

Côr Meibion Gwalia
50 Years 1967-2017 A History
CHAPTER 4: 1983-1987

1983

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

Chairman: Dr Ifor James

Secretary: Wynne Davies

Musical Director: Wendy Halden

Accompanist: Jane Watts

Wed 9 February 1983 - Balham Old People's Association

Sunday 13 March 1983 - Football match Gwalia 3 v Voyagers 6.

Alex Howden Sports Club, Dulwich

Sat 19 March 1983 - Sidcup

Sunday 24 April 1983 - Village Hall, South Darenth, Horton Kirby, Kent

Guest Conductor: Haydn James. Accompanist Jane Watts.

Anita Williams (soprano). Gareth Rees (tenor). (a copy of the programme can be viewed in the archive)

Thurs 27 May 1983 - The third visit of the Gwalia to Wuppertal, Germany.

Sang on the Town Hall steps. Visited Cologne Cathedral.

Sun 30 May 1983 - Joint Concert with Mannerchor Union

Conductor: Wendy Halden. Accompanist Jane Watts.

With Dylan Singers (conductor Idwal Jones). Glenys Roberts (soprano)

Steve Davies: The first time we went to Wuppertal in West Germany it was decided that it would be an all male affair. However that didn't stop several wives organising their own minibus and meeting us in Wuppertal. By the second visit we had bowed to the inevitable, and on this trip the Dylan singers (many married to Gwalia members) shared the stage with us.

(three reports on our trip are contained in Issue 14 of Tempo Gwalia which are reproduced below)

THE 'DYLAN'S' SHARE A CONCERT PLATFORM WITH THE 'GWALIA' IN GERMANY.

By

Melwen Griffiths, Chairman 'Dylan Singers'.

One of the worst things about being away from home for three nights is the hassle of getting the 'right' sort of wardrobe together. If only I were the type of person who didn't have to pack, and unpack, a sensibly sized weekend case several times before finally dragging my largest suitcase from the attic, so that I could take everything I might need - "far too much" I mutter to myself, trying desperately to fit in my fifth pair of shoes!

However, it was early evening on Thursday 26th May at Russell Square - goodbyes had been said - my assortment of bags and packages were safely on the coach - engines throbbed into life, and we were off on the first stage of our journey to Ronsdorf in Germany, where the 'Dylans' and 'Gwalia' had been invited to share a concert platform with the Männerchor Union (Wuppertal). For many it would be the third visit, and we were looking forward to meeting our 'old' friends with great pleasure.

We arrived in Sheerness - boarded the Britannia/Hollandia - settled into our cabins (very sumptuous, all with private showers), and quickly made for the 'Captain's Table' for our first meal of the trip. The variety of foods offered at the magnificent 'eat as much as you want' buffet was so overwhelming that many spent a pleasant couple of hours eating and chatting, and some of us, I'm afraid, just spent the time eating. Then it was off to the Britannia Bar for a few drinks, and a sing-song before retiring to our cabins for the crossing to Vlissingen in Holland.

Friday morning came all too quickly it seemed, and we were back on the coaches for the final stage of the journey. We arrived at the Dutch/German border. Eager to stretch our legs, we descended stiffly from the coaches to meet a group of our host choir, who were to lead us to

their club-house for a meal before we were sorted into our various hotels, and families. In the evening, we all met once more in the club-house, and spent a very convivial evening.

On the Saturday morning, the three choirs gave a short concert on the steps of the Town Hall in Wuppertal - much appreciated by the crowds of Saturday morning shoppers - even the rain failed to fall, thankfully. Then we went on to Cologne to see the awe-inspiring Cathedral. It didn't take us long to discover a cafe, which sold a wide variety of fabulous cheesecakes - needless to say, these were very well sampled. That evening, a social evening had been arranged in the large St. Joseph's Hall. Gifts were exchanged, and speeches delivered in a mixture of halting German, Welsh and English. There was much singing, dancing (we all have bruises to prove this) and laughter - everywhere could be seen little groups of 'Schnappes' drinkers, cementing everlasting friendship. It was the small hours of the morning by the time everyone had dispersed, to try to grab a few hours sleep.

A ride on the over-head railway in Wuppertal had been arranged for the Sunday morning. Looking around, I felt that most of us took this opportunity to rest a little, to prepare for the evening's concert.

After lunch that day, Bruno, my host, told me that I had one hour and ten minutes to 're-create' myself before we all met for rehearsal. Never again will I 'get ready' for any event - I shall always 're-create' myself. If only I could!

It was obviously clear that the concert was a tremendous success, and much enjoyed by both the large audience, and the choirs. Glenys Roberts, who was the only soloist, gave such a superb performance that Bill (Coach B driver) was literally moved to tears.

Another social evening had been arranged at the club-house for that evening, and we soon forgot that our coaches were leaving Ronsdorf at 5.30 a.m. (I just managed to get home - still wearing choir uniform - with five minutes to change, pack, and return to the pick-up point for the departure.

On reflection, it is very difficult to pick out any one 'thing' that made this such a memorable visit. It was obvious that our friends had put much thought into the planning, so that every moment should be enjoyed. It was, however, their open friendliness, frank informality, their humour, and ability to make us feel quickly at home that did most to make this one of the most superb visits ever experienced. My waistline has disappeared for ever, but I thoroughly enjoyed the process of losing it - all those mouth-watering cheesecakes!

The 'Dylans' sincerely thank the Gwalia Committee (especially Wynne Davies, their Secretary) for taking over the arduous task of organization - we were, indeed, very fortunate to be so well chaperoned.

A GERMAN VIEW OF OUR VISIT TO RONSODORF.

By courtesy of the Union-Kurier.

"Nichts ist schwerer zu ertragen, als eine Reihe von schönen Tagen!" (Nothing is harder to bear than a series of pleasant days!)

Was it a week or a year? Time passes quickly - indeed the Gwalia-Union link has lasted five years. Its solidity and strength has endured and grown and shall keep on growing.

The Dylan Singers and the Gwalia Choir arrived at our Club to embraces and cries of Hullo and bowls of soup from an army field-kitchen to strengthen and revive them. There were many new faces among them, but in a very short time we knew all the fresh faces and no matter how different people spent the evening the hours passed happily.

In spite of all our fears, Saturday morning was dry and all went well. On the Rathaus steps all three choirs performed promptly and well. The applause of the passers-by who stayed a while was hearty. Surely, these performances were not the least successful of the

"Platzgemacht" (Give Room) Series in Barmen!

