



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



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

Tickets for our Truro Cathedral performance on Sunday 29 July now are available from Hall for Cornwall Box Office - <https://www.hallforcornwall.co.uk>

No: 35



Preparing for our 2016 concert – what a view!

BOOK EARLY FOR THE MINACK!

Book your seats now for our spring concert at the spectacular Minack Theatre on Saturday 12th May. It will be our fourth visit to this fabulous arena, hewn out of the cliff face above Porthcurno's golden beach in the early 1930s, and offering dramatic views of the west Cornwall coastline.

Once again we will be joined by the Culdrose Military Wives Choir, the only Cornish member of the 70-strong worldwide military wives choir movement inspired by Gareth Malone back in 2012. It was the Culdrose ladies who sang with us in 2016 and, two years earlier, we had

hosted the Plymouth MWC.

The Minack event is just one of a host of performances we will be giving this season, which will see us performing at Truro Cathedral at the end of July, and at various venues in the south west, including Yealmpton, Padstow, Lostwithiel, and Tavistock – not forgetting our free summer concerts on the Mevagissey quayside.

Log on to our website – www.mevachoir.co.uk – and click on the Events tab for updates.

Connie and the Mevagissey School Choir Steal the Christmas Show



Chairman Nick presents Connie with her bursary

“A spectacular night of music in our village,” proclaimed Rebekah Bailey, Assistant Headteacher at Mevagissey Community Primary School. She was referring to our Christmas concert at St Andrew’s.

For the second year running, we were delighted to welcome the Mevagissey Performing Arts Choir – that’s the

choir put together by Rebekah and the school (they also joined us at Feast Week last year), while once again we were also honoured with the presence of the Mevagissey Ladies Choir, who have been part of the event since 2012.

“We were thrilled to be invited to sing alongside the ‘Big Boys and Big Girls’”, said Rebekah.

“Christmas time certainly brings a magical feel to music and, listening to the voices of our community across the ages, from our youngest singers to our more mature, was a special moment.”



Bill Collins, Bass singer and former chairman, compered the evening, which began with a rousing rendition of 'While Shepherds Watched', sung to the Lyngham arrangement by the entire congregation. Our own first set of five included a first outing for 'Winter Wonderland' and concluded with our popular interpretation of 'White Christmas'. We were well aware, though, that we were merely the warm-up act for what was to come next.

It was the children! A dozen under-11s skipped on to the stage, and proceeded to enchant the audience with the joyful 'Christmas Calypso' followed by the jazzy 'Midnight'. Finally, up stepped their soloist, young Connie Voyce, with a stunning performance of 'O! Holy Night' that had everybody spellbound. It was her first performance in public and she sang beautifully – and nervelessly**.



Rebekah with the Mevagissey Performing Arts Choir

Thankfully, it was the ladies who had to follow the children. And they were certainly up to the task, with five pieces, including the popular 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. After a brief interval the ladies returned, with five more offerings, including the traditional 'Holly and the Ivy' and the French 'Sing We Now of Christmas'.

Then it was our turn again, beginning with the gentle 'What Shall We Sing for the Child's' and ending with our MD Graham Willcocks, no less, performing the solo in 'Mary's Boy Child'. The congregation then rose to join in with 'O! Come All Ye Faithful' and the evening ended with a joint performance of 'Lo! He Comes an Infant Stranger' by the two adult choirs.

Final word to Rebekah. "There is such talent in the adult choirs and all singers are the perfect musical role models for our children. The children certainly saw the love of singing in the faces of the big people, which we hope will encourage them to be lifelong musicians and singers themselves, and one day join the adult choirs."

Rebekah also thanked MMC Deputy Chairman and Baritone Stephen Gibson for liaising on behalf of MMC. "Here's to next time!" she said, a sentiment that we all echoed.

**** Our choir has voted to award a regular bursary to a deserving music student and, after consultation with Rebekah, Connie Voyce has become the first recipient. We wish her every success.**

CHAMPAGNE ADD FIZZ TO HOLY TRINITY CONCERT



Trophy winning Champagne Chorus joined us at Holy Trinity

For the second year running, we engaged St Austell's Holy Trinity Church for a Christmas concert in aid of St Petroc's, the charity for the homeless. This time – Friday 15th November – we invited Champagne Cornwall Chorus, the popular local ladies four-part *a cappella* group, to join us.

