

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

March Newsletter No 34



St David's Day Concert at MLC

From the opening bars of *Deus Salutis* to the ovation which followed the final strains of *Mae hen wlad fy'n hadau* (the Welsh National Anthem) the capacity audience at the James Tatoulis auditorium was treated to a wonderful afternoon's entertainment.



Following the choir's opening bracket of *Deus Salutis*, *Gwahoddiad* and *Tydi y Roddiast*, our male soloist **Erfyl Tomos Jones** demonstrated why he deserved the Blue Riband at the Welsh National Eisteddfod, with a powerful rendition of *Gwlad y Delyn*, followed by a tender interpretation of *My little Welsh home*.

Amelia Wawrzon then took the stage to delight the audience singing Eric Coates beautiful song *Birdsong at Eventide*.

As the choir returned to the risers to sing *David of the White Rock*, **Bill Spawton**, our compere, outlined the story behind the song. The tune was composed by David Owen (1712–1741), a harpist and composer who lived near Porthmadog in Caernarfonshire. He was known locally as *Dafydd y Garreg Wen* since *Y Garreg Wen* (The White Rock) was the name of the farm where he lived near Morfa Bychan. There is a tradition that, as Owen lay on his death bed, he called for his harp and composed the tune of this haunting song. He died at the early age of 29 and was buried at St Cynhaearn's Church near Porthmadog.

This item was followed by **Ieuan Thomas** reciting a poem *My father was a miner* while the choir provided vocal accompaniment oohing the lullaby *Suo Gan*. **Bill Spawton** pointed out that it was appropriate that **Ieuan** should read this poem since, apart from the time he spent fighting the Japanese during World War II, his father had been a miner in the Rhondda Valley for all of his working life.

Erfyl then returned to sing *Danny Boy*. This was followed by **Chloe Harris**, dressed in breeches as Cherubino - the Count's page, to sing *Voi che sapete* from Mozart's Opera *The Marriage of Figaro*.

To finish the first half of the concert, the choir returned to sing Joseph Parry's famous hymn *Aberystwyth* with its wonderful amens, followed by *Morte Christi*.

Following the interval, the choir sang two beautiful American songs - *How can I keep from singing*, one of the songs we learned for our trip to Cornwall for the Festival of Male Choirs, followed by a wonderful arrangement of *Homeward Bound*.

Amelia and Chloe returned to the stage to perform two duets perfectly suited to their voices - the *Flower Song* from the opera *Lakme* by Delibes and, in combination with the choir, Andrew Lloyd Webber's beautiful *Pie Jesu*.

Erfyl demonstrated his versatility with the romantic ballad *You needed me* which was a No 1 hit in 1978 for Anne Murray.

The choir then performed two audience favourites *Ar hyd y nos* and the acapella poem from Dylan Thomas' radio play "Under Milk Wood" - *Rev. Eli Jenkins Prayer*.



(after the concert, left to right - Amelia, Simon Walters (accompanist), Erfyl, Chloe and David Ashton-Smith)

To end the concert on a spectacular note, all the artists came on stage for the *World in Union* and *I Still Call Australia home*.

Following the presentations to the guest artists by the choir president - David Field, we ended the evening in typical Welsh fashion by singing *Calon Lan*, (now becoming a standard at Rugby matches in Wales) and, of course, finished with *Mae hen wlad fy'n hadau*.

Feedback from audience members after the show was unanimously positive and we look forward to making next year's St David's day celebration equally entertaining.

2020 St David's Day Gymanfa Ganu

St Michael's Uniting Church, Corner of Collins and Russell Street,

Sunday, March 1 at 3:00 p.m.

Those friends of the choir who have not attended a Gymanfa Ganu in Melbourne, really missed a wonderful free afternoon of Welsh entertainment on St David's Day.