Then, our guests drove off to the Rhine. What a pity that they could not have a boat trip because of the flood. But they saw a fine part of Rheinland and also climbed the Drachenfels. (To be sure it was not the Welsh dragon which used to live here once upon a time!)

A tremendous party with huge waves of enthusiasm when they returned. There were songs from the choirs and soloists and a variety of comic turns. The Gwalia sang a German song to German words, and this, with our beloved "Heimat" created one united choir which completely filled the hall. The tombola had plenty of good customers. Who does not like to try his luck? We had better not ask who were the last ones to go to bed!

Because of going to bed so late, the hour when we were due to go on the Schwebbahn seemed very ungodly, but it must have been an interesting ride in such an unfamiliar vehicle. The Schwebbahn really is something which Wuppertal can show with pride!

On Sunday evening, after a quick rehearsal, came the concert in the assembly hall of the Gesamtschule Ronsdorf, which was the fundamental reason for the visit to Wuppertal. All three choirs gave of their best. Light-hearted and sad songs were heard in Latin, English, Welsh and German, and the programme was enriched by excellent soprano, tenor, baritone and bass solos. How can one single out one singer or choir? All of them, choirs and soloists sang with great feeling which swept through the audience. All the encores were proof of this. A programme of this quality would have demanded a greater audience in a less suburban part of Wuppertal than Ronsdorf.

A sage once called languages windows to the world. Isn't music our common language? Music helps us to understand other people. Let us together open all the windows wider and ever wider.

By the way, anyone who had had the time to look in our local newspaper on the Saturday would have been reminded of the night exactly 40 years before, when

Ronsdorf and Barmen fell into ruins. Exactly on this "anniversary night" the Ronsdorfer and the Londoner sat together, and undoubtedly there were people among them who had lived through that time and had been involved in the fighting. But these grudges have long since been swept away and no one would have believed that the party guests had once been called enemies. Of course, the forty years which have passed have helped us to forget, but we think that music has done much to unite us. Let us show others the way.

KMB.

UNWAITH ETO'N RONSODORF ANNWYL!

By
Eddie Parry

When reporting our earlier visits to Germany I have referred to our concerts in Ronsdorf as "home fixtures" because of the warm, friendly audiences who obviously wanted us to sing well. They are like an audience from our own "Heimat". No wonder we have taken so well to their wonderful song. One of my most golden memories of this recent visit is of the Saturday night party which "got going" with a rapidity which was quite breath-taking. As Gretel says, it was a "tremendous party with huge waves of enthusiasm", - and it seemed to begin when we entered the hall. That spirit of Union-Gwalia was a genuine "hwy!" a word we should like our friends to accept in return for "Heimat".

In the words of Heulwen Griffiths, "It was obvious that our friends had put much thought into the planning, so that every moment should be enjoyed." That is what made our week-end too wonderful for us to be able to forget it.

Dioch yn fawr, gyfeillion. Thank you very much, friends.

Danke schön, Freunde.

9 June 1983 - Royal Festival Hall

Joined (1983): Richard Mitchley; Dewi Griffiths; Gwynne Davies.

Died: Lloyd Herbert; Ken Smallman

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1984

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

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Musical Director: Wendy Halden

Accompanist: Jane Watts

15 April 1984 - Concert tour of Czechoslovakia - Prague and Brno.

Conductor: Wendy Halden Accompanist: Jane Watts

Steve Davies says: In those days Czechoslovakia was still communist. In advance of the trip the Czech Ambassador to UK invited the choir to the Embassy in Kensington Palace Gardens. After plying us with vodka the Ambassador explained how thrilled he was that we were visiting his country and how we were to be looked after when we were there. My wife was due to give birth to our first son on the weekend of the actual trip, so thrilled as I was with the impending new arrival, I was disappointed not to be able to go to Prague and Brno. However, I'm told that the Ambassador was true to his word - police motorcycle outriders escorted the coach from the airport into the centre of Prague - but from then on things weren't so well organised. The concerts had not been advertised so apart from the coach driver and our own supporters, there were very few in the auditorium. After a short concert the choir went to the nearest bar and found an enthusiastic audience.

Ken Brickell's memories of the Choir trip to Czechslovakia in April 1984:

I have fond memories of organizing that trip to Prague and Brno. Of how the Commies tried to leg us over at every turn, but we still came out on top. The International Hotel at which we stayed with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Prague is now a Holiday Inn. The RSC wised us up to the bugs in the rooms. You needed to look along the wall surfaces near the bed headboards for unevenness. That's where they were. Mine, because I had organised the trip was in a three bulb chandelier. One of the bulbs didn't work and when I took down the glass base, a ferrule was holding in the microphone instead of a bulb! We had a last night party in one of the rooms and when we rang down to reception for more beer, the guy came up to the room, pointed at the chandelier in the room lobby and indicated that we should talk outside in the corridor.

Sinead Cusack was one of the RSC players. They were there to celebrate 25 years of Rank Xerox being in Czechoslovakia. They had 1000 posters printed and only three were put up. One in the theatre, one in their office and one in the Russian Embassy. The British Ambassador arrived late for our concert because the authorities wouldn't tell him where it was being held. It was in the hotel and the audience consisted of five men and a dog. John & Wynne said we would do a 20 minute concert and it was to be the best we had ever done. THEN, we discovered that U Fleku was the best pub in town, so we decamped there and did the concert again to a full house. Also, I remember plaguing the life out of the courier on my bus trying to find out where Dubceck was and what he was doing. At first, the guy denied all knowledge of him. I eventually wore him down and he told me that I mustn't tell anyone in the UK, but he, Dubceck was now sweeping the streets. He had been the most important man in Czechoslovakia.

I remember that we sang La Vergine unaccompanied with Glenys and there was a group from Venice sitting around a corner. When we finished, all the ladies of that group presented Glenys with a flower. Magic.

Also, there was the wedding we sort of fell over at a little deserted market town where it had been arranged for us to have lunch. There was not a soul in sight until loud car horns arrived from somewhere and it was a wedding party. I asked my friendly courier how long it took to get married in this town and he said, "20 minutes", so I organised everyone to be in the arcade which lead to the registry office and when the bride and groom reappeared, we sang Myfanwy.

The Registrar came down and asked who was responsible and I said "Me!" He thought about it and said, "I will buy you a beer." I replied, "You won't - you will buy 43 beers, one for each singer" and he did. "Taurus excrementum vincit cerebellum" or if you prefer it, bulls..t baffles brains.

