

Côr Meibion Gwalia
50 Years 1967-2017 A History
CHAPTER 10: 2013-2017

2013

President: Huw Edwards

Chairman: Steve Davies

Secretary: Dave Hurlbut (Geoff Rogers from July)

Musical Director: James Hearn

Accompanist: Wyn Hyland

Thurs 17 January 2013 - Chapel of St Mary Undercroft, Westminster Hall. Service to commemorate the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the birth of David Lloyd George. Conductor: Dr Haydn James.

We met in front of Lloyd George's statue in Parliament Sq and sang there (broadcast on ITV <http://www.itv.com/news/wales/story/2013-01-17/lloyd-georges-150th-birthday/>) and then we went into the chapel, followed by refreshments and speeches in the Palace of Westminster. *[Order of Service in archive]*

Wed 6 February 2013 - Cabaret, International Students House, Gt Portland St.

The organisers were trying to give their students (mostly from overseas) a flavour of Britain. As well as a Welsh choir they had three sheep, borrowed from an urban farm, in a pen at the back of the hall. I've no idea what they were implying!

Fri 1 March 2013 - Surprise 50th birthday celebration for a director of Sarasin in their offices at St Paul's Churchyard.

Sat 6 April 2013 - Wedding, St Mary's, Wimbledon

Wed 10 April 2013 - Ted Sellick's funeral, St Stephen's Church, Bush Hill Park, Enfield.

Ted had died on 25 March having suffered a stroke in 2011 and then developed cancer. Members of the LW Rugby Club Choir (of whom Ted was also a member) joined the Gwalia at the graveside where, at Ted's son's request, we sang the Banana Boat Song (Day-O). *[Order of Service in archive]*

As it says in the Introduction, several Chairmen have served the choir over the years, but one that deserves mention for his contribution to the choir as a soloist and all-round entertainer is Ted Sellick. The tribute in the memorial songbook that was produced after he died in 2013 said:

In 1978, a couple of students who knew that Ted liked singing in the pub - just round the corner from his sign-writing business in Islington - suggested he go along to the London Welsh Centre in Gray's Inn Road. The little man with a Captain Birdseye beard and a twinkle in his eye joined the Gwalia as a top tenor. Soon he became one of the Choir's key members performing solos in concerts and keeping everyone entertained in the bar afterwards. Ted was a thoroughbred Londoner, without a drop of Welsh blood in his veins. But he loved the Choir and we loved him. Ted contributed selflessly to the life of the London Welsh Centre in so many ways: the signage and other work he carried out in the building were just as important as the musical evenings he presented. He was the Gwalia's chairman from 2005 to 2012. Ted was a lovely man and it is a real privilege to have known him.

Ken Brickell writes: I have been greatly saddened every time I read Ted's name. He was such a wonderful man. My father-in-law was about 5'5" tall and I always describe him as the biggest man I ever knew. Ted was in the same bracket. I loved him to bits. It was always agreed that if ever Elaine and I tied the knot, Ted was to be my Best Man.

Thurs 16 May 2013 - Wedding, Church of the Sacred Heart, Edge Hill, Wimbledon *[Order of Service in archive]*

Sat 1 June 2013 - Wedding in British Medical Association House, Tavistock Sq *[Order of Service in archive]*

Sat 6 July 2013 - Joint Concert with Monmouth MVC in St Mary's Priory Church, Monmouth

Wed 24 July 2013 - Dave Hurlbut's 'thankyou party', London Welsh Centre & Calthorpe Arms. Dave stepped down as choir Secretary a job he had done tirelessly and with great devotion for 14 years (1999-13).

Sat 14 September 2013 - Wedding St Mary with St Alban, Teddington *[Order of Service in archive]*

Wed 25 September 2013 - Cabaret The Painted Hall, Old Naval College, Greenwich. This was a cabaret in a very historic venue. It was at the end-of-conference dinner for the European Conference & Exhibition on Optical Communication that had been running at Excel.

Wed 16 October 2013 - Open Rehearsal. Part of the Bloomsbury Festival. *[programme in archive]*

Sun 10 November 2013 - Remembrance Day Gymanfa Ganu at Jewin Welsh chapel, Barbican EC1 [*Order of Service in archive*]

Sat 30 November 2013 - A Musical Evening with Huw Edwards & Côr Meibion Gwalia. Clapham Welsh Chapel, Beauchamp Rd Clapham Junction SW11.

