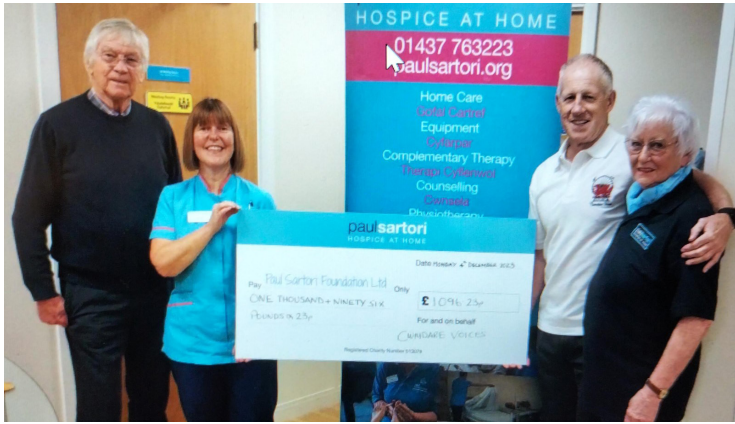




CWMDARE VOICES

NEWSLETTER 2024

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PEMBROKESHIRE FUNDRAISER

Following on from our fundraising expedition to West Wales in September, 2023, fellow chorister, Tudor Walters, took part in a publicity event in the new year, where a cheque for £1096.23 was presented to representatives of the Paul Sartori Hospice at Home Foundation. Yet another great effort from the boys for such a worthy and remarkable cause.

The Paul Sartori Hospice at Home is a charity offering free specialised, supportive care and advice for those in the later stages of any life-limiting illness. They provide a range of services in the patient's home.

A VISIT FROM OUR CORNISH FRIENDS

On an evening in November we hosted, at Cwmddare Miners' Welfare Club, our friends from Newquay Rowing Club and what a night we had! Friendship, choral singing and sea shanties combined to provide

a wonderful atmosphere and an enjoyable and memorable occasion. There was an exchange of gifts, and we were privileged to receive a replica pilot gig which is now proudly mounted (along with other Cwmddare Voices memorabilia) in the lounge of the Ton Glwyd Fawr Pub in Cwmddare, where the choir was formed over 12 years ago.



CHRISTMAS CAROLS AT TESCO

During December we made our annual pilgrimage to the Tesco Store in Aberdare. We were able to entertain the customers and enhance their festive shopping experience, whilst raising funds for a worthy cause. On this appearance, we were able to raise a cracking £205, which was donated to a local representative of the Prostate Cancer charity.



CWMDARE VOICES HELPS REFLECT UPON THE MINER'S STRIKE

On a Saturday afternoon in mid-February the choir took part in the "Voices from Underground" launch event, held at St Elvan's Church. The twelve months project aimed to mark the fortieth anniversary of the 1984/85 strike and explore its impact and legacy upon former mining communities and their residents. Various speakers offered a range of interesting perspectives. Our choir, accompanied by the Lewis Merthyr Brass Band, sang four tradition Welsh songs, culminating in a rousing performance of Yma O Hyd, which is fast becoming our second National Anthem! A full church provided appreciative and protracted applause.

SAINT DAVID'S DAY CELEBRATION

In early March, the choir welcomed the pupils of Year Three, Cwmdare Primary School, to take part in our celebration for our Patron Saint. The children did themselves proud! Wonderful singing brought prolonged applause from a very appreciative audience.



The evening's entertainment culminated with the choir joining the children in hearty renditions of Calon Lan; Yma O Hyd; and, of course, the National Anthem. Huge thanks must go to staff at the school and, in particular, Karen Miles, Deputy Head, for her part in organising the school's input. This type of combined event is not only enjoyable but so important to maintain community involvement and spirit.

A WELCOME TO OUR FELLOW CHOIRS

With the aid of a Community Micro Grant provided by RCT council, we held a multi-choir social evening at the Cwmdare Miners' Welfare Club, at the end of March. Our Pelenna Valley friends were accompanied by the newly formed Llansawel MVC. A great social experience followed with choir and individual singing being enhanced by a marvellous buffet. Many thanks to Emma at the club!! Much fun and laughter was accompanied by the occasional alcoholic supplement! A huge 'thank you' to our fellow choristers for making the evening such a success! Following fundraising during the evening, we were able to donate £500 towards the National Eisteddfod, which was to be held in Pontypridd in July.

