



NEWSLETTER



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VICWELSH CHOIR

Lockdowns and Postponements

Tony Davies

Now in our sixth lockdown, VicWelsh is having another 'rest' from rehearsals and concerts.

We managed to have a few sessions in late April, early May, June and July, with well-attended practices at all three chapters, albeit with social distancing and masks. On 31 July choristers from all three chapters came together in person for the first time since March 2020 at St Peter's Church Hall in the city. See photos and article by Col Evans. Choristers found singing with masks reasonably easy and it did have an unintended consequence of not divulging who couldn't

remember all the words!

Whilst some members have not yet returned to Blackburn, attendances have been good and, pleasingly, the Bendigo group has kept up its numbers, with Faleiry and Rushan driving up on alternate weeks. Rushan (and accompanist Lorna) have been incredible, committing themselves to fortnightly rehearsals in our newest chapter in Ballarat. This expertise, coupled with renewed local branch activity, has had the effect of recruiting seven new members to reach an assembly of 16 singers. They are particularly keen to get back to practices as soon as restrictions are lifted. As are we all.

Three concerts in September were cancelled or postponed due to the hirers' nervousness about audience sizes. If the venues are allowed to have a maximum of 100, the concerts are simply financially unviable. We have a few more scheduled for October-December but are at the mercy of the government regulations.





In the meantime, Zoom sessions have come back – they give choristers and partners the opportunity to have a chat about what’s happening in their lives. Given our age range, topics include hobbies, home improvements, lengths of hair (if any) and beards, new grand- and great-grandchildren as well as operations and procedures. Like a Mens’ Shed, we reckon we’re a very good source of information about physical and mental health and, with our almoners making frequent calls to members, we aim to keep our support network and camaraderie alive during these testing times.

As part of our duty of care and responsibility for choristers, partners and music team, in early August the Committee surveyed everybody to find out who had had their AstraZeneca shots and how they would feel singing with unvaccinated colleagues. The majority of people had received at least one but the response rate

was only 72% which perhaps reflected some apathy or hesitancy.

At its 17 August meeting, and with increasing concern about the Delta variant and its potential damage to our age cohort, the Committee took the decision that no fully vaccinated people would be allowed to attend rehearsals and concerts, whenever they resume. Whilst one or two ‘hesitators’ were caught off-guard and are now quickly organising their jabs, the decision has been universally embraced as being an eminently fair and reasonable policy for our entire choir family.

Covid passports appear to be the next logical step. Already it is possible to link one’s Covid vaccination certificate and status on to the ServiceVictoria checkin app.

Tony Davies

Ambrose Morgan retires after 25 years.

First tenor Ambrose, who joined the choir in July 1996, has recently retired pending a move to Drouin.

Born in 1942 and originally from Dinas Powys, Ambrose represented Wales in 1959/60 in the three internationals for that season, against England, Scotland and Ireland. In 1961, he went to Canada to play for Toronto City in the inaugural season of the Eastern Canadian Soccer League and was with them for three seasons. In between seasons in Canada, he played a number of games as a 'guest' for teams in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Newark, New Jersey. He arrived in Melbourne in 1965 and met his future wife Linda (a Middlesbrough lass who had arrived with two friends two years before) at TAA where they both worked.

Amby was with TAA for 32 years and, after being made redundant in 1997 at the age of 55, he became the International Air Transport Association Inspector for Victoria and Tasmania, for a further nine years.

In July 1996, Amby and Linda went to a choir concert at the restored Storey Hall at RMIT and hung around with them at the bar until they started singing some wind down songs. Amby sang along, ex-chorister Vaughan Davies could hear he had a voice and gave Faleiry the thumbs up. She invited him to come to the next rehearsal at St Edward's which happened to be just five minutes away from where he lived ...and that was that.

He quickly became an important member of the first tenors with his love of singing and the Welsh language which he had studied at school. His attention to detail and a fantastic memory ensured he was always totally prepared for all performances. He became a Committee member and a terrific Marketing Manager, responsible for acquiring concerts throughout Victoria and for interstate tours. With his professional knowledge of towns and hotels, he also organised accommodation for choristers and their partners wherever the concerts were taking place. One place lives in many fellow choristers' memories. This was when Amby did a deal for us to stay for free at the old convent school in St Arnaud – for us single guys, sleeping together in the dormitory was a real throwback and images of the many and various outfits worn to bed, haunts us still!

