

The Choir's participation in November 11th Remembrance Service

The choir was honoured to be invited to sing at the 100th Remembrance Day service at the Shrine in Melbourne. The dignitaries present included the Governor, Her Excellency the Honorable Linda Dessau, the Premier Daniel Andrews, the Federal Minister for Defence, Melissah Price, the Lord Mayor, Sally Capp as well as various members of the government and diplomatic corps. The weather was fine and the large crowd which included large numbers of school children plus veterans and their families and many tourists, covered most of the grassy area around the shrine.

Being in the open air and with the choir being arranged in five rows on the stone steps leading to the shrine, was not the best of environments in which to perform, but the microphones helped to broadcast our sound to the audience. At 10:58 a.m. the bugler sounded the *Last Post* and at



exactly 11:00 a.m. there was two minute's silence followed by the bugler playing *Rouse and Carry On*. Then at 11:04 a.m. the choir sang *You'll Never Walk Alone*. This was followed by school student (and Shrine Young Ambassador) Rosie Hyett reciting *In Flanders Field* and the Governor giving the Remembrance Day Address. At 11:19 a.m. the choir led the singing of the *Australian National Anthem* and the official party went inside the shrine to lay wreaths. A 20-minute performance by the choir began at 11:45 a.m. after the official ceremony was completed. We performed a bracket of songs including *Amazing Grace*, *Benedictus*, *He Ain't Heavy, I Believe*, *Hine E Hine* and *You Raise Me Up*.

It was a very moving ceremony and many members of the crowd came up to us later to say how much they had enjoyed our contribution.

Our new choir recording

Our Music Director has been hard at work over the past few weeks working with the technicians at Oaklands studio mixing and putting the finishing touches to our new recording, which we hope will be available and on sale in time for Christmas.

Featuring many of our newer songs together with some songs which we have performed with our guest artists Roy Best, Chloe Harris, and Kate Amos. There is also a characteristic piano solo by our own keyboard virtuoso accompanist Simon Walters.

This will make an ideal present for Christmas so watch the choir's web site for details of price and availability. Orders for this new CD can be placed via the website www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au or by calling Phil Tomlinson on 9800 3889



Christmas Concert Sunday

15th December

Mooroolbark

Community Centre

125 Brice Avenue,

Mooroolbark

This concert has been a sell-out for seven years running and seats are selling fast.

As our readers may be aware, because of the size of the Hall, the choir gives two concerts in one day, the first being 11:00 a.m. and the second at 3:00 p.m. The concerts feature traditional and modern Christmas carols, some old choir favourites as well as some of the new material which we have developed in 2019.

Despite the limitations associated with fitting a choir of our size onto the relatively small stage, we love our traditional Christmas concerts at this charming intimate venue.

As a special treat this year we will have the lovely soprano Catherine Bolzonello as our guest artist.

To book please contact Yarra Ranges on 1300 368 333 or via email to boxoffice@yarraranges.vic.gov.au



The Melbourne Welsh Male Choir's Celebration of St David's Day

James Tatoulis Auditorium,

MLC 207 Barkers Road, Kew

The choir's traditional celebration of the birthday of the Patron Saint of Wales will continue this year with performances by the winner of the 2019 Blue Riband at the National Eisteddfod of Wales (which this year was held in Llanrwst, Conwy County) in August 2019.

Erfyl Tomos Jones from Aberhosen, Machynlleth was winner of the David Ellis trophy- the Blue Riband for soloists.

As with our last year's guest performer we are indebted to the Melbourne Welsh Church who were instrumental in bringing Erfyl to Melbourne to perform at their traditional Gymanfa Ganu on Sunday 1st March in St Michael's Church, Collins Street.

Erfyl will be joined by two of Australia's best young female vocalists **Chloe Harris** and **Amelia Wawrzon** both of whom are well known to regular choir patrons. Expect solos, duets, joint items with the choir and much more.

This promises to be a wonderful afternoon of glorious singing, so be sure to book your tickets early.

<https://melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets/>



A Welsh Celebration for St David's Day
Melbourne Welsh Male Choir
Conductor David Ashton-Smith OAM
Accompanist Simon Walters
Associate Artists
Erfyl Tomos Jones
Blue Riband winner
at the 2019 Welsh National Eisteddfod
Chloe Harris 2019 Singer of the Year Winner
and **Amelia Wawrzon**
3 pm Saturday 29th February 2020
The James Tatoulis Auditorium - MLC
207 Barkers Road, Kew
Adult \$38 • Concession \$35
Group (6 or more) \$32
Children (under 15) \$15
www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets
or Phone 9800 3889

Side Story and *Jesus Christ Super Star* (I loved Jon English in his performances at the Palace theatre in St Kilda).

I started singing at church where, on different occasions, I sang both baritone and tenor parts.

In my earlier years (from the age of 10), I was part of the Demons (Melbourne Football Club) cheer squad and it is possible that this is where my loud voice developed!

