



CHOIR NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER issue

Year 27 December 2022

Welcome to our December newsletter and I hope it finds you all in celebratory mood as we approach the big day! So here's wishing you all



Did you know:

December 25th Christmas Day: The name 'Christmas' comes from the Mass of Christ, a Mass or Communion service celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. The 'Christ-Mass' service was the only one that was allowed to take place after sunset (and before sunrise the next day), so people had it at Midnight! So we get the name Christ-Mass, shortened to Christmas.

The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336, during the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine (he was the first Christian Roman Emperor) The feast regained prominence after 800 when Charlemagne was crowned emperor on Christmas Day. In the early 19th century, Christmas festivities and services became widespread in the Church of England that emphasized the centrality of Christmas in Christianity and charity to the poor. Then Charles Dickens' novel "A Christmas Carol" developed the idea and made it even more popular!

December 26th Boxing Day: It is also St. Stephen's Day (or 'the feast of Stephen' as in the carol). St Stephen is believed to have been the first Christian Martyr. Starting in the Middle Ages, it was the day when the alms box, collection boxes for the poor often kept in churches, were traditionally opened so that the contents could be distributed to poor people. Hence the name Boxing Day.

December birthdays.

Only 4 birthdays this month:

Gary Jeffries (T2) Saturday 3rd **John James** (B2) Wednesday 7th **Steve Evans** (B1) **Keith Jones** (B2) Saturday 24th

Chorister updates.

Unfortunately, this health bulletin is getting longer each month as choristers 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 recently but it's good to see **Alwyn Nutland** returning to practice under the watchful eye of wife, Gwyneth. **Barry Page**, who had returned home after a few weeks in hospital, has been readmitted. **Graeme Jones** continues his recovery from an operation but has been told to keep talking to a minimum, much to the delight of wife, Sue. However, **John Walding** has recently succumbed to the Covid virus as have Second Tenors **Martin Carey**, **Graeme Davies** and **Martin Jones**.

On a more positive note, **Mansel Young** has resumed his place in the Second Tenors, and we welcome back **Paul Wellington** into our depleted ranks. Good news too, that **Alex Phillips** is home after surgery at the Grange Hospital and so is **Peter Davies** after being admitted following another of his episodes. The only section to have escaped any major illnesses are the Baritones and I'm sure they will benefit from the extra man-hours of practice I hear you say!

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.





Mike Mayled has announced that he is retiring from the choir due to the continued poor health of wife, Wendy. His retirement from the choir, whilst **Malcolm Gough** is also stepping down due to conflicting demands on his time. We thank them both for their active contributions to PMC during their time as members. 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.

St Gabriel's Fundraising Concert

Despite the reduced number of choristers, the joint concert with Pontnewydd Ladies Choir and Morgan Rees, a young and talented trumpet soloist, the concert was a great success both musically and financially and we will be presenting St Gabriel's Church with a cheque for £871.

It was our first major concert since Covid struck in early 2020 and brought all activities to a shuddering halt, so it was wonderful to be back on stage performing to the public again, and particularly satisfying to be greeted by such a large audience. We took the opportunity as well to pay tribute to John Brown, one of PMC's long-serving, well-loved and most respected choristers who had sadly passed away during the Covid lockdown period. The singing of "Gwahoddiad" in memory of John was a particularly poignant moment.

Given our substantial sickness and injury list of 15 members, we took the stage with 28 choristers and acquitted ourselves admirably and will mean that we'll approach our concert engagements in the lead-up to Christmas with increased confidence and anticipation.

Raiders of the Lost Archive

How many choristers remember this occasion from November 2018?

Wales v Tonga and the first time that PMC had been invited to sing as part of the pre-match entertainment on the pitch at the Principality Stadium.

Who could forget the challenge of learning the Tongan national anthem or being sumptuously treated, courtesy of the Welsh Rugby Union, to a lunch of one of Peter's Pies!

Who could forget the jaw-dropping sound that reverberated when 150 choristers rehearsed the repertoire in the bowels of the stadium before proudly walking into that arena to an audience of 74,000 spectators and belting out Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau. It encapsulated what being part of a male voice choir is all about!





Hidden Talent

In September's newsletter I mentioned that we had unearthed some hidden talent within the ranks of choristers and that one example was Paul Reynolds' talent for poetry. It seems more apt that, with the introduction of Autumn Leaves into our repertoire, I include Paul's "Autumn Poem" in this edition of our newsletter.

