



Pontnewydd Male Choir

CHOIR NEWSLETTER

Year 25 AUGUST 2021

“Patience is a virtue” – can you complete the saying?

Well here’s a newsletter that will attempt to make up for **the lack of a July newsletter**. Your editor spent an interesting time in **The Grange and Neville Hall Hospital** and is now gradually just about back to a normal routine – although the recent sweltering weather did not really go well with an aged senior citizen. But let’s start bringing you up-to-date.

Sad news.

A former chorister, **John Davies** recently died and his funeral took place on **Tuesday 20th July**. John was a long-standing and valued member of the 2nd tenor section of the choir for many years and retired at the age of 80. He usually sang in the front row and could be relied upon to hold his part – not often easy for a second tenor. He enjoyed a well-deserved retirement of almost 10 years before sadly passing away at home only months before his 90th birthday.

He will be remembered with affection as well as respect..

Birthdays & celebrations.

For the record, the following choristers had birthdays in July and have shed many a tear because they missed out on the usual melodious rendering of “Happy Birthday”.

Ron Jones 3rd **Alex Phillips** 12th **Mark Woodhouse.** 14th
Alan Dunn 18th **Steven Spokes.** 20th. **Jeff Williams.** 29th

Jeff Williams (B1) has been in touch to say that he would like me to mention that he, and his beloved wife **Chris**, had an important celebration in July. Shy fellow that he is he doesn’t tell me (possibly can’t remember) the actual anniversary day but in the 4000-word text that he sent me recently he explained that he first met Chris on New Year’s Eve 1966. It was at the famous Upper Race Labour and Social Club. In those days there were certain venues where you could be sure of meeting the right sort of possible partners – for dancing and more permanent relationships. Their very happy marriage of fifty years has resulted in three children and four grandchildren. So we’re glad that you had

Happy Golden Wedding, Chris and Jeff!

August birthdays are as follows:

Neil Dixon (B2) Thursday 5th
Doug Hopkins (B1) Thursday 26th
Peter Cox (B2) Saturday 28th

Robert Powell (B2) Friday 13th
Phil Evans (B2) Friday 27th
No Tenors in August!

Here's another celebration.

Gwyneth and Alwyn Nutland proudly tell us some good news:

*It is with such pride that we would like to share some wonderful happy news: Our **grandson Ben Taverner** (T1) has **passed his BTec** with a **double distinction star** and is now going on to do his **HNC**.*

*Also our daughter **Lia Taverner** has **passed her nursing degree**.*

Congratulations to you both!

Gwyneth and Alwyn.

Response?

Please read this section as one in which speculation is made about where we go next – not as one of criticism.

Attendance at Fairhill Church choir practices has been rather erratic and sometimes quite poor percentage-wise.

Undoubtedly there have been a number of very understandable reasons for this. The need to split practices between the four sections, having to wear face masks, discomfort in the hot weather, the desire to make the most of eating outdoors, the opportunity to escape for a couple of days to another part of the country. All of these are perfectly acceptable reasons and that's without mentioning possible lack of enjoyment or personal problems.

So when can we expect any sort of improvement?

Management committee are working their socks off to keep things on the right track and have to deal with whatever are the current "lockdown" rules. Personally speaking I wonder whether there is any logic behind them – but I wouldn't like to be the one who has to consider the possible future consequences for the wider community.

So it all boils down to this. What is going to be our response to what comes next? Carry on and wait until things get back to what they used to be? *If so, what if that is unlikely?* Is there some way we can adapt to changed circumstances – and is there something we (more importantly, "I") can do to ensure that our happy band of brothers battles through and comes out victorious at the end? Or perhaps I need to ask - do I care at all?

Annual General Meeting and WAMC news.

On 28th June the choir Annual General Meeting was held in a completely different form owing to Covid restrictions on the number allowed to assemble. The venue was a separate room in Cwmbran Rugby Club and our technical team had set up all the equipment for a Zoom session. Inevitably the numbers attending was reduced but the business went ahead in an otherwise

conventional way and officers were elected – with the usual ‘hang-over’ of some positions not being filled on the night – more later.