Comperer: Huw Edwards. Conductor James Hearn; Accompanist Wyn Hyland. Soloists: Glenys Roberts (soprano); James Hearn (organ); Dave Sweet (tenor). [*programme in archive*]

Sat 7 December 2013 - Wedding St Mildred's Tenterden, Kent

Conductor James Hearn; Piano Steve Ridley [*Order of Service in archive*]

Wed 11 December 2013 - Carol singing in aid of Evelina Children's Hospital. At St Thomas's Hospital SE1, followed by carols at the south Bank Centre outside the Royal Festival Hall.

2014

President: Huw Edwards

Chairman: Steve Davies

Secretary: Geoff Rogers

Musical Director: James Hearn

Accompanist: Wyn Hyland

Tues 7 January 2014 - Cabaret, Hilton Hotel, Wembley

Sun 12 January 2014 - Captain's Day, Kingswood Golf Club, Surrey.

This was the beginning of Pam Griffiths' (wife of baritone Lionel) year as Lady Captain.

Thurs 23 January 2014 - Sky TV Headquarters, Brentford.

A small choir made up of men from both the Gwalia and LW Rugby Choirs, conducted by Wyn Hyland, greeted the cast of 'Stella', led by Ruth Jones, on the balcony in the atrium as they arrived at Sky's HQ. The programme is made in Wales, so this visit was a first for the cast.

Wed 26 February 2014 - Open Rehearsal to LW Centre, Grays Inn Rd as part of the Centre's St David's Day Festival. [*programme in archive*]

Fri 7 March 2014 - Rosslyn Park RFC, SW15

Cabaret at the rugby club's regular eve of England v Wales dinner

Sun 23 March 2014 - Charity Concert, St Mary's Horton Kirby.

Window Restoration Fund & Electrical Appeal.

Conductor James Hearn; Accompanist Wyn Hyland. Soloists Victoria Stanyon (soprano) and Dave Sweet (tenor). [*programme in archive*]

Thurs 3 April 2014 - Golders Green Crematorium Funeral of Hywel Evans former bass

Sat 5 April 2014 - Wedding St Mary's Hitchin, Herts [*Order of Service and CD of the music in archive*]

The bride, Sarah Free, has stayed in touch with the choir and is a great supporter. She works in the Houses of Parliament and was instrumental in the choir's invitation to sing in St Mary Undercroft in the Palace of Westminster in our 50th anniversary year on St David's Day 2017

Tues 8 April 2014 - Spring Singfest, Emmanuel Church NW6 in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Research

Six community choirs: The Gwalia plus Choirs R Us; Belsize Community Choir; Royal Free Music Society Choir; Red & Green Choir; Fortune Green Choir [*programme in archive*]

Thurs 10 April 2014 - The OBE chapel in the Crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

Memorial Service for Dr David Evans who was awarded an MBE for rescuing victims of the Kings Cross fire. Members of the LW Rugby choir joined us and Wyn conducted from the keyboard.

Sat 26 April 2014 - The Ivy 'celebrities' restaurant in the West End. This was an 80th birthday surprise for Neil McIntyre a close friend of our former Chairman Dr Ifor James.

Sat 14 June 2014 - Another successful surprise, this time for the Welsh groom at a wedding reception in the London Golf Club, Kent

Sat 28 June 2014 - London Welsh Centre. Concert to raise funds for the Centre.

Conductor James Hearn; Piano Wyn Hyland; Soloists: Glenys Roberts (soprano); Huw Rhys-Evans (tenor) [*programme in archive*]

Sat 9 August 2014 - Wedding St James's Church, Piccadilly SW1, followed by a short performance at the reception in the Ritz Hotel. *[Order of Service in archive]*

Thurs 14 August 2014 - Funeral at Sussex Crem of Vernon Hill one of our former baritones. *[Order of Service in archive]*

Thurs 28 August 2014 - Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Whitehall.

Joint performance with 10 members of LWMVC. This was hastily put together by Haydn James when he was asked at short notice to provide a choir. Haydn conducted, James Hearn played piano.

First Minister Carwyn Jones and Secretary of State for Wales Stephen Crabb hosted a Wales Reception to promote business, trade, investment and education in Wales. This was on the eve of the NATO Summit in the Celtic Manor and a number of delegates were present, as were several Welsh wines which were sampled in the reception afterwards.

