



Covid Puts the Brakes on Choir's Progress

It's been just over a year now with no concerts, practices or social get-togethers. It's been a tough old time, with several of our members succumbing to the dreaded virus, but thankfully we haven't lost anyone.

There is however, a glimmer of light for the future. The vaccine roll out is gaining a-pace and indications are that cases are rapidly falling. This gives us some hope that by the late summer, dependant of course on the instructions from the Welsh Government and advice from the Welsh Association of Choirs, we will be able to meet again. There are even plans afoot to meet outside if indoors is still restricted. So, lets keep our fingers crossed for that.

Our thanks must go to our dedicated members for keeping faith and continuing with their monthly standing orders. This has enabled us to retain our brilliant music team who have been doing excellent work on Zoom.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS! As you may be aware, the Committee has been meeting regularly on Zoom throughout this lockdown period and one of the more tricky issues we have discussed, is how to keep our members interested and abreast of any developments. One of the biggest problems we faced was looking for ways in which we could keep in touch with members and also get feed- back from them. So, we decided to issue a questionnaire in order for the Committee to get members thoughts and feelings on a number of aspects of our choir life.

36 questionnaires were sent out with a stamped address return envelope. 26 were returned (Not sure what happened to the other 10) and a number of interesting and constructive points were raised in those replies.

It was encouraging to see that in most cases the response was very positive. Members felt happy with the choirs progress, the Committee's structure and the feedback they had. All felt that the music team were a valued and treasured asset to the Choir's development. There were a number of opinions as to the choir's choice of music with some wanting more modern songs whilst others were concerned with the difficulty in learning the welsh songs. Generally most were happy with our repertoire.

All members were positive regarding our venue at the club and the amount of practice undertaken. There was a call for more social events whilst there was an even split in the response to our concert schedule with half wanting more while the others were content with our existing schedule.

There were also constructive suggestions regarding recruitment and some valid points to the 'further comments' question.

All in all this appears to have been a worthwhile exercise and therefore the Committee have decided to raise some of the relevant suggestions for further discussion by all members in the forthcoming AGM (Date to be verified)



Jiffy Joins our Choir (For a photograph only unfortunately.)

It seems so long ago but we did manage to get a few performances in before the virus took over our lives. MD Mike has often said the both Cwmclare and Pelenna are commando choirs and nothing exemplifies this more than our performance together in Morgan's Hotel Swansea in February last year. The short concert was a prestigious fund raiser for The Doddie Weir Foundation a charity created by Doddie after he was struck down with motor neuron disease.

An added bonus to the evening was that Jonathan Davies was to be the guest speaker for the night. He turned down the opportunity to join Cwmclare Voices but happily joined us for a group photograph.

OUR CHAIRMAN RETIRES

As you may know Huw Jones (Yosser) our Chairman has decided to retire from the Choir due to family and work commitments. He will be sorely missed.

Our thanks must go out to him as one of our 'Founding Fathers' who's vision leading from those sing-songs in the Ton led to the formation of Only Drunks Allowed and of course to the choir we have today, Cwmclare Voices. The Committee have decided to offer Yosser a life membership and he would always be welcomed back at any time when his circumstances allow.



Wild Cat Kelly strikes again



The boys love a bit of nonsense and dressing for the part is now essential. Cowboy hats are definitely the thing for the choir's rendition of Wild Cat Kelly. This was as part of our Saint David's Day concert at the club in March 2020. Little did we know at the time that this would be our last concert for a long time.



Caradog's 150th anniversary Celebration

Not everyone knows the history of the man we have dominating the square in Aberdare. His fame is due to his musical ability in assembling a huge choir, 460 strong, who were to win on two consecutive years the prestigious 1st prize at the British Choral Awards at the Crystal Palace, London.

2022 is the 150th anniversary of that event and the Committee feels that it should be marked with a celebratory choir event in Aberdare Town Centre. It was felt that it would enhance the reputation of the Choir if we took the lead in the organisation of this event by incorporating all the valley's choirs in one spectacular massed performance.

YMA O HYD (We are still here)

Message from our MD, Mike Thomas

Can I pay tribute to all of you who have made the effort to make sure that this choir survives. Thanks to you—we are still here! Thanks to all our choristers who have done their bit from home, to those who have sang along to recordings, to those logged onto Onedrive (Pelennachoir@hotmail.com) to learn parts and to those who have managed Zoom. Well done to all.

I know how challenging Zoom is to some but well done to the 20 plus that join each week. I know some find it difficult to sing along in the kitchen, attic or man cave but those who have overcome their reservations seem to enjoy it. I appreciate that it's not for everyone, some don't have the technical skills, others don't feel comfortable with it while others are not on Broadband. Nobody could have been more frustrated at Zoom than me, but I feel the effort is worthwhile as it keeps us in contact and allows us to keep abreast of our music and also socialise together a vital part, I feel, of our choir.

I can't wait for the time when we can all meet in the same room to have a sing together. There is no substitute for that experience. I do however,



MEET THE COMMITTEE.

Snap shot from a Zoom meeting

One member replied in our questionnaire that he did not know the Committee (duh!) so we thought we would re-introduce ourselves. Top row from left to right **Dave Manning** (Event Secretary), **Matthew Burford** (Secretary) **Liam Riddiford** (much needed youth contributor) Middle line L to R, **Gwilym Jones** (Music liaison), **Bob Jenkins** (Treasurer) **Ian Blake** (Tour Organiser), Bottom line L to R **Garry Powell** (Patrons Liaison and Vice Treasurer), **Nick Evans** (Members liaison officer)

Get your party pants on

Once we get the all clear we intend to hold a getting back together knees up. With a few free pints for everyone, plenty to eat and of course a good old sing-song. We might even incorporate our AGM so we can all have good chin-wag before hand. We'll see, so just watch this space.



St David's Day Concert with a difference

Big thanks to Mike for organising our St. David's day concert on Zoom. A bit different to past years but those that took part really had a great time. Mike had pre recorded several traditional welsh songs and we all sang along to them in the privacy of our own homes. Patrons were invited and with 24 choristers taking part

NOTICES ON THE BOTTOM: Obviously, our performances have been extremely compromised this last year however, we do have a few things to look forward to if circumstances allow. The Welsh Proms should be re-scheduled for next year and a trip to West Wales to sing in St David's Cathedral in September is still on the cards. Also, once back, we will be rapidly investigating more opportunities for concerts.

DONT FORGET TO ZOOM ON TUESDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS