

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

November 2021 Newsletter No 50



We're back!

The choir has had a number of face-to-face rehearsals at Federation Estate so far this month and despite our long absence from singing at the venue and the mandatory use of masks during the session, the choir is sounding good.



In case you've forgotten what we look like this was take before COVID in the garden at Federation Estate

This augurs well for our **Melbourne Welsh Re-United Concert**, now scheduled, after many postponements, for December 4th at 11:00 a.m. at Federation Estate, Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood.

To accommodate the expected number of patrons, including those who booked tickets for the **SOTY** concert we will be performing two concerts on that day.

The **second concert** will commence at 2:00 p.m.

At the moment, there are still seats available for both concerts.

The packed concert program will feature solos from two of our choristers - tenor *Tony Meeuwsen* and our guitar-playing folk singer - *Raymond Croke*.

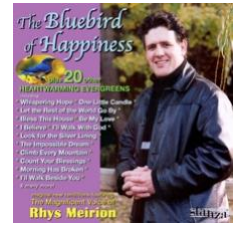
In addition, we will have contributions from our music director *David Ashton-Smith* including a duet with our talented pianist *Simon Walters* (who will also treat us to a piano solo later in the program).

Our guest artist will be the beautiful soprano - **Catherine Bolzonello**.



Catherine Bolzonello

In an interesting aside, Catherine has previously recorded two songs “*Oh What a Beautiful Morning*” and “*Whispering Hope*” in a duet with another of our former guests - Welsh tenor, Rhys Meirion (who performed in concert with us at the Hamer Hall in 2005) on his album *The Bluebird of Happiness*.



Catherine recorded the songs under her maiden name Ashton-Smith.

Yes, it runs in the family!

So, for those of you who have been in need of a pick-me-up after the recent lockdown, this concert is perfect for you.

While many of the more restrictive COVID rules on seating density will have passed, patrons will be required to show proof of their double vaccination status in order to be admitted into the venue and masks may need to be worn in the audience.

As you would expect, all of our Melbourne Welsh Male Choir members performing in the concert have been fully vaccinated.

The **raffle** will be drawn at the earlier concert on December 4th.

Anyone without raffle tickets who wishes to participate in the draw can buy them at Federation Estate immediately available prior to the 11:00 a.m. concert, or by phoning Geoff Cooke on 0402 349 674 or contacting any member of the committee.

To minimise the time taken to conduct the draw, the winners will be announced, but all the prizes may not be available during the first concert. All prizes will be available following the conclusion of the second concert or from the choir secretary (or his nominee) at any time after that concert.

A new video relating to our SOTY competition finalists

As we did last year, we have produced a video featuring our Music Director - David Ashton-Smith interviewing the three SOTY finalists, Samantha Hargreaves, Michael Dimovski and Amelia Wawrzon together with the adjudicator - Margaret Arnold.

The video also includes the artists' prizewinning performances. It runs for around 30 minutes and is compelling viewing.

This video was produced by our technology guru and baritone - Will Morton and is currently available to viewers of the choir's Facebook page and the web page at:

<https://melbournwelshchoir.com.au/singer-of-the-year/>.

We are looking forward to having these talented young artists performing with us as soloists in future events.

Concert at Mooroolbark cancelled

Our traditional Christmas concert at Mooroolbark Community Centre, 125 Brice Ave, Mooroolbark, on Sunday 12th December 2021 has regrettably been cancelled, yet another victim of COVID19!

The organisers have advised us that they hope to have the choir perform for the community at the venue in the March timeframe.

Please watch this space and our website www.melbournwelshchoir.com.au for details and dates of this and all our future concerts.

The background to another song from the Choir's repertoire - *Mansions of the Lord*

A new addition to the choir's repertoire - "**Mansions of the Lord**", is a hymn written by Randall Wallace and set to the music of Nick Glennie-Smith.

The bonding of grief and hope, sadness and peace is reflected in this moving, contemporary hymn to fallen servicemen.

The text was composed by Christian songwriter, screenwriter and director - Randall Wallace and the music is by the English film score composer - Nick Glennie-Smith (who was responsible for the music for many other great film themes such as *The Lion King*, and *Crimson Tide* plus background music for scores of other hit movies).

It was sung by the US Military Academy Glee Club during the closing credits of the 2002 film "*We were soldiers*" (starring Mel Gibson as the US commander Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore, on whose book the film was based), which chronicled the November 1965 battle of Ia Trang in Vietnam.

The hymn also served as the recessional in the 2004 funeral of US president Ronald Reagan.

The text consists of three short stanzas that dwell, not on war and death, but on the eternal peace of heaven - the Mansions of the Lord - to which a fallen soldier (or sailor or airman) is commended by his comrades, who promise to stand guard and remember him always.

The hymn reminds us that in that blessed place there is no more war, no fear or pain, no anguish or loss – "*Just divine embrace, eternal light*".

