



CHOIR NEWSLETTER

JANUARY issue

Year 29 January 2024

Welcome to our January newsletter and our very best wishes to all for a Happy, Healthy, Peaceful and Musical 2024



Did you know:

You may increasingly come across the letters **CE** or **BCE** in conjunction with a year e.g. 2024 CE, but what does it mean?

CE is an abbreviation for Common Era. It means the same as AD (Anno Domini) and represents the time from year 1 and onward. BCE is short for Before Common Era. It can be used instead of BC (Before Christ) and stands for the time before year 1. CE and BCE are used in the same way as the traditional abbreviations AD and BC. Because AD and BC hold religious connotations, many prefer to use the more modern and neutral CE and BCE to indicate if a year is before or after year.

January is named after Janus, the Roman god of new beginnings and transitions. Janus is depicted with two faces, one looking into the past, the other into the future, so it seems apt that we should do the same.

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Reflections on 2023

Like Janus, the choir will also look back over the experiences of 2023 but, at the same time, look forward with anticipation to the celebration of our 120th Anniversary in 2024.

The big change for us was the welcome move to our new home and practice room at Nant Bran Centre and where, despite the new challenge of unlocking and locking the front door which now competes with the more famous Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London, we quickly settled in and saw the regular return of established choristers and meant that attendance at practice increased markedly and generated

a new vibe at rehearsals.

With the return to concert performances choristers found that the combined effect of Covid lockdown and Christmas and New Year festivities resulted in some difficulty fitting into their uniform. However, those difficulties were overcome by delving into our stock of larger sizes rather than resorting to the more demanding solutions of diet and exercise.





As Sarah stated last month, the choir should be pleased with the successful performances we gave in 2023 as we continued to raise money for a range of local and national charitable causes including Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, the Royal British Legion and Hope GB. In the process we established new links with Caerphilly Ladies Choir, Allegra and Morrison RFC Male Choir as well as discovering new venues to host future concerts. We also rediscovered our appetite for and enjoyment of "afterglows". The year was not without its moments of sadness too as we mourned the loss of two pillars of the choir in Roy Fisher and Brian Davies, whilst poor health led to the premature retirement of Alwyn Nutland and Graeme Davies.

However, we warmly welcomed new choristers Phil Batty, Bill Adshead, Jonathan Kerl and Huw Williams into our fold and were delighted that Nick Thomas-Symonds MP accepted our invitation to become our new President.

We've made some significant progress too in terms of our advertising and publicity with the production of new flyers and posters, and particularly throughout new Facebook page and its links to other social media platforms.

Our MD, Sarah, has been putting in a lot of hard work outside of practice in recording the 4 voice parts of all our main repertoire pieces to help us master our harmonies more quickly and effectively. She has been sending her sectional recordings via WhatsApp and, more recently, by emailing a Google link to each part. Peter Binding has also made excellent progress in organising our music library, making our catalogue of musical score more accessible and easier for choristers to manage.

Sarah's take-away and recommendations from our concerts are:

- keep singing between the Tuesday and Friday practices because not only does your voice benefit but the lyrics become easier to sing in choir when sung as often as possible out of context, i.e. the kitchen, shower, car, Aldi etc! My reason for mentioning this, is because some lyrics were a little 'sparse' on some occasions.
- concert motivation etc, try to sit next to someone different to usual now and again in rehearsals; that way, if we are logistically challenged at a concert venue, you'll be used to being squished next to a different section/singer and won't feel as vulnerable.

Did you also know:

There are some New Year traditions that are uniquely Welsh:

Calennig

A well-known Welsh tradition, still seen in some areas, is the collection of calennig (New Year's gift) where children rise early and carry from door to door, as bearers of good luck, a decorated apple, pierced with three sticks and adorned with a sprig of box and hazelnuts.

The children usually sing a simple verse and in return usually received a gift or food or money for their troubles. Rhymes and songs were concisely worded and their message was to announce the New Year's arrival, to wish the family a prosperous twelvemonth, and to ask from it 'calennig' or (New Year's Gift).

Nos Galan Road Race

The Nos Galan race celebrates the life and achievements of Welsh runner Guto Nyth Brân. Founded in 1958 by local runner Bernard Baldwin, it is run over the 5 kilometres (3.1 mi) route of Bran's first competitive race. The main race starts with a church service at Llanwynno, and then a wreath is laid on the grave of Guto Nyth Brân in Llanwynno graveyard. After lighting a torch, it is carried to the nearby town of Mountain Ash, where the main race takes place.