For the second year running, too, sadly, it did not draw the audience that we had been hoping for. It is such a busy time, of course, when there are so many other things going on, and, it has to be said, St Austell town centre is not the most attractive of venues on dark winter evenings.

Such a pity, as it was a wonderful concert. We opened with five pieces, beginning with 'Do You Hear What I Hear?' and closing with 'White Christmas'. After everyone had had an opportunity to fill their lungs for 'While Shepherds Watched', sung to Lyngham, the ladies appeared, for a series of six, mixing 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight?' and 'Mistletoe and Wine' with more traditional Christmas songs.

The 34-strong Champagne Cornwall Chorus have been singing since 1985 – just eleven years after our own choir was formed – and have raised many thousands of pounds for national and local charities. Last year they won the Ladies Barbershop Cup at the Wadebridge Music Festival and the Ladies Choir Shield at the Truro Music Festival.

After the break - during the course of which former Top Tenor, Alan Dibb, raised extra funds with his £1 'heads or tails' game - they returned dressed in festive fashion with seven more numbers, including a joyful rendering of 'It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year' and culminating with the lively 'Jingle Bell Rock'. The audience were then invited to join in again with 'The St Day Carol' before we performed our final set of five, ending with 'Mary's Boy Child'. We then invited the audience to bring the evening to a close with 'O! Come All Ye Faithful'.

Despite the disappointing turnout, the evening still raised just over £200 for St Petroc's, whose Treasurer Linda Pye wrote to say: "Thank you. We all enjoyed it so much – a good start to Christmas. Looking forward to next year."

Christmas is for Children – of all Ages

Our Christmas programme also included our annual appearances at St Johns in St Austell and at Penrice House, the retirement home in Porthpean, events that give us the opportunity to perform in front of the young and the not so young respectively.

The St Johns Singalong, hosted by one-time MMC Musical Director Geoff Wheildon, is an informal affair, with Choir members asked simply to turn up and help swell the sound. Given that the church is half full (at least) of excited schoolchildren, it hardly seems necessary, but those who go wouldn't miss it for the world. It's a joyous way to start the Christmas season, with a packed church, and the by the St Austell Band. And it has the bonus of raising funds for a poorly young member of the community. The fun had by the kids when singing 'When Santa Got Stuck up the Chimney' and 'Twelve Days of Christmas' is truly infectious.

It's fair to say that Penrice provides a rather less raucous ambience. But it's no less enjoyable for that. It's just as rewarding to see the pleasure on the residents' (and the staff's) faces as we perform our most recent festive piece and as they join us in two or three of the more popular carols. Once again, our thanks go to Porthpean House for the wonderful buffet provided. Suitably fed, a majority of members retired to the nearby Polgooth Inn, to quench their thirst – yes, and sing a few more carols for the punters there.

DON ARTHUR



Choir members were saddened to hear of the passing of Don Arthur, one of the founder members and a popular figure in the Bass section for many years. Our thoughts are with his daughters, Kim and Zoe, and brother John. Don was remembered at St Andrew's on Saturday 17th February, with many choir members in attendance.

Alasdair's Concert – Everyone Wins



Ali comes home!

Readers will recall that the previous newsletter appeared shortly before the special 2nd December concert that we put on to raise funds to help the family of Graham Hoskins, our Treasurer, Second Tenor and guitarist, whose 10-year-old grandson, Alasdair, who lives in Hawaii, had been diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour.

The first thing to report is that Alasdair's operation in Oakland, California, was successful. Graham tells us that the surgeons removed 90% of the tumour and he has since completed a 6-week daily radiotherapy course in Oahu, Hawaii. The doctors are happy with his progress, although he may still have to undergo new, ground-breaking immunotherapy back in Oakland. "He has retained all his faculties and has undergone every stage of his treatment with incredible resolve, bravery and humour," says Graham. "He is delighted to be back at school, for mornings only, with his own, exclusive rest-room should he get tired.