The music is likewise simple, dignified, and uplifting, and reinforces the text message of hope.

The hymn is featured on the CD of the same name by the Morryston Orpheus Choir from Wales conducted by our choir's patron Alwyn Humphreys and released in 2004.

It is Alwyn's arrangement for a 4-part male choir that we sing.



Mansions of the Lord

*To fallen soldiers let us sing,
Where no rockets fly nor bullets wing/
Our broken brothers let us bring,
To the Mansions of the Lord.*

*No more bleeding, no more fight.
No prayers pleading through the night.
Just divine embrace, Eternal light,
In the Mansions of the Lord*

*Where no mothers cry and no children weep,
We will stand and guard though the angels sleep.
All through the ages safely keep,
The Mansions of the Lord*

Choir Chorister Profile - Geoff Heyme - Baritone

My parents were born and lived in Katamatite, a small town in Northern Victoria.

They eventually moved to West Footscray where I was born and went to primary school.

My dad was an engine and diesel mechanic with the Victorian Railways at North Melbourne. Every second Sunday he went to help maintain Puffing Billy, in the years before it became a tourist train.

Football and sports have been a large part of my life.

When I was 15, I was invited to play with the Footscray Under 16's by a neighbour - Merv Hobbs, a Footscray star.

I was there for two years with the possibility of ultimately playing with the great Ted Whitten.

My parents moved to the Seaholme/Altona area and, due to V.F.L. football zoning restrictions, I was then tied to South Melbourne.

I played there for four years and was privileged to play alongside triple Brownlow Medallist Bob Skilton, a V.F.L. and A.F.L. legend.

During that time, I was selected to represent Victoria in a combined reserves team.

Leaving the V.F.L., I spent 5 years with Redan in the Ballarat League, where I was runner-up to the Best and Fairest 2 years in succession and was also nominated for the Centre Half Forward position in the Redans team of the century. While at Redan and as a result of my consistently good play being recognised, I was selected to represent the Ballarat League in the Victorian Country Championships.

Travelling to Ballarat meant a two-and-a-half-hour trip, occasionally arriving just in time to run on the field for the first bounce. After the match, it was another long trip back to Melbourne.

During one game, while playing at Daylesford, it began snowing. The usual three-quarter time orange refreshments were replaced with glasses of sherry for the players. That day, the accuracy of the goal kicking in the last quarter was questionable

Because of the travelling I decided to play closer to home.

I chose Yarraville in the V.F.A. when they were in 1st division. During one of my 4 years with Yarraville, I won the 2nd Best and Fairest. The following year - 1969, I won the Best and Fairest player ahead of John Heriot who was Full Back in South Melbourne's Team of the Century and Fred Cook a V.F.A. legend.

After leaving Yarraville, I applied for a coaching position at Lilydale Football Club. and was accepted as their playing coach, where I played and coached for 3 years.

I finally retired due to injuries. I really enjoyed all of my footy career, having played approximately 316 games. The downside, however, is that it has left me with artificial joint replacements for both hips, both knees and a shoulder.

Golf has been a sport I have enjoyed for over 60 years. Playing off a handicap of 7 at the age of 21, I made the Victorian Junior State Squad of 25 players. We played at all the sand belt courses, such as Royal Melbourne, Huntingdale, Kingston Heath etc., We were coached by Doug Bachli - the first Australian to win the British Amateur Championship. I still enjoy the occasional game.



In my teenage years, I was a member of the Altona Yacht Club, where a friend and I had success racing in the Cadet Dinghy class.

From a young age, I was keen on tennis. I have always played social and competitive tennis and having our own court has proved to be a wonderful way to involve the whole family. I eventually ended my competitive tennis playing at night for Chirnside Park Tennis Club. I now play table tennis, a less strenuous game.

My interest in squash developed while watching Jill play Pennant at the night competition. I joined the club and played Pennant Squash at night for some years.

Cricket is another game which I have enjoyed playing over a 10-year period. I played in the Mountain District Cricket competition. On one occasion I won the A Grade batting with an average of 44.7 runs.

My working career began as a technician with the P.M.G. and continued for the next 31 years with Telecom Australia, (now Telstra). During that time, I worked in telephone exchanges, on mechanical and electronic equipment, some of which were privately owned (such as Box Hill Hospital and Myers Doncaster and Eastland) which sometimes involved inconvenient call-outs at night.

I finished my 31 years at Telstra as a Senior Technical Officer leading a staff of seven technicians.

I thought a change of direction might be a good idea and so I retired from Telstra and bought a Jim's Mowing Franchise. This proved to be good work-out for 10 years and kept me fit.

Jill and I have been together for 61 years, happily married for 55 years. We have 4 children, identical twin boys, Benn and Brad and two girls, Mardi and Tara, and we now have 6 wonderful grandchildren, 4 girls and 2 boys arranging in age from 2 to 14 years.

