



# CWMDARE VOICES NEWSLETTER NOV 2019

## AMBITION REACHED!

Ever since the choir was formed in the bar room of the Ton Glwyd Fawr public house it had been its ambition to sing at an international rugby match at the home of rugby, Cardiff's Principality Stadium. In those heady, early days of 'Only Drunks Allowed' it seemed an impossible dream. However, in just six short years that ambition was reached when the choir was invited to sing on the pitch at the start of the Wales v South Africa international in November 2018.



All credit to the boys as they had to learn a number of new songs including the South African National Anthem (sang in 4 languages) and a Zulu song, Si-a-hamba. It was an amazing experience especially singing the Welsh National Anthem with seventy five-thousand fans joining in. We were given free seats for the match which proved to be a cracker with Wales winning 20—11. Just the icing on the cake. The celebrations continued into the night with a great impromptu performance at the Pontcanna Inn in front of a packed house of Welsh fans celebrating their countries win.



What a great weekend we had at the end of September singing in a joint concert with the Bournemouth Male Voice Choir at the lovely St. Stephen's Church, with its stunning architecture and wonderful acoustics. And, to add to the enjoyment we all ended up in the Bournemouth Rugby Club at 8.30 the following morning to watch Wales beat Australia in the Rugby World Cup. Of course, there were some very bleary eyes but tiredness was soon forgotten with a few beverages to celebrate the win. Basically just topping up from the night before. Thanks must be given to Andrew Chinnock who stood in for Mike as conductor for the event. It was a most enjoyable trip despite the fact that our bus driver took us on the prolonged scenic route to get there. The success of this short tour bodes well for our next foray out of the valley when we travel to sing with the Stoneleigh Choir in Coventry at the end of November.

### **THE CHOIR AT ST. STEPHENS CHURCH, BOURNEMOUTH**





Cwmdare and Pelenna together for the finale

## GRAND WEEKEND IN THE SUNSINE

On a sunny weekend in July the choir was extremely busy with three outdoor venues at which to sing.

Saturday saw the celebrations for the Aberdare Park's 150 year anniversary which included two concerts. The first in Aberdare town and the second, in the afternoon, at the park itself. There was a plethora of choirs and artists taking part including Dare to Sing, Cwmbach MVC, Mount Rugby Club Singers etc.

The day started with a photo call at Caradog's statue in Victoria Square and then over to the Library Square for a rousing concert. We may be a little prejudice but Cwmdare Voices were the best by far. It was great to see that the fine weather brought out a crowd of thousands.

In the afternoon it was up to the park with a little watering break in-between. Again we had a great reception from a large and receptive audience.



## TWO TIES THOMAS



The next day saw us performing in the warm sunshine at the Neath Music Festival where we met up with our old friends from Pelenna Valley MVC. We each did two sets then came together for a grand finale. Nearly sixty choristers on stage (in the tent) made a grand sound. Mike of course, being the conductor for both choirs was left with a dilemma for the finale, what tie to wear? So in typical Mike Thomas fashion he wore two!



Cwmdare with all the other choirs together with Roy Noble and Park organisers at the Library Square.



## Community Litter Pick

Being a village choir it is important, as a group, that we put some help and support back into the local community. With that in mind, Bob Jenkins set off on his quest. He had long been dismayed at the amount of rubbish which had been left and dumped, particularly in the hedge growth and side lanes of the village. So why not kill two birds with one stone? Let's have a sponsored litter pick with the proceeds going towards Riding for the Disabled, our chosen charity for this year. Keep Wales Tidy got involved and supplied the picking tongs and bags and so on a thankfully sunny Saturday morning in March we set about the task. We eventually finished up with almost 40 bags of rubbish which Bobby is so helpfully pointing out in the photograph. (in case you missed it!)

It was an amazing success, not only did it raise the Choir's profile in the Community but also raised over £900 for the charity. Well done to all those that took part.

That was the toughest choir practice ever



## Old Time Music Hall at the Aberdare Coliseum

What a great show! Considering that it was all done with local talent it wouldn't have been out of place on a London stage. All credit to the Friends of Aberdare Park who organised the event in September this year. Cwmdare Voices opened the first and second halves and also took part in the finale to a standing ovation.



Waiting for the curtain to rise at the Coliseum



# My Australian Dream

By Dr. Mike Thomas

It had long been my ambition to take a choir to Australia. I nearly made it in 2000 with Pelenna, but unfortunately we couldn't make the numbers. However, an opportunity arose a couple of years ago when choristers from the three choirs I am involved with, Cwmdare, Cwmbach and Pelenna, together with our old friends at Wigston MVC performed at a massed concert. It was almost a spur of the moment decision when I announced that I was thinking of taking a choir to Australia. I was amazed with the response and quickly made contact with my cousin 'down under' Mike Webb who was thrilled by the news. He quickly set about organising every thing at the Australian end,

even getting a promotional video of the choir on the local TV, while Matthew Burford provided great support for me with the organisation on this side.

Eventually on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2019 we left Aberdare with a choir contingent of 35 plus wives and partners, with Cwmdare Voices being by far the largest contributor with 19 choristers.

It was a long journey with a short stop in Singapore and it was a tired group that trudged into our Sydney Hotel but after a short rest, it was off to see the sights. The Opera House, Darling Harbour and the Sydney Harbour Bridge where the more adventurous of the group climbed to the very top.

Tuesday April 2<sup>nd</sup> was certainly a day to remember for me. It was my 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday and it was great to celebrate it with such a great bunch of people. It started with a ride on an old London bus followed by a trip on a pirate ship with an open bar and a huge birthday cake.

