that there is a 3 metre distance between the music team and the first row of choristers. This allows the music team to remove their face coverings. When necessary they will be fitted with a radio microphone which will help those with hearing difficulties*

We have introduced the reduced distancing between choristers in recent practices and reaction has been very positive.

However the requirement to wear face coverings still remains and I know it is choristers' main complaint - but again we potentially have some good news. There are lighter, half-face coverings that are available and we have ordered a small quantity of two different types so that we can assess their

suitability. These coverings cover from the lower part of the nose down to the chin and do not affect your normal vision. Hopefully they will arrive in time for next practice.

As you will see we are trying to find solutions to the obstacles that we face in returning to normal practice bearing in mind that we have a responsibility to keep all choristers safe and that, despite entering Alert Level Zero, we have a legal responsibility to take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to, and spread of, coronavirus.

Again we will review the effectiveness of these changes at the next monthly management meeting. All choristers views will be sought but you will only be able to comment fully if you attend practice.

Looking further forward we have been notified by WAMC that the postponed concerts have now been re-scheduled and confirmed with the venues for:

*St David's Hall, Cardiff Saturday 24th June 2023
Royal Albert Hall, London Saturday 27th April 2024*

The music programmes will be as originally planned. The Association has a group working on the detailed arrangements for rehearsals etc with further details being circulated early in the new year. Those choirs who were previously allocated spaces will have first preference when booking for these new, re-arranged dates.

Ian.

Rehearsals music.

M.D. Martyn has issued a list a pieces to be rehearsed during October and it is given below – just in case! You been informed that rehearsals will now last 1 hour and that practices will start on Tuesdays at 7:45pm and on Friday at 7:30am. **You are asked to let our librarian, Peter Binding, know if you require music for any items.**

| Day | Date | Repertoire |
|------------|------------------|---|
| Friday | 1 st | African Prayer, Let all men sing, Fields of Athenry. |
| Tuesday | 5 th | O Happy Day, Tangnefeddwyr (The Peacemakers). |
| Friday | 8 th | With a voice of singing, World in Union, Higher and higher. |
| Tuesday | 12 th | Soldiers' Chorus, All through the night. |
| Friday | 15 th | Make your own kind of music, Divine Brahma. |
| Tuesday | 19 th | Calon Lan, Gwahoddiad, Cwm Rhondda. |
| Friday | 22 nd | Fly me to the moon, When you believe. |
| Tuesday | 26 th | Fly me to the moon, When you believe. |
| Friday | 29th | Kwmbayah, You'll never walk alone, Speed your journey. |

Turning over a new leaf.

How many of you are still **using** the 2021 choir calendar? If you are you are able to look at a photograph of the choir taken in 1912. It was then known as *The Upper Cwmbran United Male Voice Choir* – and your editor simply wondered why “United”? The choir history will need to be brought out and the dust blown off. There are more than 70 choristers in the photograph and the average age is obviously considerably less than at present. “Johnny” Williams was the conductor and NO! YOUR EDITOR WAS NOT ONE OF THE CHORISTERS!

Who’s a clever boy?



Mike O’Dwyer, one of our baritones, on September 18th became the Singles Bowls Champion of his club (a title he had also won in earlier years). He is now eligible to enter the annual Champion of Champions competition.

Congratulations Mike.

I suspect there might be other bowls champions in the choir.

What bragging rights do other choristers have, I wonder? We certainly have a young top tenor who has gained success in another field (take a bow Ben) and many years ago your editor came second in the mile walk of the Monmouthshire Secondary School Athletics championships. Only two of us finished the mile – all other competitors were disqualified for running! So let’s hear about your other talents. The ability to sing sea shanties under water does not qualify as a talent.

We were there!

With the autumn internationals now upon us I thought this photograph might bring back memories.

So when was it, what was the match result and who made his farewell appearance?



Not all Americans are parochial!

*The following is an extract from an article written by Susan Spano of the **Los Angeles Times** in December 2004. It was a pity she missed us during her visit!*

..... I took a special shine to the Blaenavon Male Voice Choir, a group of average Hughs and Williams, with light shining in their eyes. They clearly liked one another and had a great time harmonizing, led by local schoolmaster Gareth Whitcombe. Choir membership is a substantial commitment, Whitcombe said. But it gives the men a chance to travel inexpensively to such exotic places as Southern California, where they sang earlier this year. They did "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Alexander's Ragtime Band" for me, followed by a show-stopping Nigerian number, accompanied by bongos and maracas, as the choir shuffled through a line dance that looked like something out of "The Full Monty."

Fewer voices.

Some people say the male voice choir tradition is dying in Wales, as long-time members retire and few youngsters step up. Even rugby matches, where spectators once broke into song to strike fear in the heart of the opposition, have quieted, particularly in the last few decades as Wales succumbed to teams from England, France and Australia. Soon after the 1999 opening of Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, the 70,000-seat home of the Welsh Rugby Union, Hadyn James, musical director of the London Welsh Male Voice Choir, was tapped to bring the sound of men's voices back to the game. I joined him as he rehearsed three men's choirs in a concrete passageway adjoining the stadium, before Wales trounced Japan, 98-0, on Nov. 26. Nearby, Welsh team mascot Billy the Regimental Goat of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers was being groomed and, between numbers, a member of the Llantrisant Male Choir tried to teach me the rules of rugby. Then a brass band led the choirs onto the field, followed by the goat, for a pregame rendition of "Delilah," popularized by Welsh-born Tom Jones. Along the way, the man from Llantrisant turned to me with an endearing smile and confided, "We're a small country, but I think we've made a mark in the world."

I couldn't say, but they made a mark on me.

Answers for September's two tricky cryptic crossword clues were:

TV show one's watching all the time? (3, 7). *Big brother.*

Old priest's last letter discovered in time. (4). *Ezra.*

The easy musical one was: *Minim.*

Roy Fisher.....Editor.