For the benefit of those of us who, for varying reasons, were unable to take part I reproduce the Chairman’s address as an appendix to this newsletter. The choir web page gives fuller details of the elections but, in case you are unable to look there, I list below details of some post-holders.

Chairman:	Ian Evans.	01633 876742.	07860 293720
General Secretary:	Martin Carey.	01633 770204.	07715 252160
Treasurer & Web Master:	Doug Hopkins.		07794 766706
Facebook:	Phil Evans.		
Concert Secretary:	Derek Williams.		
Stage Managers:	Paul Reynolds and Graeme Davies.		
Section Leaders:	T1	Rob Crowley	
	T2	Mike Mayled	
	B1	Haydn Noonan	
	B2	Phil Evans	

There are other committee members listed on the web page (just as important) and also a number of posts that, when this newsletter was being compiled, need to be filled.

Are you prepared to help by filling one (or more) of the following posts?

Vice-Chairman, Social Secretary, Minute Secretary, Vice-Presidents’ Secretary, Welfare Officer, Health & Safety Officer.

These are jobs that need to be done. Some are less-demanding than others – so why not have a word with the chairman or secretary who will give you details.

WAMC.

In a June update from the Welsh Association of Male Choirs we were told that:

- A project group had been set up to replan the proposed 2023 Royal Albert Hall concert and also explore the possibility of a smaller mass concert, possibly in Cardiff.
- Another group will consider possible activities to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the WAMC in 2022.
- The WAMC will have a stand at the Tregaron 2022 National Eisteddfod.
- The Executive will consider a number of possible improvements in the services on offer to member choirs.

On Friday 18th June the Welsh Government revised and republished its guidance about the reopening of places of worship. It said that singing and playing of instruments could take place where risk assessments and mitigation measures have been put in place and that congregations had to wear masks when singing. It explained that a longer duration of singing creates a higher risk,

as does having more singers, *but also the 'type' of singer; eg tenors are more likely to emit more virus than altos and sopranos.*

Following the publication the Welsh Government made apologies “unreservedly” about the section saying that tenors were more likely to spread corona virus than other types of singers.

Early in July revised advice was issued (that is being followed in our choir practices) and you can read or download the section subtitled “**Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments**”. (*Good luck! That title reads like something out of a medieval manuscript.*)

Light relief.

You may have seen the following – it was sent to me by a close friend of mine (thank you Vivienne) who lives, when she isn't travelling all over north America, in Edmonton, Alberta. At one time there were **two** Welsh Societies in Edmonton and perhaps both are still active! Viv is a welsh lady who seizes any opportunity to promote the land of our fathers. Here's the posting that Viv had seen and then forwarded to me:

As we get older we sometimes begin to doubt our ability to “make a difference” in the world. It is at these times that our hopes are boosted by the remarkable achievements of other “seniors” who have found the courage to take on challenges that would make many of us wither.

Harold Schlumberg is such a person:

Harold says: “I've often been asked ‘What do you do, now that you're retired?’

WellI'm fortunate to have a chemical engineering background and one of the things I enjoy most is converting beer, wine and whisky into urine. It's rewarding, uplifting, satisfying and fulfilling. I do it every day and I really enjoy it.”

Harold is an inspiration to us all.

It is claimed that:

A cat has 32 muscles in each ear.

A crocodile cannot stick out its tongue.

A shark is the only fish that can blink with both eyes.

A snail can sleep for three years.

Butterflies taste with their feet.

Cats have over 100 vocal sounds – dogs only have about 10.

It's impossible to sneeze with your eyes open.

A “jiffy” is an actual unit of time for 1 hundredth of a second.

APPENDIX. CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS AT 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Mr President, Musical Director, committee members and choristers – thank you for your support and the honour of allowing me. to continue to serve as your chairman for another year.

