

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 75 December 2023



On behalf of our President - Kevin Seerup, Music Director - David Ashton-Smith, our accompanist - Simon Walters and all the members of the choir, may we wish all our supporters - Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda (Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year).

We have enjoyed performing for you during the past year and look forward to your patronage in 2024

Late change for our upcoming Annual Christmas Carols Concert - Nadolig Llawen

Saturday 9th December at 2:30 p.m.

North Ringwood Uniting Church

14 Dixon Crescent,

North Ringwood

Local young Soprano Lucy Schneider steps in for Melbourne Welsh Male Choir Christmas Concert

At very short notice, young Soprano Lucy Schneider will sing alongside tenor Roy Best with the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir in the choir's big Christmas concert on Dec 9th. With just over a week to go the singer will crash learn several songs and says she is very happy to assist and step in for Welsh Soprano Carly Owen who has withdrawn due to ill health. "It is a great opportunity for me, and I really look forward to singing with this wonderful choir"



Lucy Schneider



The Choir's Musical Director, David Ashton-Smith said today that although he is disappointed Carly isn't able to sing, he and the choir's accompanist Simon Walters will work closely with Lucy and bring all musical forces together in what promises to be a grand Christmas Musical event!

Join us for our final Melbourne performance for the year.

The choir is polishing several fabulous new and traditional Christmas songs and is in best-ever form!

In addition to some fine four-part harmony carols such as the beautiful *Coventry Carol* there will be audience participation items, so bring your voices and enjoy this

joyous occasion. Tickets are available at: <https://melbournewelshchoir.com.au/tickets>

Choir Concert at Wonthaggi Union Community Arts Centre



For our last performance of the year, the Choir has accepted an invitation from Bass Coast Shire Council to perform at the WUCAC.

The Wonthaggi Union Community Arts Centre, also known as *The Union* or the *WUCAC*, was built in 1925 by the Miners Union. It stood up until the 10th of April 1980 when fire razed the building. However, through the commitment of the then known Borough of Wonthaggi, the theatre was rebuilt and opened on the 13th of November 1982.

We will be presenting a mixed program including some of our traditional Welsh songs, favourite ballads and Christmas carols appropriate to the season.

For any of our friends in the area or anyone who may be holidaying, the concert is at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday 16th December at WUCAC - 96 Graham Street, Wonthaggi. Tel No 5671 2470.

Tickets are available at Trybooking - [Melbourne Welsh Male Choir @ Wonthaggi Union](#)

Two new videos of the Choir

Canwn at Tamale Studios

Those of you who accessed our recent video of the choir in rehearsal using the link provided in our newsletter or by typing *Canwn* in the YouTube search tool <https://youtu.be/B4yXdgxfKOU> will recall that the rehearsals at Federation Estate formed the major part of the video with the activity at the recording studios coming at the end.

We have now released the follow-on version which shows (almost) everything that happened at the *Tamale* studios and includes several songs which were performed.

This new video can be seen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9OQ05pfYYQ>

or search for Melbourne Welsh Male Choir on YouTube.



The AYB in Singapore

<https://mediazilla.com/Tt36JilCJX>.

MWMC with the AYB at MLC

Patrons who attended the Australian Youth Band (AYB) concert at MLC on August 20th this year, where we were the guest artists, will recall what a fabulous concert it was.

The AYB have subsequently toured and performed to great acclaim in Singapore and have been wonderful ambassadors for Australia.

They recently released a video of the MLC concert, for their friends and supporters, which is well worth viewing. It covers the whole performance that day including the Choir's contribution as well as the drumline segments

To access the performance, go to

Some background to our newest carol and possibly one of the oldest - *the Coventry Carol*

The "**Coventry Carol**" is an English Christmas carol dating from the 16th century.

The carol was traditionally performed in Coventry in England as part of a mystery play called *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors*. The play depicts the Christmas story from chapter two in the Gospel of Matthew.

The carol itself refers to the Massacre of the Innocents, in which Herod ordered all male infants under the age of two in Bethlehem to be killed, and takes the form of a lullaby sung by mothers of the doomed children.

The author is unknown; the oldest known text was written down by Robert Croo in 1534, and the oldest known setting of the melody dates from 1591. There are alternative, modern settings of the carol by Kenneth Leighton, Philip Stopford and Michael McGlynn.

History and text

The carol is the second of three songs included in the *Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors*, a play that was one of the Coventry Mystery Plays, originally performed by the city's guilds. The exact date of the text is unknown, though there are references to the Coventry guild pageants from 1392 onwards.

The single surviving text of the carol and the pageant containing it was edited by one Robert Croo, who dated his manuscript 14 March 1534.

