

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir Newsletter No 35



We live in interesting times!

In our last newsletter some weeks ago we were advising our supporters about our next concerts while today we have to advise that, because of the Covid-19 virus restrictions, all planned concerts and rehearsals have been suspended until such time as the crisis has passed - as it most surely will.

We are pleased to say that at this stage none of our members have been infected and we are hoping to keep it that way.

In the interim this gives us an opportunity to tell you what we are doing to keep our choristers motivated and in good voice.

All choristers who have access to the internet (which is all but 2 in our choir) can access the choir's website to access the scores and hear the music for their individual sectional parts (i.e. tenor, baritone etc.) for all of our current repertoire.

In addition, our Music Director - David Ashton-Smith is producing a weekly blog, to assist our choristers to get up to speed with current and future items in our repertoire, as well as tips for vocal exercises to maintain our singing capability. Our accompanist Simon Walters is producing piano tracks to enable choristers to practice with the piano accompaniment.

We managed to hold the Choir's Annual General Meeting with a limited attendance and the appropriate recommended physical separation restrictions.

A new committee was elected with David Field re-elected as President, Kevin Seerup taking the role of Vice President, Ieuan Thomas assuming the role of Secretary and Andrew Gibson returning to the role of Treasurer. The retirement of long serving members David Simm and Paul Gawthorn has allowed two of our younger brigade - Will Morton and Geoffrey Cooke to join the committee. Four of the remaining members of the committee i.e. Colin Brown, Doug Utley, Phil Tomlinson and Gwyn Harper were re-elected.

To comply with current restrictions the committee is examining various forms of video conferencing to allow the planning and operation of the choir to continue without physically meeting.

Future Concerts

Karralyka's 40th Birthday Celebration

As patrons will be aware, our planned concerts for the Toe Tapping Tuesday and Wednesday concerts on 14/15 April at Karralyka Theatre on behalf of the Maroondah Council have been postponed until further notice. However, we've been assured that as soon as the restrictions are lifted the concerts will be rescheduled.

The Melbourne Welsh Male Choir with Silvie Paladino and Roy Best.

Sunday Aug 23rd 2:00 p.m.

Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo

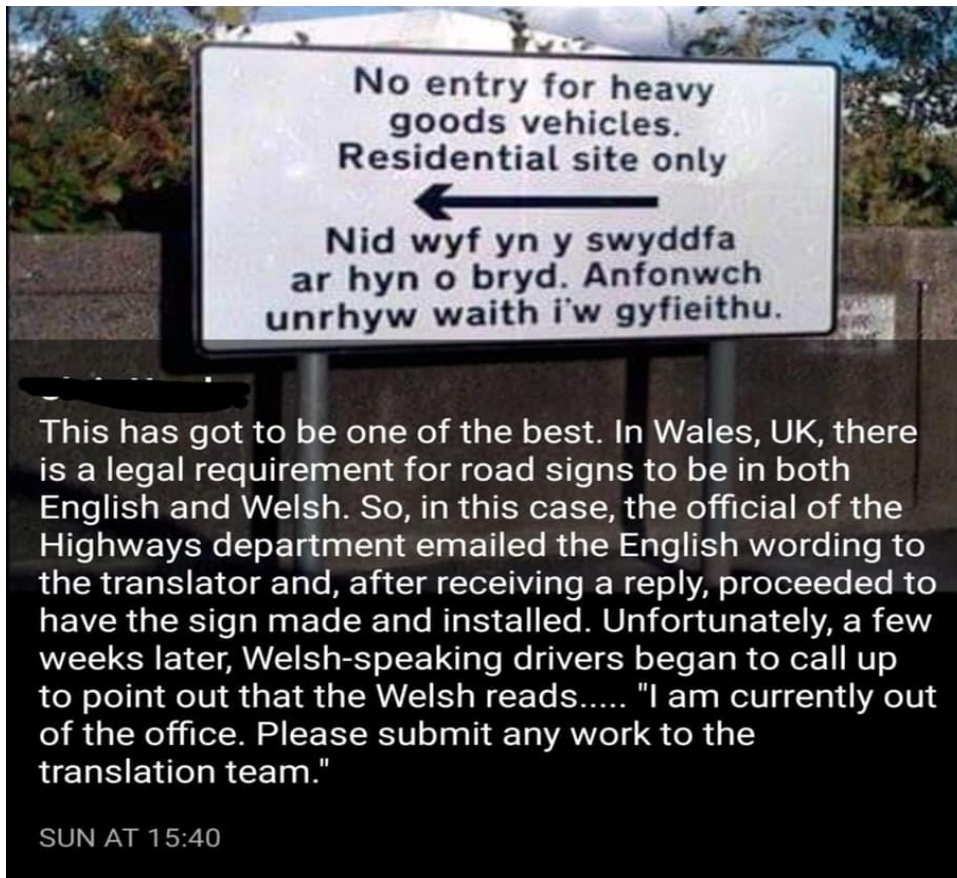
The planning for this concert continues, but since it falls within the six month window we are examining contingency plans for a later performance at the same venue.

Singer of the Year - 20th September 2020

The choir is still accepting entries for this competition with applications closing on 21st August, but, as with all these events, the current dates for the elimination heats and the final may be subject to change.

Laughter is the best medicine

As a bit of light relief from the current crisis here is an example of missed communication in Wales...



In Australia we have our own unique challenges....here is a little poem courtesy of Facebook

*I love our panicked country
A land of empty shelves
Where everyone is hunting
For toilet paper elves*

*The Pasta aisle is empty
The Oats and Wheat Bix gone
What has happened to this country?
When knives come out... forlorn...*

*We are the lucky country
Or so they used to say,
But when Aussie takes on Aussie
Over dunny paper, who will pay?*

*The Virus has us running
For hand sanitiser and masks
But what about the Aussie way
Looking out for each other I ask?*

*Bring back my Aussie Homeland
Where when in fire or in flood
We stand by one another
We fight hand in hand in mud*

*Stop heading to the shops
And buying everything in sight
Remember you're an Aussie
And keep your community tight*

*Check on all your neighbours
Hand out the toilet rolls
Put some snags out on the barby
And block out the panic trolls*

by Julia Varga

Choir Chorister Profile - Tony Such - Bass

I was born on 17th February 1941 in Bedford, England. Bedford is in a valley and always had a mist covering it. This is what helped it survive the war easily, despite being fairly close to London.

As a boy, I sang in the church choir (and also practised the art of campanology- bellringing). The church was StMary's in Cardington, a rural part of Bedford that is famous as the home of the R101



the airship that ended in a fatal flight. The crew has a significant memorial located at the Church.

I joined the R.A.F. at 15 years of age as an apprentice and served at various locations both in the U.K. and overseas as an Electronic Instrument Fitter on various aircraft, including Victors, Vulcans, Hercules and the Blue Steel Missile.

During my service, I met my wife Heather, who was serving in the W.R.A.F. We married in 1970, so now, of course, we have an important wedding anniversary coming up (50)!

In 1968, there was a marathon car rally starting in London and ending in Sydney organised by the Daily Express (U.K) and the Daily Telegraph (Australia). I came to Australia as aircrew on the Hercules that picked up the RAF and Army participants to take them and their cars back home.

Whilst here, I had time to travel from Sydney to Melbourne to visit my family (Mum, Dad, sister and brother) that I hadn't seen since they emigrated in 1966. I was very impressed with what I saw of Australia and the way of life they were experiencing. I returned home and told Heather all about it and my impressions. She of course, was keen to

meet my family.

After completing my tenure in the R.A.F., I applied for a position of Electronic Instrument Fitter with British Aircraft Corporation working on the Concorde. My application was successful, but I decided not to take up the position, because that same night we had received notification from Australia House of a date to emigrate to Melbourne. Guess which one we picked! We set off as "ten pound Poms" in June 1971.

I have always loved singing and Heather and I often attended concerts presented by the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir, at the invitation of Alex Young (tenor), whom Heather knew through Church. I was coerced into joining the choir by my wife and Alex and have enjoyed the experience for the last fifteen years.

Heather and I have two children - Melanie and Mark. They each presented us with two beautiful grandchildren - all girls. We are waiting for a grandson, but I think we may have 'miss' ed out!

History of our music

Choristers and audience members have asked us about the background to some of the Welsh songs we sing. Many have a story based on Welsh folklore.

Here for instance is "**Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn**" (English: Watching the White Wheat) - an 18th-century traditional Welsh love song.

It describes the tragic love affair between Wil Hopcyn and Ann Thomas (The Maid of Cefn Ydfa) from the village of Llangynwyd in Glamorganshire.

Ann belonged to a wealthy farming family but Wil was only a farm labourer. Ann's mother rejected Wil and forced Ann into a marriage with Anthony Maddocks, the son of a local squire.

A few days before the marriage took place Wil left Llangynwyd.

Months later Wil had a dream in which Ann's new husband had died, so he returned home.

However, when he arrived he discovered that in fact it was Ann who was dying, from a broken heart. Ann died in his arms that day.

Maddocks inherited the Thomas' estate and soon re-married.

Wil died in 1741, never having married. Both he and Ann are buried at Llangynwyd.

The song was collected from the oral tradition in the 1830s and was first published in 1844 by the Welsh musician and folklorist Maria Jane Williams in her collection *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg*.

Note: Our choir sings the second verse in English, but it is a different (non literal) translation

Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn

Mi sydd fachgen ieuanc ffôl
Yn byw yn ôl fy ffansi,
Myfi'n bugeilio'r gwenith gwyn,
Ac arall yn ei feddi.
Pam na ddeui ar fy ôl,
Ryw ddydd ar ôl ei gilydd?
Gwaith 'rwy'n dy weld, y feinirfach,
Yn lanach, lanachbeunydd.

Glanach, glanachwyt bob dydd,
Neu fi yn wirsy'nffolach;
Ermwyn y Gŵr a wnaeth dy wedd
Dodim' drugareddbellach.
Cwenn dy ben, gwelacw draw,
Rho im' dy law wen dirion;
Gwaith yn dy fynwesbert ei thro
Mae allweddcllo fy nghalon.

Trafodŵr y môr yn hallt,
A thrabogwallt yn tyfu,
A thrafocalon dan fy mron
Mi fydda'nffyddloniti;
Dywedimi'rgwirhebgêl,
A rho dan sêld'atebion,
P'un ai myfi ai arall, Ann
Syddoraugan dy galo

Watching the white wheat

*A simple youthful lad am I
Who loves at fancy's pleasure:
I fondly watch the blooming wheat,
Another reaps the treasure.
Oh! Wherefore still despise my suit,
Why sighing keep thy lover?
For some new charm, thou matchless fair,
I day by day discover.*

*Each day reveals some newborn grace,
Or does fond faith deceive me?
In love to Him who formed thy face,
With pity now receive me,
Then lift thine eyes, one look bestow.
Give me thy hand, my fairest,
For in thy bosom, lovely maid,
My heart's true key thou bearest.*

*While hair adorns this aching brow
Still I will love sincerely,
While ocean rolls its briny flow
Still I will love thee dearly.
Then tell the truth, in secret tell,
And under seal discover,
If it be I or who is blest
As thy true heart's best lover*