Happy days. Ken Brickell 10.1.16

Sun 27 May 1984 - Concert Seion Chapel, Aberystwyth

Conductor: Wendy Halden Accompanist: Jane Watts

Mari Ffion Williams (soprano). Jane Watss (organ) (see scanned programme)

Tempo Gwalia (issue 18) has stories about the Czech trip:

<p>CLOCKS AWAY FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA</p> <p>When Gwalia's inspirational visit to Czechoslovakia was confirmed, Wendy, the choir's musical director, who professionally is Head of Music at Saling's Ellen Wilkinson School, informed a class of young girls that she would be in a position to describe first hand the country's musical traditions. A chirpy youngster piped up, "What yer goin' there for, Miss? Why don't yer go up Spain?" The child should go far.</p> <p>Earlier, in an oak-panelled and marbled stateroom of the Czech embassy in Kensington, the Gwalia choir sang from the Welsh repertoire to a welcoming ambassador and his legation. It would have been hard to discover three more beautiful tongues as Czech, English and Welsh duly mingled. A buffet of Bohemian savouries and delicacies celebrated the newfound friendships - and the traditional Gwalia reserve when offered alcoholic beverage - in this instance fine Czech wines and export Pilsner Urquell - was ultimately prevailed upon. Ken (Brickell - the cuddly, red tracksuited one who flashes across your 'Rugby Special' TV screens with the bucket and sponge when the 'Welsh' are playing) and Wynne (no introduction required) planned meticulously and carefully to provide wings for sixty-four Gwalia folk; and on 19th April Ilyushin 62 of Czech Airlines did the honours to Ruzyně Airport, Prague.</p> <p>On closer examination, Czechoslovakia, 470 miles in length east to west, comprises the Slovak Socialist Republic made up of three rather mountainous Slovak regions; and the larger Czech Socialist Republic, comprising two Moravian regions in the centre with five regions of Bohemia to the west - the two Slav nations having separate cultural identities but with mutual ties and closely related languages.</p> <p>A Celtic tribe, the Boi (giving Bohemia its name) invaded and settled during the years 400 B.C. - 100 A.D., effectively taking Gwalia about 2,000 years to travel full</p>	<p>role - blame the Committee!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">7</p> <p>All holidays are anticipated naturally with a degree of pleasant expectancy. And so with this east-bound caravan, the blithe indulgence and sensualism that good company, sightseeing, native fare, music, fizz ordinaire and nog extraordinaire and friends as yet unmet, may offer, were fully contemplated - even with a mild dissipation in mind perhaps! - you never know your luck!</p> <p>But for some, historical dilemma exists too poignantly in the Czech dimension. Too perplexing are memories of German inflicted terror from May 1939 to liberation in 1945 and, later, Soviet intrusion in 1968. But ah, the tender leaves of hope! Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new - let's greet the unmet with a cheer!</p> <p>To late-evening South Moravia; our Hotel Voronez, innovative and modish, a beacon in dimly lit, deserted, dusty Brno, the third city, 1,000 feet above sea level, regional capital and centre for industrial fairs, colleges and institutes. Lionel, second to breakfast - and with admirable Cefn y Rhondda curiosity, had already walked the early morning gardens and streets but not swiftly enough to christen Gwalia's breakfastroom - wonderful Auntie Nellie (who else?) was first up and shamed the bleary lot of us - well, some of us!</p> <p>The old city, advert free, now alive with holiday shoppers, the shop windows rather than dressed, displayed examples of the goods, their interiors not contrived to attract custom, the service nevertheless invariably caring. Czech currency exchange not being permitted, a not unpleasant indulgence in souvenir hunting. The coffee, despite cautionary advice before leaving UK, generally Turkish, deeply flavoursome and memorable. Presence of belly-dancers quite unwarranted.</p> <p>If we were prepared to acknowledge dissimilarities in life-style and disposition of the country and its likeable people then some felt that their particular system of joint-ownership, participation and collectivism was economically inadequate. Against this, the fine deals of genuine socialism and well-being through unity</p>
<p>would appear to be in harmony with christian principles. Time may disclose which system first discovers the correct balance between materialism and moral sensibility.</p> <p>The Brno section of the tour included the coach ride through the South Moravian countryside; winter's hold not fully relinquished with snow pockets remaining in sun-deprived depressions, the colours as yet softened, almost autumny; cottage gardens, foliage, trees and the hills still awaiting the luxuriance and procreativity of spring.</p> <p>The Macocha caves were predictably impressive, the voyage in small boats along the underground river unforgettable - even the claustrophobic would have coped on the spontaneous hilarity from the buoyant Gwaliaophiles. And who extinguished the lights 500 feet down in the basement of central Europe? Llanybyther's Denzil Davies would never practice that kind of joke! - or would he? For the moment even the stalactites got a bit phobic.</p> <p>Elwyn has frequently informed concert audiences of the feeling of relief when they return for the 'second half'. At Brno there was simply no audience. Gwalia sang a reduced programme to the accompanying party - and the two coach drivers - to thunderous applause! Very loyal and very touching. A moment later the whole assemblage fell about at the bizarre events.</p> <p>In a nearby alleyway tavern the Gwalia assault troops rallied for pilsner - at 15p per half-litre, with oat-like satisfaction. In the vanguard Barry was Owain Arwel Hughes, John Bevan and the Good Shepherd rolled into one. The singing reached the hearts of the good folk of downtown Brno in seconds as wall-to-wall Sospan Fach found no barriers. One old burgher, tables away, rose like the ghost of Christmas past to conduct, with great dignity, the most intimate Welsh refrains, others beamed and participated. What a warm and appreciative audience such ordinary townspeople would have made earlier.</p> <p>An acclimatised Gwalia left Brno for Prague, lunch to be taken at mediaeval Telc. In the large square of period arcaded buildings the wedding taking place would</p>	<p>have been memorably sufficient in itself, but deferential good wishes from Gwalia members resulted in an impromptu invitation to the choir to sing - the rendering of 'Myfanwy' was charmingly and joyously received. A cameo and exquisite moment. Any ideas for the first girl-child's name? Suggestions to Telc.</p> <p>Czech music's most admirable feature, for some, is the vitality, peaceful patriotism and love of folk culture displayed by its composers. Smetana, born 80 miles from Prague in eastern Bohemia, is today regarded as the major Czech composer; a heady experience to walk across the 14th century Charles Bridge over his revered Vltava river in Prague on which was based some of his iridescent music. Dvorak, seventeen years Smetana's junior, born 1841 in the north Prague countryside, is for many of greater standing, especially in the international field, due to his strongly individual but classical compositions. The magnificent Janacek, born 1854 in Northern Moravia was another individualist, coming from an impoverished background. The quintessence of Czechoslovakia may be found in the scintillating tone-bursts of his work, complementing the folk-language's rhythms and intonations. The vigour, sparkle and glinting colours of the Czech landscape, russets, tans, ochres, auburns and crimsons vividly transposed in such masterpieces as Sinfonietta and the Taras Bulba Rhapsody.</p> <p>Janacek said of his Mass, the clumsily entitled 'Glagolitic', being, we discover, the old Slav ecclesiastical language:</p> <p>'Why did I write it? It rains, it pours in Luhacovice. From the window I look up at the frowning face of the Komona mountain. The clouds pile up; the storm tears them apart, breaks them up. Exactly as when a month ago the Archbishop and I stood in front of the school at Jukvaldy in the rain. It is getting darker and darker. Now we are looking into the black night; zigzags of lightning cut the sky open. I light the lamp and sketch just the quiet motif of the desperate cry from the soul: "God have</p> <p style="text-align: right;">9</p>

