



With the Easter holidays behind us, the choir is hard at work preparing for the very busy concert schedule ahead with a new President, Secretary and Committee. Our President David Field and our Secretary Kevin Seerup were profiled in earlier newsletters and they are busy preparing for our major concerts in the middle of the year with Teddy Tahu Rhodes and our guest artist at our recent St David's Day concert - Kate Amos.

## Recent Concerts

### A Welsh Celebration of St David's Day

From our master of ceremonies - Bill Spawton's introduction to the rousing final chorus of "World in Union" and "Mae hen wlad fy'n hadau" (the Welsh national anthem), the audience at the MLC's wonderful James Tatoulis Auditorium enjoyed a veritable feast of singing. Our sole remaining founding member - Terry Thomas, reminded us of how good a baritone he is with his solo part in "Lily of the Valley" while our MD David Ashton-Smith demonstrated he has lost none of his skill in giving us a moving rendition of "My little Welsh Home".

In a sobering moment, Bill Spawton reminded us that it was in this month nine years ago that Black Saturday claimed the lives of 173 people in Victoria, including one of our choristers David Holcombe and his wife Carol. He acknowledged the presence in the audience of two visiting friends from California (David Holcombe's home state).



The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly our guest artist and winner of Singer of the Year award in 2016 - Kate Amos. Her combination with the choir in "You'll never walk alone" and "World in Union" demonstrated her wonderful range and control. Her year spent in Cardiff at the International Academy of Voice has obviously paid handsome dividends.

### Melbourne Welsh Church Gymanfa Ganu

Because St David's Day fell in the middle of the week this year, the choir's participation in the Gymanfa Ganu was a week later than our own concert, rather than the following day as has been the case in previous years.

This year's celebration was dominated by the three tenors - Steffan Prys Roberts (who was the Blue Riband winner at the

Welsh National Eisteddfod) plus Rhys Meirion and Alun Wyn Davies. (Rhys was one of our guest artists - the other was Sally Anne Russell- at the concert, which our choir gave at the Hamer Hall in 2005).

The capacity audience at St Michaels Church, Collins Street, Melbourne, appeared to enjoy the whole event and the Welsh Church is to be congratulated in continuing the support of this Gymanfa Ganu, which is possibly the largest event of its type in the world.

### Choir Member Profile - Ieuan Thomas (T2)

I was born in the coal-mining town of Maesteg, which is situated in the Llynfi Valley some 15 miles east of Swansea and 25 miles west of Cardiff, the year was 1950. My father was, of course, a coal miner, as were my grand fathers and uncles. From a very early age it was made quite clear to me that a career in the coal mining industry was not a suitable option, education was the answer.



My education, and thus my passport out of the valley, began at Plasnewydd Primary School and continued at Yr Ysgol Ramadeg Dechnegol Maesteg (Maesteg Grammar/Technical School). Having completed my 'A' Levels in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, I gained my passport and studied Chemical Engineering at Imperial College, University of

London, which I completed with Third Class Honours in 1971 (the boy from the valley had trouble adjusting to the social life of the big city).

Towards the end of my tertiary education I realized I'd soon be out there earning a living and engineering was not on my wish list. I had been talked out of teaching as a career by Mr Iorwedd Jones, the Principal of Maesteg Grammar School - his advice on a career choice being: "no money in teaching boy, give engineering a go".

I left the Big Smoke and returned to fill a vacancy at my old school, teaching mathematics and physics at Yr Ysgol Ramadeg Dechnegol Maesteg - quite an un-nerving experience I can assure you. I had been a rather difficult student in my formative years and to sit there, now as a teacher, playing cards in the staff room with the very teachers who had called me all sorts of unkind names during my studentship often caused me to play an inappropriate card. Many of the students also did not share my love of mathematics and physics and would often question the educational reasoning behind the solution of non-linear simultaneous equations. This I found challenging, especially in the morning after an evening of festivities at the Nantyllyllon Rugby Club followed by a session at the '7777' Night Club and a wayward walk home.



Despite the often challenging and confronting situations I encountered in teaching I realized that I loved the job and should make this my career choice. I also realized that my liver could not take another year of punishment and decided to return to the University of London to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Education, which I did. I stayed on in London and taught in Croydon for a couple of years before again deciding that I'd had enough of The Big Smoke.

Being an adventurous type I decided, (one night down the pub), that I was going to embark on an adventure, teaching my way around the English speaking (and rugby playing) countries of the World and eventually return to Maesteg and marry a valley girl. Having met a group of nurses from Melbourne at one of our many parties I decided that Melbourne would be my first port of call.

On January 28th 1975 I landed at Tullamarine Airport ... and so it began ... I enjoyed the more relaxed atmosphere in the class room and playing rugby for the then, Melbourne Kiwis, introduced me to New Zealand culture, rather similar to the culture I had left behind, except the beer was colder and there weren't so many sheep in the city. Most importantly though, I found I had money in my pocket at the end of the year – this place wasn't at all bad.

Then, of course, I met this little girl from Ringwood and so Melbourne was as far as I got teaching my way around the World. We've been back to the 'old country' a couple of times and I often think of the Sunday morning walks with my father and sister, up over the top of the valley – especially when we sing 'Take me Home'. I wonder if my children will remember our walks along the Mullum-Mullum creek?

While teaching at Parkwood Secondary College, I met this eccentric parent who made a point of speaking with me on parent/teacher evening despite the fact that I didn't teach his children. He kept on and on about this Welsh Choir he sang with, I explained I hadn't sung since I was a second tenor at school – he didn't give up and finally Charlie Sharp convinced me to join – my only regret is that I waited so long and I had to sit next to Charlie for the next six months ('only joking mun' - as Max Boyce would say).

I finally gave up teaching in 2013 and joined the throng of grey haired nomads in retirement, I will no longer have the pleasure of enlightening teenagers in the ways of Information Technology and Mathematics, but retirement has its compensations.

I love my involvement with the choir and I'm looking forward to the next thirty years, which will make me nearly as old as the other Thomas in the baritones ('only joking mun'). Now – why don't you consider joining our choir?

## Forthcoming Concerts for your diary

### St Andrews Church, Brighton 22 April

The choir is delighted to have been invited to perform at the wonderful St Andrews Church with its great acoustics. Our solo artist for this event will be mezzo-soprano Chloe Harris, who was runner up in last year's Singer of the Year competition.

Chloe is a recent graduate of the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Music degree with first class honours. She is under the tutelage of mezzo-soprano Roxane Hislop (who has been one of our adjudicators for the Singer of the Year competition in the past).

The program will have a distinctly Welsh flavour with old favourites like "Myfanwy" and "Calon Ian" but will also demonstrate the choir's ability to perform operatic and musical theatre pieces as well as pop songs from the 40's to the present day. We look forward to raising the lovely church roof.

### Returning by popular demand

# Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

*Rousing choruses & heart-warming classics*

*Featuring soloist Chloe Harris*

*in "one of the most beautiful acoustics in Australia"*

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> April**

**2.30pm**

**at St Andrew's**

**228 New Street, Brighton**

**(parking available)**

**www.trybooking.com/TOBM**

or purchase at the door

adult \$45 / concession \$40 / student \$20  
under 18 free

www.standrewsbrighton.org.au



*A sheriff walks into a saloon, and shouts for everyone's attention. "Has anyone seen Brown paper Jake?", he asks. "What's he look like?", asks one shoddy-looking cowboy. "Well", replies the Sheriff. "He wears a brown paper hat, a brown paper waistcoat, a brown paper shirt, brown paper boots, brown paper pants, and a brown paper jacket." "So what's he wanted for?", asks the same cowboy... "Rustlin'...", replies the Sheriff.*



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## Joint Concert with Frankston Ladies Choir at Robert Blackwood Hall 30 May 2018 sponsored by Allison Monkhouse

The choir's history in performing an annual free concert for Tuckers Funerals in Geelong may well have been the inspiration for this new concert for Allison Monkhouse in Melbourne.

The choir will return to the majestic Robert Blackwood Hall at Monash University for a "Morning melodies" style concert with our friends - Frankston Ladies Choir, whose Music Director is our accompanist - Simon Walters.

The concert will be compered by the delightful star of stage, television and radio - Denise Drysdale.

The choirs will sing separate brackets and will also combine for a couple of spectacular numbers.

It's a concert not to be missed and it's free!

Who knows, if we can fill the Robert Blackwood Hall, it may become an annual event.



*"Doc, I can't stop singing 'The Green, Green Grass of Home.'"*

*"That sounds like Tom Jones Syndrome."*

*"Is it common?"*

*"Well, It's Not Unusual."*

## Concert with Teddy Tahu-Rhodes and Kate Amos at Melbourne Recital Centre and the Ulumbarra Theatre in Bendigo

Tickets are selling well for the two concerts with Teddy Tahu Rhodes and Kate Amos at the Melbourne Recital Centre on 23rd June 2018 and the following afternoon in Bendigo at the beautiful new Ulumbarra Theatre.

Surprisingly tickets are selling faster in Bendigo than in Melbourne so make sure you get in early for the best seats.