Our concert, at St Andrew's, Tywardreath – Alasdair lived in Tywardreath when he was younger – together

with other donations from choir members raised £1,190 towards the formidable travel and medical expenses faced by the family.

And we all had a great time! Given the proximity to Christmas, we punctuated our normal secular programme with a Christmas segment. But, more importantly, and more poignantly, we were treated to three pieces by the 37-strong Tywardreath Primary School Choir, which included many of Alasdair's former school chums. And the songs, chosen by their Musical Director, Matt Douglas, could not have been more appropriate. 'You've Got a Friend in Me' from Toy Story was followed by 'The Sheep Song', a wonderfully funny song about the Bethlehem shepherds, which had everyone laughing and finally, 'Mele Kalikimaka', a Hawaiian carol sung by Bing Crosby in the '50s. It means 'Merry Christmas' - in Hawaiian, of course - and the kids performed it with whistles and traditional hand-waving, too.

What's more, thanks to the wonders of current day technology, it was possible to share the performance with young Alasdair as he lay in his bed in Hawaii. Indeed, we learned that he was in regular touch with his former schoolfriends via Facetime.

Second Tenor Paul Pearce entertained us with his solo versions of 'Empty Chairs, Empty Tables' from Les

Miserables and 'Younger than Springtime', from South Pacific. And, for an encore, we gave 'Tears in Heaven', the Eric Clapton song arranged for us by Nick Hart, its debut. It's fair to say that it was very well received.

Former Top Tenor and friend of the family, Alan Dibb, got the congregation to play his 'heads or tails' game to boost the coffers still further. The prize was a bottle of Scotch. How appropriate that it was won by Alasdair's great grandfather – who promptly gave it back to be auctioned!

Finally, Graham reports that "a further staggering £1,136 was raised by Gerald Goode over Christmas from the very generous people of Mevagissey. We wish to thank everyone who contributed from the bottom of our hearts and look forward to hearing that Alasdair's treatment has been 100% successful. Perhaps one day he will be able to come to Cornwall and we will be able to bring him along to meet, and thank, you all."

TOP TENOR JIM HUNKIN STEPS DOWN



It was with sadness that we heard last month that Jim Hunkin, one of the founder members of our Choir had been forced to retire for health reasons. Jim has been a true stalwart of the Choir, holder of our Black Badge for his 40-plus years of service in more ways than there is space to mention, and he will leave a big gap in our Top Tenor contingent. We wish him well and look forward to seeing him at our future events, when he'll be able to sit back and enjoy the music that he's helped create.

Photo of Choir founder members taken in 2011 by Paul Williams. Jim is first left, front row!

New Look meva-choir.co.uk Website

Have you checked out our website recently? Since November, it's undergone a major revamp which, we hope, has improved its look and made it far easier to navigate – not to say manage! It's still called www.meva-choir.co.uk of course. Our thanks go to Jane Stubberfield, who has given her time and expertise over winter weeks, without charge. Please take a look and let us know what you think. All ideas and suggestions are welcome and should be sent to publicity@meva-choir.co.uk.

Tesco Shoppers Top Up Choir Funds

If you spotted two or three Choir members lurking suspiciously around Tesco's foyer in Holmbush on Friday 15th December, we hope you didn't panic. They were only after your money, they weren't going to sing at you. It was the latest of Fundraiser Extraordinaire Peter Bowker's wheezes to bolster our bank balance.

While negotiating with the store for a place to pin our posters, Peter discovered that we could apply for a four-hour 'collection session', during which we could hand out literature, shake a bucket and play our CDs. We couldn't 'sell' the CDs on the spot – but we could point punters in the direction of a man in the car park who could.

What a brainwave! The stunt raised over £600, including CD sales. Our thanks go to Peter and the brave souls who gave up their Saturday morning to raise urgently needed funds for new music.

