



ISSUE 14



LLAIS Y FRO

The magazine of Cowbridge Male Voice Choir

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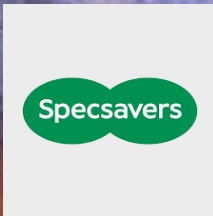
Highlights Reel Sep-Dec 2024



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This page: 2 MDs and The King.

Cover photo: Porthcawl concert with German Winds Symphonic Band



*Jon Wilks
Chairman, CMVC*

Editorial

The change of year is important for all of us. It allows a psychological turning of a page and then an immersion into new opportunities, aspirational horizons and excitement for experiences to be shared. I've never been a great one for New Year Resolutions, but if they help you then that's all to the good. If I might gently suggest though, try casting aside the idea of an individual resolution and focus, instead, on how you might contribute to collective happiness. In my experience, you'll find it much more achievable and sustainable and let's face it, 100 sit ups a day is probably neither of those things!

Numerous academic studies have demonstrated that singing promotes the release of endorphins, those clever peptides produced in the brain that block the perception of pain and boost the feeling of wellbeing. Furthermore, because singing is an aerobic activity it promotes the absorption of oxygen into the blood, further enhancing that good mood experience.

Put those positive effects into the cumulative experience of singing in a choir and, well, who wouldn't want a bit of that?!

Carols in Cowbridge brought a smile to every face...



One word? Happy...

If I was asked to provide a one-word description of the choir in 2024 it would be 'happy'. Cowbridge MVC has always been good fun, and I feel that we've built on that over the last 12 months. Its absolutely a happy place to be and I know the support that it provides to many of us.

Have a look at most of the photos shared in this new issue of Llais Y Fro and you'll rarely see a miserable face. We might sometimes appear serious but that is probably down to fierce concentration write large on our facial features. Come to an afterglow to see and feel for yourself the sense of fulfilment and joy.

All that we have done has generated a happy outcome – or certainly that's been the aim.

The happiness is not an accident of nature. We work hard to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for all our choristers and supporters. If people are poorly, they know that the thoughts of their choir friends are with them.

Not an accident of nature...

If people are down, they know that those same friends will pick them up. If people are struggling with something, they know that support will be offered. Perhaps that is why so many choristers refer to the choir as a family.

My favourite moment of the last few months? Easy. Standing next to internationally acclaimed soprano Rebecca Evans at Llandaff cathedral and singing the Hark the Herald descant with her.

It must be instantly acknowledged that she hit the high notes rather more precisely than I did, but we still gave each other a hug afterwards and she was smiling just as broadly as I was.

You see, singing together does great things for us. It conjures positivity and makes you feel good.

Happiness, that's what it inspires, beyond anything else.

Many thanks for your continued, fantastic support. On behalf of the choir, I wish you all a happy and fulfilling 2025.

Jon Wilks, Chairman

ISLE OF WIGHT



The tour party less a few who had sprinted for an earlier ferry!

The Choir was honoured and delighted to accept an invitation from Rotary Isle of Wight to visit and be the first performers in the newly refurbished Newport Minster in early September. A cohort of nearly 50 choristers together with an enthusiastic band of supporters gathered to enjoy the coach journey and immensely smooth ferry crossing to the Isle.

The tour was expertly and impressively organised by CMVC Tour Secretary Stuart McCullough, working alongside bass section member Bob Jenkins who has a long affinity with the island. The weather was simply glorious and showed off the imperious colours and sea scapes so beloved of many visitors over the years.

Our performance at Newport was completely sold out and we did the occasion proud, delivering a genuinely stand out concert. Bravo to all members of our music team.



Supporters packed coaches for the concert!



Newport Minster was full!



Our second concert was also sold out and, overall, this was a magnificent tour that will live long in the memory. Bravo also to our wonderful soloist, Esther Thomas-Bizjak.





ALL SAINTS PORTHCAWL, WITH GERMAN WINDS!



Every so often karma decides to reward you if you work hard, keep a good heart and aim to do the right thing. So it proved as an unexpected telephone call led to a remarkable event. German Winds Symphonic Band were touring the South of the UK and could we possibly do a concert with them? And thus a Tuesday night in September became an occasion that has launched a whole new, fabulous relationship.