Teddy is in great form, as anyone who saw him perform recently in "From Broadway to La Scala" at the Hamer Hall will confirm. His most recent appearance was as Scarpia in Tosca for the New Zealand Opera.

In addition to his solos and songs with the choir we expect that Teddy will also join with Kate Amos for a duet (or two). Tickets are available from <https://melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets/> so book now.

**Melbourne Welsh Male Choir**  
with **Teddy Tahu-Rhodes**  
and 2016 Singer of the Year **Kate Amos**  
conducted by  
**David Ashton-Smith OAM**



**Melbourne Recital Centre**  
Cnr Southbank Blvd & Sturt St, Southbank  
**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2 pm**  
For tickets visit [melbournerecital.com.au](http://melbournerecital.com.au)  
or call 9699 3333  
A Reserve \$70 ♦ B Reserve \$60 ♦ C Reserve \$45  
Pensioner Concession & Group (6+) Available  
*Transaction & delivery fees may apply*

and  
**Ulumbarra Theatre**  
Bendigo  
**2 pm Sunday**  
**24th June**  
For tickets visit [gotix.com.au](http://gotix.com.au)  
or call 5434 6100  
Adult \$45 ♦ Concession \$40 ♦ Subscriber \$38 ♦ Student \$25





## Recruiting

A recent influx of new probationer choristers has been very encouraging but the choir continues to be on the lookout for new members, whether experienced choristers wanting a new challenge or young inexperienced singers, who would benefit from the coaching and direction of our professional music team and the mentoring of our established choristers. Our web based learning aids enable newcomers and established choristers to quickly come up to speed with new and existing material.

Rehearsals are held every Wednesday (excepting school holidays) and run from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. when the choir is updated by the president and secretary about upcoming events and related choir matters.

We especially welcome younger members, but prospective choristers of any age are urged to come for an audition. My own experience was that following a chance meeting with one of the established members I came along for a visit and then an audition.

I found that, despite never having sung since being part of a university choir decades earlier, I felt so comfortable in joining a section and learning the music with the help of my mentors that I was singing onstage with the choir within six months

If you are interested in joining, please give me (Gwyn Harper), or any choir member, a call (my number is 0419 562 353) and we will introduce you to an irreverent but highly motivated group of guys who love singing in 4-part harmony.

## Hiring the choir

If you or your company are interested in promoting your image, rewarding your clients or staff or celebrating a significant occasion, then we may well be the answer to your requirements.

For a negotiated fee we can provide entertainment with a number of appropriate songs or we can provide a complete 2-hour concert. We have a large repertoire of songs from Opera choruses and songs from Musical theatre to pop and folk music. We come as the complete package with electronic keyboard (if necessary) and choir risers. Our music professionals can assist with the staging and content of the performance and we can also help with the marketing and promotion if necessary. Give us a call and we will be pleased to tailor a performance to your individual requirements.

## Sponsorship

The choir is actively seeking sponsors, in particular for our major events including the prestigious Singer of the Year competition and concert.

If you would like to be associated with this or other wonderful events, or simply wish to have your name or product associated with the choir in concerts, programs or website etc., please contact Colin Brown or any member of the choir's committee and we will be delighted to work with you to make the most of your sponsorship.

Alternatively if you would like to support our "crowd funding" initiative please log on to <https://chuffed.org/project/mwmc>.

The choir is a registered charity so all donations are tax deductible.

*Did you hear about the man in Paris who almost got away with stealing several paintings from the Louvre?....*

*After planning the crime, getting in and out through all the security at the Louvre, he was caught only a mile away when his van ran out of petrol....*

*When asked how he could mastermind such a spectacular crime and then make such an obvious error, he replied:*

*"Monsieur, I had no Monet to buy Degas to make the Van Gogh."*

## The wonders of maths

*A man left to his three sons 17 camels. To the first son, he left half the camels. To the second son, he left a third of the camels, and to the youngest son, he left a ninth of the camels. Well three sons got into a negotiation. Seventeen doesn't divide by two. It doesn't divide by three. It doesn't divide by nine. Brotherly tempers started to get strained.*

*Finally, in desperation, they went and they consulted a wise old woman. The wise old woman thought about their problem for a long time, and finally she came back and said, "Well, I don't know if I can help you, but at least, if you want, you can have my camel." So then they had 18 camels. The first son took his half -- half of 18 is nine.*

*The second son took his third -- a third of 18 is six. The youngest son took his ninth -- a ninth of 18 is two. You get 17. They had one camel left over. They gave it back to the wise old woman.*

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