



# Pontnewydd Male Choir

## CHOIR NEWSLETTER

Year 25 JUNE 2021

### This month's birthdays.

**Ron Burnett** (B2) Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>

**Roy Fisher** (B1) Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>

**Dave Hine** (B2) Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>

**Roy Dixon** (B2) Friday 25<sup>th</sup>

**Haydn Noonan** (B1). Monday 28<sup>th</sup>

**Lyn Birch** (T2). Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup>

*Coincidentally, the youngest and oldest choristers (in this group of six) share the same birthday!*

### Important news.

The minutes of the Zoom Management Committee meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April contained the following item:

*Resignation letter received from Lucie Bebbington-Lewis following her successful application to teach with Bristol Cathedrals Schools Trust.*

*The resignation is effective from 31/08/21.*

*We thank Lucie for her outstanding contribution to the choir through these difficult times and wish her every success in her new venture.*

No further comment at this time, other than to say it is sad news for the choir.

### There is light at the end of the tunnel!



The first practice room rehearsal (on Friday May 28<sup>th</sup>) was held in Fairhill Methodist Church with the two tenor sections getting themselves used to the new regime. (They strictly followed the rule about no hugging and kissing although there was some elbow contact). The Zoom pattern of rotating Friday and Tuesday practices will resume when the two bass sections rehearse next Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June and it is worth giving choristers a reminder of some procedures that we all need to follow. (Secretary Martin has already emailed detailed instructions and they are on our web page – have you read them?)

1. Only arrive 5 minutes prior to the start and leave within 5 minutes of the end of the (shorter) practice. Tuesday practices will start at 7.45pm and on Friday at 7.30pm. Wearing a face mask and observing the 2m social distancing rule applies to the duration of the visit to practice. If wishing to converse with others then please do so outside the church.
2. A face shield will be issued and it has to be worn during practice. It then becomes a personal shield that has to be **brought to each practice**. The pieces to be rehearsed **will have been announced, brought to practice and not shared with anyone**.

### **Annual General Meeting.**

The lockdown rules resulted in there being no AGM in 2020 – but we are now able to hold one, albeit in restricted form. Our hard-working administrators have been able to find a venue (**Cwmbran Rugby Club**) that will cater for the restriction in numbers yet also provide the facility for members to take part by Zooming.

The date for the AGM is **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June** with the meeting starting at 7:00pm. Martin has emailed all relevant details – so make sure you've checked your inbox. The form of this meeting will be a real challenge and **requires us all** to do a bit of preparation. Changes are inevitable and **they need input from members**.

**Keep your eyes open for further emails / postings on  
[pontnewyddmalechoir.com](http://pontnewyddmalechoir.com).**

*While internet surfing recently the editor came across the web page The Celtic Fringe that had an article written in 2017 by a gentleman (?) named V. Walton. I thought you might find it interesting – the reference to beer bellies doesn't apply to baritones.*

### **Male Voice Choirs in Wales: A Brief Overview**

Eager to hear elderly men with snow-white hair and beer bellies sing about the plight of their coal-stained homeland and their faith in God, and not necessarily in English? Your best bet is to go to Wales. The Welsh male voice choir has become the country's most treasured and remarkable feature, with nonconformist (e.g. Baptist, Methodist) origins in the 18th century. During this time, congregations in both the north and south of Wales formed tenor-bass choirs that led chapel-goers in the singing of hymns, both in English and in Welsh. Singing in these choirs was one of the crucial methods the Welsh used to establish their rugged individualism, especially in the wake of their dying language, political struggles (miners' strikes and unionist skirmishes) and cultural constraints from the English (the Anglicization of Welsh national schools). Choirs and solo singers alike performed their repertoire at festivals, namely Eisteddfod (*sic*), an annual gathering of performers in different cities around the nation. Fortunately, these traditions are still (mostly) robust today.

Since its pious and political 18th century heyday, Wales has been appropriately referred to as “the Land of Song.”

Welsh male voice choirs have become something of a spectacle to the outside world. Only Boys Aloud, a choir made up of 130+ boys aged 14-19 from the financially depressed and socially troubled South Wales valleys, was featured on *Britain’s Got Talent* in 2012 (and placed third!). Additionally, more localized choirs’ rehearsals are popular sights for tourists, and visitors are often invited to audit or observe them. These intimate rehearsals are typically held once or twice a week, and each town or village has a choir of their own, normally affiliated with the church, though not always.

While media attention does not always capture the raw essence and cultural motivation behind the existence of these choirs (and, in addition, antiquates them and makes them out to be “old-timey”), the continued popularization of these choirs within the country and around the world has yielded benefits. With the most prominent and active members of the male voice choirs rapidly aging, there is a great deal of concern surrounding the preservation of this tradition. Organizations such as The Aloud Charity (from which sprang Only Boys Aloud) help to make these choirs relevant again in the lives of young Welsh men yearning to find a sense of personal and national identity.

My personal understanding of the male voice choir is one that is decidedly political — a stunning reaction to historical cultural takeover (by the English), as well as a continuing soulful singularity that unites generations. When one goes to Wales and hears everything from the Welsh accent to the vigorous sound of choirs resounding in the hill-valleys of the Rhondda, you will also hear the song of a people with lyricism and pride sewn into their hearts.

I can practically hear my great-great-grandfather singing with the other men as he returns home from the coal mine in Maerdy. That is, if he wasn’t tone-deaf just like the rest of my Welsh family...!

**October 1995 L’Abbeye-aux-Hommes. Caen.  
We sang around the tomb of William The Conqueror.**



Chairman **Ian** fulfils his promise in the May newsletter to spill the beans about the name Croesyceiliog. *Thanks again Ian. I wondered whether it was going to be a cock and bull contribution.*

In May's newsletter I made the assertion that the name of Croesyceiliog has nothing to do with cockerels. It is more to do with horses and specifically *cock horses*, as in the nursery rhyme " Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross".

A cock horse was a horse added to a team of horses to assist in pulling a wagon through high water or over difficult terrain. Given the location of Croesyceiliog on the hillside of the Afon Llwyd, it seems more than logical that this is where such horses would have been stabled and used to draw loads up the hill. It could also explain the names of two pubs in the area – Upper Cock Inn and Lower Cock Inn (no longer there). The crossing point of the Afon Llwyd would have been at Pontrhydyrun which translates into English as '*the bridge over the ford by the ash trees*' – this is where the name of the Ashbridge pub comes from.

Can anyone add to this? **Ian.**

### **May newsletter - solutions.**

If the dice had the numbers 15, 25, 35, 45, 55 and 65 instead of the usual 1 to 6 *opposite faces* would have the numbers 15 and 65, 25 and 55, 35 and 45. *So if a die was rolled and the number on the top face was 55 the number on the face touching the table would be 25.*

A word that is the name of something you can eat, something choristers often look at and something that could be connected with having a fright?

*What about Quaver?*

Sunday – Di Sul            Monday – Di Lun            Tuesday – Di Meurzh  
Wednesday – Di Merc'her    Thursday – Di Yaou    Friday – Di Gwener  
Saturday – Di Sadorn            *The language is Breton.*

### **Some examples of why the English language can be difficult to learn.**

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The dump was so full, it had to refuse refuse.
3. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
4. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
5. They were too close to the door to close it.
6. After a number of injections my jaw eventually got number.
7. He said that he did not object to the object.
8. When he saw the tear in the oil painting he shed a tear.

Roy Fisher.....Editor