Sat 30 August 2014 - Excel Centre, Royal Victoria Dock E16

Opening Ceremony of the European Congress, conference and Exhibition on Pathology.

Sat 4 October 2014 - City Temple, Holborn Viaduct, EC1

Gala concert as part of the London Welsh Literature Festival to celebrate the work of Dylan Thomas. Joint with the Sydney Welsh Choir, the London Welsh Chorale and LWMVC. *[programme in archive]*

16- 20 October 2014 - Concerts with Coro Voci dalla Rocca in Breno, Lombardy, Italy.

Baritone Anthony Weaver had a contact with the choir in Breno who arranged a joint concert on the Saturday night in Breno. We had flown to Verona and stayed in the spa town of Boario in the Camonica valley, an area full of rich history. We gave a short concert after the Sunday Mass in the Church of the Alpini in Boario. [itinerary in archive]

Tues 4 November 2014 - Landmark Arts Centre, Teddington.

Joint concert with LW Rugby Choir as part of the Landmark Festival of song.

Conductor James Hearn; Piano Wyn Hyland. Soloists Dave Sweet and Geraint Lewis. *[programme in archive]*

Sun 9 November 2014 - Remembrance Day Service, Jewin Welsh Chapel, EC1

Sat 22 November 2014 - Ideal Home Show at Earls Court SW5.

We sang on a bandstand on the 1st floor. The Welsh songs attracted more of an audience than the Christmas carols.

Wed 10 December 2014 - Carol singing at St Marys Paddington to raise funds for the Children's Intensive Care ward 'Cosmic'. We then sang in Paddington station concourse, the pub in the station, a pub opposite the station and then Major Paul's local the Cleveland Arms. We raised £521.

Sat 13 December 2014 - Wedding in Dartmouth House, Mayfair W1

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2015

President: Huw Edwards

Chairman: Steve Davies

Secretary: Geoff Rogers

Musical Director: James Hearn

Accompanist: Wyn Hyland

Sat 17 January 2015 - Wedding: St Mary The Virgin, Stebbing, Essex

Sat 28 February 2015 - Performance at Greenman's Dewi Sant Parti at Cecil Sharp House, Regents Park NW1. Entertainment during an afternoon when the France v Wales 6 Nations match was shown on a large screen.

Mon 2 March 2015 - Cabaret after the Annual St David's Day Dinner at The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Pl SW1 Chairman His Hon Judge David Owen-Jones. Guest of Honour Rt Hon Baroness Randerson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Welsh Office. *[menu and programme in archive]*

Sat 7 March 2015 - St David's Day concert in St Andrews Church West Kensington W14

Conductor James Hearn; Piano Wyn Hyland. Soloists: Glenys Roberts (soprano) James Hearn (organ)

[programme in archive] **Tues 24 March 2015** - Spring Singfest, Emmanuel Church, West Hampstead NW6 Six choirs sang in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Research. Choirs R Us, Belsize Community Choir; Côr Llunsain; Gwalia; Fortune Green Ensemble; Fortune Green Choir. We all sang Abba's 'Thank You For The Music' at the end.

Wed 29 April 2015 - Leaving party for Bryan & Iris Howells who were retiring to Usk. Bryan had been in the choir from its very early days and he and Iris over many years put in a lot of hard work voluntarily supporting both Clapham Welsh chapel and the London Welsh Centre. Bryan had been the choir Librarian.

Thurs 7 May 2015 - General Election. *Three Gwalia members stood for election Parliament, unfortunately without success, but all credit to them for trying!* Laurence Williams (baritone) representing the Christian Party fought Old Bexley & Sidcup. Richard Hopkin (baritone), Conservative, fought Cardiff Central. Alex Meredith (bass), Liberal Democrat, fought Wantage. *[results in archive]*

Sat 23 May 2015 - Wedding of former bass Tom Morgan in the Nash Conservatory followed by drinks reception in the Princess of Wales conservatory, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. *[Order of Service in archive]*

Sat 30 May 2015 - St Mary's, Barnes SW13

Celebration concert for Vic Nolan's 95th birthday. As a young man Vic had recorded 'Galway Bay' on a 78 rpm disc whilst on holiday, and as a total surprise his grand-daughter played it as a solo spot in our concert, and Vic joined in. *[programme in archive]*

Sat 20 June 2015 - Joint Concert at London Welsh Centre with Côt Llunsain ladies choir in aid of The London Welsh Centre Trust *[programme in archive]*

Sun 19 July 2015 - Charity Concert St Mary's Horton Kirby, Kent

Solists Victoria Stanyon and Dave Sweet. This was the last appearance for Davewho was moving to Plymouth, and 2nd tenor John Conisbee who was moving to Dover. *[programme in archive]*

Sat 1 August 2015 - Wedding reception, Aynhoe Park, Nr Bicester, Oxon

Sat 15 August 2015 - Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall

Drumhead Service to commemorate the 70th anniversary of VJ Day, in the presence of the Prince of Wales and Prime Minister David Cameron. Joint with LWMVC. James Hearn conducted. *[programme in archive]*

Wed 16 September 2015 - Cabaret at Rugby World Cup Preview Dinner with Martin Williams.
London Welsh Centre

Sat 26 September 2015 - Part of the entertainment in the Wales Supporters Village prior to the England v Wales World Cup match. Old Deer Park Richmond. Joint with LW Rugby Club Choir. James Hearn conducted.

Tues 20 October 2015 - Seven of the choir went along for an informal (unofficial) sing-song at the Colton Arms in West Kensington. We had gone in there after our concert on 7 March in nearby St Andrews church, and the landlord had asked us to come back to help his mother celebrate 50 years as landlady of the pub.

Sat 24 October 2015 - Joint concert with Coro Voci Dalla Rocca in Eastcastle St Welsh Chapel, W1

CVdR had looked after us superbly when we visited them in Breno, Northern Italy the year before and we were very pleased to host their visit to London. After the concert we had supper of cawl, Welsh beer, bara brith and Welsh cakes, which against expectations was consumed heartily by the Italians! *[programme in archive]*

Sun 25 October 2015 - Concert by Coro Voci dalla Rocca St Peter's Italian Church, Clerkenwell Rd EC1

The Gwalia opened the concert with 3 songs and James Hearn gave an organ solo, but the concert was mainly the Italian choir. *[programme in archive]*

Sun 15 November 2015 - Great Northern Hotel, Kings Cross

Wedding Reception for the (Welsh) proprietor Jeremy Robson and Dawn who have become great supporters of the choir. As a special request we sang Always Look on the Bright side of Life.

Fri 11 December 2015 - Banking Halls, Cornhill EC3

Cabaret at the staff Christmas Party of Just Eat the online catering company, whose Chief Exec is Welsh. It was a very lavish affair. After a few Welsh numbers we led everybody in The 12 Days of Christmas with those present divided into 12 groups who 'acted' out each verse. A good time was had by all.

Wed 2 December 2015 - Carol singing in Kings Cross Parcel Yard pub, Gt Northern Hotel, St Pancras station and the Dolphin pub. We were singing Calon Lan around one of the pianos in St Pancras just as the Eurostar from Brussels arrived - a Welsh lady said 'I've just spent 3 months in Brussels and this is the most wonderful welcome back!' We added money from our raffle at our Christmas party to the money raised from the carols to give a total of £571 for Kids, the Mayor of Camden's chosen charity.

Sat 12 December 2015 - Wedding Borough Welsh Chapel SE1 *[Order of service in archive]*

Mon 21 December 2015 - Funeral, St Mary's, Wimbledon SW19

The actor Martin Clunes, a close family friend, was in the congregation. *[Order of service in archive]*

Gwalia Repertoire (2014-2015) We've got over 200 songs in our library but listed below are the songs that we've sung at weddings, concerts, cabarets etc over the past 12 months or so:

Welsh: Ar Hyd y Nos (All through the Night)

Blaenwern (words of Calon Lan to the tune of 'Love Divine')

Calon Lan (famous, sung at rugby)

Cyfrir Geifr (folk song - Counting the Goats)

Cwm Rhondda (Bread of Heaven 1st verse in Welsh, 2nd English, and last chorus O am Aros)

Deep Harmony (hymn, words of Llef - O Jesu Mawr)

Deus Salutis (Llef, possibly a bit funereal, but some great Amens)

Delilah (by Tom Jones in English)

Gwahoddiad (famous hymn, Mi Glywaf Dynyr Lais)

Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau (National Anthem)

Lisa Lan (love song, traditional folk tune)

Men of Harlech (in English)

Myfanwy (famous love song)

Nant y Mynydd

O Gymru (patriotic song)

Pan For Nos Yn Hir (Ryan Davies)

Rhyd Y Groes (hymn, arranged by Mansel 'Amen' Thomas)

Rachie (hymn sung at rugby matches - I bob un sydd ffyddlon)

Si Hei Lwli Mabi (lullaby)

Sospan Fach (rugby)

Sunset Poem (in English; Eli Jenkins' Prayer from Under Milkwood by Dylan Thomas)

We'll Keep a Welcome in the Hillsides (in English)

Y Darlun

Ysbryd y Nos

English/other: Abide with Me

Always Look on the Bright Side of Life

Aus der Traube (German drinking song)

An American Trilogy (Glory glory hallelujah etc covered by Elvis)

Calm is the Sea

Celtic Alleluia

Can't Help Falling in Love (made famous by Elvis Presley)

Cole Porter - medley of Songs (You do Something to Me, So in Love with You, Who wants to be a Millionaire etc)

Glory and Love (rousing Soldiers' chorus from Gounod's Faust)

God Save The Queen

Hand me Down the Silver Trumpet

Hava Nagila (Israeli folk tune)

How Great Thou Art

Jerusalem

Land of Hope and Glory

Kalinka (Russian folk tune)

La Vergine (opera, Italian)

Let it Be Me (Everly Bros)

Lords Prayer

My Way (by Paul Anka, made famous by Frank Sinatra)

My Lord What a Mornin' (spiritual)

On the Breeze (Comrades in Arms by Adolphe Adam)

Sanctus

Speed Your Journey (Va Piensero, famous chorus in Italian or English from Verdi's opera Nabucco)

Sweet Charity (Rhythm of Life)

The Way You Look Tonight (Jerome Kern)

The Rose (Some say Love.... originally sung by Bette Midler)

Unchained Melody

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Where Shall I Be

You'll Never Walk Alone

You Who have Dreams (Stout-hearted Men from Hammerstein's musical New Moon)

2016

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Chairman: Steve Davies

Secretary: Geoff Rogers

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Accompanist: Wyn Hyland

Wed 27 January 2016 - Funeral of Dr Ifor James, Haven Green Baptist Church, Ealing.

Conductor Dr Haydn James; Accompanist Wyn Hyland. Dr Ivor was our longest serving Chairman (1976-94) He had a lovely tenor voice, a wicked sense of humour and a wealth of 'slightly off-colour' rugby songs. *[Order of Service in archive]*

Tues 9 February 2016 - Stationers' Hall, EC4

Cabaret at Master and Clerk's Dinner, Worshipful Company of Stationers & Newspaper Makers (Livery Company). Top tenor Barry is a member of the Stationers. *[menu and programme in archive]*

Fri 4 March 2016 - Cabaret at St David's Day Dinner, Oxford & Cambridge Club, Pall Mall SW1 *[menu and programme in archive]*

Sat 19 March 2016 - Wedding, St Mary's Church, Battersea SW11

Sat 2 April 2016 - St John The Baptist Church, High Barnet, EN5 4BW Spring Choirs Celebration Charity Concert. Gwalia, Choirs R Us and Lemon Tuesday Female Choir singing in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care *[programme in archive]*

Sat 7 May 2016 - Clapham Welsh Chapel. First recording session for new CD

Tues 10 May 2016 - Funeral of Clive Rees at South West Middlesex Crematorium.

Wyn Hyland conducted. *[Order of Service in archive]*

Sat 21 May 2016 - Charity Concert All Saints Church, Tooting SW17

Part of the Wandsworth Fringe Arts Festival - Music & Arts Weekend *[programme in archive]*

Conductor James Hearn; Accompanist Wyn Hyland. Soloist: Susan Jiwey (soprano). James gave brilliant renditions of Ride of the Valkyries and Widor's Toccata on the famous Harrison & Harrison organ.

Friday 27 May 2016 - Funeral in Paris of Richard Osman the only Briton killed when the Egyptair flight crashed. *Email from Steve Davies: At midday on Wednesday I received a call from someone asking whether 5 or 6 of us could sing in a memorial service. I said it depended on when and where, to which he said it would be less than two days later in Paris. At that stage he did not say it was for Welshman, Richard Osman, the only Briton on the Egypt Air flight that was brought down 10 days ago. After a few hurried phone calls I had 5 singers who could do this at such short notice - Mike Davies, Richard Killoughery and me from the Gwalia and Dai 'Dogs' SurrIDGE and Arthur Simpson from the LW Rugby choir. We booked our Eurostar tickets and a hotel near Gare du Nord, and arrived in Paris on Thursday night.*

On the following morning we arrived early for a rehearsal in the chapel of the ancient Abbey church of St Germain des Pres on the left bank. Richard Osman was 40 and was married to a French lady, Aurelie, who had given birth to their second daughter just five weeks ago. His brothers and sister and work colleagues and friends were there, many in Welsh rugby shirts, and the chapel was standing-room only. As you can imagine it was a very emotional occasion. After Aurelie and the brothers had spoken, the Order of Service said 'Bread of Heaven - Cor Meibion Gwalia'. We were nervous that just 5 of would be able to pull this off but I am proud to say that we did, and the whole choir should be proud too. As the mourners were paying their respects to Aurelie at the entrance to the church we sang several more songs and then Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau. Our travel and hotel costs will be covered, but there was no fee involved - we were just honoured and privileged to be asked to take part. We received several compliments about our performance and many said that we helped to make the day very special and memorable - it certainly was for us. [Order of Service in archive]

Sat 25 June 2016 - Cabaret at Captain's Dinner Ealing Golf Club, Greenford *[photo in archive]*

Sat 23 July 2016 - Clapham Welsh Chapel. Second recording session for new CD.

Sat 10 September 2016 - Wedding, Jewin Welsh chapel, EC1 *[Order of service in archive]*

Thurs 22 September 2016 - The Charity Commission approved our application to become a registered charity - a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation'. Our objectives are much the same as they've always been, but this new status gives the choir a more modern structure and better regulation.

The registered number is: 1169319 and our charitable objectives are:

1. to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of choral music in all its aspects (in particular by the continuation of the tradition of Welsh choral music) by way of public concerts and recitals;
2. to further such charitable purposes as the Trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit.

Basically, what we do has to benefit the public in some way - and that includes the enjoyment people get from hearing us perform whether in a concert or private engagement.

Fri 23 September 2016 - Wedding of the daughter of one of our basses, John, at St Augustine's, Grove Park SE London. We were joined by members of the LW Rugby Choir. Wyn Hyland conducted. *[Order of service in archive]*

Sat 15 October 2016 - Wedding Temple Church, EC4 *[Order of service in archive]*

Mon 17 October 2016 - New CD released 'O Gymru - Celebrating the First Fifty Years of The Gwalia Male Choir'. It was recorded in May and July in clapham Welsh chapel by a small company called auburn Jam in SW London. Total cost was just over £5,000. *[advert and sleeve insert in archive]*

20-24 October 2016 - Tour to Northern France to commemorate to 100th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. We stayed in a hotel in the centre of Arras for four nights. *[itinerary and pennant in archive]*

Fri 21 October 2016 - Mametz Church, Haute Somme, Picardy, France

Joint Concert with French Male Choir Choeur Agâche

Sat 22 October 2016 - Church of St Leger, Perenchies, France Nord

Joint Concert with French Male Choir Choeur Agâche

Extract from London Welsh Magazine: **Vive les choeurs d'hommes**

The Gwalia has recently returned from an emotional trip to France where we commemorated those who fell in the Battle of the Somme 100 years ago. At a short informal ceremony attended by the local Mayor we laid a wreath, read poems and sang Sospan Fach (famously sung by the men in the trenches) at the memorial, in the form of a dragon, to the Welsh Regiment who fought a bitter battle at Mametz Wood and where so many Welshmen were killed or wounded. That evening we took part in a concert in the church organised by Choeur d'Hommes Agache who we had contacted some months previously. The choirs sang in each half of the concert, and the Mayor spoke very movingly about the deep respect and gratitude which the village of Mametz holds for those who gave their lives in its defence. Indeed, at the end of the concert several children sang along with Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau which we discovered they are taught in the village school - an amazing tribute to those who fought there.

Earlier in the day the choir and supporters had gathered in a church near our hotel in the centre of Arras to observe a minute's silence to coincide precisely with the commemorations taking place in Wales to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Aberfan disaster. This was followed by a heartfelt rendition of Myfanwy, a song that means so much to the families of the victims of the terrible event.

During our five day tour visits were made to the largest German cemetery in France and the Canadian memorial at Vimy. However, the weekend wasn't an entirely sombre affair; we managed to sample some fine bières Artois and regional cuisine, and took part in an entertaining concert with our new friends in the Agache Male Choir. They had made the arrangements for our first concert and invited us to share a concert with them in their own church in Pérenchies, a town some 90 minutes north of Mametz between the Belgium border and Lille. As with the previous evening, the church was full and the performance very well received. At the civic reception after the concert we were pleased to hear the French choir accept our invitation to sing with us in London in the near future, and the deputy mayor invited us back to Perénchies in 2018 to mark the centenary of the end of the Great War.

Since our last report, in addition to our very memorable few days in France, the Gwalia has taken part in weddings at two superb venues - Jewin Welsh chapel in the City of London and at the historic Church in Inner Temple. Also, in readiness for our 50th Anniversary celebrations next year, we have released a new CD titled 'O Gymru', an advert for which appears elsewhere in this issue.

Sun 6 November 2016 - St Anne's Church, Cwmffrwd, Carmarthen

Memorial Service for Richard Osman

Wed 7 December 2016 - Carol singing at Great Northern Hotel in aid of London's Air Ambulance

Wed 14 December 2016 - Carol singing and Welsh songs Piccadilly Circus.

Extract from London Welsh Magazine:

A small group representing the Gwalia were privileged to sing last May at the funeral in Paris of Richard Osman, the only Briton on the Egypt Air flight that had been brought down that month, and in November we were honoured to be asked by Richard's family to perform in a little church near Carmarthen at a very moving memorial service.

As the year drew to a close we went carol-singing at the Great Northern Hotel in Kings Cross and in a couple of hours raised an impressive £440 for London's Air Ambulance.

A week later the Gwalia literally had its name up in lights in Piccadilly Circus when, on a specially erected stage next to Eros, we performed to a large West End crowd. Samsung were sponsoring the 'Advent Choir of the World' in which a choir from a different country sang each night in the run-up to Christmas, and the Gwalia was proud to be the choir representing Wales.

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2017

President: Cerys Matthews MBE

Chairman: Steve Davies

Secretary: Geoff Rogers

Musical Director: James Hearn

Accompanist: Wyn Hyland

As we start the Gwalia's 50th Anniversary year, it is a pleasure to extend a warm welcome our new President, Cerys Matthews MBE. Huw Edwards is stepping down after more than 10 years as the choir's President, and our gratitude goes to him for all his support and encouragement over that time.

Cerys, the founder of multi-million selling band Catatonia and now a successful author and presenter of documentaries and music shows for TV and radio, hosts an award-winning weekly show on BBC 6. Appointed an MBE for her services to music in 2014, Cerys is Vice President of Shelter and of the Hay Festival of Literature and Arts, is patron of the Dylan Thomas Society and Ballet Cymru, and owner of the Good Life Experience festival. Born in Cardiff and a fluent Welsh speaker, Cerys now lives in West London. She said, "I'm a huge fan of choral music, and am delighted to follow in Huw Edwards' footsteps to become The Gwalia's President".

Wed 1 March 2017 - 11.00am Wedding Chiswick [*Order of service in archive*]

Wed 1 March 2017 - 2.30pm St David's Day Service St Mary Undercroft, Westminster [*Order of service in archive*]

Wed 1 March 2017 - 7.30pm London Welsh Centre WC1

St David's Day Concert with Sian James

Fri 3 March 2017 - St David's Day Dinner, Oxford & Cambridge Club London, SW1 [*programme and menu in archive*]

Wed 29 March 2017 - Cabaret at Anthony's (baritone) 70th birthday party in the Crypt of SS Anselm & Cecelia, Kingsway

Tues 4 April 2017 - Emanuel Church, West Hampstead NW6

Spring Singfest, Six choirs in aid of Marie Curie

Sat 13 May 2017 - Wedding Loft Studios NW10

When we were asked to sing before the ceremony we didn't expect to have to keep it up for over an hour! Just as the ceremony was due to start the best man realised he had left the rings in the hotel and had to rush back to get them.