Of course, we can't rely on mugging Tesco shoppers once a year for all our music needs. It's really vital that we continue to receive donations from our followers and friends, those who already know and like our music, our CDs etc – and, indeed, this newsletter. Without them, we will struggle to find the quality arrangements that enable Mevagissey Male Choir to stand out from the rest. *Please help us* by sending your donations, either by cheque made out to Mevagissey Male Choir to Mike Tate, Hillside House, Biscovey Road, Par. PL24 2H, or by BACS to account no. 70717940, sort code 20-74-20 – remembering to identify yourself!

DINNER, DANCING – BUT STRICTLY NO SINGING!

The early weeks of the year tend to be a quiet time in terms of demands on the Choir, so it's a good time for making our own fun. That's just what we did on 13th January, when we got together with some of our followers for our annual dinner & dance. For the second year running, we had booked the Carlyon Bay Golf Club and, once again, they did us proud. Excellent food, at sensible prices, and served with both professionalism and a smile.

We had a scare when our regular band, the popular two-piece Double Brandy phoned to say they were stuck in Spain on the morning of the event. They delegated their musician son to fill in for them, and he made a good fist of it, even it wasn't *quite* the same. It was a great evening and the same venue is booked for next year: 19th January, make a note now.

Mike Miller Flies In

Former Choir member Mike Miller, who emigrated to Australia several years ago, has written to say that he will be in Mevagissey in April, and popping along on a Monday evening. We look forward to seeing him again.

Meva Choir – Les's Latest 'Madcap Endurance Test'!



One of the reasons that our new Bass, Les Hereward, gives for moving to Cornwall is that his wife, Helen, spent her teens in Fowey where she was taught Chemistry by a 'dashing young Science teacher'. His name? Mr Nicholls, apparently. (Perhaps that's why she turned to a career in music!)

Much more acceptable, surely, is the reason they chose Mevagissey. 'Because of the outstanding choirs, of course', he answers. (That's the right answer, Les.) Choirs plural because Helen has already become a valued member of the Ladies Choir. 'Helen and I both have an interest in music', he explains. 'She is the competent one and had some training, going to Dartington for a year.'

Les was born in Edinburgh but grew up in West Dorset, where he sang in his church choir. Most of his working life was spent in and around London, initially as a primary school teacher and later as a lecturer in Education. In fact, he still does some work for the Open University. Les and Helen had no intention of staying in the London area 'once the work had started to tail off' and swiftly uprooted and headed for Cornwall (Les also has family here, incidentally).

Other than his childhood experiences as a boy treble, Les has had little experience of male voice singing, although he was a member of Leatherhead Choral Society for a few years. 'The Musical Director is also MD for Epsom MVC, who come to the International Festival, so Cornish Male Choirs were already on my horizon', he says. 'I found the Mevagissey choir via the website and it seemed to offer an extension of my previous singing. But I also see it as a challenge.'

Les spares no blushes in listing his three main reasons for joining.

- 1) The quality of the welcome; the choir is friendly and supportive.
- 2) The quality of the sound: the St. Germans concert intimidated me, it was so good.
- 3) The quality of the musical direction, the clarity of the conductor and his ability to identify where we go wrong without rancour, supported by lovely accompaniment. This is all reflected in the varied repertoire.

Les and Helen share a love of both gardening and walking. The photo was apparently taken just before a 100km walk. "I enjoy madcap endurance events", he says by way of explanation, and certainly the warm up looks weird enough. And his endurance skills should come in handy for our new '60s medley, let alone the rest of the repertoire. "I'm looking forward to the time when I can remember most of it," he comments, a little wistfully. His choir voice test piece was Tears in Heaven – one of our new ones – 'and that was a stretch outside my normal repertoire'.

SECOND TENOR NEEDED? CUE PAUL HORSMAN

After 22 years spent following the likes of Steve Davis and Ronnie O'Sullivan around the world, Paul Horsman needed a break (geddit?). He and wife Caroline found sanctuary in Mevagissey, where they bought a cottage in 2009, initially for weekends but, for the last four years, as residents. "Living the dream", he calls it.