SUPPORTING OUR FRIENDS

In April, to assist Pelenna Valley MVC in fundraising towards their forthcoming tour to Esslingen, Germany, several of our crew travelled to Tonmawr Rugby Club for an evening of entertainment. Choristers were invited to take part in a 'Conductor of the Year' competition. Terry Lewis and Bob Jenkins represented us and demonstrated unique costume choice and musical talent!

The event was hosted by Mike Thomas, who had designed and operated a 'remarkable' clapometer. Somewhat contentiously, the judges awarded the prestigious trophy to a representative of another choir, but that outcome did not detract from an evening of fun and laughter, along with hugely successful fundraising.



OUR PATRONS EVENING

In late April, we hosted our loyal supporters with a buffet and entertainment, at our practice venue, Cwmdare Club. Our patrons were treated to the choir performing traditional and more modern, newly learned music. In addition, we shared the evening's entertainment with members of the Showcase cast, who had recently performed 'Made in Dagenham' at the Coliseum. What wonderful entertainment, a brilliant atmosphere and plenty of food (and some drink) too!



DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING

Not your usual choir activity this! However, in line with our community emphasis and our awareness of our responsibility towards our fellow choir members, a hands-on CPR and AED training was arranged for early June. The training was provided, in an accessible and professional manner, by RCT Heart Heroes. All who had the opportunity to undertake the training commented upon the relevance and absolute value of the experience. Well done boys.



ORIANA CONCERT

On a Saturday afternoon in May, the choir took part in this event held at St Elvan's Church. The boys shared the stage with our fellow choristers from Pelenna and Cwmbach. The combined choir performed specific parts within 'An Age of Kings' composed by Edward Gregson, which was superbly performed by the Lewis Merthyr Brass Band. A very appreciative audience witnessed a unique experience which reflected a real developmental opportunity for our choir.

OUR WEDDING EXPERIENCE

On a glorious day in June, the choir were privileged to perform at Kelsie and Tyler's wedding, held at Bryngarw House, near Bridgend. An hour of singing in the venue's conservatory ended with further specific songs requested by the happy couple, 'You'll never walk alone' and 'Working Man'. A successful event where the choir made many new and appreciative friends. On the journey home, the boys (thirsty by now!) frequented a welcoming hostelry in Neath. The singing continued and ended only when the coach pulled up in Cwmdare, some hours later!



MASS CHOIR EVENT

In June, the choir was joined by members of Pelenna Valley, Cwmbach and Tonna MVC's to form a mass choir of 100+ at Saint David's Church, Neath. In addition, we were supported by the impressive Dare to Sing Ladies Choir. The concert was in aid of the RNLI and the Burton Bont Festival Group (Pontrhydyfen). It was a pleasure to be part of a sold-out event that raised £3500 for the two charities, followed by some liquid refreshment and a good singsong at the nearby Neath Rugby Club. It is so important that we cooperate in this way, clearly for the benefit of the community and enjoyment of all concerned.



OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was held on an evening, in late June, at the home of our 'Only Drunks Allowed' origins, the Ton Glwyd Fawr Pub, in Cwmdare. The event was well attended and following consideration of the formal, relevant and important matters, much singing and socialising ensued. Yet another successful year for the choir was celebrated in an appropriate manner.



A MEMORABLE WEEKEND IN RUGBY

In late October, the choir took up the invitation to sing at the 'Magic of Male Voice' concert held in the impressive surroundings at the Temple Speech Room in the historic Rugby School in Warwickshire. The boys again brought credit to our choir by contributing to an amazing blend of sound, produced by the six choirs combined for the night! We offer our thanks to Wigston MVC for the invitation to attend such a prestigious and well-attended event and, of course, to our friends at Pelenna MVC who accompanied us over the weekend. Long may these associations continue! It would also be remiss not to mention the exceptional hospitality and the late, late afterglow held at Newbold-upon-Avon Rugby club, where, again, the boys performed magnificently.