The following day was our first concert. My cousin had arranged it in the oldest theatre in the southern hemisphere, The Prince of Wales Gulgong Opera House and when we arrived it was hard to believe, the audience was already queuing around the block. It was an unforgettable experience and of course, the show was a huge success.

Buoyed with success our next concert was at the Joan Sutherland Theatre in Penrith where we were treated like royalty. Another wonderful triumph.

On the Saturday we travelled to my cousin's home town of Port Macquarie, which was to be our home for the next five days and the venue for our next concert. This was to be an evening performance at the Glasshouse Theatre and although it had a seating capacity of nearly 600, the tickets had been quickly snapped up, leaving a lot of disappointed people. The solution was to put on a matinee show which was also a sell-out. We were supported by the Man Shed Choir from the local high school who were absolutely brilliant.

Being partial to a drop of Aussie ale we visited the iconic 'Pub With no Beer' and also had time to visit Timber Town, Wauchope, a kind of St Fagans with sunshine.

All to soon it was time to say goodbye as we made our way back to Sydney for our flights to Singapore.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> in Singapore was an amazing day. Matthew had incredibly managed to get us a chance to perform at the world famous Singapore Rugby Sevens. We performed in the Sports Village and later at a corporate event where to everyone's amazement we were approached by George Gregan, Australia's most capped rugby player, who asked to sing 'I Still Call Australia Home' with us. The performance brought a tear to the eye of many.

We arrived home on the following Monday, completely knackered but delighted with our tour's success.

I must thank all the choristers who supported me in this venture, Liam who performed solo at the concerts, William and Jac for their musical contribution and finally to Marg, my long suffering wife who did so much organisation behind the scenes and had to live through my dream from Wigson to Wagga Wagga



The Dragon meets the kangaroo



**THE WHOLE MOTLEY CREW ON SYDNEY HARBOUR**



Put the knife down and step away



## Riding for the Disabled gets 1500 smackers

Once again, in August this year the choir has excelled itself in collecting for our chosen charity. This year it has been close to the choir's heart as Cwmdare Voices chorister Mark England and his wife host the charity, Riding for the Disabled.

"Bronco" Bob Jenkins presented a cheque for £1500 to Paula Hadfield and Sally Williams at an evening of fun and frolics in the barn of the Green Meadows Riding School in the Dare Valley Country Park.

This has been a magnificent effort by the choir with the money raised from 3 main events, our Christmas concert at Nebo Chapel, the litter pick and the BBQ night at Green Meadows.



## Performing for Mayor of RCT

In March this year the choir were invited by the Mayor of RCT to perform at the Mayors Parlour in front of a select audience. It was an unique and privileged experience to see "the inner sanctum" of the Mayors domain with it's fine panelling and artwork. Both the Mayor and his audience certainly enjoyed our short concert although there was disappointment all round when it was explained that the parlour was alcohol free so we reluctantly demolished the fine buffet and made do with cups of tea.



## CHOIR NOTICES

The last AGM heralded a couple of changes on the Committee. Both Mike Rees (The younger) and Andrew Phillips stepped down and much thanks must go them for the work they have put in during the years they have served. We were therefore pleased to welcome onto the Committee Ian Blake who brings a wealth of committee experience to the group and also Liam Ridiford who brings a much needed youthful aspect.

## New Members

A big Cwmdare Voices welcome to four new members: **Terry Jones, Malcolm Evans, John Hendy and Bernie Thompson**

## Future Events:

- Nov 23/24** Stoneleigh, Coventry
- Dec 7th** Wedding Oxwich, **Dec 15th** Tesco's, Aberdare
- Dec 23rd** Wedding Brecon, **Dec 17th** Xmas concert Nebo
- Fri. Feb 28th** Abercwmboi Rugby Club
- 3rd March** St David's Concert (provisional)
- April 11th** Fun event with Glynneath MVC (prov.)
- Tue. 13th** May Patrons Evening
- Sat. 6th** June 1st Annual Concert



## 60's, 70's or 80's Take your pick

What a night it was, our first fancy dress evening where choristers, partners and friends were invited to dress up in the clothes of their youth be it 60's, 70's or 80's.

We held it in the Cwmdare Club and a lot of people made the effort to dress up (Those that didn't certainly felt left out).

Anyway it was a great night with Karl Riddiford taking 1st prize as Adam Ant. Nick and his wife took the couples prize as a couple of punks and Karen (Peter William's wife) took the prize for best lady, looking quite stunning in her 60's gear and long wig. Peter spent some time chatting her up before he realised he was talking to his wife! Certainly took him back a few years!

We were entertained by local band Primary Covers

## PATRONS

Once again a big thank you to all our patrons. Your contribution both supportive and financial makes a big difference to the everyday running of the choir.

People are not always aware of how much it costs just to keep a choir viable. Although our members pay a monthly subscription, the amount only just covers the Choir's ongoing costs such as our Musical director and accompanist fees and venue charges. So, as patrons, your contribution does really help, particularly in covering some of the transport back and foe to our concert venues.

## Patrons Evening

Taking on board suggestions from our members our patrons evening in the coming year will be even better. (Tuesday 13th May) Not only will you be entertained informally by the choir and have a sumptuous buffet but there are plans afoot to fill the evening with further entertainment. **DON'T MISS IT!**



finally  
a little  
titter

- Q** How do you know when a bass chorister is at the door
- A.** He can't find the key and he doesn't know when to come in
- Q.** How can you tell when a tenor is really stupid
- A.** When the other tenors notice