

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir

Newsletter No 79 April 2024



The Choir's Annual General Meeting was held in March and the president reported the choir had a successful year 2023/24 both in terms of concerts and financially. Hopefully the traumas of the COVID days are long gone. A number of talented choristers joined the choir during the year, and we now have a very strong bass section, but we still need additional top tenors. New gigs planned and some old haunts to revisit while the much-lauded Singer of the Year (SOTY) competition will continue in 2024/25, so the Choir's future under the continuing presidency of Kevin Seerup and with our new conductor Mitch Meyer looks bright.



A recent pre-rehearsal photo of most of the choir in the grounds of our home venue at Federation Estate

New songs are being added to our repertoire which should delight our Scottish, Irish, Cornish and Welsh supporters.

Cam ye by Athol, Maureen (Irish cradle son), Trelawney (see article below), Avenging and bright and Laudamus (Bryn Calfaria) are set to stir the hearts of our audiences later in the year.

We look forward to seeing you at our next performance.

Upcoming Events

Robert Burns Celtic Festival

Sunday 23rd June 2024 2:30 p.m.

Camperdown Theatre Royal,

2 Bath Street, Camperdown, Victoria 3260

We have been invited by the organisers of the above festival to perform a full concert for this festival. As a result, we have added some new Scottish, Irish and Cornish songs to our repertoire (see above). Tickets will be available soon on www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1056482.

Mooroolbark Concert

Saturday 27th July 2024 2:30 p.m.

Mooroolbark Community Centre

125 Brice Avenue, Mooroolbark, 3138

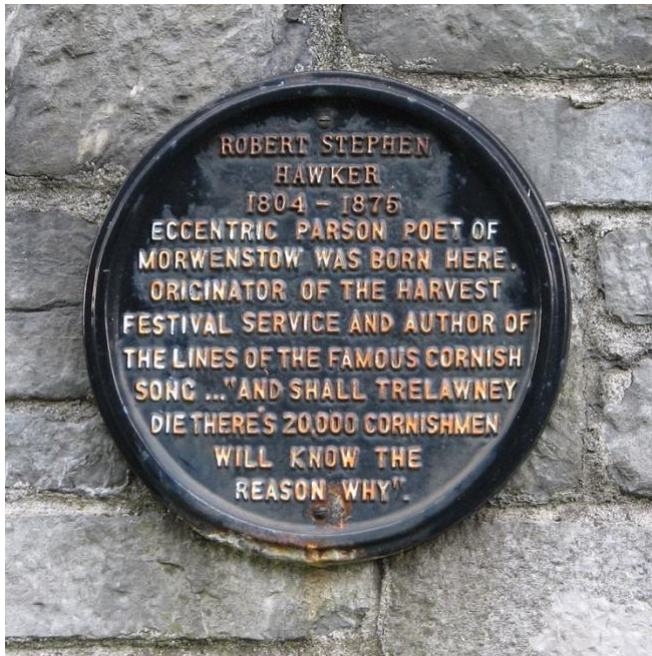
One of the choir's favourite venues – this intimate theatre, with its limited seating, fills quickly so book early to avoid disappointment. For tickets, which will be available shortly, book via:

www.trybooking.com/eventlist/melbournewelsh

Background to one of our newer songs - *Trelawny*

(The Song of the Western Men)

Our choir first came across this song when we visited Cornwall for the *Cornish International Male Voice Choral Festival*. It was the favourite ballad sung by all of the Cornish choirs in the local pubs



following our joint choral concerts throughout Cornwall.

“**The Song of the Western Men**”, also known as “**Trelawny**”, is a Cornish patriotic song, composed by Louisa T. Clare to lyrics by Robert Stephen Hawker.

The poem was first published anonymously in *The Royal Devonport Telegraph and Plymouth Chronicle* in September 1826, over 100 years after the events.

Hawker, a churchman, claimed authorship for the words except for the chorus.

He assumed that the Trelawny mentioned in those three lines was Sir Jonathan Trelawny, the Bishop of Bristol, who had been imprisoned in the Tower of London by King James II in 1688.

However it is more likely that it referred to his grandfather, Sir John Trelawny, a Cornish Royalist leader who had been imprisoned by parliament in 1628. The people of Cornwall did not actually march to rescue Trelawny, as told in the song. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London for three weeks, then tried and acquitted.

Hawker's poem was set to music by Louisa T. Clare in 1861. Hawker was so pleased with Clare's setting, that he sent her another poem of his in hopes of a further success.

According to Cornish historian Robert Morton Nance, “The Song of the Western Men” was possibly inspired by the song “Come, all ye jolly tinner boys” which was written more than ten years earlier in about 1807, when Napoleon Bonaparte made threats that would affect trade in Cornwall at the time of the invasion of Poland. “Ye jolly tinner boys” contains the line “Why forty thousand Cornish boys shall know the reason why.”

In 1881, at the laying of the foundation stone of the Cathedral at Truro, the song was described by Canon Harvey as “... the national anthem of our dear Cornwall.”

This colloquial song is regularly sung at Cornish rugby union matches and other Cornish gatherings. In some schools in Cornwall, the children are taught the first verse and chorus, and sing it at events such as Murdoch Day and St Piran's Day (5th March). Since 2016 the latter occasion has also seen the “Trelawny Shout” – the song being sung in pubs across Cornwall for charity.

Trelawny

A good sword and a trusty hand!
A merry heart and true!
King James's men shall understand
What Cornish lads can do!
And have they fixed the where and when?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!

*And shall Trelawny live?
Or shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!*

Out spake their Captain brave and bold:
A merry wight was he:
Though London Tower were Michael's hold,
We'll set Trelawny free!
We'll cross the Tamar, land to land:
The Severn is no stay:
With "one and all," and hand in hand;
And who shall bid us nay?

*And shall Trelawny live?
Or shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!*

And when we come to London Wall,
A pleasant sight to view,
Come forth! come forth! ye cowards all:
Here's men as good as you.
Trelawny he's in keep and hold;
Trelawny he may die:
Here's twenty thousand Cornish bold
Will know the reason why

*And shall Trelawny live?
Or shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!*

Vale - Noreen Thomas (1932 – 2024)

Noreen was the wife of one of our longer serving choristers - second tenor Ron Thomas.

However, what endeared her most to the choir was her regular attendance at our choir rehearsals.



For the past couple of years, Noreen would sit, knitting quietly in our rehearsal venue, while the choir was put through it's paces by the music director.

Born in India, she emigrated to Australia and met Ron on a training course with the Seventh Day Adventists in Avondale NSW.

They married in 1958 and ten days later they moved to New Zealand. Moves to Brisbane and Tasmania and Perth followed before they finally settled in Victoria.

Noreen and Ron's three children Owen, Corinne and Ron (Junior) presented moving eulogies at the funeral service at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Lilydale.

A large contingent of the choir attended the service and at Ron's request sang three of Noreen's favourite songs - "Men of Harlech, Shelter and

Danny Boy" to help sing her spirit home.

How would you like to be remembered?

About a hundred years ago, a man looked at the morning newspaper and to his surprise and horror, he read his name in the obituary column.

The newspapers had reported the death of the wrong person by mistake.

His first response was shock.

Am I here or there?

When he regained his composure, his second thought was to find out what people had said about him. "Dynamite King Dies" and also "He was the merchant of death."

This man was the inventor of dynamite and when he read the words "merchant of death," he asked himself a question, "Is this how I am



going to be remembered?"

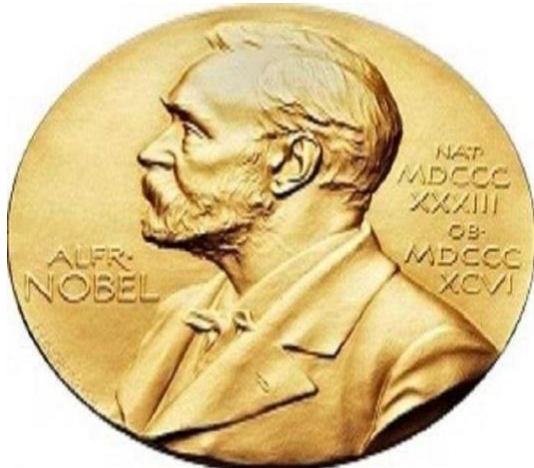
He got in touch with his feelings and decided that this was not the way he wanted to be remembered.

From that day on, he started working toward peace.

His name was Alfred Nobel and he is remembered today by the great Nobel Prize.

Just as Alfred Nobel got in touch with his feelings and redefined his values, we should step back and do the same.

1. What is your legacy?
2. How would you like to be remembered?
3. Will you be spoken well of?
4. Will you be remembered with love and respect?
5. Will you be missed



Want to be part of the start of a new era for the choir?

While the choir maintains its ability to regularly put between 40 and 50 choristers onstage, we are keen to increase those numbers and hence we 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, possibly 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 of any nationality, age, colour or ethnicity.

Our current and past members include people with Scots, English, Irish, New Zealand, Dutch, French, German, Egyptian, Latvian, South African, Tongan, Samoan, American 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 any 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 possibly the best music director and accompanist combination in Melbourne.

Mitch Meyer, our new Music Director, has a background in music and management. An accomplished soloist as well as a respected conductor of several choirs, he was most recently the music director of the Buderim Male Choir in Queensland.

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.

On the first Wednesday in the month, one of the sections provides the choir and our visitors with a light 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 member facilities, which will enable you to learn and practice the individual vocal parts at home.

This makes the process of getting up to speed with the Choir's repertoire very 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 beautiful Welsh songs in our repertoire.

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

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, 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), then 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 (with a portable electric piano, where required).

We have an eclectic repertoire, a wonderful sound and provide great 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-aged citizens. Hence potential sponsors with products to market to this demographic e.g., those providing services in retail, hospitality, investment, insurance, real estate, retirement homes etc., might find supporting the choir worthwhile.

Alternatively, if you have a product or service which you believe might appeal to our audiences, then please contact us and we will be delighted to promote your company, product or service through our concerts and marketing materials.

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

Newsletter Feed-back

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

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

We are seeking to increase our patronage and we are happy for you copy or circulate this newsletter to any of your friends and relatives. If you would like us to add them to our distribution list, so they get their copy by email from the choir, 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 subscribers can opt out at any time.

Email is our preferred way of communication with our friends and 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.

Laughter is the best medicine

Old Firefighters

One night outside a small town in the US, a fire started inside the local chemical factory.

In the blink of an eye, it exploded into massive flames.

The alarm went out to all fire departments for miles around.

When the volunteer fire fighters appeared on the scene, the chemical company president rushed to the fire chief and said, "All our secret formulas are in the vault in the centre of the plant. They must be saved I'll give \$50,000 to the fire department that brings them out intact." But the roaring flames held the firefighters off.

Soon more fire departments had to be called in as the situation became desperate.

As the firemen arrived, the president shouted out that the offer was now \$100,000 to the fire department who could save the company's secret files.

From the distance, a lone siren was heard as another fire truck came into sight.

It was the nearby Chasidic Jewish rural township volunteer fire company composed mainly of Jewish, ultra-orthodox men over the age of 65.

To everyone's amazement, that little weathered fire engine roared right past all the sleek newer engines that were parked outside the plant

Without even slowing down, it drove straight into the middle of the inferno.

Outside, the other firemen watched as the Chasidic old timers jumped off right in the middle of the fire and fought it back on all sides

It was a performance and effort never seen before.

Within a short time, the old timers had extinguished the fire and saved the secret formulas.

The grateful chemical company president announced that for such a superhuman feat he was upping the reward to \$200,000 and walked over to thank each of the brave fire fighters personally.

The local TV news reporter rushed in to capture the event on film, asking their chief, “What are you going to do with all that money?”

“Vell,” said Moishe Goldberg, the 70-year-old Fire Chief, “Da foist ting ve gonna do is fix da brakes on dat truck!”

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