It's been 2 years since our last AGM and a period of unprecedented challenges and strong responses that have really tested the strength and resolve of the choir.

The success of our concert tour to Southend to sing with Leigh Orpheus MVC, our joint St. David's Day concert with City of Newport Male Choir and our various other engagements were overshadowed by the loss of our much-loved Musical Director, Pauline Carey, after an extended illness and absence from the practice room. Her talent, energy, enthusiasm and humour that endeared her to the choir has been sorely missed. However, we were fortunate in not only having the strength and commitment of Keith Jones and Annette Williams to see us through those difficult times, but we were also delighted to secure the services of 2 very talented musicians in Martyn Jones and Lucie Bebbington-Lewis as MD and Assistant MD, that allowed us maintain continuity of practice and concert performance and to continue the fine legacy of Pauline and Walford Hutchings before her.

I must also pay tribute to you, gentlemen, for your response and commitment during this tough period and for your whole-hearted support of our musical team.

Despite this tragic set-back we continued with our annual concert at Rougemont School, with Martyn Jones taking the baton for the first time (after a rather interesting final practice the night before – the expression "I'll be alright on the night" springs to mind) and, together with Keith and Annette, leading us through a successful and emotional performance on the evening.

Following our Christmas concerts at St Woolos' and the Salvation Army Hall, the Covid pandemic struck and all practice was cancelled on 17th March and consequently 2020 proved to be the year that never was. Thankfully there was enough time to recruit new choristers and we welcomed Bill Bebbington, Frank Horsell and Gareth Jones into the fold, and we wish them a long and happy membership of Pontnewydd Male Choir.

Unfortunately we also lost a long-serving and very-well-respected chorister, John Brown, who passed away following a long battle with cancer. John was one of the corner-stones of the Second tenors and his reassuring presence and strong voice is greatly missed.

However, not all choir activity ceased and I want to pay particular tribute to those who have worked hard to maintain contact and communication with choristers over the last 15 months of lockdown:

- Martyn and Lucie in particular for organising practice sessions over Zoom. It provided a challenging medium for practice and may have had limited benefit but it allowed Martyn to introduce some new music and even a new language to our repertoire.
- Roy Fisher for his persistence in regularly producing our monthly newsletter and managing to make it entertaining despite the lack of choral activity.
- Doug Hopkins and Peter Davies, our newly-appointed Marketing and Publicity Manager, for continuing to develop our web site and introduce our new choir branding.
- Phil Evans for continuing to update our Facebook page.
- And those choristers who have taken it upon themselves to keep in touch with fellow members of the choir and help ease the loneliness and isolation of lockdown.

And, of course, I must also thank my fellow officers of the choir for all their hard work over this period; particularly Martin Carey, our secretary, Mansel Young, our treasurer, and Doug Hopkins who tried to keep us all connected! The lockdown presented us with a whole new series of challenges which were compounded by the lack of face-to-face contact and the vagaries of email and internet connection.

Thanks also to Gwyneth Nutland and the Ladies Committee whose activities were abruptly halted last year, but who in 2019 had presented the choir with a donation of £500 through their tireless fund-raising.

Finally, gentlemen, thank you for your support and commitment during these trying times. I know that Zoom was not everyone's cup of tea, but at least it provided us with a means of maintaining contact and demonstrated to a number of us that the fear of computer technology can be mastered, with of course some requisite help from wives – I'm thinking here of Haydn Noonan, Jeff Williams, Alan Dunn and John Walding in particular.

As a group of choristers I am thankful that we survived the worst of Covid 19 intact – in fact some of us are actually in better shape, with new knees, hips and wider arteries. As we slowly return to normal and pick up the threads of where we left off almost a year ago, we face another year of challenges ahead and we have to re-energise ourselves and re-commit to enhancing the reputation of PMC under the leadership of Martyn Jones.

Thank you.