mercy".

Then only the joyous shout, "Glory. Glory!"
After that the tearing sorrow in the motif: "He
suffered, was tortured and buried."
Then the credo and the unconquerable faith in the
motif: "I believe."
And the release of emotional turmoil in the
motif "Amen. Amen!"
The holy reverence in the motifs of the "Sanctus",
the "Gloria" and the "Agnus Dei!"
In motifs without the darkness of the catacombs
of the Middle Ages.
Without the usual lines of imitation,
without the pathos of Beethoven,
without the playfulness of Haydn.

Tonight the crescent moon shines on little pieces
of paper full of notes - tomorrow the sun will
seek them in curiosity.

At first my fingers were frozen - then through the
open window the warm air streamed in, laden with
the scent of the moist forests of Luhacovice
- this was my incense.

The cathedral became for me the enormous grandeur
of the mountains, beyond which stretched the open
sky into misty distances; in those distances a
flock of sheep rang the little bells.

I hear in the tenor solo, the celebrant,
in the soprano, a girl - an angel,
in the choir, the Czech people.

The candles are high fir trees in the forest,
lit by stars; in the ritual somewhere in the
misty distance I see a vision of St. Wenceslas.
Before three weeks of evenings in the Spa of
Luhacovice had passed, the little work was
finished.

Heading north-west into Central Bohemia the party
visited Konopiste Castle, set in wooded and lake-strewn
hills. Former heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, who
was assassinated at Sarajevo in 1914, had converted the
castle into a lavishly decorated residence filled with

The Gwalia tourists accompanying the choir
throughout had been completely supportive and a
privilege and delight to holiday with. Let us delve
into their ranks very briefly and meet a mere handful.
Classified info has it that when 'gardening' is
mentioned Derek (Rees) - we will not impinge upon his
modesty by specifying the great work he performs for
the LWA - grabs the first Olau, Wallace Arnold, Wigan
Airways or Ilyushin and follows the choir on tour. A
pity about the jungle but Gwalia's gain! Let us attempt
a literary portrait of Mary Bowden, the Jewel of West
Wales. No, good reader! Discover her for yourself -
come with Gwalia or to the LWA and experience the
'real thing'. Minor illnesses on tour, whether provoked
psychosomatically or whether olivovice or gherkin based,
were reassuringly assuaged by Hilary (and Ifor) of whom
we see too little. Mansell - a fellow countryman new
to my acquaintance and clearly of fine temperament and
erudition was a 'profound influence' on 'Gentleman Jack',
also known as 'Jack the Pipe', who brought an element
of sanity to proceedings when other tourists became
overstimulated and won for himself the affection of the
Czech nation.

The efforts and dedication to our needs performed
by Wynne and Ken and other helpers were immense and we
thank them sincerely.

Such is capricious life - close to the East German
border in Northern Bohemia, at Duchov, Casanova (1725 -
1798), the Italian adventurer and author of amorous
memoirs and escapades lived his last years. The people
of Prague, who feted Mozart, entreated the great
composer to write an opera for the city - it was no
coincidence that 'Don Giovanni' followed.

Men never change - graffiti writ large on a
North Bohemian wall proclaimed "STRUMPE FÜR IMMER" -
'Stockings for ever'. We should have guessed.

A furniture, countless works of art and hunting
ophies. Our resourceful guide, Toni, who had served
with the RAF at wartime St. Athan and on ops in Liber-
ators conversed with us in matchless English as he led
us through the opulent staterooms. In contrast to
English stately home guides our man included measured
comments on the greed of the former royal owners. And
as quick as you could say 'Snobby Roberts' he would
calmly observe that yet another emperor in his lust for
riches was merely 'showing off'.

That Prague had a university in 1348, the first in
central Europe, a hundred spires and architecture from
every eminent period puts the city in a perspective. On
arrival day, to the old town for evening dinner, 13
premises-brewed brown ale, singing, and Bryn carolling
like a seraph from the minstrels gallery, very celestial,
very cherubic, very Gwalia; all at the early 16th
century, hippy-frequented, living mediaeval museum piece
of the U Fleku tavern.

Prague Hradhany Castle, in Sunday morning sunshine,
represented much of the substance of Czech history, the
palace buildings stylishly proportioned and elegant.
Golden Lane, an alleyway of quaint, fairytale cottages
perched in history.

Entry to the 14th century St. Vitus Cathedral, for
some - including this pagan scribbler - was an exhilar-
ating moment with Mass before a sizeable congregation,
with choir, organ and orchestra in full flow. Soprano
trebled notes went spinning up into the magnificent
vaults high over the sanctuary as shafts of sunlight
slanted through a tracery of stained glass windows.

Our Prague concert in the International Hotel,
attended by the British ambassador and a keenly
attentive audience including many young people, their
eyes alive with interest. Elwyn's introductory skills
included very acceptable Czech. The party in Wendy's
room, attended by members of the Royal Shakespeare cast
(playing to full houses in the capital), was an
appropriately intoxicating (all meanings) finale.

13

"SHHH"

A HUSHED AUDIENCE
IN BRNO

THE TOUR OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

We practised hard and we practised long
For we were emissaries from the Land of Song.
A glorious, exciting tour had been planned
So off we flew to that distant land,
To a city famed for its exhibition trade.
Our first grand concert would be made
Fortified by beer and gherkins galore;
We prepared to make our voices soar.
Soloists and choir sang as angels on high,
But no Slovak or Slav came anywhere nigh.

