

Côr Meibion Gwalia
50 Years 1967-2017
A History

CHAPTER 2 1973-1977

1973

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths
Chairman: Tom Morgan; Dafydd Gwynfor Jones
Secretary: John Evans
Musical Director: Brynmor Llewellyn Jones
Accompanist: Wendy Halden

17 June 1973 - Festival of London Choirs. Royal Festival Hall. Compere Cliff Morgan

Conductor: Brynmor Llewellyn Jones Accompanist: Wendy Halden

With: London Irish Gaelic League Choir; London Jewish Male Choir; Kavanagh Academy of Irish Dancing; Zemel Choir.

(see scanned programme)

24 June 1973 - live recording at The Roundhouse, Camden backing Man (a Swansea band) on 'Back Into The Future'. Disc 2 'Sospan Fach trad. arranged by Gwalia Male Voice Choir'.

An Amazon review states: 'Man were joined on stage by a male voice choir, possibly the only time spaced out free flowing rock had fused with the unique sound of Welsh voices. The result was a wonderful album which charted in the UK and Germany and broke Man to a wider audience in Britain. Esoteric.'

The Gwalia had previously sung with Man at the Oval when we supported Frank Zappa.

(see scanned document)

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNo92jS0HJ4>

1974

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths
Chairman: Dafydd Gwynfor Jones
Secretary: John Evans
Musical Director: Ifor Evans
Accompanist: Wendy Halden

Concerts:

1 March 1974: St David's Day Radio 2 performance. Joint concert with LWMVC.

Conductor Owain Arwel Hughes

From Dai Rep Edwards:

If you can find details, I always have a joke with Joe about the introduction to a radio programme recorded with audience at the "Golders Green Theatre". It was the only time I remember of a joint cabaret performance with both Red Jackets and Gwalia, together with full concert orchestra conducted by Arwel. There were other "great" London Welsh figures, doing various cabaret style pieces, such as Jonny Morris.

The concert opened with a shouted strident announcement (like "The Now Show" on radio 4): " St. David's Day 1974!!!" - immediately the joint choirs and orchestra broke into "God bless the Prince of Wales".

I won't say anything to him, but if you want a laugh in the pub shout the announcement to Joe, and I bet he will follow with a La La version of "God Bless the Prince of Wales". Please try it and let me know - he did!

3 July 1974 - Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane W1

Conductor: Haydn James

Summer 1974 - Castleford, Yorks

Photo in archive

10 August 1974 - Royal National Eisteddfod, Carmarthen -

Conductor: Haydn James.

The Gwalia came 1st out of 9 choirs in the 'Glee' section (for under 40 voices)

1. Gwalia [London] 180 marks. 2. Penybont-fawr [172]. 3. Adar Tawe [171]. 4. Rhos Cwmtawe [168]. 5. Gyrlais [165]. 6. Caron [164]. 7. Ferndale [163]. 8. Llandybie [163]. 9. Clawdd Offa [156].

Test pieces: Y Delyn Aur (D Pughe Evans) and Yr Hufen Melyn (Caradog Roberts)

(Ref 5) see page 207 of 'Do You Hear The People Sing' by Gareth Williams, published by Gomer

19 October 1974 - Concert Birmingham Town Hall with Rhos Girls Choir

Conductor Ivor Evans; Accomp Wendy Halden. (see scanned programme)

30 November 1974 - Eisteddfod Winners Concert, London Welsh Association

Conductor: Haydn James

Eisteddfod Choristers - see photo in the London Welshman Nov 1974:

Back (l-r): Dafydd Gwynfor 'The Pope' Jones; Dr Ifor James; Viv 'Day-O' Morgan; ?; Paul Jacob; ?; ?; Noel Davies; Ben Jones; Eifion Jones; ?; Cerith Davies; Ellis Jones; John Evans; ?; Bryan Howells; beard?; Dilwyn Griffiths; Eddie Parry; ?; Ivor Buxton; Howard Jones; Dai 'window-cleaner' Griffiths.

Front: Brin Wesson; ?; Don Tullit; ?; Ifor 'top-note' Evans; beard?; Cliff 'box' Davies; beard?; Russ Jones; Meirion Morris; Glyn 'four-eyes' Thomas; Edgar Thomas?; Elwyn Evans; beard?; Martin Picton; Dai 'box' Davies; John Llewelyn; Idwal Jones; Wynn Davies; ?; Syd Ace; Graham Martin; Dai 'carpets' Griffiths; Geoff Jones. (47)

Recording: Around this time the choir did a recording with Shirley Bassey.

1974 (possibly '73) - Whitbread Advert

Haydn James writes:

Ah yes, I remember it well;

we drank at dawn, we drank at noon, we drank throughout the afternoon,

Ah yes, I remember it well!

It was Whitbread (Tankard?); they served real beer (as opposed to real ale!), and we all had to take many sips for each of the many film shots from various angles throughout the day. They even served us a liquid lunch..... After lunch, we did more filming, by which time they were running out of beer..... To create a 'head' to the beer in each glass, they eventually, by mid to late afternoon, needed to use a small pump to make it look more realistic, which had adverse effects on the taste. The final shots were taken without hardly anyone taking what had become a very tasteless sip! I vaguely recollect that we sang the advert to Myfanwy! I think it may have been filmed in Barnes. As the beers were passed around (by Russ) each chorister stopped singing to take a sip eventually leaving only Geoff Jones without a pint and singing on his own.

Whitbread Advert Photo:

Edgar Thomas; Dafydd G Jones; Noel Davies; Dilwyn Griffiths; Erfyl Evans(?); Dai (Biscuits?) Griffiths; Dafydd Lewis; Bryn Wesson.

Dai Dep James; who's this?; Cliff Box Davies; John Llewelyn; Wynn Davies; Dai Box Davies; Haydn James; Bryan Howells; Dafydd Thomas.

Russ Jones (with tray); Ivor Topnote Evans; John Evans; Graham Martin; Geoff Jones; who's this - Ivor Square-jaw?; Dai Carpets Griffiths; Sid Ace; who's this?

.....

1975

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

Chairman: Dafydd Gwynfor Jones

Secretary: John Evans; Wynn Davies

Musical Director: Ifor Evans

Accompanist: Wendy Halden

25 Jan 1975 - Concert: Harrow Welsh Society.

Conductor: Haydn James. Accompanist: Wendy Halden

12 February 1975 - Concert: Swanley

Conductor: Haydn James

18 February 1975 - Concert: Tring

Conductor: Haydn James

Saturday 1 March 1975 - Royal Albert Hall. (televised)

London Welsh Trust 24th Annual St David's National Festival

Conductor: Haydn James.

With Max Boyce, Cyril Anthony, Cliff Morgan and others.

18 April 1975 - Mayor's Banquet, Harrow

Conductor: Haydn James

25 May 1975 Sunday 8pm: Charity Concert

Conductor; Ivor Evans; Accomp Wendy Halden (*see scanned programme*)

July? 1975 - Royal National Eisteddfod, Bro Dwyfor (Criccieth) (40-70 voices)

3rd place with 165 marks after Caernarfon [170 marks], Trelawnydd [166 marks]

Test pieces: Seren Bethlehem (T Hopkin Evans) and Can Buddugoliaeth (Mansel Thomas)

(*ref 5, see 1974*)

Saturday 18 October 1975 - Concert: Clacton & District Welsh Society

St Osyth's Training College Hall, Clacton on Sea

Conductor: Ivor Evans. Accompanist: Wendy Halden Anita Williams (soprano). Gwilym Thomas.

(*programme in archive*)

1976

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

Chairman: Dr Ifor James

Secretary: Wynn Davies

Musical Director: Ifor Evans

Accompanist: Wendy Halden

31 January 1976 - Concert: Sevenoaks Lions Club, Wilderness School, Sevenoaks, Kent

Conductor: Ivor Evans. Accompanist: Cicely Grant Elizabeth Gronow (soprano). Gwilym Thomas (bass)
(programme in archive)

(?) 1976 - Bromley Rotary Club

Conductor: Ivor Evans ('77 Michael Thomas?). Accompanist: Wendy Halden

With Newham Band, Anita Williams (soprano) and Peggy Williams (contralto) (programme in archive)

August 1976 - Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod

Conductor: Ivor Evans

Photo in archive

1976(?) - Eisteddfod Pontrhydfendigaid. *(I can't find any documents confirming this)*

9 October 1976 - Cabaret: Masonic Ladies Night. Master Brewer, Hillingdon

Conductor: Haydn James

? Cabaret Livery Company Dinner, Plaisterers Hall, London Wall.

Steve Davies says: I'm not sure of the date of this, but I do remember it well. In the basement of a '60s/'70s office building was this magnificent room with the most ornate plasterwork - on the ceilings, on the walls everywhere.

13 December 1976 - Studio Recording for Olympia.

Conductor: Haydn James

20? December 1976 - Horse of the Year Show, Olympia (televised)

Steve Davies says: We were part of the entertainment in the interval. Because the acoustics were not great and we couldn't be miked-up, we sang along to a tape, played over the PA system, of ourselves singing carols and Welsh songs which had been recorded the week before. We were dressed up as Victorian miners (in very itchy costumes) and as we walked up the centre of the arena singing, false snow was falling from the ceiling.

The organisers also wanted to entertain the audience with a race round the arena with a jockey on a pony and someone on a camel. For some reason they did not have a camel rider so, as we were all there hanging around backstage, they asked if any of us wanted to ride the camels and Bryan and Dilwyn both volunteered. They may not have won, but at least they survived the ordeal.

