



ISSUE 13



LLAIS Y FRO

The magazine of Cowbridge Male Voice Choir

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-4

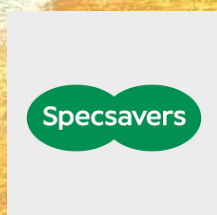
Highlights Reel 2024



Table of Contents

Editorial.....	4-5
Royal Welsh Show.....	6-7
Margam Abbey & Roath.....	8-9
Percoed (MIND).....	10-11
Carols in Cowbridge.....	12-13
Christmas Concert.....	14-15
The Fab 4.....	16-17
St Davids Day Concert.....	18-19
Llandaff with Allegra.....	20-21
National Workers.....	22-23
Peterchurch (Hereford).....	24-25
Jersey Tour.....	26-27
Annual.....	28-29

CMVC IS PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:



This page: Sunburst at our CD recording.

Cover photo: One of the most uplifting performances any of us has experienced. St Helier with Les Amis.



*Jon Wilks
Chairman, CMVC*

Editorial

As the choir enjoys a well-earned break from rehearsals and performances during August, it's appropriate to reflect on a fantastic year of achievements, contributions and events.

2023-24 has been certainly the most fulfilling that I can recall as a CMVC chorister – and you can see why I say this if you look at the list of contents for this annual review. We have collectively done a huge amount and all should be very proud. My personal highlight (and I know that many feel the same) was our performance with Les Amis choir during our St Helier, Jersey tour in June 2024. You can read more about this in the review but suffice to say here that it brought unconfined joy to all who attended.

Behind the scenes we have expanded our music team by the formal recruitment of Jane Coles as deputy MD and Scott Williams as Deputy Accompanist. We have also created a long-term plan for the choir to ensure that we have a sustainable and prosperous future and our Patrons Association, managed by Chris & Liz George, is going from strength to strength.

Our signing of 'Both Sides Now' continues to attract interest and praise.



Excellent progress...

For the choir itself, we are making excellent progress. Our register now names 92 choristers, the largest membership that the choir has ever enjoyed. Having more choristers provides some challenges for our rehearsal space but the positive by-product is a much richer and more melodious sound and harmonies. Many of our audience members comment on the enhanced quality of the choir and I am convinced that part of this is down to the increased number of choristers.

Additionally, and with huge thanks to the previous incumbent John Williams, we have split the role of concert and tour secretary. Bruce Edwards as concert secretary and Stuart McCullough as tour secretary are doing a really

first class job of ensuring that the planning and preparation for our performances leaves nothing to chance.

Certainly, the very positive outcome of our Jersey tour was testament to their planning and rigour.

In May 2024 we recorded our new CD, Total Praise.

A fabulous piece of work...!

The recording took place over two days at Porthcawl's All Saints Church with the exceptional Jordan from Cobra Music undertaking all of the technical recording work. It is a fabulous piece of work, and the first production run has completely sold out.

Furthermore, we return to All Saints Church to perform on 24th September with German Winds, the leading brass and woodwind band in Germany in aid of the RNLI charity.

In all that you will read about in this review, the contribution of Rhiannon Williams, our Musical Director, and Sandra Williams BEM, our accompanist, cannot be overstated. We owe them a huge round of applause and thanks for the commitment and dedication that they demonstrate on a consistent basis.

CMVC is a truly great choir and everyone who is associated with it, in any way, will know the truth of that statement. What a privilege it is for me to be Chairman.

Many thanks for your continued, fantastic support.

Jon Wilks, Chairman



MOLIANT Y MAES – Royal Welsh Show

It was last July 2023 that the choir were asked to be the principal performers at the Moliant Y Maes service held every year on the Sunday preceding the Royal Welsh Show. With Penllyn Estate owner Johnny Homfray in the President of the Royal Welsh Show Presidential role, we were very humbled to be asked and accepted the honour.

Johnny has been an immense supporter of the choir over recent years, providing facilities and a venue for the choir to rehearse and even perform during covid, whilst also directing us to specific grant funding.

We now needed to repay that support by showing a capacity audience what CMVC is capable of.

The traffic around the showground was appalling but Top Tenor and previous chair Leon Fear demonstrated his mastery of coach driving by ensuring that the choir arrived on time.

On a very warm day in what is the sheep shearing barn at the show, the choir performed impeccably (Johnny Homfray's words, not mine – Ed) to a huge audience estimated to be over 1,000.

This was a truly fantastic honour, and we hope that we did the Homfray family proud on what was a very big day for them.



**Y Gymdeithas Amaethyddol
Frenhinol Cymru**

**The Royal Welsh
Agricultural Society**



MARGAM ABBEY & MAGGIE'S ROATH (NOV & DEC 2023)



£6,300 raised for Maggie's

Held in freezing conditions at St Michael's Church in Roath, Cardiff, the Choir were on top form once again at the annual Christmas fundraiser for Maggie's cancer charity.

It was a real pleasure to share the stage with the wonderful Lisvane Primary School Choir and the excellent 'Dare To Sing' Ladies choir. Both engaged fantastically well with the sold-out audience and provided the first frissons of excitement for advent and the coming Christmas festivities.

CMVC were assured and confident, though it was cold in certain areas of the church despite the best efforts of church wardens. Shrugging this off, the Choir entertained with a wide selection of popular numbers from their repertoire, as well as performing their debut of 'Let the River Run' to great praise.



Dare To Sing Ladies Choir

St Michael's, Roath





Again, raising money for Royal Welsh Agricultural Society charities, this time In the fabulous surroundings of Margam Abbey.





PENCOED MAYOR'S CONCERT FOR MIND

Being asked to support one of our own choristers, Barry Doughty (TT), was never a problem once we had discovered that he was serving a year as Mayor of Pencoed and wanted to raise money for MIND.

The choir duly travelled the short distance to Pencoed social club and much enjoyed performing to a sold-out audience. As well as the performance there were presentations on mental health from the inspirational Reel Minds as well as the two strongest women in Wales!



This was a great and thoroughly worthy event, and we hope that Barry managed to raise a ton of cash for the charities concerned.

Yes, the venue was a little snug for the choir but that didn't detract at all from the occasion. We were also pleased to share the stage with soprano Natasha John who surely can expect a long and distinguished singing career. Her 'Nesun Dorma' really was one where no-one would sleep!



The choir with Natasha John





CAROLS IN COWBRIDGE

Whilst the previous year had seen the choir gather for informal carol singing in a couple of Cowbridge's lively pubs, Christmas 2023 saw an expansion to four – Harry's Bar, The Bear, The Duke of Wellington and, finally, the Horse & Groom.

In what proved to be a marathon effort of singing and beer consumption, choristers and pub revellers alike much enjoyed what is certain to become a regular fixture in the choir calendar.



A lively night – and a wedding celebration as well!





CHRISTMAS CONCERT AT HOLY CROSS

Sometimes (and you can never really see it coming) you produce a performance which you know to be special. The CMVC Christmas Concert 2023 was just such an occasion as we managed to generate what most agreed was our best quality of the year. Featuring two new Christmas pieces in We Three Kings and The First Noel, the capacity audience really enjoyed a treat.





Huge thanks and appreciation to our two young soloists Christian Street and Esther Thomas-Bizjak for their wonderful performances. Also to Scott Williams for his organ playing contribution and duet with Sandra Williams for 'The First Noel'.



THE FAB 4!



CMVC was absolutely delighted to announce the appointment of two new members for our musical team in February.

Jane Coles (right of picture) was appointed Deputy Musical Director having excelled during her audition with the choir. Jane is also musically involved with Caerphilly MVC and Llantrisant MVC and is thrilled to now be joining Cowbridge in the Deputy MD role. She will attend rehearsal once a month to lead sectional practice and develop a full knowledge of our repertoire.

Scott Williams (second left) was appointed Deputy Accompanist and will work with Sandra Williams to develop the choir's repertoire and learning of new pieces. He is already the CMVC organist, and this new development will further strengthen his links to the choir.



Rhiannon Williams continues to pour heart and soul into CMVC. From leading the production of the choir's most recent CD recording to piano duets and more, she is at the centre of all that we produce. Newly appointed as MD of Treorchy Male Choir, Rhi will continue to lead CMVC as well and we look forward to the many opportunities that her joint roles will provide.

Meanwhile, Sandra Williams continues to astound us with her dedication as accompanist. She will practice for at least 1-2 hours every day to ensure that her performances are out of the top drawer, whether for rehearsal or concerts and it is always humbling to realise that she has mastered any new song before choristers have even started to learn it!





ST DAVID'S DAY CONCERT

Having, unusually, had to experience the frustration of a late postponement of a charity concert for St David's Day, the choir decided to go ahead with one of their own at Holy Cross Church. Not only would this enable the Cowbridge and Vale community to once gain hear the choir, but it would also act as excellent preparation for the forthcoming major concert at Llandaff cathedral with Allegra Ladies' Choir.

And so the planets aligned, the rather alarming weather abated for long enough for people to arrive safely and, goodness me, what a lovely evening was enjoyed by all.

Congratulations, in particular, to Archie Edwards for his wonderful trumpet solo.

Holy Cross church was completely packed for the concert, with even the central aisle used for extra seating capacity.

Emma Edwards, who had performed with great distinction with the choir in Margam Abbey, stepped up again to deliver a fabulous soprano solo.





The programme included, as you would expect for St David's Day, a number of rousing Welsh hymns and also 'Both Sides Now' featuring our band of dedicated signers (see above). Archie absolutely nailed his trumpet solo pieces, and his mum was no less impressive with her fantastic soprano solos.





LLANDAFF CATHEDRAL WITH ALLEGRA

It is always an absolute privilege to perform in Cardiff's iconic Llandaff Cathedral. Raising money for the brilliant charity that is Maggie's always makes an occasion special and the acoustics in Llandaff are something else again. This event had some added pressure in that the choir would perform with Allegra Ladies choir, an award-winning choir from Newport. We would need to look smart too – Allegra wear some gorgeous ball gowns to perform!

Ironing boards were employed to good effect and our musical preparations had been very thorough. The result was simply sensational.

This was a 'tour de force' performance by CMVC, leading Allegra to declare that Cowbridge is the best male choir they have ever performed with (and they have performed with all that are anyone). In particular, our debut of the Carly Simon song 'Let the River Run' received an instant ovation. Gosh, what an experience!





What
A
Concert!





NATIONAL WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

Sometimes opportunities just come right out of the blue and you either grab them or let them pass. Life is much more interesting if you grab them!

And so it was that, with minimal preparation, we were asked whether we would be prepared to sing in front of the Wales First Minister and assembled dignitaries at the National Workers Memorial to commemorate all those who have lost their lives to industrial accidents. Given Wales' enormous contribution to the industrial revolution and subsequently with coal, steel and manufacturing this felt an entirely worthy undertaking.

Notwithstanding the machinations of political life (the first minister resigned shortly after our performance!) this was a moving and sombre occasion where the lives of too many people were remembered. May they all rest in peace and may we learn lessons from their circumstances.





Workers' Memorial Day Remember the Dead and Fight for the Living

Event 22 April

**ORGANISING FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY
A CRUCIAL PART OF UNION ACTION**

- Recognising and supporting our safety reps
- An organised workplace is a safe workplace



www.unitetheunion.org

Event
National Memorial

Time and place
1, Cathedral Rd

Contact
Ceri Williams

All welcome !

10am, 22 April

cwilliams@tuc.org.uk

FIGHTING FOR • JOBS • PAY • CONDITIONS



PETERCHURCH (HEREFORD)

Peterchurch is a picture-perfect English rural church some 15 miles to the West of Hereford, much to the surprise of our coach driver who decided to 'wing it' without the benefit of sat-nav. 4 hours on a coach did little to lift the mood but the welcome and appreciation from the parishioners more than made up for the travel frustration.

To describe the church as 'bijou' would give hope to many single room dwellings struggling in estate agent windows. The choir crammed themselves into every nook and cranny in order to be accommodated and jackets were discarded as the first June rays of sunshine appeared.

Despite all of the squeezing, this was a lovely, joyous occasion and put a real spring in the step of all who attended. The fact that parishioners even saw fit to lay free beer on for choristers afterwards summed up the 'feel good' nature of the day. Thank you Peterchurch – you were wonderful!



Peterchurch montage!





JERSEY TOUR

It was simply too good an opportunity to turn down. Working in the Channel islands for Jersey's Family Nursing & Homecare charity in November 2023, your correspondent was asked about hobbies and pastimes. 'Oh, I song in a Welsh male voice choir' was greeted with huge enthusiasm and a single sentence – "tell me that you'll bring them here to perform!"

In June this year that is exactly what happened, 45 choristers with supporters made the adventurous crossing via high-speed catamaran to St Helier in Jersey and two performances – a small warm up in the hotel in aid of NSPCC before a major undertaking to a sold-out audience at St Helier's Methodist Centre.

"Would it be OK if a local choir performed with you?", I was asked. "Certainly" was my reply and thereby arose one of the most uplifting, joyous and life-affirming concerts that anyone who was there will remember.

Les Amis choir, formed in March specifically for the event and made up of islanders with learning disabilities, absolutely owned the night. Theirs be the glory; theirs be the adulation. I simply can't recall anything to match it in terms of pure positive affirmation.

Would we return to Jersey in the future? In a heartbeat. This was an absolute highlight of the year. Bravo to all who made it happen and to the choristers who made the trip. I'm still smiling 2 months' on.