In an ancient town we were filled with pride
When we sang for a lovely, blushing young bride.
'Myfanwy' is of love and of parting,
And its beautiful chords left all eyes smarting.

Across the lovely countryside
Past grey square flats where the proletariat reside,
At last in Prague, so lovely and proud.
Ah! Here we'll sing to a Bohemian crowd.

The piano was tuned last Thursday, we think,
But poor Wendy and Jane just needed a drink.
Our audience gathered and sat in their chairs.
Of Czechs - I'd say there were a dozen pairs -
Italians, Welsh, some English as well,
And the British Ambassador!

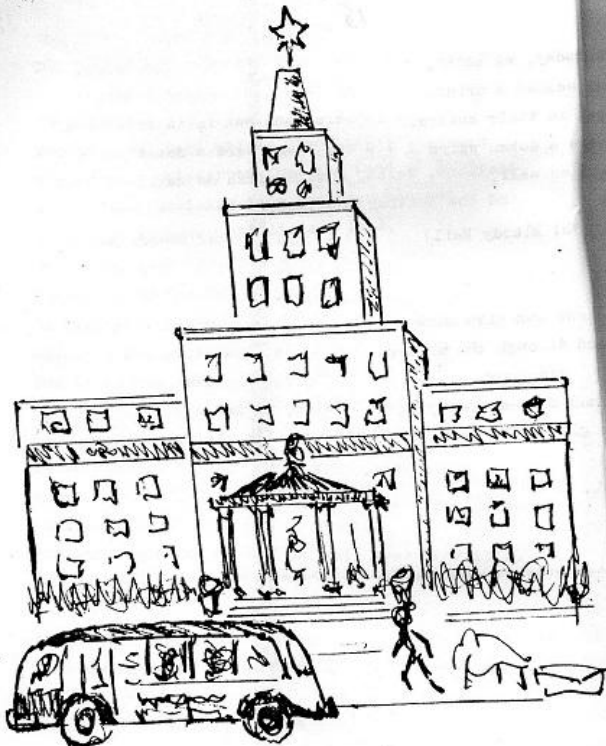
Oh! Bloody Hell!

But we gave of our best - no one can give more -
As the strains of a brass band through the windows
did pour.

But I'm not complaining, we had a good crack,
But between you and me - I'm glad to be back.

Ted Sellick.

16



THE INTERNATIONAL
GORKY GHERKIN HOTEL PRAGUE

1985

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

Chairman: Dr Ifor James

Secretary: Wynne Davies

Musical Director: Wendy Halden

Accompanist: Jane Watts

Sunday 17 February 1985 - Concert: Civic Hall, Borehamwood

Conductor: Wendy Halden; Accompanist: Jane Watts. Soloists: Glenys Roberts (soprano); Kelvin Jones (baritone) [*programme scanned*]

Saturday 30 March 1985 - Concert: London Welsh Centre

Conductor: Wendy Halden; Accompanist: Jane Watts. Soloists: Iona Jones (soprano); Philip Lloyd Evans (baritone) [*programme scanned*]

May? 1985 - Heilbronn and Lowenstein - See reports from Tempo below

Sun 23 June 1985 - Concert: Kenneth More Theatre, Ilford

July 1985 - Concert: Hayes Middlesex

Sat 14 September 1985 - Concert: Kingston Surrey

Sun 10 November 1985 - Concert: St Andrews Hall, Norwich for Norwich Welsh Society.

Conductor: Wendy Halden; Accompanist: Jane Watts. Soloist: Jane Watts (organ) [*programme scanned*]

<p style="text-align: right;">9</p> <p>HEULWEN</p> <p>IN</p> <p>HEILBRONN!</p> <p>by</p> <p>Heulwen Griffiths.</p> <p>A mini-break with the Gwalia is all anyone could possibly want from a German trip, and so it was with great delight that I accepted the chance to be part of the large group which left Russell Square on Thursday, 23rd May, 1985, bound for Heilbronn in West Germany. We were glad to leave the un-summer-like weather behind us as the two coaches set out on the first stage of the journey.</p> <p>I was a passenger on 'Coach 2, and our hosts soon got to work appropriately setting up the bar on the flat roof of the toilet.</p> <p>The journey passed by quickly, with much laughter - 'BUT NO SINGING BECAUSE THE BOYS HAD PROMISED WENDY'.</p> <p>We arrived at Sheerness, boarded the Britannia/Hollandia - settled into our cabins, and made for the restaurant - I wish food were not such an important part of my life. Dilys and I had decided that we would eat in 'THE CAPTAIN'S TABLE' restaurant - waitress service and all very posh. We made our way to a little corner table where we had spotted two empty chairs. This was a big mistake - how were we to know that this was 'THE CAPTAIN'S TABLE' and the people already sitting there were HIS guests. We beat a hasty retreat, and sat silently at another table, as far away as possible, and ate too much before speeding off to buy our duty-free booze, cigarettes and perfume. Then it was off to the Britannia Bar for a few drinks and a chat - 'BUT NO SINGING BECAUSE THE BOYS HAD PROMISED WENDY'.</p> <p>I called in to say goodnight to Anita and Dai Pres - a bottle of port later I made my way to my cabin to snatch a few minutes sleep.</p> <p>Friday morning came all too quickly for me, and I just managed a 'four cups of black coffee' breakfast before boarding the coach for the long journey to Heilbronn. It was at this time that I realised that I had packed</p>	<p>the wrong sort of wardrobe for the lovely weather we encountered.</p> <p>We arrived at Heilbronn just in time for the boys to give the open-air concert in super sunshine. (Coach 2 had been treated to a little side-show of Gwalia choristers changing into choir uniform, and unexpectedly slumping spirits visibly perked up at this spectacle.)</p> <p>This was the opening event of the garden festival - a major festival, which was to last the whole summer. There was an appreciative audience, and we were proud of our boys, who sang so well after an arduous 24 hour journey, and the added hindrance of Jane's music wafting off the electric organ (with previous faults) in the gentle summer breeze.</p> <p>We were then taken to our hotel, where we were sorted into our various rooms - superb accommodation, and, joy of joys, all the 'singles' had single rooms. After a refreshing shower, and a much needed change of clothing, it was off to the restaurant, and a leisurely (too leisurely for some of us) meal. Then off to bed for a sound sleep to prepare us for the visit to the Salt Mine lunch at Bad Wimpfen, wine tasting with the mayor of Weinsberg, and a concert there that evening.</p> <p>The Salt Mine was impressive - it was quite pleasant crammed cheek to jowl in the cote for the descent, and quite exciting trudging around in the semi-darkness of huge caverns. Syllil and I, remembering the beautiful sunshine above ground, ducked furtively under a rope, and made for the cage to take us to the surface (tough luck, Dewi, I'm sorry that you were spotted ducking under that rope and made to go back).</p> <p>Back on the coaches, and off for lunch at the Eberfürst-Halle in Bad Wimpfen - a beautiful lunch. My table companions were quite carried away with the camaraderie that abounded, and were moved to leap to their feet between mouthfuls of food to toast each other with the full version of 'Prosen' every time one person simply smiled at another, and I can assure you that there was a lot of smiling.</p>
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er buying wine-glasses, and, surprisingly, without digestion, we were on our way to Weinsberg for the fine-tasting, and the visit to the castle. Gifts were exchanged, and speeches made, before we boarded the coaches, and off to the hotel to get ready for THE CONCERT. The boys of Coach 2 were instructed to meet in the hotel swimming pool to freshen up - tut-tut, whoever heard of anyone jumping into a pool and splashing?

