



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



www.meva-choir.co.uk
Registered Charity No:298985

Join us every Monday evening in August on the quayside for our free, open-air concerts, starting at 7.45pm.

Summer 2016

No: 30



A Seagull's View of One Choir Listening to Another at the Minack

HALL FOR CORNWALL TICKETS NOW ON SALE!

As we enjoy our run of concerts on our quayside this summer, minds are already turning to our 10th September concert at Truro's Hall for Cornwall, when we will renew our friendship with Plymouth Military Wives Choir.

It will be the fifth time we've shared a stage with the chart-topping Plymouth ladies, who only this summer were making a triumphant appearance at New York's Carnegie Hall. Back in May, of course, we played host to the

Culdrose Military Wives at the Minack Theatre [more overleaf!] while in October we travel to Cyprus to sing with the Akrotiri and Episkopi MWCs.

HfC tickets are already on sale via www.hallforcornwall.co.uk although Friends who want to avoid the HfC booking fee can contact the Choir – publicity@meva-choir.co.uk – and join us on a group booking.



Bobbing, dipping and diving lazily across the bay, a pod of dolphins greeted our audience as they settled into their seats at west Cornwall's unique Minack theatre. And for those prepared to descend another score or more steps to the stage area and peer over, there was the added bonus of a family of seals basking on the rocks.

However, it is over 100 steps down from the car park and entrance to the stage, so some preferred to take no more than necessary. And yet our risers had to be carried by hand all the way down – along with the new back safety bars. To Second Tenor Graham Alee's horror one escaped from its bag on the way down and disappeared over the edge – fortunately to nestle on a grassy outcrop just below the path!



Carved out of the cliffs high above the golden sands of Porthcurno and the Atlantic, the Minack is one of the world's most famous open-air theatres. Conceived in 1931 by Rowena Cade, who lived at the top of the cliff, and wanted a place for local drama enthusiasts to perform, it was built by her and her gardener, Billy Rawlings, between them moving tons of earth and countless granite boulders to create the stage and the lower terraces of what, over the years, has been expanded and developed into a 750-seat outdoor auditorium.

Saturday 14th May saw our third Minack visit and, for the second time, we were accompanied by a Military Wives Choir. This time we welcomed the ladies from Culdrose, the only Cornish members of the now 75-strong worldwide movement.



Could there be a more romantic setting for these lovely ladies?

Just as when their sisters from Plymouth shared a concert with us there two years ago, the air was filled with 'ooh's' and 'aah's' as the ladies caught their first glimpse of the magnificent setting where they were about to sing. And they produced a performance to match, ending the first half with magnificent renditions of *'Higher and Higher'*, *'Skyfall'*; *'Stand by Me'*; their own military wives prayer, the moving *'Wherever You Are'*; and *'Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy'*.

Our own choir opened the concert, after an introduction by Adrian Wilton, an excellent compere for the evening as always. We began with a few of our more popular pieces, and a first public airing for *'Every Time I Feel the Spirit'*, one of the new numbers we had been busy learning through the dark winter. It's a boisterous spiritual that allows Matt Fox to show us all his skills, with a Scott Joplin-style instrumental solo part way through.



Adrian Wilton – a true Cornish compere

We were then entertained by Meva Cappella, our barbershop quartet, at their best, with their interpretations of the Beach Boys' *'In My Room'* and the Beatles' *'All my lovin'*. We also began the second half, with five songs, including the evocative *'Away from the Roll of the Sea'* and two more of our new pieces, *'Only You'* and *'We Rise Again'*. The ladies returned with *'Rule the World'*; *'True Colours'*; *'Proud'*; *'Lean on Me'*; and *'I Will Follow Him'*. The finale saw the two choirs join for the powerful *'Morte Christe'*.

It was a special day for one member of the audience, Ed Barnicoat, a long-time admirer of the Choir who had been gifted a weekend in Porthcurno and tickets to the event by his family for his 70th birthday. – duly acknowledged by Adrian Wilton and by us in song, of course. One of the most pleasing things we noticed about the audience as they settled into their seats had been the wide age profile.



Young and, well, not so young, looking forward to the singing

The verdict? "We had such a wonderful night, it won't be forgotten", said Culdrose's Anna Oliver. "The backdrop, the atmosphere, the dolphins! And your choir sang fantastically, we were very impressed indeed." And we with you, Anna.