Organised by the Melbourne Welsh Church, the event was held at St Michael's Church on the corner of Collins and Russell Streets. Members of all three Welsh male choirs in Victoria, the *Australia Welsh*, *Victorian Welsh* and of course the *Melbourne Welsh*, together with two ladies choirs – *Geelong Ladies* and *Mornington Peninsula Ladies* choirs plus a mixed choir *Excelsis* were located in the balcony to lead the hymn singing and also to perform some special joint choral items.

Our soloist at MLC, baritone *Erfyl Tomos Jones* (Machynlleth), together with husband and wife team *Eleri and Aled Edwards* (Cilycwm, both previous Blue Riband winners at the Welsh National Eisteddfod) and the popular Welsh conductor, *Dilwyn Price* (Old Colwyn), had all been brought to Melbourne by the Welsh Church to perform at this year's Gymanfa Ganu. *Dilwyn*, a retired teacher with a distinguished career in musical education in North Wales led the Gymanfa Ganu.

The event was opened, as usual, by the pastor of the Welsh Church, *Siôn Gough Hughes*, who introduced the congregation to the Welsh Church' new minister *Rev. Sara Bishop* before handing over to *Dilwyn* to conduct the Gymanfa Ganu.

What a wonderful afternoon it was. The choral pieces performed by the joint male choir in the balcony *Gwahoddiad*, *Rachie* and *Deus Salutis* were well received as was the joint ladies choir's rendition of *Calon Lan*, a new version using the traditional Welsh lyrics but performed to the music we know as *the Rose* from the film of the same name starring Bette Midler. The *Excelsis* choir performed their item on the ground floor.

Dilwyn maintained good control of the choirs and the congregation and kept us all amused, the soloists were all excellent and everyone in the church had a great time.

Mistaken Identity

The Pope is extremely early for his flight.

He asks his driver on his way to the airport if he could drive the car around for a while because they have time to kill and he hasn't driven a car since becoming the Pope.

Naturally, he's a bit rusty, so he's driving poorly, when suddenly he sees police lights flashing behind him. He pulls over and when the police officer comes up to the window his eyes go wide. He says to the Pope "Hold on for a minute," and goes back to his car to radio the chief.

Cop: "Chief we have a situation. I've pulled over an important figure."

Chief: "How important? A governor or something?"

Cop: "No sir. He's bigger."

Chief: "So, what? a celebrity or something?"

Cop: "More important, sir."

Chief: "A major politician?"

Cop: "No sir, he's much more important."

Chief: "WELL WHO IS IT!?"

Cop: "Well actually I'm not sure. But the Pope's his driver."

Upcoming choir events

Karralyka's 40th *Toe Tapping* Birthday Celebration

Karralyka Theatre, Mines Road, Ringwood East. 3134

14th (and now 15th) April 2020 at 10:30 a.m.

The choir's next engagement will be performing for Maroondah Council's *Toe Tapping Tuesdays* at the Karralyka Theatre venue, as part of the Centre's 40th anniversary celebrations. In this instance we will be performing in the function rooms at the Karralyka Centre, where patrons will not only get musical but edible treats as well. The program for this concert will be



totally different to the one at MLC, predominantly featuring, in keeping with the “toe tapping” theme, songs from many popular and well-loved musical shows.

The lovely soprano *Kate Amos* will be our guest artist. Kate is a previous winner of the Choir's Singer of the Year competition.

The response from the public to this concert has been so overwhelming that Maroondah Council have asked us if we can give a second performance, treats and all, on the following Wednesday morning, to which we have said yes (of course). Presumably that makes it a *Toe Tapping Wednesday!*

For tickets please phone the Karralyka Centre on 9870 2888

Travellers tale

A prominent Welsh minister travelling home one night was greatly annoyed when a young man much the worse for drink came and sat next to him on the bus.

“Young man,” he declared, “do you not realise you are on the road to perdition?”

“Oh, hell,” replied the drunkard. “I could have sworn this was the bus to Llanelli.”