I moved away from singing, except for a few gigs at weddings, when I started shift work with the Victorian Railways in 1978 as a station assistant. Over 10 years I worked my way up to Station Master level 1. During this time, I worked predominantly on the Hurstbridge and Lilydale lines.

Valerie and I got married in April 1993, shortly after we had acquired our house in Montrose.

It was a concert by the Melbourne Welsh Choir at the Melbourne Town Hall, in July 93, which proved to be the turning point in my singing career. Listening to the choir singing their different parts made a great impression on me. This gave me the motivation to take up the challenge to join.

There was an advert for the Melbourne Welsh Male Voice Choir, in the local paper, looking for "men who love to sing". I said to Valerie, "Let's go to a rehearsal" - which was at Tintern Grammar School, in Ringwood North. Bill Mead, the choir's conductor at the time, welcomed me to the choir and two second tenors John Roberts and Charlie Sharpe both took me under their wing and effectively trained me as a part of their section - "thanks guys". I was successful in my audition as a second tenor and was thus able to join the choir onstage for their "Singer of the Year" concert in September 1993.

I have enjoyed the camaraderie within the choir especially with some of the key personalities. Terry Thomas was (and is) my idol. I looked at him and said, "What a performer!". His solo baritone singing really stood out. Bill Dorman was yet another entertaining personality at the time, and a beautiful tenor soloist.

I have been lucky enough to go on a number of overseas tours with the choir to South Africa, Canada, England, Wales and Austria, which have been both enjoyable and enlightening.

I was on the committee in 2006/07. It was an eye opener! It proved to me that to manage a choir of this size and diversity you have to be very dedicated and have a passion for handling men from various worlds and backgrounds.

I have had the opportunity to sing as a first tenor, which I did in several concerts because of lack of numbers in the first tenor section at the time. I enjoyed the challenge, however I love the second tenor section more, since you can both sing higher and lower than the firsts at times, and it is the section whose performance can break a choir or make it great. It's a section where you do not sing many of the melody lines and hence it requires one to be very disciplined and often creative when learning your part.



Erfyl Tomos Jones



Chloe Harris



Amelia Wawrzon

Choir Chorister Profile – Alan Fordham – Second Tenor

Thanks for the opportunity to outline my story as part of the choir.

I consider myself to be eighth generation Welsh since my father's forebears came from Neath near Swansea but my mother has both English (London) and French ancestry. My father's ancestors came out to Australia as Freemasons in the 1830s and settled at the top end of Spencer Street.

When I was a child I was introduced to music by my mother. Mum, when she was younger, participated in a number of vocal competitions and also sang on radio, courtesy of Radio 3XY Melbourne.

This motivated me to take an interest in musical theatre with shows like - *Paint your wagon*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *West*





Our second tenor section has expanded from a low of 6 to the current level of 14 members and so we currently have a respectable number of chaps and all solid singers.

In recent years I have been pleased to see an increasing number of new members joining the choir.

It's good to see that the current committee is doing a great job under the leadership of David Field and with the support, conducting genius and passion of our Music Director.

I retired from the railways in 2017 and now have time to enjoy riding my bike with the U3A group on Mondays and joining the Karaoke group on Tuesdays to sing a wider variety of songs and to keep my voice in trim.

I look forward to many more years of fun and great singing together with the men of the Melbourne Welsh.

New Choir Chorister Profile Michael Kenny – Second Tenor

Michael lives in Greensborough. He is retired but formerly he worked at the Peter Mac where he was a ROMP (Radiation Oncology Medical Physicist) for more than 40 years. During that time, he was also a member of the Peter Mac Staff Choir and every year at Christmas they sang carols to the patients in the wards and waiting rooms; they also did a concert for the staff in the cafeteria. Michael had been with the Peter Mac choir 35 years.



He is the eldest of nine children. He had a brother, who has unfortunately passed away and seven sisters. He is unaware of any Welsh ancestry. However, he does know that his paternal grandmother Frances Kenny (nee Lucas), was descended from Nathaniel Lucas and Olivia Gascoigne who came to Australia courtesy of His Majesty with the First Fleet. At one time he had the report of the trial of Nathaniel indicating that he was convicted of stealing a tablecloth and tea-towels.

Michael and his wife, Liz, had 4 children - Christopher, Rachel, Hannah and Andrew. Christopher sadly passed away as a result of a rare metabolic disorder when he was 26. Hannah was born with the same disorder but, fortunately for her she has been cured by a liver transplant and now is disease-free and lives in Brisbane.

Since retiring Michael has been able to pursue his hobby of woodworking. As a retirement gift, his co-workers gave him a lathe and he has since built an off-grid man-cave to house the lathe and his other tools. The "cave" is a cedar shed he bought as a kit and assembled himself and in it he can run a saw table, the lathe and a drill press. Over the years he has undertaken many carpentry and cabinet making projects ranging from framing his house to making many cabinets, shelves and bookcases, speaker boxes and stereo cabinets, glory boxes for his sisters, an octagonal table, and even a

Welsh Love Spoon. And hereby hangs a beautiful story.