The two choirs combine for a rousing finale

FEAST WEEK REMEMBERS

Our Feast Week concert this year was dedicated to Robin Hunkin, who sadly left us last August. Most readers are aware of what Mevagissey meant to Robin, and, indeed, what Robin meant to Mevagissey. It is fair to say that Feast Week, in which the annual concert plays a small, but integral, part, would not be the huge and popular event that it has become over the past 20 years, had it not been for Robin's energy, imagination and commitment.

That same drive and enthusiasm were among the pillars on which the Mevagissey Male Choir itself was built. Robin was just 19 when, in November 1974, he was hauled along by his older brothers to the Congregational Sunday School for the meeting that led to the Choir's formation; the youngest of the score or so local men attending, unsure not only of his ability, but whether singing was for him at all. Forty years on, he was a key member of the Choir Committee, leader of the Baritone section, soloist, founding member of our Meva Cappella quartet, and an expert and imaginative member of our Music Committee.

Robin's organisational talents were never better put to use than when leading the team that planned the immensely successful 40th Anniversary Concert at the Eden Project in May 2014. But his hand could be seen in so much of what the Choir did, particularly when it was done in Mevagissey, whether it was the Harvest of the Sea, the Christmas concert or the much-loved August Quay concerts that have been part of the Mevagissey calendar for the past 30 years.

More than that, Robin was a major influence on the direction of the Choir in recent years. Just as with Feast Week, he recognised that, to survive, and to prosper, the Choir needed to entertain. Working closely with Musical Director Graham Willcocks and other members of the Music Committee, he was instrumental in introducing more modern and increasingly challenging pieces to the ever-widening repertoire that is today the envy of many male voice choirs. We like to think that our Feast Week performance provided a fitting tribute.

Certainly the audience appeared to think so. A full house climbed as one to its feet as we ended our second half, *We Rise Again*, such an appropriate finale, particularly since Robin had taken the lead. Top Tenor Dom McVeigh picked up the baton and did us proud.

Dom also took his own place in Meva Cappella for two pieces in the second half. That was entertaining enough but they had their work cut out to match the treat we were given in the first half, when three of accompanist Matt Fox's pupils from Falmouth school delighted solo performances.



Lewis, Anna and Theo – Falmouth school stars

Year 10 student Theo Fleming, recently appointed Falmouth School's Head Boy, played Handel's 'Sonata in E Minor' on his flute, Lewis Naisby, from Year 9, gave us Chopin's 'Nocturne in C# Minor' on the piano and A-Level student, Anna Freeman, thrilled us with her own stunning arrangement of 'How Great Thou Art', accompanying her own singing on the piano. What young talent!

Speaking of young talent, the Feast Week concert also saw Joel Fox, Matt and Carolyn's baby son, make his debut appearance. And it was notable for one other event. Our Concert Secretary, Second Tenor Cliff Burnett, was presented with Choir Black Badge. For many years Cliff has

uncomplainingly hauled our risers and other equipment all over the county, and beyond – as well as booking our concerts. And all in good humour. None more deserving, Cliff. Congratulations.



Joel Fox's debut



Cliff presented with his Black Badge

Near Mishap at Noss Mayo



St Peter's, Noss Mayo

Seventeen times we've been to Noss Mayo, the last just three years ago, so you'd think we'd have learned! This charmingly pretty village on the River Yealm estuary, some ten miles south of Plymouth and on the opposite bank of a tidal creek from its better known neighbour, Newton Ferrers, is only reached by lanes as narrow and winding as any on the Roseland or the Lizard. Not ideal, then, for a 30ft coach. No matter, we had been assured by the operator that we could be delivered to St Peter's Church without too much difficulty. So it was that, on Saturday 25th June, we set off on the 60-mile journey, regaling each other *en route* with tales of past follies and mishaps in Noss Mayo.

The plan, after the concert, was to walk down the hill from the church for our afterglow, returning at 11.15 and set off home. Unfortunately, we'd booked the wrong pub! Walking was out of the question for aging choristers, so the driver was awakened from his slumbers and, with some difficulty, persuaded to take us to The Dolphin on the other bank of the river, where hot pasties awaited. So we clambered aboard again. Unfortunately, the route to the Dolphin was un-researched! The lanes got narrower, the bends tighter. Our expected 10pm arrival time came and went, then 10.15 and 10.30, as we inched our way between hedgerows and parked cars, eventually fetching up at a gated marina – and nowhere to turn. We had no option but to reverse the mile or so we had come. At around 10.40 we were hailed by the pub landlady, who pointed those who could walk in the direction of the rapidly cooling pasties and an idle, reinforced bar staff, while offering to drive the less able herself. Our intrepid coach driver was left to complete his 'reverse' journey and find a turning place as we made up for lost time at the hostelry. So we didn't get away until 11.30, which made it a very late night for everyone.

Oh yes, and there was a concert! We had been warmly greeted on arrival by the Revd Anne Legge, for whose church we have been raising funds for many years after being introduced by David Foard, our long-serving Bass who passed away last year. On this occasion, we were thrilled to welcome as our guest the Devon-based mezzo soprano Helen Haviland, who delighted us with arias from the *'Barber of Seville'* and *'Samson & Delilah'*, as well as *'Losing My Mind'*, from *'Follies'*; *'Maybe This Time'*, from *'Cabaret'*; *'Fine, Fine Line'* from *'Avenue Q'*; and *'Don't Rain on My Parade'* from *'Funny Girl'*. Simply stunning.

The audience were also fulsome in their praise of our own performance, once again admirably compered by Bass Bill Collins. It included a first outing for *'Home Lovin' Man'*, the 1970 hit for Andy Williams, and, after our now customary rousing finish with *'We Rise Again'*, we were persuaded to give an encore – what else but *'Lower Lights'*?



Hailing Helen Haviland

ORPHEUS CHARM US IN PENZANCE

Two weeks after our Noss Mayo adventure, on 17th July, we set off in the opposite direction, to Penzance, where we had been invited to sing with the Penzance Orpheus Ladies Choir at St Mary's Church in the historic Chapel Street. St Mary's traces its roots back to the 13th century – when it was just a chapel!

Formed in 1953, the Orpheus Choir, now directed by Stephen Lawry, our old friend from Mousehole MVC, sang beautifully, entertaining the audience with a nicely varied programme, ranging from the Everly Brothers' *'Let It Be Me'* to Russian and Maori lullabies, and including an amusing, home-grown



St Mary's, Penzance



Meva Cappella take a bow

arrangement, *'A Fishy Tale'*, and a beautiful rendition of the Delyth Rees song, *'Another Day'*, featuring a duet by twin sisters from the choir,

Our first set, of four songs, was sandwiched between two by the ladies, and the first half ended with the entire congregation coming together for a stirring performance of *'Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah'*. The second half comprised two sets by MMC, either side of one by Orpheus, and saw the reintroduction of *'My Heart Will Go On'*, a piece we hadn't done for a while. The evening ended with *'Morte Christe'*, performed by the choirs in unison.

It was but a short walk to the Yacht Inn for the afterglow, where each choir sang a few favourites in between munching pasties and quaffing ale. Another wonderful evening.

St Enoder Hears Another New Piece – ‘The Way We Were’

The following Saturday, July 23rd, we found ourselves in St Enoder, near Summercourt, a few miles south of Newquay and birthplace of 14th century Cornish writer John Trevisa. It was only our second visit to St Enoder Church (the first was in 2006), apparently named after a saint first recorded as Heglosenunder in the Domesday Book.

A difficult concert for our Music Director Graham Willcocks, who, just a few days before, had lost his father, but one in which our choir once again excelled. Another new piece was introduced – ‘*The Way We Were*’ - Barbra Streisand’s 1974 chart-topping song from the film of the same name, in which she starred with Robert Redford. We also brought back ‘*Goin’ Home*’ and ‘*Softly as I Leave You*’.

Not for the first time, particular thanks go to Second Tenor Paul Pearce for his leads in ‘*Mevagissey Bay*’ and ‘*You Raise Me Up*’, and, on this occasion, his solo stint midway through the first half. ‘*For Your Eyes Only*’ and ‘*Mona Lisa*’ were excellent choices and loved by the audience.

Meva Cappella featured midway through the second half, with the 1953 song, ‘*I Really Don’t Want to Know*’, first recorded by Les Paul and Mary Ford in 1953, and covered by artists as diverse as Andy Williams, Elvis Presley, John Travolta and Jerry Lee Lewis. This was followed by ‘*Tonight*’, from the 1956 musical, ‘*West Side Story*’.

Our thanks go to St Enoder Church for their kind invitation, and the halftime refreshments, and to the nearby London Inn, hosts to a splendid afterglow.



Paul Pearce introduces his next solo piece

SUPPORTING THE RNLI IN NEWQUAY

A week after our Minack triumph, Choir members set out for the Parish Church of St Michael the Archangel, in Newquay. It was late in the afternoon of a cold, wet, miserable day, the kind on which Cornwall's abundance of wild flowers remain steadfastly closed. As we arrived, however, the skies cleared and the sun shone; too late to warm the day but, at least it was cheering. Which was as it should be because Second Tenor Chris Bale had worked tirelessly yet again to promote this concert in support of the RNLI.

On entering St Michael's, the first-time visitor is impressed by the light and colour that flood in and fill the interior. It was rebuilt following a fire in the 1990s and the high vaulted plaster ceiling makes a wonderful auditorium.

As always it was delightful to see so many of our faithful fans and particularly heartening to see so many young people. Their smiles do wonders for the confidence of the Choir – thank you all so much! It was with a certain nervousness that we looked for Matt Fox, our hugely talented and greatly valued accompanist. His wife, Carolyn, was expecting their first baby, so their happy event might leave us abruptly *a cappella* on the night. But with his laconic calm and smile, he explained that his baby was proper Cornish 'tacker' and would be arrive 'dreckly'.**

Meva Cappella demonstrated their mastery with 'In My Room' and the Beatles classic 'All My Lovin'. We were all delighted to have Maggie Holden and Rosemary Turner with us again, so well known are they to the Choir. Each gave us an enchanting solo before they thrilled us with their wonderful rendition of the 'Flower Duet' from Lakmé by Léo Delibes. While Rosemary was singing 'Summertime', the setting sun blazed and dazzled through the western windows; quite unforgettable!

** Joel Fox duly arrived on 26 May weighing in at 9 lb 6 and 3/4 oz .



We Rise Again!

HATS Raised – by a Grand!

Our third concert of the season took us just across the Devon border to Holsworthy, to perform in a sophisticated and delightful little theatre, capable of seating more than 10% of the two and a half thousand residents of the historic and prosperous market town.

Arranged by Bass Phil Walter, a resident of nearby Bude, the concert was conceived to raise funds for the Holsworthy Amateur Theatrical Society's theatre restoration fund and we were enthusiastically received by the theatre's staff, whose brilliant efforts to publicise the event ensured there was scarcely a seat unoccupied.

Our compère for the evening was James Morrish, a colleague of Phil's, who captivated audience and Choir alike with his carefully crafted 'country yokel' style. In a 'first' for us, James started 'interviewing' Choir members between sets. But he met his match when he asked new Top Tenor Steve Truscott about the Choir's infamous 'Voice Test'. With extraordinary presence of mind, Steve began to describe a dark satanic ritual reminiscent of some secret society, to the delight of the whole house, forcing James to bring his 'interview' to a speedy conclusion!



17-year-old George Cooper amuses the choir

Between our sets, Meva Capella showed yet again the depth of talent that the Choir possess, while local and gifted George Cooper, 17, who is currently studying A-levels, sang 'The Arc', 'Half A World Away' and 'All My Lovin'' to his own guitar accompaniment. Choir members were delighted to have such a confident young performer provide such a competent interlude while they recovered their breath.

The warmth of the reception given us by the people of Holsworthy, inspired the Choir to one of their best performances, and Annette Dennis to write, thanking us for a 'super evening, lovely, relaxed and friendly'. The event raised proceeds of

£1,093.52, which will help refurbish the HATS stage, and prompted several requests for a repeat visit.

Afterwards we retired to the Holsworthy Golf Club, who treated us to some very welcome 'nibbles', which, together with a beer or two and a few afterglow songs, brought a splendid evening to a comfortable, contented and long-to-be-remembered conclusion.

Darren Lyons, Triathlete, Tries Singing – and Loves It



Darren, Caroline & Anna enjoying a Cornish summer

“There’s not much else you can find to do with other men except drink in the pub, play rugby or watch football.” Yep, reckon Darren Lyons has got that about right!

Darren enjoys them all – “but there’s something unique about singing with 40 other men”, he adds. Which is good news for us, because, Darren recently passed his voice test and is already pulling his vocal weight in the Second Tenors.

Mind you, despite what he says, he seems to live a pretty active life. He’s been oil painting since he was 14 and, until he moved to Cornwall, he was heavily involved with swimming and Triathlon clubs, competing with Liverpool and Coventry Masters and helping set up the Nuneaton Triathlon club. “I just love the open water – I’ve already swum with Charlestown open water swimmers and competed in some local events.”