The concert was superb - the hall was full to overflowing, and the group of Ronsdorf friends, who made the long journey to be with us, enhanced the evening more than words can tell. 'We were so proud of you, 'Gwalia', and the 'NO SINGING BECAUSE THE BOYS PROMISED WENDY' rule had paid off handsomely. Richard's expertise in German impressed us, too. In true German fashion, the tables were re-arranged after the concert, and we were soon singing and swinging with linked arms.

Now, although everyone had been allocated superb accommodation in the hotel, Wendy and Mary had been offered the use of a fantastic flat beside the hotel - very up-market indeed. They had decided to be 'AT HOME' after the concert, and we all flocked there for a very convivial night. I can't understand why Wendy and Mary had to move into the hotel the next morning. Mary insists that everything was cleared up and very, very tidy when everyone left.

During the forenoon of Sunday, we were to meet the music society of Löwenstein, and the boys were to sing in the square. The local band were playing, and the square was full of friendship - the buying of tickets to get a glass of wine could have been tricky for anyone who hadn't the chance (like me) of working through the Muffield Mathematics Scheme for Infants.

We bade our Ronsdorf friends farewell, and made for the ancient barn at Hösling's Kelter for lunch. Joe: (the driver of Coach 2), Ted and Barry were the cabaret here, with quite the best rendering of "Daylight come and I wanna go home" ever heard.

Back to the hotel - quick shower - change - on to the

coaches, and back to Löwenstein for a Swabian evening. The seven Dylan Singers members were to give a turn here, and we were worried. Could we live up to the reputation that the Gwalia had built up in such a short time? After 'Madrigal' renderings, and 'Barber Shop' renderings, it was our turn, and we did our very best (and thank you, Ellis, for that second verse of 'Pan fo'r nos yn hir'). We felt that we did well, BUT it isn't for us to say.

The weather was really copy-book, hot and sunny - how was I to know that this was a wine growing region, and that it was always like this in the summer (Geography has never been one of my strongest points).

On Monday we were off to Heidelberg (Mario Lanza - Student Prince) country. We vacated the hotel at 8.30 a.m. - Mary was quite sad to leave her nice little flat behind. (How many night had they stayed there?)

We arrived at Heidelberg and Dilys and I were off to see the castle - from the ramparts we viewed the town - saw the tables, chairs and yellow umbrellas, and felt hungry. Quite soon we were seated at a table in the square - what would we eat, we wondered. Although we were not conversant in the German language, we slowly began to understand that there was no bread left in Heidelberg at all, and guess what? We lunched on a McDonald's hamburger.

It was a long journey back to Wlissingen, but Barry and Steve did well to entertain us and relieve the boredom. What boredom?

And so another Gwalia trip was over. Despite my swollen ankles on my return to Hornsey, my thoughts are all of thankfulness that I have, yet again, had the pleasure to be a part of a tremendous body of people. Social life would cease for some of us if you didn't remember us.

Thank you - and please will you ask me to your next trip? I count myself fortunate to have such friends as you.

TRANSPORT OF DELIGHT

TO HEILBRONN

by

Vernon Hill

True to the itinerary for Gwalia to Heilbronn-Löwenstein, drafted by Wynne Davies and John Evans, two laden coaches pulled out of Russell Square on 23rd May 1985, soon after the tactical evening departure time.

Happiness, indeed, was the rear-end of Coach 1, emblazoned with the Gwalia standard in brilliant 'Sellickelour', enhancing the back window screen as the Grey-Green stratocoach, all off-face-grinning souls safely aboard, headed out with modest ceremony for sea-breezed, pennant-fluttering Sheerness and the continent for the night crossing.

Happiness, too, Russell Square in the rearview mirror of Coach 2. Piloted by immaculately presented Grenada (West Indies) born Joe ('In the groove - on the move!'), the comfortably loaded stratocoach conformed Coach 1 in precise line-astern, the voyagers shepherded reassuringly, coolly and cheerfully by Barrie Jones and Steve Davies. An immediate issue of iced lagers postulated an efficacious campaign to vineclad Lower Swabia.

How was passenger configuration of the coaches resolved? Some suggest by in-house computer based on individual personality printouts syllogized by consultant psychoanalysts - others infer selection is decided on the back of a fag packet by a committeeman en route between Holborn and Russell Square on the Piccadilly Line.

Aboard '2' Barrie introduced himself as our hostess: for the tour - of whom more later. Steve, striving to maintain a low profile - not easy, good folks, with such orgasmic charisma - travelled as consultant neurologist, general strategist and turf accountant - and of whom - more later.

United aboard m/v BRITANNIA and the beckoning seagirt, sounding Thames estuary - and to anticipated indulgencies and our slumbrous, wavy beds...

... the lotus blooms below the barren peak:
the lotus blows by every winding creek:
all night the wind breathes low with mellow tone:
thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
round and round the spicy downs the yellow lotus-
dust is blown.

... let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal
mind,
in the hollow lotus-land to live and lie reclined,
on the hills like Gods together, careless of
mankind.

PHEW! That Geneva must have been strong last night!

Coach 2, in uncommonly welcoming sunshine and tactically to rearward of Pathfinder Coach 1, cruised the length of Helland, providing opportunity to renew acquaintance with fellow voyagers, 'all bright as angels new dropt from the sky'.

