

Preparations for the Concert at Melbourne Town Hall for the Concert celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the WWI Armistice.

This will be one of the only concerts we have done with a single theme and the program encompasses almost every aspect of life during the two world wars.

From the cocky soldiers' songs such as "Kiss me goodnight sergeant major" to the poignant reflections of "No man's land" sung by Mike Brady, to the wives and sweethearts' views with Marina Prior's interpretation of Gracie Field's classic "Wish me luck" the audience will be treated to the full gamut of wartime emotions.

Not to be outdone the wonderful 50 plus piece Australian Youth Band is sure to get you whistling with their rendition of Colonel Bogey.

Some of the profits from the concert will go to support RSL and Legacy so at a time when the Invictus games are very much in our mind, what better way to support our Diggers as well as having a great afternoon's entertainment.

The choir is hard at work rehearsing for this upcoming concert.

Recent Concerts

Tuckers' Concert in Geelong - Seniors Week

5th October at 2:30 p.m.

Our 17th consecutive year of performances for Tuckers at the Basilica in Seniors week was enjoyed by a full house (*as usual*).

In addition to a full program of well known and well loved songs in Welsh and English, the audience was treated to a number of songs by mezzo soprano Chloe Harris including *We'll gather lilacs, I could have danced all night* and in a demonstration of what a wonderful mezzo range she has, *Can't help loving that man* from *Porgy and Bess* which totally won over the audience (*and choir*).

As a bonus, a rare performance by our music director David Ashton-Smith demonstrated he has lost none of his beautiful baritone voice in singing *Without a song*.

The photo shows the large sculptured crest that graces the front of the Geelong Basilica - above the front doorway and immediately below



the circular Rose Window. The crest is that of the Holy See and is a little over a metre square in size. It has been magnificently cast in bronze and is a striking visible symbol of St Marys' status as a minor Basilica.

Triple Treat Joint Concert

with Sydney Welsh Choir and the Australian Youth Band at Kingston Town Arts Centre, Moorabbin

Oct 21st at 2.00pm

A relatively small but appreciative audience enjoyed a fun Sunday afternoon concert and witnessed the differences between a mixed and male voice choir.

With over 150 performers including the wonderful Australian Youth Band the audience had a lot to enjoy and went home well satisfied.



Many of our choir members enjoyed a drink, meal and an afterglow with the Sydney Welsh following the performance, which augurs well for a possible joint concert in Sydney next year.

Choir Chorister Profile – Bill Spawton



Our profile this month is one of our longer serving choristers and also one of our experienced compères whose dulcet tones and Carmarthenshire accent lend themselves well to introducing items from our Welsh repertoire.

An aficionado of Dylan Thomas' poetry, Bill's occasional recitations and his love of his home country

have endeared Bill to audiences across Victoria and indeed internationally.

I was born in January 1953 in Carmarthen, the oldest town in Wales. My mother had already had two easy deliveries at the local Infirmary, so her Doctor suggested a home birth for me. Little did she know that our house, a cottage called Glan-yr -Afon (River Side) would be flooded after very heavy rains, along with most of the Tywi valley. There was about a foot of water downstairs and I was rather a big baby (ten and a half pounds). It wasn't an easy birth.

Our family moved from Carmarthen to Porth Tywyn (Burry Port) when I was seven so as a child, I enjoyed the beaches and harbour of our town as well as roaming the nearby hills which were full of old mine shafts and tunnels.

After primary school I went to Llanelli Boys Grammar School and then on to an apprenticeship in electronics with the RAF at Locking in Somerset.

I had chosen the wrong career and left the RAF after two years to begin a period in my late teens and early twenties of being a wandering free spirit.

Amongst the various jobs I tried during this period of high employment and lots of available work was a six-month stint with the National Coal Board. I worked underground at Brynlliw colliery, Grovesend, just West of Swansea and, as an electrician's mate, got to visit most of the underground tunnels and coal faces. The underground network was so vast that it linked with the tunnels of Morlais colliery situated at Llangennech across the Loughor estuary in Carmarthenshire. Some of the best anthracite coal in the world was extracted from Brynlliw.

I worked as a nurseryman in the Geranium greenhouses at Hyde Park in London, as a baker and cook in the seaside town of Tenby in West Wales, and on farms in the hinterland of mid Wales where I lived in a little cottage with a well and a ty-bach (outside toilet) at the end of the garden.