All Saints Church Porthcawl was available and concert secretary Bruce Edwards promptly booked it before confirming everything to Sven Hellinghausen, MD for German Winds.

Nobody quite knew what would happen. Neither the choir nor German Winds had heard of each other, but the planets aligned, spirits rose, and an unforgettable sold out evening took place in aid of RNLI Porthcawl.

What's more, it has laid the ground for a tour next year to Germany for the choir. Don't you just love it when sometimes you cast care aside, throw yourself into the arms of fate and receive a great big hug?!

Porthcawl's Elvis festival took place the following weekend. They didn't have nearly as much fun, I promise you.



The 'oompah' afterglow will never be surpassed...



German Winds mascots, including Frederick Carbonara (2nd from left)



Tuesday evenings will never quite be the same again. What a fabulous occasion!





Y PANT SCHOOL

We were delighted to accept an invitation from Markham & District Brass Band to accompany them for a gala concert at Y Pant School in Pontyclun in early October, alongside the excellent Y Pant School Choir.

Due to Rhiannon's unavailability, our deputy MD, Jane Coles, picked up the baton superbly to lead her first concert with the choir. Many congratulations to Jane, who received a gift of appreciation from the choir at the afterglow.

The choir has been very saddened to learn in December of the sudden and unexpected passing of M&DBB solo trombone player Ian Howe who was with us at the concert in October, We send sympathy and condolences to the band and Ian's family.



Ian Howe RIP







ST ILLTUD'S CHURCH, LLANWIT.

Samaritans is an incredible charity, founded by Chad Varah (an alumni of your editor's school!), which does incredible and difficult work to support people struggling with depression and suicide. We have undertaken concerts and produced videos supporting Samaritans in the past and we were therefore delighted to accept an invitation from Bridgend Samaritans to help them commemorate their 50th anniversary.

To say that St Illtud's is a snug fit for nearly 60 choristers who were there is to do an injustice to sardines and their tin resting places. Every space was filled with someone in a green blazer, but the tight fit didn't impede the performance or the enjoyment for the capacity audience.

The event raised nearly £2,000 for The Samaritans cause and you can be certain that it will not be the last time that we support this wonderful charity.

The afterglow was held at Llantwit Major rugby club where the drinks flowed, songs were sung and the evening closed. Thanks to all involved particularly stage manager Geoff Smallbone!



Space was at an absolute premium as our choir continues to grow in numbers...



All eyes on MD Rhiannon as we performed before some gentle refreshment and smiles
All round at the enjoyable afterglow.



HORATIO'S GARDEN: LLANDAFF CATHEDRAL



CMVC really does asked to perform at some splendid occasions and none more so than the annual celebration for the Horatio's Garden charity in Wales. Held in the spectacular setting of Llandaff Cathedral, the concert honoured the work of the fantastic charity work of Horatio's Garden that supports spinal injury patients and families across the UK. This commemorative Wales event saw representation from rugby royalty in the person of Sir Gareth Edwards and singing royalty in the person of internationally renowned soprano Rebecca Evans CBE with whom the choir sung 'O Holy Night'.

Every concert is important for our choir, though we can rarely have concentrated quite so hard as we did for this one. It was a magnificent occasion fully justifying the gorgeous ambience and surroundings. Well done also to Graham Loveluck-Edwards for his debut with CMVC in the ranks of the top tenors.





CHRISTMAS CONCERT

One of the more difficult side effects of a choir growing in both numbers and reputation is that concert tickets tend to be in great demand. So it proved for our annual Christmas Concert held in Holy Cross Church, Cowbridge in the week before Christmas, as tickets were sold out by the end of November. We will give this some thought for next year.

With over 70 choristers on stage, a scintillating performance from our soloist Belle McMeechan and Christmas joy in everyone's hearts, this was always going to be a special evening, though maybe the choir tried a little too hard in some songs, given the wonderful acoustics in the church.

Irrespective, the concert brought happiness to the packed audience and the impressive angels salvaged from a skip at Sheffield cathedral brought an ethereal atmosphere that was genuinely unique.

It must be said that the playing of Sandra Williams, CMVC accompanist, was faultless as was the organ playing of Scott Williams. As our local MP Kanishka Narayan commented, 'what a perfect start to Christmas'.







