

June 30th found us again in Nebo Chapel. This time for our own annual concert where we were joined with Dare to Sing Ladies Choir. Another very successful event with a good afterglow in the Club.

The choir has had a number of charity fund raising events throughout the year. Several of our lads responded to Mike Thomas's call for a fund raising trip to Northern Ireland (see below) and later in July we took part in another charity fund raising event where we joined Pelenna Choir on a sponsored walk along Cefn Bryn, a hilly ridge in Gower. This time our donation went to the "Tenovus" cancer charity



No not an orgy but another verse of Peter Williams, the King was in the Counting House. This time with shirts off (Males only)

This was followed by a lively afterglow in the Beaufort Inn. Again an excellent sing. (see photo) The King and Charlie Mopps were included, with several pints consumed.

August brought a cracking social night at Porkey's barn where burgers were the order of the day with the entertainment provided by Celtic Spirit and a singer to finish the night off.

This looks as if it could turn into an annual event Watch this space!

Back after a quiet summer break the boys had only a little time to prepare for our first overseas tour, a long weekend in the town of Wolfenbuttel in Germany (see article). This was followed later in the week with a concert at St. Joseph's Church, Cwmaman, as part of the 'Cwmfest' opening night event. This was a repeat of last year's concert where we were accompanied by Dare to Sing, Ladies Choir and Stephanie Harvey Powell as the special individual artist. Once again the church was packed and from the excellent feedback received it appeared that everyone really enjoyed the show. Several of our members have also had a few tours with Pelenna Choir proving, again, that the relationship we have is working to everyone's benefit

MIKES' COMMANDO CHORISTERS MAGHERFELT, NORTHERN IRELAND

On July 7th we met for our Annual General Meeting at the Ton and I mention this only because of events that unfolded on the night. At the end of the meeting Mike Thomas (MD) brought to our attention the plight of the wife of the brother of his long time friend who was suffering from an incurable cancer and the NHS in their wisdom had stopped her life preserving tablets

Mike was looking for volunteers to accompany him on a trip to Northern Ireland to sing in a fund raising event to help purchase the pills needed. Anyway the point of relating this is the extraordinary spontaneous generosity of our members who elected to collect £10 per person right there and then. We raised £250 on that night and also voted to double it from club funds.

Several of our members eventually joined Mike's "Commando Choristers" along with some lads from Pelenna Choir and travelled to Northern Ireland to take part in the fund raiser. Our cheque for £500 was duly presented and about £10,000 was raised on the night. **Well done boys!**



The full commando party enjoying some R & R time after the gruelling events of the night before. Fair play we didn't lose a single chorister

CWMDARE VOICES TAKE GERMANY BY STORM.

As the choir has gone from strength to strength over the last few years so there has been a growing feeling of the need to expand our horizons. So a trip abroad was on the cards. The problem was where to start. A number of ideas were forthcoming but eventually with the help of Mervyn Pugh, the Twinning organiser for RCT, we were offered a short tour to Wolfenbuttel to take part in their Town Music Festival. The organisation for an event of this size was something new for the Committee. Coaches to organise, flights to book, accommodation to be sought, funds to raise and our thanks must go to Dave Manning for taking up the challenge. Well done Dave!



The boys in St. Trinitas church, Wolfenbuttel

A tour party of 35 left Cwmdare on Friday 15th September for our flight to Hanover where we were met by the twinning organiser and the Wolfenbuttel choir master. After a night's sleep (or a few hours in some cases) we assembled for our practice in St Trinitas Church where we also met the local choir who were about 40 lady choristers strong with a few males thrown in to provide the base notes.



St. Trinitas Church, Wolfenbuttel

The concert with them in the evening was brilliant with hundreds in the audience. I think that our boys did themselves proud and certainly impressed their musical director and the ladies themselves. We also sang in the same church as part of their service the following morning.

The town of Wolfenbuttel was incredible, with old half-timbered houses, a beautiful castle and some amazing pubs, which we occasionally frequented 'LOL'. The people there were also brilliant and they couldn't do enough for our boys. They took us on trips to see the area, they plied us with ample amounts of food and furnished us with copious amounts of beer and wine. Which of course we took advantage of, it would have been rude not to.



An impromptu sing-song after lunch on Monday where, in an amazing old barn we were provided with a tasty lunch of local delicacies

All of us on the tour were astounded by the warm welcome we had received and the friendliness of the people there. We were even front page news in their Sunday newspaper. We all agreed that it could not have been better. The only problem we now face is how to compare with that when they come to visit us, as an invitation has been made for them to come over in 2019. That should be truly be an event worth looking forward to.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

So, on the success of this year and in particularly our tour to Germany choristers are keen for more. Well at present, for next year we have no tours abroad planned however we are looking to organise a weekend trip to Newquay. (Some may recall the successful trip down there a couple of years ago) also we are looking to include a social weekend to Tenby where we will be singing at a wedding in the afternoon.

However, things are moving for 2019. Mike has plans for a mixed choir tour to Australia in February (more details to follow) We are also still, together with Pelenna, being considered for the Welsh contribution to the Celtic Festival at Lorient in Brittany. Again watch this space! And of course we hope to have the Wolfenbuttel choir over



Tenor Baritone Bass

Cwmdare Voices report published in the National Associations of Choirs Magazine

The Choir has recently been included in an interesting article in the National Association of Choirs Magazine which illustrates that in the village of Cwmdare something is stirring. We think that as many of you would not have had a chance to read the article that we'd reproduce some extracts from it.

Cwmdare! You'd be hard pressed to find it on any map. It's just a small ex mining village situated in a small blind end valley in South Wales surrounded by high grass covered mountains. The Village once had a thriving community based around a couple of collieries; however, those days are now long gone together with a lot of the spirit that once held the community together. Today the Village has one pub, the Ton-Glwyd-Fawr, a village shop, a small zinc covered church, one remaining chapel and a thriving miners welfare club that sports a compact concert hall.