Many people recall what an excellent job he did with the WA tour in a tricky

situation where in many places, no single hotel could accommodate everybody. He also organised an extra daytime gig which was a great success.

Not only was Amby a creative Marketing and Accommodation Manager but he has gone down in the choir history as the author of a number of specially written humorous versions of both Collingwood's and Hawthorn's Football clubs' anthems, for occasions when we were hired by them.

But his *pièce de résistance* has to be his take on Max Boyce's Hymns and Arias, first sung at the Celtic Club for the Lions supporters in July 2001. He tweaked it for the whole choir to sing at the 2002 St David's Day concert when it was rapturously received, and he performed it to equally appreciative audiences on many other occasions. As our only real Welsh bard, he has no obvious successor.

Linda, from the start, was a committed and multi-tasking member of the Supporters' group with teas and the weekly fundraising, front of house and CDs. Organising the raffles over the years has meant that she has been one of the choir's most valuable fundraisers. She was a very warm and welcoming person for new supporters and choristers, helping to create that strong family atmosphere that VicWelsh has. Linda was a pivotal and energetic member of the Supporters' Group in so many positions that they had to be divvied out to three or four people when she reluctantly resigned, due to ill-health.



Over and above this, Amby and Linda's hospitality to the choir family and to visiting guests, was legendary. Many a Welsh conductor must have thought all Australians had swimming pools in their backyard!

The choir owes a huge debt to them and we wish them and their son Jamie all the very best for their new life in West Gippsland.

Tony Davies & Drew Hopkins

Iphigenia in Splott

Iphigenia in Splott, written by Welshman Gary Owen, won the Best New Play at the 2015 UK Theatre Awards. When I saw it advertised as going to the Red Stitch Theatre in August 2021 I was intrigued.

The title of this play has an impressive shock factor for anybody who knows the Cardiff suburb of Splott. Juxtaposing a high culture Greek myth with a decidedly down-to-earth working-class place like Splott is something like seeing a local play called Aphrodite in Broadie.

From an early age until 2016, the last time I was in Cardiff, we stayed with my aunt in Splott.

On 6 July 1940 she had put on a wedding breakfast for my parents who got married that morning at the Register Office in the city. All the streets were just rows of terraced houses with tiny back yards. I remember everywhere being grey with always a sooty smell hanging over the streets from all the coal fires.

The double-decker buses there had an honesty box at the bottom of the stairs, for people to put

their pennies in if the conductor was in the front of the downstairs section. Our buses in London didn't have these so I noted these boxes with interest and was convinced for years that putting money in the Slot was what had given its name to the area.

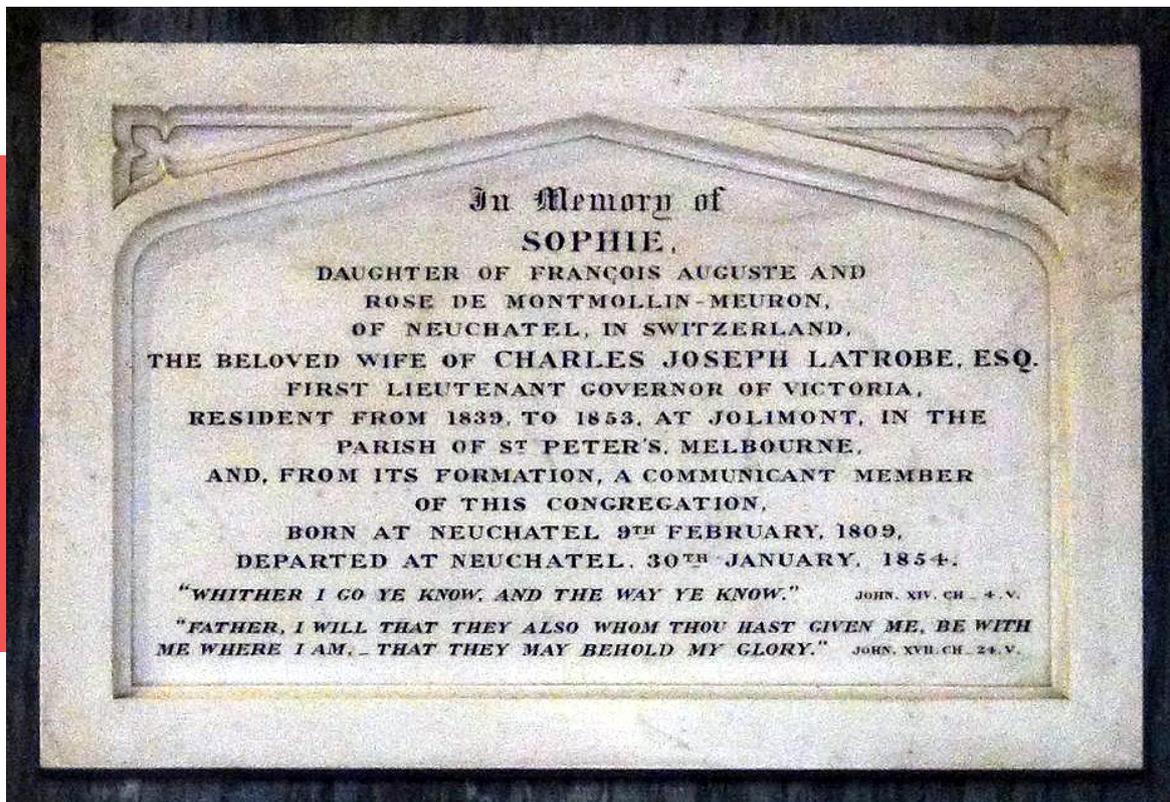
My aunt ended up with an account at Lloyds Bank in Splott Road and that's where she went when she wanted some of her pension money. Despite having a bankcard, she never believed it was possible to get this money out of any other branch. The brother of recently retired chorister Ambrose Morgan (see separate write-up) once lived in the flat above 'her' bank.