Croo or Crowe, acted for some years as the 'manager' of the city pageants. Over a twenty-year period, payments are recorded to him for playing the part of God in the *Drapers' Pageant*, for making a hat for a "*pharysye*", and for mending and making other costumes and props, as well as for supplying new dialogue and for copying out the *Shearmen and Tailors' Pageant* in a version which Croo described as "newly correcte". Croo seems to have worked by adapting and editing older material, while adding his own rather ponderous and undistinguished verse.

Religious changes caused the plays' suppression during the later 16th century, but Croo's prompt book, including the songs, survived and a transcription was eventually published by the Coventry antiquarian Thomas Sharp in 1817 as part of his detailed study of the city's mystery plays.

Sharp published a second edition in 1825 which included the songs' music. Both printings were intended to be a facsimile of Croo's manuscript, copying both the orthography and layout; this proved fortunate as Croo's original manuscript, which had passed into the collection of the Birmingham Free Library, was destroyed in a fire there in 1879. Sharp's transcriptions are therefore the only source.

Sharp had a reputation as a careful scholar, and his copying of the text of the women's carol appears to be accurate.

Within the pageant, the carol is sung by three women of Bethlehem, who enter on stage with their children immediately after Joseph is warned by an angel to take his family to Egypt:

Sharp's publication of the text stimulated some renewed interest in the pageant and songs, particularly in Coventry itself. Although the Coventry mystery play cycle was traditionally performed in summer, the lullaby has been in modern times regarded as a Christmas carol. It was brought to a wider audience after being featured in the BBC's Empire Broadcast at Christmas 1940, shortly after the bombing of Coventry in World War II, when the broadcast concluded with the singing of the carol in the bombed-out ruins of the Cathedral.

Music

The carol's music was added to Croo's manuscript at a later date by Thomas Mawdyke, his additions being dated 13 May 1591. Mawdyke wrote out the music in three-part harmony, though whether he was responsible for its composition is debatable, and the music's style could be indicative of an earlier date. The three (alto, tenor and baritone) vocal parts confirm that, as was usual with mystery plays, the parts of the "*mothers*" singing the carol were invariably played by men.

Mawdyke, who may be identifiable with a tailor of that name living in the St Michael's parish of Coventry in the late 16th century, is thought to have made his additions as part of an unsuccessful

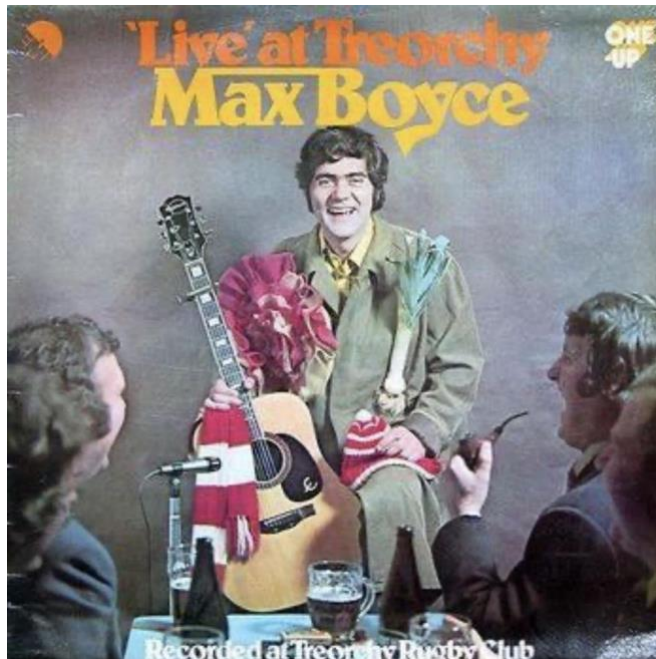
attempt to revive the play cycle in the summer of 1591, though in the end the city authorities chose not to support the revival.

The surviving pageants were revived in the Cathedral from 1951 onward.

Live at Treorchy, 50 years on: The story of Max Boyce's famous album

It was at this time 50 years ago that a star was born.

It was the evening of November 23, 1973, that Max Boyce recorded his famous *Live at Treorchy* album.



The rest is history.

Captured live at Treorchy Rugby Club it opens with what quickly became his trademark clarion call – “Oggy, oggy, oggy”. The crowd dutifully respond with a boisterous “Oi, oi, oi!”

The scene is set for an album that Welsh historian Martin Johnes describes as “important to an understanding of Welshness as anything Dylan Thomas or Saunders Lewis wrote.”

Released in 1974, it was his third album but his first with the might of major label, EMI Records behind him.

The album contains a mixture of comedic songs and poems along with Boyce's interactions with the audience. It was an unexpected success going gold and was the performer's breakthrough recording, helping make him a household name in Wales and

beyond.

That the album even existed at all is some small way thanks to comedian Ken Dodd. The Welshman was spotted by EMI record producer Bob Barrett, stealing the show from headliner Dodd at the Brangwyn Hall in Swansea.