The valley is part of the wider community of the town of Aberdare which sits pleasantly in its own valley between the better known valleys of Rhondda and Merthyr Tydfil.

Aberdare has a claim to quite an extraordinary choral past. In the year 1872 a local musician by the name of Griffith Rees Jones or 'Caradog' as he was more widely known, assembled together colliers and working class men of the valley to form a male voice choir comprising of four hundred and sixty voices. He took the entire assemblage to London by train to compete in the most prestigious British choral competition of the time at the Crystal Palace, and won first prize. That's not all! The following year he did the same thing again and again won first prize. It was such an extraordinary accomplishment that the townspeople of Aberdare erected a statue of him which still stands proudly today as the centre-piece of the Town's square.

Anyway back to the village of Cwmdare. Something is stirring in this quiet backwater of the land of song, for in the last few years the Village has spawned not one but two new choirs. One a male voice and another for ladies.

'Nothing unusual in that', I hear you say? But in this traditional heart-land of song many choirs are struggling to maintain membership and some are just closing their doors altogether. So two new choirs in one small village is surely, a truly amazing occurrence.

First came the men's choir when after one particularly noisy sing-song in the back room of the 'Ton' pub the consensus was that they certainly enjoyed the singing but with a little practice they could do a lot better. So a practice night was established and soon the lads were entertaining the pub's customers on a regular basis. The next step was a name; and as a bit of fun they agreed that the new group of songsters should be called 'Only Drunks Allowed'.

Of course this was great as a laugh but as the boys improved and the word got round they began to perform in a number of other hostelrys in the locality. The name only became a problem when they eventually were invited to sing in a local church, how could they be introduced as 'Only Drunks Allowed' in a place of worship and therefore Cwmdare Voices were born.

Since that time the choir has gone from strength to strength and now has a 40 strong membership under the tutelage and guidance of their musical director Doctor Michael Thomas. They have sung in a number of quite prestigious concerts, had several short tours within this country and are presently looking forward to a short tour of Germany in September this year.

The Cwmdare ladies choir were formed a year or so later. And now 'Dare To Sing' has 76 members with an ever growing repertoire and concert list. Just recently the ladies have been invited by the long established Treharris Male Voice Choir to tour Canada with them next year.

So despite signs to the contrary elsewhere, choral singing, both male and female is alive and thriving in this little South Wales Valley. Additionally both choirs have helped rejuvenate the community spirit in the village; they have helped raise funds for local charities and have each provided a purpose in life for their ever growing membership.



WARNING! On the loose in Cwmdare

This frightening bunch were some of our choristers hamming it up and providing the laughter to our concert in Nebo Chapel last Christmas.

The committee are always busy looking at ways and means of improving our choir and our thanks must go to Andrew Phillips and Bob Jenkins for obtaining a lottery grant for £5000 earlier in the year which has gone to pay for choir coats and transport

Panto. Don't forget on **Friday 29th December** the Choir are putting on, in the Cwmdare Club, a pantomime (Matinee and evening performance) loosely based on the theme of Treasure Island. It will be a real hoot so don't miss it.

Patrons: Our thanks go out to you for your wonderful support and contribution to our choir. **Diolch yn fawr iawn**



CWMDARE VOICES NEWSLETTER NOV 2017

Another successful year for the choir

Another great year lads-well-done! Several more successful concerts under our belts with some great social events thrown in as well.

We started before last Christmas with a fund raiser in Tesco's and another in Aberdare Market. These gigs certainly helped raise the Choir's profile locally as well as raise funds and support for our charities. These gigs were swiftly followed by our own Christmas concert in Nebo Chapel and what a great night that was. With a packed audience and some awesome singing by the children from Cwmdare primary. They were brilliant, even joining in with our dance routine to Winter Wonderland. Winter Wonderland became an even bigger hit when we sang it in the Con Club with Pelenna and Dare to Sing Ladies Choir. It was complete chaos but great fun. I know the ladies were talking about it for ages afterwards



This was followed during Christmas week by a social afternoon at the Halfway Inn, Glynneath which went on well into the evening and a good time was had by all. Several of our boys were unusually quite the worse for wear after a really good sing and slurp.

After Christmas, as usual, things were quite quiet, but practice continued apace ready for our Saint David's concert which this year we held in Cwmdare Club. This was followed by our own special night for our patrons again in the Club. They all seemed to enjoy the relaxed evening and the buffet afterwards was greatly appreciated. This was so successful that another evening was organised for the Patrons in October, which again was a great night

As you know we have had quite some success in attracting patrons to our choir and our thanks must go to Mike Rees (Junior) for his sterling work in organising the group. We now have over a hundred and it's really great to have them on board.

In April we were again performing in the Club, this time for the congregation and friends of Saint Luke's Church. All these smaller concerts were to put us in a good singing shape ready for the BIG ONE. The one we had all been practicing for months for—a massed concert at Saint Elvan's Church, Aberdare, where we were to be joined by Pelenna Valley Male Voice Choir, Cwmbach Choir and Mountain Ash Singers.

There were about 150 choristers on stage singing to a packed church and what an awesome sound we made. A truly memorable experience for all of us.

YOUR CHOIR NEEDS YOU



We are still looking for new choristers to boost our numbers, particularly in the base and baritone sections. So if you fancy a go, just come along to our Tuesday practice night in the Cwmdare Club and have a listen. There's no pressure to join, no voice tests and you can learn the numbers at your own pace. Your choice! You can either sit in front of the telly or you can do something which has been proven to be good for one's health, promotes wellbeing and involves you in an interesting pastime and a great social outlet