Gwyn Lloyd, a most welcome brother-in-music and loyal Gwalliaman, with his mother, Nans, likewise a popular tourist (Nans, Elwyn's sister, of course), had embarked on a 400 mile round trip from Aberystwyth to join us in London. Gwyn it was who organised the brilliant occasion for Gwalia at his beautiful Baker Street Congregational Chapel in Aberystwyth last year. Also present, delightful Dilys Morgan, later to charm our hosts and ourselves with her songs at the Swabian Evening in Löwenstein. Space restriction precludes extended portraits of the many good friends aboard '2' - suffice to say it was the greatest pleasure to enjoy their company.

Our own baritone, Dewi Jones, official 'fotog' for the party, was already completing subject shots and handily for us made up the '2' squad.

On the 'flightdeck', Joe maintained a steady 70 kph jointly with Coach 1, in accordance with autobahn speed

ings - eminently sensible - and an easeful mode of
gress too.

an Brickell, familiar with the Dutch borderlands and
the majestic Rhine valley, interestingly pinpointed our
ever onward progression. But is it true Ken thinks
the erogenous zones are near the equator?!

At Venlo, on the Dutch/German border, the coaches drew
up alongside each other whereat the 'older' characters
crowded to the rear windows to "identify" personalities
in the other vehicle. President Mr D. Griffiths, well
to the fore here, enquiring repeatedly with impressive
interest - "And who is that then?" indicating a perfectly
well-known figure, with an air of deeply warm inquisitive-
ness. Good play here and full marks for originality and
style.

Drinkable wine, we are informed, requires that two
climatic conditions prevail. First, sufficient sun to
ripen the grapes, and secondly, a moderate winter
sufficiently cool to afford the vine a recuperative
period to restore its strength for the growing and
fruiting season. The first condition was truly provided
on our arrival at Heilbronn's Landesgartenschau (Garden
Festival) for our opening performance. To describe
the effect of the glorious weather on the prodigality
of our welcome afforded by our generous hosts, civic
and social, the fine hotel accommodation, the sun-kissed
countryside caressed with immaculately cultivated vines,
the sumptuous feasting in the Swabian mode and the
palatable local vintages, would require space and the
most lyrical pen.

If Wynne ever had a problem, it will be to improve on
the perfection of this thoroughly enjoyable tour.

(Incidentally, Mr Jack Addis has mislaid his favourite
pipe.)

Heilbronn, deeply rooted in medieval history, had
sustained some devastation from the war and had rebuilt
with impressive charm and a fine sense of continuity
with the historical. At a more contemporary stage, it

news, Wendy once again evaded arrest by the hotel
staff."

ews from Coach 1 followed, for instance that Mr John
Evans, in receipt of so much presentation wine for
services to British/Swabian relations, was said to be
arranging shipment to UK via Rhine tanker.

To quote one item from the 'Lost Property' spot: a pair
of gents' socks, "only darned twice", and a lady's
delicate, pink negligee had been found. The unsuspecting
owners duly claimed possession to be informed that the
articles had been found together under a certain bed
and did the owners wish to provide explanation.

Jack asks again whether there is any sign of his
favourite pipe, please?

One evening before dinner, a handsome, young, upstanding
tenor, whose name shall not be divulged at any cost -
alright then, it was Ted Sellick. Anyway, Ted stood
there deep in meditation. Both sy'n bod, Ted?
Reflectively, he explained how the party had filed back
into the hotel at the end of the day's tour and dispersed
to their rooms whilst he remained briefly in the cool
of the garden patio. Suddenly, he beheld the unclad
figure of a dark-haired lady gaze out, fleetingly, from
an upper window at the river afire with the rays of the
evening sun; the form disappeared as swiftly as it had
shown itself as the curtains were closed, its lissom
nakedness lost even to the gaze of Titian's fiery wheel
of eventide. Nefoedd fawr! Yet ... who was that 'Dark
Lady of the Sonatas'? As the Earl of Shaftesbury said,
"Madam, men of sense never tell." And neither will Ted.

At the Swabian Evening in the Old Cellar with the
Singers Group of Löwenstein, one old man of 83 revealed
that he had never enjoyed himself so much in his life.
Make what you will of it. And following one of our
numbers about coloured goats, one perceptive local is
said to have enquired, "Wat are 'Oysters Garboretto'?
Are zey Welsh seafood?"

Still no sign of Jack's favourite pipe, but he's bearing
up well.

was not difficult to observe a certain fixation with
nude statuary in the public areas where outside
depictions of genitalia were prevalent. Freudian
influence, perhaps, the great man not unfamiliar with
the Württemberg region, and his genital libido theory
suggesting a characteristic of the healthy individual.
On one glorious evening in a cosy Heilbronn restaurant
where sublime steaks cooked in wine and peppers, pommes
gratin savoyard and blissful lagers, repleted with the
golden salubrity of the day, we discussed this local
preoccupation with erotogenic sculpture - and arrived
at no particular conclusion.

Although the Baedeker Guide defines the name Heilbronn
as 'the sacred spring', our own Mr John Evans, a member
of the Welsh language illuminati, with deft and imagin-
ative use of that tongue, suggests the true meaning to
be 'the Town of Sunny Breasts'! Think about it, you
Welsh encyclopedists.

An endearing legend conveyed to us at Weinsberg Castle -
where in 1140 a siege by an invading Swedish army
reduced the beleaguered to consuming dogs, cat and rats.
An amnesty allowed the women together with their children
to leave the sieged fortress in safety, with no more
than they could carry. And so they trooped out -
carrying their menfolk on their backs. Makes you think,
boys bach!

Say what you like but the sun gets up early in Heilbronn,
and those breakfasting on the snug patio in still and
cossetting morning air, revelled in the tranquil, coffee
and croissant, dulcet scene - the youthful sun's rays
streaming through the greenest leaves of riverside
willows and leafy saplings. A garden of earthly delights
indeed.

The morning encoaching ritual would see Barrie travel
the coach length, rallying here, there more therapeut-
ically, even a reassuring squeeze of the arm. The day's
timetable confirmed, the morning's good and bad news
would be announced: an example of the latter - "After
last night's successful party in Wendy's room, Ken
Brickell is feeling very well this morning." "And the

The return journey from the sun-endowed vine-clad
slopes of the lovely Neckar valley to Viissingen
predicted a tedious drive. Never fear, good reader,
Steve and Barrie maintained a level of badinage and
jocosity that the Wogan personage (on, we are told,
£350,000 a year for a somewhat sleepy thrice-weekly
show) would have envied. You supplied magnificently,
gentlemen.