My cousin Joan had been at school with Shirley Bassey's sister who lived in nearby Tiger Bay. Once the most multicultural part of Wales and with a bad reputation, it has been gentrified into Cardiff Bay.

Tony Davies



St Peter's and the La Trobe Connection



I have been in contact with Adrian La Trobe the church warden at Holy Trinity, Llandudno, with the idea of a concert there on the Thursday evening of our September 2022 tour to Wales. Adrian is keen for a concert that would include us and Ilid Ann Jones giving a recital on their famous organ and possibly a soloist whom Ilid would arrange.

The relationship with St. Peter's is the link to Adrian and why he is keen for this concert.

Adrian is the great-great grandson of Charles La Trobe who, with his wife Sophie, was a member of St. Peter's whilst he was the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria in the mid-1800s. It was Sophie who arranged to have the original hall at St. Peter's built in the 1850s and I believe donated the money for it. There is a memorial plaque to

Sophie in the church to this day (see above).

I believe the actual hall that Sophie financed became derelict and was torn down and replaced with the existing building at some point but the existing hall is still considered to be due to Sophie La Trobe.

In another link with history, it was from the steps of St. Peter's that Queen Victoria's Letters Patent establishing Melbourne as a city and the capital of the colony of Victoria were read out in June 1847.

Colin Evans

Venue Organiser of several choir UK tours. The next was originally intended for 2020, has been postponed three times and is presently scheduled for September 2022, if international travel is permitted and subject to both Australian and UK regulations.

VicWelsh on Radio Eastern FM 98.1

Despite our present lockdown, the Radio Eastern Committee of Management continues to allow their regular guests to be present for their regular programs using the same Authorized Workers Permit as used by the station workers. Thus, our regular monthly slot within Lyn Woods Lunch Spot program has continued and our latest appearance was on the 12th of October 2021 at our regular time 11.30 am to 12.30 pm.. In it we featured four tracks from our popular CD

Let All Men Sing available online for \$25 plus \$3 postage.

Track 1 Let All Men Sing - Keith Christopher

This title track is a Keith Christopher composition which has been described as, “Buoyant, uplifting, declamatory, powerful.” Keith is actively involved in music as a composer, arranger, orchestrator and producer. His musical roots go back to Wylie, Texas, where he grew up playing the trumpet in the church band and singing in the church youth choir. He studied music theory, composition and conducting and holds a Master of Music in Composition from Southern Methodist University.

Track 7 Pemulwuy - Paul Jarman

Pemulwuy was born around 1756 somewhere near where Homebush Bay is now and belonged to the Bidjigal Clan of the Eora nation. The City of Sydney is built upon this land and the establishment of the city took place during the last fourteen years of Pemulwuy’s life. The legend of Pemulwuy is part of the belief system and oral history of the Aboriginal people of east coast Australia.