CELEBRATING OUR PROUD HERITAGE

In October we were invited to take part in a project and the making of a film named: 'The Coal Beneath our Feet', 'The Wind above our heads'. The event, organised by Beth Winter, was held at the Penrhwi Ceiber Hall, a building steeped in local history and examined our culture and the opportunities that lie ahead within our locality. Our choir concluded the evening with a number of appropriately passionate songs and ended with us being joined by children from Ysgol Gyfyn Rhydywaun, for a stirring rendering of Yma o Hyd. A wonderful evening enjoyed by us and an appreciative audience.



SAINT ELVAN'S REMEMBRANCE CONCERT

On the evening of 7th November, the Choir was proud to participate in a moving Remembrance Service held at Saint Elvan's church, a lead-up to the annual Sunday Remembrance, alongside our friends Pelenna Valley MVC, Llwydcoed Brass Band and Town Church Primary School choir. The church was full and we've since received numerous compliments on our performance.

ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY CONTRIBUTION

Once again, Cwmdare Voices were out in force at Aberdare Cenotaph, to respect and remember our fallen heroes, with friends from Cwmbach MVC, Dare to Sing Ladies and the excellent Llwydcoed Brass Band. Our MD, Dr Mike Thomas, MBE, led the singing and the band, in his own inimitable way. There was a first-class turn out, as usual, which is always good to see. Later in the afternoon, a dedicated number of our boys supported and sang at the further Remembrance Service held at our 'home' in Cwmdare Miner's Welfare Club. Well done boys.



FURTHER CHOIR NEWS

TRIBUTE TO OUR CHAIRMAN

The Committee and members of Cwmdare Voices would wish to place on record their sincere appreciation of the hard work and contribution made, over the years, to the Choir and its administration, by David Manning, who stood down from his role as Chairman, Committeeman and Baritone chorister, in advance of this year's Annual General Meeting in July.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW CHAIRMAN

At this year's AGM, Nick Evans was elected to the role of Chairman for our Choir. A long-standing bass section member of Cwmdare Voices, Nick has served on the committee for seven years. A former military man, Nick's vision for the Choir is to strive to continue the steady progress and development, seen over recent years.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW ACCOMPANIST

A huge welcome to Rhian Grundy Lewis, who joined us in May. Rhian has already made a significant positive impact within the Choir, with her effervescent personality and considerable musical experience and talent! The cultural heritage of the Welsh Valleys and the musical legacy of male voice choirs is close to Rhian's heart. In dedicating to upholding and advancing these traditions, Rhian has already become a major asset to our Choir and to our future progress.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

We continue to buck the trend experienced by other choirs by building our membership. This year we have had the pleasure in welcoming five new members: Geraint Thomas, Gary Williams, Phillip Evans, Lewis James and, not least, Ceri Haggett. These boys are already making a positive contribution within our ranks and long may their energy and our overall enjoyment continue!

FRIENDS MOVING ON

The past year has seen comings and goings within our ranks. Our accompanist, Andrew Chinnock, moved on to pastures new after supporting our musical development over recent years. We wish Andrew all the best in his future endeavours. We have also said 'goodbye' to choristers, Darren Lloyd, Kingsley Samuel and Keith Boggis. A big 'thank you' to these lads for their positive contribution whilst part of our happy group. The door is always open when you wish to return boys.

OUR LOYAL PATRONS

Once again, the Choir is indebted to our loyal Patrons and also those who have joined us recently. Your invaluable support means so much to us! It was a real pleasure to welcome so many of you to our Patrons Evening back in April, where we were supported and entertained by members of the Showcase Performing Arts Group. Have a wonderful Christmas and New Year and we look forward to your continued support in 2025. Also a big thank you to our own Ian Blake for organising our Patrons section.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

You are probably aware that Cwmdare Voices is self-funding, so any financial contribution is most welcome, appreciated and invested in the choir's current and future development. A huge 'thank you' then to W D Lewis Ltd and to Darrell Williams of Ivor Phillips Sculptors for their ongoing support, in this context.

SUCH SAD NEWS

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of our friend and fellow chorister, Michael Powell. Mike will be remembered as a true gentleman, who contributed fully to our performances and who was universally liked among our group. Mike will be sadly missed.