**The Melbourne Welsh Male Choir with Silvie Paladino and Roy Best.
Sunday Aug 23rd 2:00 p.m.
Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo**

Those of you who attended our concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre will have been



delighted with the individual performances of our guest artists Silvie Paladino and Roy Best, their duets and the beautiful arrangements they sang with the choir.

We will be reprising much of this performance on Sunday afternoon August 23rd at the Ulumbarra theatre in Bendigo - that fascinating modern auditorium which was originally a prison.

For those of you who are Melbourne based, plan a weekend in Bendigo to include the concert, you won't regret it. If you attended our concert at MRC and have friends or relatives in the Bendigo area, let them know how much you enjoyed the performance and encourage them to book early.

Forrest Gump

The day finally arrives, Forrest Gump dies and goes to heaven. He is met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter himself. The gates are closed however, as Forrest approaches the gatekeeper, St. Peter says, "Well Forrest, it's certainly good to see you. We have heard a lot about you. I must inform you that the place is filling up fast, and we've been administering an entrance examination for everyone. The tests are fairly short, but you need to pass before you can get into Heaven." Forrest responds "It sure is good to be here St. Peter. I was looking forward to this. Nobody ever told me about any entrance exam. I sure hope the test ain't too hard; life was a big enough test as it was."

St. Peter goes on, "Yes, I know Forrest, but the test I have for you is only three questions.

- 1. What days of the week begin with the letter T?*
- 2. How many seconds are there in a year?*
- 3. What is God's first name?"*

Forrest goes away to think the questions over. He returns the next day and goes up to St. Peter to try to answer the exam questions. St. Peter waves him up and says, "Now that you have had a chance to think the questions over, tell me your answers."

Forrest says, "Well, the first one - how many days of the week begin with the letter "T"? Shucks, that one's easy. That'd be Today and Tomorrow."

The Saint's eyes open wide and he exclaims, "Forrest! That's not what I was thinking, but....you do have a point though, and I guess I didn't specify, so I give you credit for that answer. How about the next one?" asks St. Peter. "How many seconds in a year?"

"Now that one's harder," says Forrest, "But I think and think about that and I guess the only answer can be twelve." Astounded St. Peter says "Twelve!? Twelve!? Forrest, how in Heaven's name could you come up with twelve seconds in a year?" Forrest says, "there's gotta be twelve: January second, February second, March second....."

"Hold it," interrupts St. Peter. "I see where you're going with this. And I guess I see your point, although that wasn't quite what I had in mind, but I'll give you credit for that one, too."

"Let's go on with the next and final question. Can you tell me God's first name?"

Forrest replied, "Andy". "OK, OK," said a frustrated St. Peter, "I guess I can understand how you came up with your answers to my first two questions, but just how in the world did you come up with the name Andy as the first name of God?"

"That was the easiest one of all," Forrest replied

"I learned it from the song..... "ANDY WALKS WITH ME, ANDY TALKS WITH ME, ANDY TELLS ME I AM HIS."

Singer of the Year - 20th September 2020

Entry for this year's competition has just opened and will close on 21st August 2020.

Competitors can find the entry forms on the choir's website

(www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au).

Please note that we have dropped the entrance fee for this competition. The dates for the competition and the elimination heats have been carefully chosen to allow contestants to compete in our Singer of the Year competition as well as the Sun Aria. The heats will be held on the 28th and 29th August and the final will be adjudicated as part of our SOTY concert on 20th September. This is a date worth putting in your diary now. Our concert for St David's Day was a sellout so this one is likely to be the same. We will advise you when ticket bookings are open, and the information will also be on our website.

The photo opposite shows last year's finalists with our Music Director David Ashton-Smith. Holding the trophy is last year's winner, mezzo soprano Chloe Harris, who was one of our guest artists for our recent St David's Day celebration concert and, based on her current engagements, seems certain to have a stellar career in opera before her. The runners-up were Kimberly Colman (on the right) and Dorcas Lim.