The Welsh Love spoon was designed by his son, Christopher, for his best mate from school, Terry, and his bride Mikayla. Christopher was chosen to be a groomsman at the wedding and thought it would be a suitable wedding gift. The idea came from the Welsh love spoon that Michael & Liz were given at their wedding. Christopher started making the spoon from jarrah, but it proved to be too difficult a task for him to complete in time. He left it in a toolbox in his dad's garage. Last year Michael happened to come across the toolbox. Inside he found the sodden jarrah block of wood and the rusted chisels and carving scalpels because water had got in over the years. Christopher had consulted with his dad over the design at the start, so Michael knew what he was attempting. Michael finished the spoon in time to give it to Terry and Mikayla last year on the occasion of the baptism of their third child.

The Melbourne Welsh Male Choir first came to Michael's notice at an opening ceremony for the Rugby World Cup at Telstra Stadium (now Marvel Stadium) in 2003 and he was very impressed. Earlier this year he met Paul Etherington on a Canadian/Alaskan tour and noticed that one day Paul was wearing a windcheater with the Melbourne Welsh Choir name and logo. He struck up a conversation with him and when he returned home, he signed up to receive notification of performances from the choir website. Eventually he heard about the Rosanna concert and the rest we know. As an aside both Michael's and Paul's wives are avid quilters and have kept in touch since the tour.

Would you like to join the choir?

Joining a choir is obviously about music; you wouldn't be reading this if you weren't just a little attracted by the notion of making some. To this end, choral singing is particularly special, since your contribution is so uniquely personal; your voice is an extension of your person and the sensation of combining yours with those of your friends is, at its best, palpable; you actually feel the harmony buzzing in your cheek bones. No two choirs ever sound the same and each experience singing with your choir sounds, feels, is different; this is why we want you to join us; nobody else in the world makes a sound quite like you do.

If you are a member of another choir, a bathroom vocalizer or someone who simply wants to learn to sing why not come and do so with the best team in the business?

We are always on the lookout for new members, whether experienced choristers wanting a new challenge, or young (and not so 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 come up to speed with new and existing material very quickly.

Concerned about singing in Welsh, well don't worry! It's just another language and we already sing songs in Italian,



Latin, Maori and German which we learned without too much difficulty. We do however have a Welsh language class just prior to rehearsal, to introduce newcomers (and experienced choristers) into the pronunciation and meaning of the songs which we sing in Welsh.

Whatever your level of musical competence, you will experience a sympathetic conductor and accompanist, a great rehearsal environment and a group of friendly, dedicated and talented choristers. Many of our members had no formal musical training prior to joining, but the choir has helped them to read and interpret our music scores. We all work hard, enjoy what we do and strive to help the choir achieve new heights .

Our concerts often take us around the country and overseas as well as to some of the most prestigious concert halls in Melbourne.

If you simply want to see and hear the choir rehearsing, please come along to our rehearsal rooms at Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Ave, Ringwood. Visitors are always welcome and if you come on the first Wednesday in the month, we'll even offer you a sandwich or a cake. You'll appreciate how a four-part harmony, male voice arrangement is developed to the polished state you see on stage. Having an audience tends to keep our choristers in check, without inhibiting the fun and banter, which is part of every rehearsal!

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

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

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 their fellow choristers and enjoy the challenge of singing in 4-part harmony.

Would you like to hire the choir?

Anyone who has attended our concerts at major venues such as the Melbourne Recital Centre, Ulumbarra Theatre Bendigo and the Melbourne Town Hall, will be aware that the choir has the skills, capability and contacts to produce and run high quality major events.

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, with guest artists (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 about a choir of up to 60 voices plus a professional accompanist and music director, so we provide great value for money.

Would you like to sponsor the choir?

If you have a product or service which you believe might appeal to our audiences then contact us and we will be delighted to feature your product in our concert material and promotions.

The choir is always seeking sponsors in particular for the annual funding of our famous **Singer of the Year (SOTY)** concert. This prestigious event, which has been running for 27 years and is open to singers under the age of 35, draws competitors from all parts of the state (and indeed sometimes interstate).

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 the event. In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the finalists, the choir provides opportunities for them to perform as guest artists in our concerts during the year.

All sponsors are acknowledged in our programs and publicity material and there is also the opportunity to be involved in the presentation ceremonies on the night and during the elimination heats.

If you would like to be associated with this wonderful event or any of our other prestigious concerts please contact any member of the choir's committee and we will be delighted to work with you to get the best value out of your sponsorship.

Season's Greetings

On behalf of the Choir may I wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year or as they say in the language of heaven – Y Nadolig Llawen a Blwythyn Newydd Dda.

We look forward to seeing you at our concerts in 2020.

Regards

Gwyn

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