But it wasn't an easy decision. "I loved my work", he says, "and the people I worked with. It took all of Mevagissey's pulling power to make me leave London." So, what was this work again? For those 22 years, he was a tournament fitter for EJ Riley, whose snooker tables are used all over the world. Wherever there was a major championship, Paul was required, to ensure that the tables were level and the green baize was smooth for the star players.

However, "as snooker fell in popularity, so did my income", says Paul, who next turned his hand to property maintenance in London, as a supervisor carpenter, joiner. Once again, he was rubbing shoulders with celebrity. His impressive client list included The Duke of Westminster and Simon Cowell. And now he's mixing with the Mevagissey Male Choir. So, a life hobnobbing with the stars!

Paul was born just up the road from the Twickenham rugby ground, and went to school in Ealing, west London. His mother was an active church goer and, from the age of ten, he sang soprano in St Mary's Church choir in Hayes, Middlesex. "I loved singing the psalms and being paid 50p per wedding. In the early '70s, 50p would buy 20 No.6 and a box of matches, with change!"

He married Caroline at the age of 23 and they moved to Windlesham in Surrey, where they lived for 30 years, bringing up two children, Kirsty, a self-employed structural engineer, and Toby, a self-employed landscape gardener in Bookham, Surrey. Incidentally, Kirsty is carrying on the family globe-trotting tradition, by movin to the Falklands in



Paul, Caroline and Hugo

November to marry a sheep farmer!

Paul played flanker for Effingham RFU and raced for Farnborough and Camberley Cycling Clubs in the '80s, moving to mountain bikes in the '90s. He also loves his motor bikes and owns a Motor Guzzi Grisso.

In 2005, he joined The Epworth Choir in Woking as a Baritone – “I had forgotten the joy of listening to and being a part of a choir” - which regularly performed concerts in Guildford Cathedral and other large Surrey venues. He first became aware of our choir in 2009, seeing one of our concerts mentioned on the board outside at St Andrews. “Loving the sound, I bought all the available CDs, although they’re all unplayable now due to wear and tear.”



It's a long way from The Crucible

It wasn't until he finally gave up work two years ago – he was continuing to work in London four days a week, a 260-mile trip every Thursday and Sunday evening – that he could consider joining us. “It was (Top Tenor) Dominic McVeigh who finally introduced me to the choir.”

How did he feel on passing his voice test? “Delighted and honoured to at last be a part of the Choir, and especially looking forward to wearing the Blazer

at the Minack in May.

Meantime, you'll see Paul, kayaking, walking the coast path, or “tinkering with my tools” around the village. “There's always that job that needs doing, with a song on my lips”.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Comment	Venue	Time
Sat 14 Apr	Entertainment night	Jubilee Hall	7.30pm
Sat 12 May	With Culdrose MWC	Minack Theatre	7.30pm
Sat 2 Jun	For RNLI	Padstow	Tbc
Sat 9 Jun	For Cornish Hospices	Lostwithiel Church	7.30pm
Mon 25 Jun	Feast Week	St Andrew's	7.30pm
Sat 7 Jul	Jt with Imerys Choir	Carclaze Chapel	7.30pm
Sat 21 Jul		Yealmpton Methodist	7.30pm
Sat 29 Jul		Truro Cathedral	7.30pm
Mon 30 Jul	Quay Concert	Mevagissey Harbour	7.45pm
Mon 6,13,20,27 Aug	Quay concerts	Mevagissey Harbour	7.45pm
Sat ** Sep	For brewery charity	St Austell Brewery	Tbc
Sat ** Oct	With Tamar Valley MVC	Tavistock	Tbc
Sun ** Oct	Harvest of the Sea	St Andrew's	Tbc
Fri 8 Dec	Christmas concert	St Andrew's	7.30pm
Mon 10 Dec	Private	Penrice Hse, Porthpean	7.30pm
Tue 11 Dec	Christmas singalong – informal	St John's	7.30pm
Sat 19 Jan	Dinner/Dance	Carlyon Bay Golf Club	

** Dates to be confirmed. Check our website for updates.



STOP PRESS!

Meva in snow thanks to Mike S Thompson (for the photo, not the snow!)