Boyce signed a contract with the EMI producer while walking along a bridle path at Langland Bay and was signed to a two-record deal overseen by Vic Lanza, head of EMI Records' MOR music division.

The entertainer, from Glynneath, had produced two albums prior to the release of *Live at Treorchy*, both put out on Cambrian Records in 1971 – *Max Boyce in Session* and *Caneuon Amrywiol*. Neither album was very successful and Boyce continued touring the clubs around South Wales.

In 1973 and still an unknown outside Wales, Treorchy Rugby Club was chosen as the venue for the recording of a live album. It's incredible to think now, but despite a ticket fee of 50p, uptake was slow and many in the audience were rounded up by offering free entry to people in nearby pubs.

Noticeably, among those in the audience, were members of the *Treorchy Male Voice Choir*, who gave voice and noticeable volume during the singalong choruses of the entertainer's songs.

Abbey Road sound engineer Phil Hancock, was one of three sent by EMI to record the show, setting up the mixing desks in the club's changing rooms.

Boyce was supported by Welsh band *Triban* with the concert compered by renowned broadcaster *Alun Williams*. Completed in one take, *Live at Treorchy* was mixed and completed at Abbey Road Studios.

Like lighting a blue touch paper, the album slowly fizzed and then ignited, its popularity spreading through word of mouth – the distinct Welsh humour striking a chord both inside and outside of Wales.

The songs on the album played with the rugby theme for which the entertainer is inextricably linked, including '9-3' which celebrates Llanelli RFC's famous 1972 win over the All Blacks, *The Outside Half Factory* and the song with which Boyce is most associated, the unofficial Welsh sporting anthem

'*Hymns and Arias*' – sung with gusto at rugby internationals, it was then adopted by football fans at Swansea and Wrexham.

The success of *Live at Treorchy* was life-changing for the Welshman, allowing Boyce to become a professional entertainer.

The enduring legend of *Live at Treorchy* after its release, when it was said every house in Wales possessed a copy, can be seen in its chart performance.

Released in 1974, it entered the UK album charts on 5 July at number 35. Although reaching a peak position of 21 on 11 October 1975 it kept a presence in the charts for 38 weeks, making a final appearance 22 April 1978.

The album went gold and had the longest chart life of any of his albums, selling over half a million copies.

His follow-up, *We All Had Doctors' Papers*, released in 1975, cemented his reputation, reaching number one in the UK album charts, sending the entertainer's career into orbit.

Half a century on Max Boyce is a solid gold Welsh folklore hero.

A statue of the entertainer was unveiled in his hometown of Glynneath in September to celebrate his 80th birthday. As for *Live at Treorchy* – its legend lives on.

***Live at Treorchy* tracklisting:**

9-3

The Scottish Trip.

The Ballad of Morgan the Moon.

The Outside Half Factory.

Asso Yogoshi.

Duw It's Hard.

Ten Thousand Instant Christians.

Did You Understand.

Hymns and Arias

We are recruiting new choristers. Are you interested in joining?

While the choir is maintaining its ability to regularly put between 45 and 55 choristers onstage, we are keen to increase our numbers and hence are embarking on a recruitment drive.

Would you like to be singing in a four-part harmony ensemble, everything from full throated anthems to gentle love songs? If so, then whether you've been involved in music all your life, sing in another choir, or only sing in the shower, just come along to our rehearsals at Maroondah Federation Estate, 32 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood and join in the fun and the stimulating learning process, that being a part of the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir is all about.

The choir is open to people of all ages from 18 to 88 and of any nationality, age, colour or ethnicity.

Our current and past members include people with Scots, English, Irish, New Zealand, Dutch, French, German, Egyptian, South African, Tongan, Samoan, United States and Australian ancestry.

So, provided you pass the (relatively simple) audition, you will be made most welcome.

While our musical heritage is Welsh and we aim to have Welsh songs as a quarter of our concert programs (not necessarily all in the Welsh language), we are fundamentally a multicultural choir with probably less than half of us having direct Welsh ancestry.

We have an excellent rehearsal facility at Maroondah Federation Estate, with a grand piano, comfortable seats, good acoustics and facilities for tea and coffee at the interval.

In addition, we have the best music director and accompanist combination in Melbourne.

David Ashton-Smith OAM, our Music Director, has a background as an opera singer, teacher and adjudicator, which shows in his coaching of our voice development and projection, as well as his role in teaching us new songs.

He is ably assisted by our talented accompanist, **Simon Walters**, himself a music director and arranger of some note.

We have mentors for each vocal section, who look after all new members, to ensure they are introduced to other choristers and are properly equipped with the relevant music scores. They oversee new members for the duration of the probationary period, help with pitch or pronunciation, where appropriate and answer any questions, they might have.