Sun 4 June 2017 - Wedding Kensington Roof Gardens W5 [*Order of service in archive*]

This wedding was held in the wonderful surroundings of the Kensington Roof Gardens complete with live ducks and flamingos. It was a star-studded affair, the actress bride being the daughter of Jennifer Saunders and Ade Edmonson. As well as singing a number of well-known Welsh numbers the Gwalia sang the Beach Boys' classic 'God Only Knows' as Beattie entered the room, and we were then asked to lead the guests in a rendition of Burt Bacharach's 'I Say a Little Prayer'.

Wed 14 June 2017 - Film Premier, Royal Geographical Society, Kensington [*promotional flyer in archive*]

We were honoured to have been invited to sing at the world premier of the film 'South 2015'. In 2011 the Gwalia sang in the crypt of St Paul's when a plaque was dedicated to those Britons who had lost their lives exploring the Antarctic and this film was about the subsequent voyage to dedicate memorials in the Falklands and Antarctica. Top tenor Rod is chairman of the British Antarctic Trust.

Sat 17 June 2017 - Surprise concert for Colin Hill's 80th birthday in St Plumpton Green, Sussex. Colin is a long term supporter of the Gwalia, London Welsh RFC, the Dylan singers and London Welsh Centre. He is an Honorary member of the Gwalia.

Wed 28 June 2017 - The Gwalia's 50th Anniversary party at the Prince of Wales pub, Drury Lane, Covent Garden.

The choir was formed in 1967 when a large number of choristers broke away from the London Welsh Male Voice Choir after a disagreement over the alleged relationship between the conductor and accompanist, a time still referred to by longer-standing members of both choirs as 'The Split'. The party was held in the very room where Côt Meibion Gwalia used to hold its weekly rehearsals before moving to Grays Inn Rd.

We were very pleased to formally welcome our new President, Cerys Matthews, who, after Huw Edwards (our immediate past President) had presented her with the badge of office, then unveiled a plaque of Welsh slate which has been prominently fixed to the wall inside the pub to celebrate the founding of the choir.

Sat 30 September 2017 - London Welsh Centre

The Gwalia's 50th Anniversary Charity Concert

Sun 15 October 2017 - Charity Concert St Mary's, Horton Kirby, Kent

Fri 20 October 2017 - Wedding Islington Town Hall and Reception in Clerkenwell

Sat 28 October 2017 - London Welsh Centre, WC1

Joint Concert with Choeur Agache from Lille France

Sat 25 November 2017 - Principality Stadium, Cardiff

Part of the choir on the pitch before Wales v All Blacks match.

Tues 28 November 2017 - Great Northern Hotel, Kings Cross

Cabaret at charity event.

Sat 9 December 2017 - Ewen Hall, High Barnet

Charity Concert shared with 'Choirs R Us'

Book Reviews

Gwalia members have been responsible the publication in 2017 of two books - one light-hearted, the other serious.

'The Nant Tarw Saga'

To celebrate the Gwalia Male Choir's 50th Anniversary, Dave Hurlbut and Honorary Member, Ron 'Tidy' Williams have produced 'The Nant Tarw Saga'. This is a collection of short stories written by two founder members of the Gwalia, John Evans and Wynne Davies, both of whom, regrettably, no longer with us. The Saga first appeared in 'Tempo Gwalia' the choir's in-house magazine in the 1980's and 90's, and it recounts the trials and tribulations of a fictional choir in Wales. It is very entertaining, and certain characters will be recognisable amongst those who were, or still are, in the choirs at the London Welsh Centre.

Ron and Dave have generously agreed that all proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to the London Welsh Centre Trust.

The books are available from gwaliachoir@gmail.com or from the Bar at the Centre. The suggested donation is £7.50 per book.

'The Lost Sons of Penycae'

The second book that has just been published is 'The Lost Sons of Penycae' by Gwalia top tenor Barry Jones whose family still live in the village of Penycae near Rhosllanerchrugog outside Wrexham. The village's War Memorial has grown so familiar that it attracts little more than a passing glance these days, except on Remembrance Day. This book remembers the courage and sacrifice of the 37 men whose names are engraved on it. In such a small community, everyone knew someone who had died. This is the story of the men who went to war and didn't come home and how the village changed in the two World wars. It gives a fascinating insight into the war time history and tells the sad and poignant stories of the brave men of this little village near Wrexham.

£2 from every book sold in the Centre goes to the London Welsh Centre Trust.