Hen Galan

Hen Galan, Welsh for "old New Year" and the Gwaun Valley in Pembrokeshire is one of a handful of places which celebrates the New Year according to the old Julian calendar, which means it's on January 13. In 1752 Britain and its empire ditched the Julian calendar, which had been in use since the days of Julius Caesar and the Roman Empire and replaced it with the Gregorian calendar. There was some religious opposition because the changes were felt to be Catholic and in making September shorter people felt as if 11 days were being taken away from them unjustly. Some communities carried on celebrating festivals such as Christmas and New Year and the accompanying rituals late.



Why wait until 14th February

The Welsh equivalent of Saint Valentine's Day takes place in January. Saint Dwynwen (Santes Dwynwen) is the Welsh patron saint of lovers and her special day is celebrated throughout Wales on 25th January. She was the daughter of King Brychain Brycheiniog who lived in the 5th century on Anglesey. So, here's an extra opportunity for you choristers to impress your loved one!

January birthdays.

Remarkably there are no choristers' birthdays to celebrate this month, you'll have to wait until February!

Chorister updates.

Thankfully we have a much more positive health bulletin this month as choristers continue to recover from coughs, colds and chest infections and it did not impact too much on attendance at practice nor, more significantly, at concerts and our various other events in the lead-up to Christmas. **Mike Willis** has been hospitalised following a nasty fall which coincided with a bout of pneumonia. However, tough ex-prop forward that he is, he is now home and we should see him back in practice shortly.

Christmas thanks

We must record our thanks to two choristers in particular who put in a lot of extra work over this festive period – **Mike O'Dwyer and Alun Wilmot**. Mike organised our Christmas Hamper raffle again as in previous years and the donations that he received ensured that there were plenty of prizes to be won. It raised almost £300 for choir funds, and it was refreshing to see that someone other than Mike Willis walking away with the main hamper (probably something to do with Mike being absent from a few rehearsals in December!)

Also, a big thank you to Alun for organising our Christmas dinner at the Cwrt Henllys, which has been arranged for January 27th to avoid clashes with our busy pre-Christmas schedule.

Ladies Committee

On behalf of the Ladies' fund raising committee, I would like to thank everyone who supported us throughout 2023. Our trip to Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas market was a huge success. It was nice to see some of the choristers joining us. Despite having rain when we first arrive it soon stopped and there was plenty of different stalls as well as plenty of places to eat, drink and be merry. Hope you all had a good Christmas and that the New year will be happy and healthy. We are organising another fund-raising evening in March 2024 so keep your eyes and ears open for full details. Hopefully the evening will be a success.

Once again, a BIG THANK YOU

Regards

Gwyneth.



December 2023 events

Here are some photos of the memorable events that we attended in the run-up to Christmas!

Freezing at Five Locks – supporting Torfaen’s Santa Cruise



Luxuriating at Llansantfraed House – wedding of Kyle and Lydia Scrivens



Harmonising with Harriet – 7 year-old granddaughter of second tenor, Martin Jones





Engagements.
PMC - Confirmed Concert bookings

Item	Date	Arrival Time	Venue	Address
Joint Concert with Morryston RFC Choir	24/02/24 Saturday	6:30 7:00 start	Victory Church	Central, Greenforge Way, Cwmbran. NP44 3BA.
TOUR	8 th -10 th March 2024	TBC	Palace Hotel Paignton	The Palace Hotel, Esplanade road, Paignton, TQ4 6BJ
120 th Annual Concert	27/04/24 Saturday	7:00 start	Congress Theatre	Congress theatre Cwmbran Town Centre
Caerleon Festival	05/07/24 Friday	5:45 6:15 start	Caerleon Amphitheatre	Broadway, Caerleon, Newport, NP18 1AY
120 th Anniversary Dinner	31/08/24 Saturday	TBC	Parkway Hotel	Cwmbran Drive Cwmbran NP44 3UW
Concert at Ledbury	28/09/24	Coach leaves Cwmbran at 5:00pm TBC 7:00 start	Ledbury Theatre	The Market Theatre Market Street Ledbury HR

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. 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.

And finally:

I'm opening a gym called Resolutions. It will have exercise equipment for the first two weeks and then it turns into a bar for the rest of the year.

My New Year's resolution is not to make any New Year's resolutions. Now that I've already broken it I'm done with resolutions this year!

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda
Happy New Year

Ian