Yet it’s barely a year since Darren and wife Caroline arrived in Mevagissey. No sooner had they moved in than “a fellow with turquoise shorts and sequined flip flops came and wired in our cooker. He introduced himself as Paul and suggested I come along on Monday night and take a look”. It took him three months to show up – but no time at all to win his spurs.

While insisting that he has never sung before (unless you count the commercial kitchen where he once worked, with the radio on full blast, or at Church), he does own up to loving music - "and I can play a bit of guitar and sax".

Darren's family are from Bournville, Birmingham, but he has lived "all over the place - Bristol, Cheshire, Berkshire, Liverpool and, most recently, Nuneaton". Caroline's are from Great Bridge, Tipton, and Mildenau in Germany. They married in 1989 and honeymooned in Bude. "We love Cornwall and for the last eight years have been staying near Mevagissey twice a year. We are really pleased to be here."

Having worked with the YMCA in the past, managing housing, sports/youth centres and developing projects for homeless people, Darren has just started a job with the NHS in Truro. Caroline is a nurse at a nursing home in St Austell. Their daughter, Anna, now 22, has also been training to be a nurse.

Darren's voice test piece was "Only You" – "which I learnt it the quickest. But I love the lyrics to "The Rose" and "Morte Christe", the rhythm of "We shall Overcome", the theme of the "Pearl Fishers" and mood of "Away from the Roll of the Sea" - and all the shanties sung in the pub!

"As a total novice when it comes to choral music and choirs - I am deeply impressed with our musical director and all the committee members and men who take on weekly duties, such as organising the coach, supplying the uniform and all the others who make it such an effective organisation and a joy to experience. I would also like to thank fellow Seconds Graham, Roger and Paul for their help and encouragement, which I have appreciated more than they know, and who have given me a warm welcome."

BLESSING THE FLEET WITH THE FISHERMEN'S MISSION

On Saturday 4th June, and for the second year running, we had a good turnout for the Fishermen's Mission and their 'Blessing of the Fleet' on Mevagissey Harbour. With Graham Willcocks unavailable, we were led by Matt Fox in 'Calm is the Sea'; *Haven of Rest*; 'Mermaid' and 'Lower Lights', and the entire congregation sang everyone's favourite hymn of the sea, 'Eternal Father, Strong to Save'. The Mission's Sandra Porter wrote with 'another HUGE thank you to choir who made such a vital contribution to another successful service. I very much hope the choir will be willing to sing for us again next year – the service would be so much less successful and enjoyable without you.'



Discussing the order of play

THANK YOU

Once again, we'd like to thank a number of our followers for their kind donations. Over the past three months we've received generous contributions from:

John & Eileen Bye, Yvonne Thomas, Kathryn and Pietro Abate and Eric & Susan Barnes, from Durham.

Your donations are vital to the continuing success of our Choir and our ability to go on purchasing new music to sing and travelling to new places. Please keep them coming!

Thanks also go to various contributors: Reports, Mike Thompson; Photos, Ray & Carolyn George, Amy Griffin, Ryan Tate; Production, Jane Stubberfield, Graham Hoskins

CYPRUS

By the time you receive our next newsletter, we will have returned from Cyprus, where we are performing two concerts, at the ancient amphitheatres at Pissouri and Curium. These are scheduled for Wednesday, 19th October and Saturday, 22nd October respectively. At Curium we will be joining the Akrotiri and Episkopi Military Wives Choirs. For more information on the Cyprus schedule and on all the concerts below please visit our website – www.mevagisseychoir.co.uk

2016 CONCERT DIARY

Date	Comment	Venue	Time
Mon 15, 22, 29 Aug	Quay Concerts	Mevagissey Quay	7.45
Sat 10 Sept	Joint Concert with Plymouth Military Wives	Hall for Cornwall	7.30
Sun 9 Oct	Harvest of the Sea	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	tbc
Sun 19 Oct	Cyprus tour	Pissouri Amphitheatre, Limassol	tbc
Sat 22 Oct	Jt with Akrotiri and Epikopi MWCs	Curium Amphitheatre	tbc
Sat 29 Oct	For Roseland Music Society	Portscatho Village Hall	7.30
Sat 5 Nov		St Paul's Church, Charlestown	7.30
Sat 12 Nov	For Cornish Hospice Care	Seahorse Centre, Pentewan	tbc
Fri 9 Dec	Jt Christmas Concert with Meva Ladies	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	7.30