Pemulwuy means ‘man of the earth’. He was known as the Rainbow Warrior and his totem was the crow. From 1790 to his death in 1802, he led the Eora people in a major response to the British invasion of Australia. This resistance and, indeed, Pemulwuy’s very existence, was hardly mentioned in records made at the time, possibly as a way for both the Governor and military officers to avoid embarrassment or even disciplinary action, due to their various failed campaigns. Some documents, written by Governor Phillip and Sir Joseph Banks, do mention Pemulwuy as being a ‘terrible pest to the colony’, and it is even possible that Phillip resigned from his post partly due to the struggle against Pemulwuy. To this day, little is said of Pemulwuy in Australian history books though there is

now a suburb near Prospect called Pemulwuy.

Pemulwuy was said to be invincible against the British weapons. Legend states that, on one occasion, he was shot seven times in the head by musket fire and was locked in a cell to die during the night. The next morning, the guards unlocked the iron door but Pemulwuy had disappeared and a crow sat on the bars above the cell. Pemulwuy was ambushed and finally shot dead in 1802. His head was sent to England and it has yet to be returned.

Track 13 Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears - Brendan Graham - Solos: Drew Hopkins, Rushan Hewawasam

Anna “Annie” Moore (April 24, 1874 - December 6, 1924) was the first immigrant to the United States to pass through the Ellis Island facility in New York Harbor.

She arrived from County Cork, Ireland aboard the steamship Nevada on January 1, 1892. It was reported that her arrival was on her 15th birthday, but records in Ireland reveal that her birthday was in May and she was actually 17. Her brothers, Anthony and Philip, who journeyed with her, had just turned 15 and 12, respectively. Annie was the first passenger registered through the now world-famous immigration station. She had departed Queenstown on December 20, 1891 aboard the S.S. Nevada, as one of 148 steerage passengers. After 12 days at sea, the ship arrived in New York on Thursday evening, December 31. The immigrants were processed through Ellis Island the following morning, New Year’s Day. All three children were soon reunited with their parents who were already living in Manhattan, New York.

Track 15 Highland Cathedral - Ulrich Roever, Michael Korb / Ben Kelly, arr William Barr - Solos: Graham Warner, Colin Edwards, and Alex van Mens

Often mistaken for a traditional Scottish song, this melody was composed by German musicians (Berliners fond of bagpipes) Ulrich Roever and Michael Korb in 1982 for a Highland games festival held in Germany. It has become so popular that it has been proposed as the Scottish national anthem to replace Flower of Scotland or Scotland the Brave.

Be sure to join us on Eastern FM when next we meet on Tuesday November 9 at 11.30 am.

Andrew Naylor

Hire the choir

The great majority of Victoria Welsh Choir's concerts are performed for charitable and other organisations in Melbourne and beyond who find us the perfect solution to their fundraising needs, offering a complete, self-contained package, attractive to potential audiences, which we deliver with professionalism, polish and poise. One Melbourne hirer wrote that we were, "a well-oiled machine."

We are also often engaged for private functions such as weddings and birthday parties, and also for funerals, subject to availability. For client and audience feedback see under past performances on our website.

We provide everything needed for a satisfying and enjoyable concert experience, including:

- Conductor, accompanist and compère
- Microphones and loudspeakers
- Tiered platforms for the choir to stand and/or sit on
- Electronic keyboard for venues without a piano
- Payment of performing rights
- Assistance and advice regarding marketing, including preparation of media releases and posters/flyers.

Working with you, we are totally flexible, according to the venue and your requirements.

Contact us via the website or phone Garry Salisbury, Marketing Manager on 0428 265 656 or email: garrysalis@bigpond.com





Listening to Victoria Welsh Choir on Eastern FM (98.1)

Until the Covid lockdown VicWelsh enjoyed a monthly thirty-minute slot on Radio Eastern FM (98.1) in Lyn Woods' Lunch Spot Programme on a Tuesday between 11.30 - 12.00 pm.

During the lockdown Eastern FM was restricted to telephone only interviews but, happily, normal service has now resumed. Tune in to hear the latest choir news whilst Andrew Naylor highlights one of the choir CDs.

The next appearance will be on 9 November.

Acknowledgements

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www.newcompanymarketing.com.au

Words by Andrew Naylor & Tony Davies

CDs

All our CDs are priced at \$25 plus \$3.00 postage and packing charges (inc. GST) within Australia and \$9 overseas.

To order a CD click on our web site.
www.vicwelshmenschoir.com.au
to order.