Choir Chorister Profile – Geoff King – baritone

I was born in Corowa NSW quite a while ago and spent my first few years at a place called Coreen, where my father was a share farmer. After my younger brother was born, we moved to another farm south of Culcairn. I can remember my father teaching me how to stook sheaves - a six-year-old with a pitchfork, what could go wrong?



My first school was at Gerogery, and I had to catch the rail motor to get there. Not long after I started school, we moved to another farm (our own this time) near Canowindra in NSW, and I went to Nyrang Creek school - one room, one teacher, and about a dozen kids. Close enough to walk to, though. Our farm was a mixed farm with wheat and sheep, and the farmhouse was built of pisé (rammed earth). Unfortunately, 1950 was a very wet year and one night half of the house collapsed - we got out just in time. For many months we slept in the garage while my father cut down Murray pine, had it milled, and rebuilt the house.

I had just turned 10 when my father had a heart attack and died. My mother did her best to run a farm and 3 boys, but it was too much for her - her health suffered badly, and she had to stop. She went to recuperate with her mother in Melbourne, we boys were parcelled out to aunts and uncles, and the farm was sold to pay back

the bank.

I went to live with an uncle, near Tatura. I finished my primary schooling at Harston with my cousins Marg and Jenny. Harston was another one-room country school, but more kids - we had a part-time teacher for the mornings, but in the afternoons the sixth-grade kids were tasked with looking after the bubs. So, at twelve I was a teacher!

At thirteen I was sent to Albury Grammar School as a boarder. I joined the school cadets and eventually wound up as sergeant of the signals squad. Not being of a particularly sporting bent, I avoided football as much as possible, but when forced to, opted for soccer. Rather late, I discovered gymnastics. At the completion of my studies there, I hopped a train to Melbourne and have been here ever since.

My first job was as a junior clerk with Victorian Railways - not as boring as it sounds. One of my tasks was to help out and take notes while Doc Saleeba checked over job applicants; another task was to make up and distribute pay envelopes, which in due course resulted in me being issued with a 32 Browning in a shoulder holster.

After 4 years it was time to move on. I had done a short programming course on the CSIRAC machine (now in the Melbourne Museum), so I applied for and got a programming job with a service bureau. This lasted for a year, and I then applied for a programming job at Mobil. I was with them for 29 years, mostly working on software to support maintenance functions at the refinery, general accounting systems, and several years as a systems programmer.

Not long after I joined Mobil, one of my friends asked me if I could partner her friend to a ball - I met the girl, liked her, took her to the ball, and in due course we got engaged and married.

Judy and I went on to have three children - Jason, Deborah, and Wendy. We now have two grandchildren, Ash and Max.

During my time at Mobil I also studied part-time at Caulfield Tech and got my Bachelor's. I was also involved with a youth program called Discovery and was admin coordinator for them. After being retrenched by Mobil, I found myself out of work for eighteen months before I finally got a contract with CGU Insurance. This turned into a permanent job and I have been with them for 26 years, but now only doing 3 days a week. Judy keeps asking when I will go down to 2 days ...

It was while I was out of work that Judy talked me into joining a singing group. I was a member of Living Song for a few years and also sang with Millennium Chorus. Having been bitten by the bug, I then looked around for a more challenging gig. For some reason I looked around for a Russian choir but couldn't find one - next on my list were Welsh and Barbershop - I never got to check out Barbershop! I have been singing with Melbourne Welsh since 2001. And about 8 years ago, Melbourne Opera wanted more chorus singers for Turandot. I took up the offer, and have continued with them, doing another 13 operas.

Other hobbies I have had at various times include target shooting, car club rallying, running, and gliding. I am now into cycling and gardening.