This was near the village of Llangwrafon. For part of the time I lived there I worked as a builder's labourer during the construction of a new library at The University of

Wales in Aberystwyth. I used to walk four miles downhill each morning to the main coastal road where I would get a bus into Aberystwyth. At the end of the day, it was back home up the long uphill climb.

When I was 24 I moved into an old stately home in the Southern Lake District and joined a Buddhist community. There were two Tibetan Lamas living with us and I was fascinated by their ability to be consistently good-natured and at ease. Both had managed to escape Tibet during a period of persecution and ethnic cleansing, by walking over the Himalayas into India.

I stayed there, studied and worked on the old building for two years and then I began my work in mental health in the late 70's and worked at three Psychiatric hospitals in Cardiff, Caerleon and Abergavenny.

I had an opportunity to come to Melbourne in 1980 and did so. I was fortunate enough to meet my wife Chris one morning in Carlton and a little while later, after we'd spent a few months trekking in the Himalayas and exploring India we settled in Brixton in South London for two years.

We came back to Melbourne in 1982 and after a short spell in Kew moved to Kinglake West where our two daughters spent their childhoods. I have continued to work as a Mental Health Nurse in various roles and over the last few years have worked for Monash University teaching Mindfulness Based therapies to mental health clinicians prior to my retirement earlier this year.

Despite some health challenges I am very much enjoying being retired. As well as singing with the second tenor section of the choir, I enjoy gardening, chess, bush walking and baby-sitting duties with our granddaughter.

Over recent months I have become committed to improving my fluency in the Welsh language and use an online service called Say Something in Welsh (SSIW) as well as weekly Welsh classes in rooms provided by The Welsh Church in La Trobe Street. I am excited by the challenge of coaxing my not-so-young brain towards building new synaptic connections (the neurons that fire together wire together). Now where did I put my cup of tea?

Laughter is the best medicine

While singing in the choir is a wonderful way to maintain physical and mental health, laughter is still the best medicine. We're including a joke or two to keep you going.

Wrong

A wife returning from a fishing trip with her husband was telling her troubles to a neighbour. "I did everything all wrong again today," she said. "I talked too loud, I used the wrong bait, I reeled in too soon, and I caught more fish than he did."



New Chorister Profile – Andrew Robertson

Andrew was born in 1949, the eldest of 4 children. He has two sons – Justin, 37 who lives in British Columbia, Canada (one granddaughter Evelyn), and Mathew who lives in Perth. He himself lives in Ferntree Gully and has worked mostly in the Public Service and he is also a part-time cab driver.



He started learning singing at 19 and competed in various local eisteddfods.

In 1973 he joined Gospel Theatre Productions on and off until 1983; one of their productions “According to John” was performed 125 times. In 1984 he joined the Mordialloc Music Society for two musical productions, the Mikado and South Pacific; he managed lead roles in both.

In 1985 he moved to Mount Evelyn, and since then his musical involvement has been sporadic at best - solos & duets at weddings and funerals plus occasional solos at church functions.

In 2017 he met Peter Kooy who persuaded him to check out the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir; it had never crossed his mind to join a choir, much less a Welsh one! He’s experienced a steep learning curve, especially with the Welsh songs. He finally worked out that writing the songs out phonetically worked best and gave him the courage to audition.

Andrew, welcome to the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir; the Baritones especially appreciate your contribution and effort.

A teenage boy had just passed his driving test and inquired of his father as to when they could discuss his use of the car. His father said he'd make a deal with his son, "You bring your grades up from a C to a B average, study your Bible a little and get your hair cut. Then we'll talk about the car." The boy thought about that for a moment, decided he'd settle for the offer and they agreed on it. After about six weeks his father said, "Son, you've brought your grades up and I've observed that you have been studying your Bible, but I'm disappointed you haven't had your hair cut." The boy said, "You know, Dad, I've been thinking about that, and I've noticed in my studies of the Bible that Samson had long hair, John the Baptist had long hair, Moses had long hair, and there's even strong evidence that Jesus had long hair." Dad's reply. "Did you also notice that they all walked everywhere they went?"

Larceny in Music

One of the great things about being part of the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir is the interesting people you meet both inside and outside the choir and the extraordinary stories you hear.

Our talented accompanist Simon Walters is not only a master of the keyboards (*as well as being music director of the Frankston Ladies Choir*) but he also a music arranger of international note and has been involved with some high profile productions. It was therefore fascinating to read on his Facebook page about his experience with a rogue in the industry

Just had the news I'm going to break America (*more than it already is, anyway!*)..well, a production I did piano scores for is going on in Dallas next year. It's been a weird journey for this one - a scammer first commissioned me to do the scores under an alias and submitted the work as his own without paying me, but I found him out by looking up one of the weird character names on the net and contacting the composer/hirer direct. The Musician's Union then contacted the fraudster and got my money out of him on the threat of court action! So it's extra pleasing that over a decade later, the show is coming to fruition!