There is a break for tea or coffee during rehearsals, which gives everyone the opportunity to mingle with other choristers. On the first Wednesday in the month, one of the sections provides the choir and our 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 promptly and arrange for your introduction to the choir. Otherwise, just come along on a Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m., introduce yourself and you will be made most welcome.

Once you decide to join, we will provide you with access to our web-based aids, which will assist you in learning and practicing the individual parts at home. This makes the process of getting up to speed with the Choir's repertoire much easier.

We also have Welsh language sessions, given by some of the Welsh speaking members of the choir, to help new and existing choristers in the pronunciation and translation of the words of the Welsh songs in our repertoire.

Following some rehearsals and a formal audition, you could be standing in the choir uniform and singing in one of our concerts within weeks and possibly joining us on our next tour.

Want to hire the choir?

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, or at smaller venues such as our venue for St David's Day Concert (the James Tatoulis Auditorium at MLC), will be aware that the choir has the skills and ability to produce and run high quality major events.

So, if you are an organization or an individual requiring anything from a short rousing opening to a conference or entertainment at a formal dinner(say), to a full two-hour concert, together with quality guest artists and an orchestra or band (if required), please call **David Field (0418 175 584)** or any committee member to discuss how we can tailor a performance to meet your unique needs.

The choir is available for community, corporate and sporting events, dinners, anniversaries, weddings etc., at most times in the year.

Bear in mind that we're talking about a choir of 40 to 50 voices plus a professional music director and accompanist. We have an eclectic repertoire, a great sound and provide excellent entertainment and value for money.

Sponsorship opportunities

The choir is a not-for-profit organisation and we rely solely on revenue from concerts, membership fees, sponsorship and donations for our continuing operation.

Our audiences are predominantly middle to older aged citizens so potential sponsors with products to market to this demographic may find this of interest.

Alternatively, if you have a product or service which you believe might appeal to any or every audience, then please contact us and we will be delighted to promote your company and product or service in our concerts, marketing material and promotions.

If you would simply like to donate to the choir, please contact any member of the committee. The choir is a registered charitable body and all donations are acknowledged and are tax deductible.

Feed-back

Please feel free to copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends and relatives. We are keen to increase our supporter base, so if you would like us to add them to our distribution list, simply let us know their email address. Alternatively, they can subscribe directly to the newsletter via our website:

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

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

Email is our preferred way of communication with our supporters, so please send us an email and we'll respond promptly to whatever queries you may have. Alternately if you want to speak with the newsletter author (Gwyn) about any of the content, feel free to contact him on 0419 562 353.

Your feedback is important to us, so please let us know what you think about the choir, our newsletters, or our recent performances, whether on video or live.

In particular, we would welcome your feedback on our recent YouTube videos.

Please introduce us to your friends and be sure to let us know what you might like to see us perform in our future concerts.

Laughter is the best medicine

Traffic Camera

A man drove past a traffic camera and saw it flash.

He couldn't believe he had been caught speeding when he was driving below the speed limit for once!

He turned around and drove past again, this time even slower.

But as he passed the camera, it flashed again

He was angry!

He turned around again and this time drove past at a snail's pace.

But again, the camera flashed.

"Oh, well," he thought "It must be broken." and drove home.

A week later, he received three tickets in the mail for not wearing his seat belt!

What happened in Texas

A cowboy rode into a windy, dusty, tumble weed strewn Nevada town, reined up outside the saloon, went in and ordered a double bourbon.

The saloon was full of locals.

But what this cowboy did not know was that this town was a haven for thieves and rogues.

Having finished his drink he exited only to find that his horse had been stolen.

He returned inside to the bar and ordered another double bourbon.

With the speed of greased lightning, he drew his gun and sent it spinning into the air above his head, caught it effortlessly without looking up and fired a single shot into the ceiling.

The saloon fell deathly silent.

He announced to all and sundry that if his horse was not returned in the next three minutes then he would have to do what he had done down there in Texas.

He added, "I really do not want to do what I had had to do down there in Texas, no sir, I do not want to have to do that, no sir, I do not!"

He finished his drink; checked his gun; then his time piece.

The three minutes were up.

He exited again and there was his horse, back where he had left it.

He mounted up, turned and started to move off when the bartender came running up to him and asked, "Hey partner tell me, tell me, what was it that you had to do down there in Texas? What was it that you didn't want to have to do here? What was it? Tell me please."

The cowboy stared at him with a long withering look and then said - "I had to walk home!"

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choir will always endeavour to seek permission to reproduce material from other sources and/or acknowledge the source as appropriate. Much of the articles relating to anniversary of Live at Treorchy and the Coventry Carol were taken from Wikipedia.

CHOIR DIRECTORY

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