Of my first home at Coreen, only the kitchen chimney remains. The school at Gerogery is still there, and a little bigger than when I went to it. The school at Nyrang Creek has closed, and the building is now a shearing shed on a nearby farm. The farmhouse still exists, but is no longer lived in, and the farm now sports a small vineyard - they make a reasonable port. Albury Grammar is now the Scots School and is now coeducational. I have less hair, and not all my teeth have made the distance. The world moves on ...

New Choir Chorister Profile – Ron Mack – first tenor

Ron was born and grew up in Melbourne, lived in Adelaide for 30 years, Sydney for 5 years, and has now returned to Melbourne where he lives in Bentleigh. He has two children and three grandchildren.



As a career he was a Commercialisation Adviser with the Federal Govt Department of Industry, Innovation & Science, advising and helping inventors, entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses to commercialise new technologies.

As to his musical background, he has played numerous principal and tenor chorus roles with Opera Victoria, tenor chorus with Opera in the Alps and Opera in the Market, principal and tenor chorus roles with Savoy Arts and Rockdale Opera, tenor chorus in numerous massed choral works in the Sydney Opera House, and tenor chorus parts with several companies in Adelaide. He enjoys choral singing and loves the very moving Welsh songs. He attended last year's SOTY performance and thought he would give the MWMC a try.

He also plays competitive squash, and he is currently renovating a cottage in France, of all places!

Ron, welcome to the Melbourne Welsh, and especially, with your wealth of experience, to the first tenors.

Would you like to join the choir?

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. While we are a Welsh Choir less than 10% of our repertoire is in Welsh and while a quarter of our program in some of some of our concerts may be in Welsh these tend to be standards, which are well known and relatively easy to learn especially with the aids we provide.

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

If you are concerned about singing in Welsh, well don't worry! We have a Welsh language class just prior to most rehearsals, 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 highly experienced and sympathetic conductor, a professional 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 the 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 enjoy the company of their fellow choristers and love the challenge of singing in 4-part harmony.

Communication

Although we are an amateur choir, we employ a professional music director and accompanist, who are instrumental in ensuring the choir presents a highly professional image. This, together with our infrastructure expenses e.g. rehearsal rooms, website, music scores etc., makes the choir quite an expensive organisation to run (and we receive no external grants).

We depend primarily on hire of the choir for events, plus ticket sales to our own concerts and sales of our CDs, for the majority of our income, so your patronage is essential to our survival and growth.

Please feel free to copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends or relatives. If you would like us to add them to our distribution list, so they get their copy direct, then please let us know their email address.

Alternatively, they can subscribe via our website: www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au

Email is the preferred way to make contact with our supporters, so send us an email and we'll add you into our database and include you in all future communications.

We treat all information provided as confidential and our subscribers can opt out at any time.

We value your feedback, so please write and let us know what you think of our performances, introduce us to your friends and tell us where, and what, you would like to see us perform in future concerts.

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, with guest artists (if required), please contact **Gwyn Harper (0419 562 353)**, 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 incredible value for money.

Would you like to sponsor the choir?

The Choir is a charitable organization and has a number of sponsors, to whom we are very grateful, but we always need more. If you have a product or service which you believe might appeal to our audiences or simply wish to be associated with the choir, then contact us and we will be delighted to feature you in our marketing material and promotions.

Potential sponsors may be interested in supporting our prestigious ***Singer of the Year (SOTY)*** concert. This event, which gets a lot of exposure, has been running for 27 years, is open to singers under the age of 35 and 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 quality and significance of the event. In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the finalists, the choir provides them with opportunities 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 ceremony on the night, as well as during the during the elimination heats.

If you would like to be associated with this wonderful event or indeed any of our other prestigious concerts, please contact **Colin Brown (0409 188 109)** or 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.

Contributions welcomed from supporters. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the choir. The MWMC Newsletter articles may be reproduced, but we do insist on acknowledgement as the source. All articles, sketches, photographs etc., that are included in the publication are published on this condition. The choir will endeavour at all times to seek permission to reproduce material from other sources and/or acknowledge the source as appropriate.