As a family, we have enjoyed water skiing at Lake Eildon for 40 years and, having our own boat, we have all become competent slalom skiers. Our grandchildren are now enjoying water sports and I have become their designated boat skipper.

We have been fortunate to have had our own caravans over the years and, from the time when the children were little, travelling with a caravan has been our main way of holidaying. During those times we have covered much of the Australian coast and outback.

I first learned about the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir when invited to a Christmas Carols singalong at my Welsh neighbour's home. My wife, Jill suggested I should try out with the Choir as my body needed less physical sporting activity. Thankfully, my voice is still able to have a rigorous workout.

So, here I am in my 17th year with the Choir and with 153 concerts under my belt.

Jill and I have enjoyed hosting 4 Australia Day gatherings for choir members on our Lilydale property, where the ladies have indulged in "Wombat Tossing" and the men have played a "serious" *Welsh* versus *The Others*, game of cricket.

I'm now aiming for a 20-year choir member Achievement Award.

Communicating with the Choir

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

Alternatively, they can subscribe directly to the newsletter via our website:

www.melbournewelshchoir.com.au or via our Facebook page.

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

Email is our preferred way of communication with supporters, so please email us and we'll respond promptly to whatever query you may have.

Your feedback is important to us, so please write and let us know what you think of the choir, our newsletters, or our recent performances (whether video or live).

Introduce us to your friends and let us know what you would like to see us perform in our future live concerts.

Come join the choir.

The choir is always keen to attract new members, so please don't wait until the pandemic is completely over before checking us out. Singing is good for the mind and body and rehearsing the choir's songs during lockdown has been therapeutic. Ask any of our choristers!

The online tools for learning the repertoire are excellent and our secretary and other Welsh speaking members provide special lessons at the venue (and continued them via Zoom during lockdown), to assist with the knowledge and pronunciation of our Welsh songs

While our heritage is Welsh and around 25% of our concert programs are Welsh songs (not necessarily all in the Welsh language), we are fundamentally a multicultural choir with probably only 50% of us having a strong Welsh background. The choir is open to people of any nationality and our current and past members have included people with Scots, English, Irish, New Zealand, Dutch, French, German, Egyptian, South African, Tongan, Samoan and Australian backgrounds! We even have a Kiwi as the current president!

Whether you've been involved in music all your life, or you only sing in the shower, you are welcome to come along to any of our rehearsals at Maroondah Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood to see how our choir operates. You will be made most welcome, whether you wish to sit within the body of the choir and sing, or simply listen and observe, alongside our other guests, until you are happy with the music and the environment.

During the times when our rehearsal rooms were closed because of COVID constraints, we had Zoom rehearsals, which allowed us to practice our repertoire, kept us up to date with the choir's concert program and enabled us to interact with each other.

Our rehearsal facility at Federation Estate is excellent, with comfortable seats, good acoustics and we have the best music director and accompanist combination in Melbourne.

The choir benefits from our Music Director, David Ashton-Smith's background as an opera singer and adjudicator, in coaching our voice development and projection, as well as his role in teaching us new songs. He is ably assisted by our accompanist, Simon Walters, himself a music director and arranger of some note, whose keen ear picks up any problems with pitch or timing.

Established choristers look after all new and prospective members, to ensure they are properly introduced to other members of their section and are equipped with the relevant music scores. They will also act as mentors for the probationary period and will answer any questions you might have.

There is a break for tea or coffee during rehearsals, which gives everyone the opportunity to chat to other choir members. On the first Wednesday in the month, one of the sections will provide the choir and visitors with a (sometimes) sumptuous supper.

Car parking is plentiful and free, while Ringwood railway station is only a 5-minute walk away.

If you contact us on the phone numbers or email addresses shown in this newsletter, we will respond and arrange to meet you personally. Otherwise, just come along on a Wednesday evening, introduce yourself and you will be made very welcome.

Once you decide to join the choir, we will provide you with access to our web-based aids which assist us in learning and practising the individual parts at home. This makes the process of getting up to speed with the repertoire so much easier. We also have Welsh language sessions, as mentioned above given by some of the Welsh speaking members of the choir, to assist choristers with the pronunciation and understanding of the Welsh songs in our repertoire.

Following a number of rehearsal sessions and a formal audition, you could be singing in one of our concerts within weeks and possibly joining us on our next tour.

Would you like to hire the choir?

COVID restrictions meant that we were able to perform only one live concert (at Karralyka) for the past year or so. However, we have been rehearsing on the basis that we will be performing our regular schedule of concerts in 2022 and hopefully a couple before the end of 2021.