Broadway Or Bust indeed!

<https://www.paulkalburgi.com/broadwayorbust>

Life sure has some unexpected twists and turns.

Dear Dad

An old father living alone in the country wanted to plant his pepper garden, but the ground was too hard and he was too old to do the work. His only son who used to help him was in prison for robbing a bank. The old man wrote a letter to his son and mentioned his situation:

"Dear Jake, I've been very depressed lately because it looks like I won't be able to plant my peppers this year. You know how much your mother loved planting peppers this time of year, but I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. I know if you were here my troubles would have been over. I know you would have been happy to dig the plot for me." Love, Dad

A few days later he received a letter from his son: "Dear Dad, Don't dig up that garden! That's where I buried the THINGS!" Love, Jake

At 4.00 a.m. the next morning, federal agents and local police arrived and dug up the entire area looking for the THINGS. They apologized to the old man after not finding anything and left. The next day the old man received another letter from his son. "Dear Dad, Happy Fathers Day! Go ahead and plant your peppers now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances." Love, Jake



Would you like to sponsor the choir?

The choir is actively seeking sponsors in particular for the annual funding of our famous Singer of the Year (SOTY) Concert.

The number of winners and runners-up of this competition who have gone on to make careers on concert and opera stages worldwide is testament to the significance of this event.

Two of our previous winners recently appeared and were lauded for their performances in Victoria Opera's October production of Pelleas and Melisande by Debussy.

Siobhan Stagg our 2011 winner played the role of Melisande with Samuel Dundas, SOTY winner in 2009 playing Golaud (*her husband and brother of Pelleas*)

If you would like to be associated with this wonderful event or simply wish to have your name or product associated with the choir, please contact any member of the choir's committee and we will be delighted to work with you to make the most of your sponsorship.

Would you like to hire the choir?

The choir is available for community, corporate and sporting events, dinners, anniversaries, weddings etc.,

So if you require anything from a short rousing opening for a conference (*say*) to a full two-hour concert, complete with choir risers and electric piano (*if required*), please contact Colin Brown (0409 188 109), or any committee member to discuss your needs. Please bear in mind that we're talking of a choir of up to 50 voices plus accompanist and Music Director so we don't come cheap but we provide great value for the investment.

Would you like to join the choir?

The choir is always 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 (*which we believe to be the best in the business*) and the mentoring of our established choristers.

Our web based learning aids enable newcomers and established choristers to come up to speed with new and existing material very quickly.

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 choir president and secretary about upcoming events and related choir matters.

We always welcome younger members, although potential members of any age are encouraged to come for an audition.

As one of our relatively recent recruits and admittedly, a chorister who had sung in Wales, said, "There are male choirs and then there are Welsh male choirs..."

If you are interested give Gwyn Harper (0419 562 353), or any choir member, a call and we will be pleased to introduce you to an irreverent but highly motivated group of guys who love the company of fellow choristers and enjoy the challenge of singing in 4-part harmony.

Helpful Teacher

Did you hear about the teacher who was helping one of her kindergarten students put his boots on?

He asked for help and she could see why. With her pulling and him pushing, the boots still didn't want to go on. When the second boot was on, she had worked up a sweat. She almost whimpered when the little boy said,

"Teacher, they're on the wrong feet." She looked, and sure enough, they were. It wasn't any easier pulling the boots off than it was putting them on. She managed to keep her cool as together they worked to get the boots back on, this time on the right feet. He then announced, "These aren't my boots."

She bit her tongue rather than get right in his face and scream, "Why didn't you say so?" like she wanted to. Once again she struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off. He then said, "They're my brother's boots. My Mom made me wear them."

She didn't know if she should laugh or cry. She mustered up the grace to wrestle the boots on his feet again. She said, "Now, where are your mittens?" He said, "I stuffed them in the toes of my boots..."

Contacts

- Marketing - Gwyn Harper and Colin Brownmarketing@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
- President - David Fieldpresident@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
- Secretary -Kevin Seerupsecretary@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
- Vice President - David Simmvicepresident@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
- Phil Tomlinson, Paul Gawthorn, David Phillips, Ieuan Thomas, Doug Utleycommittee@melbournewelshchoir.com.au

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Editor: Gwyn Harper 0419 562 353

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