ANNUAL CONCERT 2024

After such a stellar year could CMVC sprinkle the hundreds and thousands on top, drizzle some raspberry sauce and insert a 99?! The annual concert in Cowbridge Leisure Centre is always a showcase for our development over the year and the pulse quickens at the realization that it is in front of our 'home' fans.

Putting up the 'sold out' signs the week before the concert created a further frisson of nervous excitement. This was going to be a big one.

Choristers all worked their socks off with new songs and refinement of existing repertoire.

75 choristers took to the stage, the largest number ever assembled, and my goodness every one of them was on it from the first note.

The debut performance of Bryn Myrddin, sponsored by the family of our dear friend and chorister, the late Meic Edwards, was faultless. What a tribute to him.

And we just kept going, somehow delivering the very best performances of our repertoire that most have ever heard. The audience feedback was fabulous and the standing ovation at the close a real testament to the choir's achievements.

Bravo to all choristers, Rhiannon, Sandra and Scott, as well as guests the Richard Williams Singers, Frank Maynard and Paul Owen.



Annual Concert Memories



LOOKING AHEAD!

13th SEP 2024

Tour to Isle of Wight with Saturday
concert at Newport Minster for Rotary
charities 7pm



24th SEP 2024

Concert at All Saints Church, Porthcawl with
German Winds, Germany's leading brass band
for RNLI, 7pm



12th OCT 2024

Concert with Markham & District Brass band at
Y Pant School, Pontyclun 7pm for Samaritans



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

CMVC PATRONS ASSOCIATION

NOW LIVE!

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

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

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

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

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

SILVER gives you:-

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

GOLD gives you:-

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

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

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





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CONSERVATORY & GARDEN

COWBRIDGE MALE VOICE CHOIR

Income & Expenditure Account For the year ended 31st December 2023

	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £
INCOME:				
Subscriptions:				
Top Tenors		1,395		1,348
2nd Tenors		1,684		1,172
1st Bass		2,674		2,294
2nd Bass		1,934		1,595
		<u>7,687</u>		<u>6,409</u>
Gift Aid		5,894		1,006
Vice Presidents		186		400
Sponsorship & Donations		4,960		2,470
Concerts & Tour		4,212		28,014
Annual Concert		8,534		4,890
Uniforms		1,478		426
100 Club		4,365		5,100
Bingo/Quizzes/Skittles		2,175		2,077
Weddings etc		1,000		1,300
CDs/Royalties		939		912
Sundry Income		86		295
Interest Received		33		2
TOTAL INCOME		41,549		53,301
EXPENDITURE:				
Concerts Tour & Travel	48,838		30,776	
Annual Concert	3,223		1,937	
Weddings/Social	5,969		7,906	
Charitable Donations	50		50	
Music	860		1,247	
Honoraria	9,826		9,100	
Prizes for 100 Club	2,025		2,115	
Insurance	1,014		947	
Administrative Expenses	240		116	
Website costs	0		1,089	
Association Fees	40		40	
Rent	1,250		583	
Accountancy	480		480	
Uniforms	2,646		2,267	
Repairs & Renewals	50		0	
Bank Charges	15		0	
Miscellaneous	0		0	
Opening Stock	4,435		4,311	
Closing Stock	-3,611		-4,435	
Depreciation:				
- Defibrillator	38		50	
- Pianos	15		20	
- Sound System	39		52	
- Camera	25		33	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		77,467		58,684
Surplus for the Year		-35,918		-5,383

COWBRIDGE MALE VOICE CHOIR

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2023

	2023	2023	2022	2022
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets:				
Piano/Keyboard		113		150
Sound System		44		59
Defibrulator		118		157
Camera		74		98
		<u>349</u>		<u>464</u>
Current Assets:				
Prepayments	311		300	
Stock of CDs	1,224		1,788	
Stock of Uniforms	2,387		2,647	
Cash on Hand	90		90	
Barclays - Deposit Account	3310		3,277	
Barclays - Current Account	12109		2,161	
Barclays - Tour Account	847		37,558	
Barclays - 100 Club Account	11024		18,744	
Barclays - Social Account	4382		4,922	
		35,684		<u>71,487</u>
Current Liabilities:				
Creditors and Accruals		-480		-480
Net Current Assets		35,204		71,007
NET ASSETS		35,553		71,471
CAPITAL ACCOUNT				
Opening Balance		71,471		76,854
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		-35,918		-5,383
Closing Balance		35,553		71,471

R H PARSONS

Treasurer, Cowbridge Male Voice Choir

Date 4/4/24

R J HEATH

Russell Heath Accountants

Date 4/4/24