CARDIFF AIRPORT

A chance exchange on social media saw the choir asked to go and sing a few carols at Cardiff Airport in the run-up to Christmas. Tuesday 17th December was selected, a few carollers assembled, cornet rehearsed and then we were off!

Whilst the audience was a little disappointing (only one flight was open for checkin as we performed, the performance was great fun and we even managed to raise a few pounds from an enthusiastically swung bucket by Jen Edwards. Many thanks to all choristers who came along and to Cardiff Airport for the invitation.





CAROLS IN COWBRIDGE

Don't worry Kings College, Cambridge, we are genuinely not trying to steal your thunder!

In what is rapidly becoming one of the stand out social events of the year, around 40 choristers and a veritable army of supporters and followers performed a selection of carols in 5 carefully selected Cowbridge pubs.

From Harry's Bar in Westgate to the Edmond's Arms in Eastgate (we moved East during the evening, like the 3 kings...) via the Bear Hotel, Duke of Wellington and Horse & Groom, this was a terrific occasion and we even, somehow, remained broadly in harmony to the end.

We will not pretend that everything about our singing was perfect, but we gave multiple people the opportunity to conduct the choir (some more successfully than others) and the Bear Hotel had even provided a stage for us.

This was informal, social singing at its best and we hope that we left a trail of happiness and joy in our wake. If your editor's head the following morning is anything to go by, we must have put several hundred pounds behind the bars of the pubs that we frequented as well, so thanks to all of them.

See you all next year!



What an evening of Christmas carolling and joy. Thanks to Harry's Bar, Bear Hotel, Duke of Wellington, Horse & Groom, and Edmond's Arms for hosting us!





PLANS FOR 2025

After such a stellar 2024, the bar has been set very high, but we are aiming to surpass our achievements in 2025.

With our choir now numbering around 90 choristers, our concert venues are being chosen to properly demonstrate the richness of our sound and harmonies, so keep a careful watch out for concert announcements.

Aside from one-off concerts, we will enjoy a short tour to the Lake District in May, courtesy of Top Tenor Barry Doughty who has connections in the area. Two concerts will be performed on the 23rd and 24th May, one in Morecambe and one in Barrow in Furness.

In early October we will be venturing to Southern Germany to perform with our friends from German Winds. 2 concerts have already been confirmed, one in Marienmunster on the shores of Lake Ammer and one in the parish church of St Quirinus on lake Tegernsee in Bavaria. Here's a couple of photos to whet appetites.

Beyond that, our concert secretary is hard at work confirming several venues and dates and we expect to make a number of announcements in the coming weeks.





LOOKING AHEAD!

7th FEB 2025

Concert of Life for African Mothers,
temple of Peace, Cardiff, 7pm



1st MAR 2025

St David's Day concert, Holy Cross Church,
Cowbridge, 7pm



29th MAR 2025

Concert for Maggies, Llandaff Cathedral, 7pm



**Tickets for all these events are available from CMVC
ticket agent, Geoff Winnard - 07580 565465.**

CMVC PATRONS ASSOCIATION

NOW LIVE!

After a huge amount of work from our vice Chair, Chris George, our Secretary Phil Insley and choir administrator Frank Maynard, our new Patrons Association is now live.

Available to anyone interested in the Choir, the Patrons Programme replaces Vice Presidency as your way of showing your support.

It costs a surprisingly large amount of money to run the choir (including the cost of uniforms, hire of rehearsal venues, cost of transport to venues, and the increasing cost of the purchase of music necessary for us to expand our repertoire)

As a charitable organisation the choir relies on its members, families, friends and donors to cover these costs. That's where the Patrons Association comes in!

Available in 2 levels, joining our Patrons Association confers fantastic benefits on you, that vary depending on the level you choose.

SILVER gives you:-

- Discount tickets to our annual concert
- Your name in our Annual concert programme and on our website.
- Your own direct link to our bi-monthly Llais y Fro online magazine.
- Lapel badge.

GOLD gives you:-

- ALL the silver benefits PLUS...
- Choir CD
- Certificate of thanks
- Patrons Association gold lapel badge
- Other special stuff that we are working on!

SILVER level costs £20 per year
GOLD level costs £50 per year

Contact the Patrons Association coordinator, Chris George, to register your interest:- chrisgeorge4880@icloud.com