Anyone who has attended our concerts at major venues such as the Melbourne Recital Centre, Ulumbarra Theatre Bendigo, Hamer Hall 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., at most times in the year, so if you are, or know of, an organization which might require anything from a short rousing opening for a conference (say) to a full two-hour concert, together with guest artists and an orchestra or band (if required), please contact **Gwyn Harper (0419 562 353)** or any committee member and we will be pleased to work with you to produce an outstanding event.

Please bear in mind that we're talking about a choir of up to 50 voices plus a professional music director and accompanist. We have an eclectic repertoire, a great sound and provide excellent entertainment value for the money.

Would you like to donate to or sponsor the choir in 2021/2?

As is the case with almost all other performing arts organisations, the choir's financial position has been adversely impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. As a result, we need sponsors more than ever. If you would simply like to donate to the choir, please contact any member of the committee. We are a registered charitable body and all donations will be acknowledged and are tax deductible.

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 concerts, marketing material and promotions.

Our audience is predominantly the "over forties", so for those organisations which have this demographic as a target market, sponsoring the choir provides a unique and cost-effective way of getting your message across.

The choir is seeking sponsors for the funding of the prizes for our prestigious *Singer of the Year (SOTY)* concert which, hopefully, we will be able to hold before a live audience, in 2022. This event, which has been running for 29 years and is open to singers under the age of 35, draws competitors from all parts of the state and indeed interstate. Many of the winners and runners-up of this competition have gone on to make careers on concert and opera stages worldwide, which is testament to the quality and significance of the event.

As a result of COVID19 restrictions the last two SOTY competitions had to be adjudicated based on video performances and the winners' interviews and examples of their entries are available via the choir's website

In addition to awarding monetary prizes to the finalists, the choir gives the finalists an opportunity to perform as guest artists in our concerts during the year.

All sponsors are acknowledged in our programs and publicity material and are given the ability to be involved in the SOTY presentation ceremonies on the night and in the elimination heats.

One of our videos produced and released during this COVID19 era was viewed by over 30,000 viewers and for the 2020 SOTY event, the videos of the final three competitors on YouTube had both local and international exposure. We expect the videos of 2021 SOTY event to have a similar impact.

The choir is able to perform at a sponsor's nominated site if required, as we have done in the past (e.g., at the opening of a legal conference in the city, the Eureka Stockade anniversary in Ballarat or even at a vehicle dealer's showroom in the suburbs).

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.

In trying times like these, laughter is still the best medicine

Blonde Jokes

Two blondes were in a parking lot trying to unlock the door of their Mercedes with a coat hanger. They tried and tried to get the door open, but they just couldn't! The blonde with the coat hanger stopped for a moment to catch her breath. The other blonde said anxiously, "Hurry up! It's starting to rain and the top is down."

A police car pulled alongside a speeding car on the motorway. Glancing at the car, the police officer was astonished to see that the blonde behind the wheel was knitting! Realizing that she was oblivious to his flashing lights and siren, the cop rolled down his window and shouted, "PULL OVER!".

The blonde rolled down her window and yelled back "NO, IT'S A SCARF!".

Schoolteacher

The schoolteacher was taking her first golfing lesson.

"Is the word spelled p-u-t or p-u-t-t ?" she asked the instructor. "P-u-t-t is correct," he replied.

"Put means to place a thing where you want it. Putt means merely a vain attempt to do the same thing."

Ice Fishing

It was a cold winter day, when an old man walked out onto a frozen lake, cut a hole in the ice, dropped in his fishing line and began waiting for a fish to bite.

He was there for almost an hour without even a nibble when a young boy walked out onto the ice, cut a hole in the ice not too far from the old man and dropped in his fishing line. It only took about a minute and WHAM! a Largemouth Bass hit his hook and the boy pulled in the fish.

The old man couldn't believe it but figured it was just luck. But the boy dropped in his line and again within just a few minutes pulled in another one.

This went on and on until finally the old man couldn't take it anymore since he hadn't caught a thing all this time.

He went to the boy and said, "Son, I've been here for over an hour without even a nibble. You have been here only a few minutes and have caught about half a dozen fish! How do you do it?"

The boy responded, "Roo raf roo reep ra rums rarrm." "What was that?" the old man asked.

Again, the boy responded, "Roo raf roo reep ra rums rarrm."

"Look," said the old man, "I can't understand a word you are saying."

So, the boy spit into his hand and said, "You have to keep the worms warm!"

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. Some of the information about the hymn "Mansions of the Lord" was taken from Wikipedia.

CHOIR DIRECTORY

President :	Kevin Seerup	president@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
Vice-president :	David Field	vicepresident@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
Secretary :	Ieuan Thomas	secretary@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
Treasurer :	Andrew Gibson	treasurer@melbournewelshchoir.com.au
Music Director :	David Ashton-Smith OAM	
Committee :	Colin Brown, Phil Tomlinson, Geoff Cooke, Will Morton, Gwyn Harper, Robert Mits	