1977

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

Chairman: Dr Ifor James

Secretary: Wynn Davies

Musical Director: Michael Thomas (from March)

Accompanist: Wendy Halden

26 January 1977 - Lord Morris of Borth y Gest, Inner Temple

Conductor: Haydn James

Saturday 12 February 1977 - Concert: Sevenoaks Lions Club

Conductor: Haydn James. Accompanist: Wendy Halden

Glenys Roberts (soprano). Gareth John (cello)

16 February 1977 - Broadcast of radio programme recorded with Sir Geraint Evans

(?) 1977 - 'A Musical Matinee' Bromley Rotary Club

Conductor: Michael Thomas. Accompanist: Wendy Halden

Peggy & Anita Williams. Newham Band. (programme in archive)

France v Wales 1977 - *Steve Davies says: Barrie, Phil and I as new members of the Gwalia and only 25 years old felt very privileged to be invited by the 'older members' on the unofficial choir tour to Paris to watch the match. Our coach from Grays Inn Rd wasn't very good at going up hills but just managed to make it to Lydd airport in Kent. We were a bit late but didn't have to worry because fog had blanketed Beauvais airport and we couldn't take off. Eventually we were given the all-clear to fly, not to Beauvais, but into Charles De Gaulle airport which was good because it's closer to Paris.*

I can't remember the score but Dafydd Gwynfor did have a bit of trouble with the locals in the Opera Bar in the city centre. The following day the coach that was meant to be taking us to Beauvais broke down on the motorway. Whilst a few of us were throwing a rugby ball about on the hard shoulder Sid Ace tried to fix the bus by pouring red wine into the diesel tank (surprisingly unsuccessful!). Eventually we were rescued but got to Beauvais too late for our plane. The airline got us onto another flight but it landed late at night at Gatwick, which was not good for those who had driven and left their cars at Lydd.

Transport problems were to feature in several future Gwalia trips abroad - see Holland 1988, Austria 1995, Antwerp 1999 and Dublin 2000.

2 April 1977 - Concert: Ystradgynlais Welfare Hall

Conductor: Michael Thomas. Accompanist: Wendy Halden

Anita Williams (soprano). Gareth John (cello). Berwyn Davies (bass) (programme in archive)

23 April 1977 - Concert: London Welsh Centre, 157 Grays Inn Rd WC1

Conductor: Michael Thomas. Guest Accompanist: Errol Girdlestone Glenys Earnshaw (soprano). Keith Embleton (baritone). Stephen Thomas (trumpet).

Simon Davies (elocutionist) (see scanned programme)

(?) 1977 - Horton Kirby, Kent - 'A Musical Matinee'

Conductor: Michael Thomas. Accompanist: Wendy Halden

Glenys Earnshaw (soprano). Alan Murray Carter (tenor) (programme in archive)

Steve Davies says: This was the first of many visits that the choir was to make to Horton Kirby. The original contact was a Welsh friend of Wynne Davies who lived in the village. For several years the concerts were held in the Village Hall on the outskirts of Horton Kirby. On later visits the concerts were held in St Mary's church. After our first concert we went next door to the rugby club clubhouse where we were treated to an excellent tea by the ladies of the WI, a tradition that continues to this day!

Ted Sellick would often give a couple of solos, one of which was 'Goodbye'. In the chorus Ted would take out his handkerchief and wave 'goodbye' and over the years the audience would join in by waving theirs. On one occasion in the Village Hall, the choir had gone out into the car park for a break while Ted did his bit, but I sneaked onto the stage behind the curtains and when it got to the chorus of Goodbye I pushed my arm through the gap in the curtains and waved my hanky. The audience were in stitches and Michael Pugh was laughing so much he almost had to stop playing the piano. When Ted realised what was happening he of course saw the funny side.

Saturday 15 October 1977 - Concert: Rushmoor Welsh Society, Princes Hall, Aldershot

Conductor: Michael Thomas. Accompanist: Wendy Halden With Lorna Elias and John Esau.

(programme in archive)

(?) 1977 - Harry Secombe in Concert, Wembley Conference Centre

With Cliff Morgan, Owain Arwel Hughes, The Gwalia Male Choir, London Welsh Male Voice Choir and the Concert Orchestra. (programme in archive)

Steve Davies: I'm not sure if it was this occasion or when we sang with Harry Secombe at the Dominion Theatre in 1982, but Ron Tidy mentioned to Harry that they lived not far apart in Sutton and asked him for a lift home. Harry could hardly refuse and had his Rolls Royce brought round for them both. [is this apocryphal?]

Saturday 3 December 1977 - Concert: Crondall Parish Church

Margaret Houston (mezzo soprano) and Alan Murray (tenor) (programme in archive)