The Great Wine Raffle launched the homeward trek when
the intrepid duo correctly noted that indiscriminate
presentations of wines together with those donated by
Mr Dai Pres, were stacked in the bonded warehouse
section of Coach 2. Entry free, bottles were drawn
for on condition that winners promptly redonated the
goods for immediate popular consumption. Oberleutenant
(acting unpaid) Dafydd Gwynfor and his minders ensured
that successful punters 'handed over'.

A brief panic situation when the equally great
corkscrew hunt unfolded. Hairy hands and gruff voices
pointed up the effort applied to the frenzied search of
the smoke and beer-stained inner recesses of clothing -
and the men were busy looking as well.

Desert Island Discs was stylishly conducted by Steve
Davies on the chosen celebrity, Mr Jack Addis. Jack
selected a compelling collection of favourite tunes -
and proceeded to perform them all himself in a pleasing
light baritone voice. His luxury article to take to
the island was an inflatable SS trooper doll which he
would enjoy deflating, and the chosen book - the
Auto-Dai-Ography of the Gwallia President, Mr David
Griffiths. The latter a clever choice - and a totally
generous sentiment from the great and good Jack.

Arriving at Heidelberg, Barrie read from the Berlitz
Guide and quoted a story from the early 18th Century
of one Perkeo Brickell, a dwarf, who was caretaker of
the Great Tun, a mammoth wine vessel of 220,000 litres.
Not for the first time did the Jones line fool the
voyagers on the Brickell theme! Poor Perkeo, an
orphan who was reared in the great wine cellars of the
medieval town, drank wine only throughout his life,

when invited, as an old man, to sample the town's
ter, promptly contracted typhoid and died.

Many and many were the musical and dramatic renditions
performed by almost every manjack aboard Coach 2, and
all on hightech amplification. What a dubious
acquisition to humanity television seems when such a
rich and joyous vein of musicality, humour, inventive-
ness and sheer sociability pervades our fellowbeings.
Sermon over.

Aboard m/v Hollandia bound for home, the party
recognised with appreciation the brilliant organisation
performed by Wynne, and presented to him a fine
Heidelberg beer stein. Supported tactically by John (E),
they clearly just did not solve problems, they
overwhelmed them; not settling for the little dream.
No sliding down the razor-blade of life for them -
where's the end of that rainbow!

Frequent mention was made of colleagues who could not
travel because of conflicting commitments. Their musical
contribution was a collective loss and we recognised, too,
that they had unavoidably relinquished a most enjoyable
tour.

Dewi, our ace fotog, unbelievably had processed his films
in time for rehearsal the day after our return - an
artistic and systematic achievement. It's said that
Dewi sometimes takes photographs of people in the nude,
although we believe he occasionally keeps his socks on.

A visit to the local wine retailer may never be the same
again. Imagine the scene:
GWALIAPERSON: "Do you have a Spatlese Weinsberg?"
SALESPERSON: "Certainly. And the Qualitatswein mit
Pradikat is authenticated by the Mayor Lowenstein
personally."
GWALIAPERSON: "Ah, Herr Willy! Know him well my good
man! A case will do nicely."

As Coach 2 pulled terminally into Southampton Row, the
sun dappling through the copper-tinted leaves of Russell

Square's proud beech trees ... did someone say ...
have another lotus-leaf?

(Jack's pipe was found under Sybil's bed. Don't ask
me who Sybil is!)

1986

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

Chairman: Dr Ifor James

Secretary: Wynne Davies

Musical Director: Wendy Halden

Accompanist: Tom Jackman

July 1986 - Fishguard, Dyfed Royal National Eisteddfod **1st place** in their category (40-70 voices).

Test pieces: Ti A Addolwn (Adoramus Te by Palestrina) and Nos A Bore (William Mathias)

1. Gwalia (London Welsh); 2. Whitland; 3. Bridgend.

[see page 215 'Do You Hear The People Sing? The Male Voice Choirs of Wales' by Gareth Williams, published by Gomer Press 2015]

Recording - Our 2nd album 'Travelling' was recorded at Angel Studios Islington and released by Grasmere Records in 1986.

Conductor: Wendy Halden. Accompanist Gwawr Owen. Soprano: Glenys Roberts

(photographs of the choir making the recording are in the archive - judging by the number of people in (very) short shorts it must have been mid-summer)

October 1986 - 10th Festival of 1000 Welsh Male Voices, Royal Albert Hall

1987

President: His Honour Judge David Griffiths

Chairman: Dr Ifor James

Secretary: Wynne Davies

Musical Director: Wendy Halden

Accompanist: Tom Jackman

Sat 31 January 1987 - Joint Concert with London Welsh Male Voice Choir. London Welsh Centre.

The two choirs sang together. Wendy conducted the first half and Haydn did the 2nd half. Marilyn Phillips was the LWMVC accompanist and Tom Jackman was the Gwalia accompanist. The soloist was soprano Elizabeth Pugh.

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the LW Association premises in Grays Inn Rd, Rita Clarke had prepared an Exhibition of material and photographs outlining the development of the Association. (*see scanned programme*)

Sun 10 May 1987 - Gala Concert, Snape Maltings, Suffolk. Organised by The Lions Club.

Introduced by Paul Heiney. Conductor: Wendy Halden Accompanist: Tom Jackman

Band of 1st Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (*programme in archive*)

Sat 23 May 1987 - Concert. Tabernacle Chapel, Aberaeron

Conductor: Wendy Halden Accompanist: Tom Jackman

Ada-Lynne Griffiths. Melodi. Glenys Roberts. Gaenor Howells. Gwawr Owen. Huw Rhys-Evans.

(*see scanned programme*)

Sun 24 May 1987 - Concert. Holy Trinity Church, Newcastle Emlyn

Conductor: Wendy Halden Accompanist: Tom Jackman

Ada-Lynne Griffiths. Melodi. Glenys Roberts. Gaenor Howells. Gwawr Owen. Huw Rhys-Evans.

(*see scanned programme*)

Sat 6 June 1987 - Social Evening at Old Comptor Debtors Prison Dungeon, Mitre Court, Wood St EC2. 'Music, Sing-song, food, plus one bottle of wine each'. Tickets £6.50

Sat 29 August 1987 - Concert. Hildthalle Weinsburg. West Germany

Conductor: Wendy Halden. Accompanist Jane Watts.

30 August 1987 - Wuppertal?