Autumn Poem

The leaves are beginning
To lose their vivid green hue,
Very soon they will have fallen,
Discoloured and covered in dew.
The mornings are much darker,
The evenings draw in fast,
The air is so much colder,
Fog appears and lasts and lasts.

It's a season to wear jumpers,
Scarves, hats and wellies too,
Shorts and t shirts are long gone,
In the cupboard out of view.

Wild birds and animals foresee,
The direction nature is heading,
They hurry and scurry to and fro,
Gathering food and extra bedding.

This year's harvest is all gathered in,
Honoured by the church,
Countdown starts to yuletide,
Thoughts of family gifts to research.

Some people feel quite jaded,
Now sunny days have gone,
But joyously still look forward
To celebrate Christmas, bonfire night, Halloween

The colours we see in autumn
Are one of the things we love the most
Orange, purple, red and brown
A great season, Let's raise a toast

Change of banks

You may recall that we were planning to transfer our accounts from HSBC to NatWest.

December Engagements.

Item	Date	Arrival Time	Venue	Address
Lovelight Concert	06/12/22	18:15	St Woolos Cathedral	105 Stow Hill, Newport NP20 4SZ
Christmas Concert	17/12/22	18:30	Salvation Army Citadel	Wesley Street Cwmbran NP44 3LX
Afternoon Concert	20/12/22	13:45	Holly Lodge Care Home	1 Ton Road, Coed Eva, Cwmbran, NP44 7LF



Rural Concierge of Herefordshire	21/12/22	15:00	Parkway Hotel	Cwmbran Dr, Cwmbran NP44 3UW
----------------------------------	----------	-------	---------------	------------------------------

Choir repertoire

Our MD, Sarah Jones, tells us that **Joy to the World** is an English Christmas carol written in 1719 and the lyrics are an interpretation of Psalm 98 celebrating the birth of Jesus. The PMC Alan Simmons arrangement states: the music is 'traditional with a little help from Handel, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Beethoven and Vivaldi ... tapestry of songs woven through the tune ...'

So! Here are those interwoven tunes the piano accompaniment plays! Sarah has included the links so that people reading electronically can easily click the link to listen!

At b34/b95: Hallelujah' from Messiah by Handel

<https://youtu.be/IUZEtVbJT5c>

At b38: 1812 Overture by Tchaikovsky

<https://youtu.be/u2W1Wi2U9sQ>

At b49/b59: Radetzky March by Strauss

https://youtu.be/eab_eFtTKFs

At 53: 'Ode to Joy' from Symphony No 9 by Beethoven

<https://youtu.be/q0EjVVjJraA>

At b63: 'Spring' from The 4 Seasons by Vivaldi

<https://youtu.be/3LiztfE1X7E>

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, whilst **Mike O'Dwyer** is still accepting donation items for our Christmas Hamper raffle but don't leave it too late as the draw is on Tuesday 13th December.

Conservation Update

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

Hedgehogs Tip No 3

Let plants go mad in a corner of your garden and don't cut them back in winter or pile up fallen leaves. Hedgehogs may well use the area for a hibernation nest. You can add some logs or branches to give some structure. This will also provide cover for insects and bugs, just in case your hoggie wakes up looking for a winter snack

For those interested in some of the wider aspects of our wildlife, the British Trust for Ornithology says that although we are approaching winter, November temperatures remained mild and there are reports of different species of butterflies still on the wing, including Painted Ladies, Brimstones and Red Admirals. While the majority of flowering plants have now finished for the year, you may still see some Ivy flowers holding on and this is often the last major source of nectar for pollinating insects.

One of the major issues facing our wild bird population is that of avian flu and as garden birds often congregate around feeding stations, the potential for disease transmission is increased. The best way to help prevent the spread of disease is to routinely practice good feeding hygiene. Feeders should be



cleaned regularly, ensuring that all pieces of food are removed, and each individual part of the feeder is washed with warm, soapy water. Once they are thoroughly dry, they can be refilled and returned to the garden. Food should be changed regularly, ideally being replaced daily. Always wash hands afterwards, especially before eating or drinking.

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:

"My idea of Christmas, whether old fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others.
Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that" - Bob Hope

Christmas presents

My grandson is asking for a pet spider for Christmas, so I went to our local pet shop, but they wanted £70 for one. Blow this I thought, I can get one cheaper off the web!

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

Nadolig LLawen – Have a Merry Christmas

Ian