

# MEVAGISSEY MALE CHOIR

WINTER 2013/14

NO. 19



*The Military Wives, Who Will Join Us at Eden*

Our next concert is on Saturday 15th March, when we will be singing with Torpoint Ladies at St James Church, Torpoint. The concert starts at 7.30 pm. For tickets, please see our website – [www.mevagisseychoir.co.uk](http://www.mevagisseychoir.co.uk)

Meanwhile, don't forget to reserve your Gala concert tickets (see below).

## GALA CONCERT TICKETS GO ON SALE

A Happy New Year to All Our Readers!

And what a great year it promises to be! We're delighted to report that tickets for our grand 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Concert, designed and printed by St Austell Brewery, to whom we are deeply indebted, will shortly be available and will be go on general sale next month.

To confirm, the concert will take place in the Eden Project's glass-walled Gallery Room, which overlooks the world-renowned Biomes, on 30th May 2014. It will feature, apart from the Choir itself, of course, the

Plymouth Military Wives, with whom we performed in Ashburton last year, Alison Harvey, who sings 'Whispering Hope' so beautifully on our latest 'Mevagissey Bay' CD, and a special surprise guest. And we will be accompanied by Cornish Sinfonia, Cornwall's own orchestra. As if that wasn't enough, our old friend, Nick Hart, has agreed to be our compere for the evening.

The Military Wives' Choir, pictured above, was formed in Plymouth in 2011, as a source of comfort to military

wives while their husbands and partners were on tours of duty. The choir became an instant TV success and within months had notched up a No.1 hit – *'Wherever You Are'*.

A programme of music reflecting the best of our Choir's 40 years, has already been put together by Musical Director Graham Willcocks and the Choir's music committee – it will include the first song ever sung by the Choir, and the latest, which has yet to be performed in public. If you want to know what they are, book your tickets now!

Tickets will be available at £25 each, either online via the Choir website, or to personal callers at a number outlets such as Mevagissey Post Office, Alias Smith in St Austell and the St Austell Tourist Information Office on Southbourne Road. A capacity audience of around 475 is expected for the evening, but remember, Friends of the Choir, like Choir members, have first option. Please contact myself or any Choir member to reserve your seats in advance.

## Pennee Drops a CD Reminder

One of our newer Friends is Pennee Paige, from Nailsea, who joined while holidaying in Mevagissey in May last year. Pennee brought her husband and friends along to a practice night – and to the Fountain afterwards.

The Choir holds special memories for her family. Her father, Peter Gutsell, was Head at Charlestown School – a position currently held by our own Baritone, Stephen Gibson - from 1965 to 1969. "Mum and Dad always loved Cornwall and came with us to hear you at St Mary Redcliffe a few years back", she says. Sadly, however, Peter passed away in December 2012, aged 84.

Pennee tells us that, at her Dad's funeral, they played the Choir's recording of *'Softly As I Leave You'*. Boy, did that set a number of hares running! I and newer members of the Choir had no record (excuse the pun) of this song, others had only vague recollections. When I queried it with her, Pennee informed me that she still had a copy of our CD entitled *'Singing the Songs'* – and offered to send it! However, it slowly emerged that one or two of our older members still had copies tucked away in their cupboards

So we have actually produced six CDs, not five, as we said in all the publicity around 'Mevagissey Bay'. That is, unless anyone's aware of any others.....?

We look forward to seeing Pennee, and thanking her for her timely reminder, when she's back in Mevagissey later this year. Meanwhile, perhaps we should revive *'Softly As I Leave You'* – I have yet to hear the Choir singing it!

## CHOIR MEMBERS THRILLED TO SING AT RAH



*(Almost) Ready for Royal Albert Hall Action*

“This was the first time I've heard a Federation massed choir sing at the Royal Albert Hall and it was a fantastic, wonderful and emotional experience. The music was so beautiful and your singing was perfection. Thank you so much! “

That was the reaction of Linda Jones, Secretary of the Cornish Federation of Male Voice Choirs, to *Kernowyon A Gan* (Men of Cornwall Sing), which took place at the Royal Albert Hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> November in celebration of the Federation's 30<sup>th</sup>

anniversary.

Over 600 singers, including 15 from Mevagissey, and representing 27 Cornish male choirs in total, took part in a sell-out performance that resembled that of *'The Last Night of the Proms'*, with Cornish flags instead of Union Jacks, and an enthusiastic and appreciative audience.

The programme, which raised funds for the RNLI, Cornwall Cancer Care and a BBC Radio Cornwall Appeal, also featured *The Cornwall Youth Orchestra*, *Dalla*, a traditional Cornish music group, and *Cornwall Cambiata*, a choir for boys with changing voices, led by Angela Renshaw, our former deputy MD.

The massed choirs sang 18 songs, including *'Speed Your Journey'*, which was accompanied by the Orchestra – a memorable experience for all. Everyone from the Mevagissey Male Choir who attended, singers and followers alike, had a wonderful time, and a vote of thanks was given to Michael Collings, for his organisation of the entire weekend, which included coach travel and hotel accommodation, and to David Leeson for handling the financials.

Choir vice chairman and Top Tenor Nick Nicholls called it “a great experience, especially singing with the Cornwall Youth Orchestra and hearing the Cornwall Cambiata Choir”.

CDs are available at £12.50 each.

## Graham Rundle Appointed New Chairman



*Graham Flanked by Michael Collings and David Leeson*

We have a new Chairman! At our AGM in December, Graham Rundle was elected to succeed Stephen Gibson, who had indicated when accepting the position a year ago that he was not looking for a long term appointment. Stephen was thanked by the Choir for his contribution and Graham promptly took centre stage at the meeting, presiding over the re-election of both Michael Collings as Secretary and David Leeson as Treasurer, between whom he is pictured here.

Only one other change to the Committee was made, the appointment of Mike Tate as Publicity Officer. The meeting was otherwise uneventful, the main points of discussion being the forthcoming Gala Concert and the need to focus on adding

further innovative and challenging pieces to the repertoire.

For those who don't know Graham he has been a member of the choir for almost twelve years, and has already served on the Committee as Publicity Officer. During the past year, he acted as our Recruitment Officer.

Immensely proud of his Cornish heritage - his favourite piece is 'Lower Lights', "so evocative of Cornish heritage"

- Graham traces his roots back to 1800, when his family were

living around St Blazey and working in the nearby Lanescot copper mine. Although he was born in Falmouth, he spent his own childhood in the St Blazey area, where the Rundles had run the village Post Office since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

After leaving school, he trained as a fitter at the Apprenticeship college at Chepstow, before spending 25 years in the Corps of Royal Engineers, serving in Northern Ireland during 'The Troubles', Cyprus, the Falklands, Guyana and West Germany. (He's pictured on his return from a nostalgic trip to Hameln – we know it as Hamlyn, of Pied Piper fame, - in Germany.)

Graham left the Army in 1988, having attained the rank of Warrant Officer, and returned home with his wife, Sylvia - they had married at Illogan, Redruth, in 1972 - and their two sons, Paul and Andrew. His father had fallen ill and Graham

took over the running of the family business. By the time he retired last year it had become a thriving Post Office and convenience store.

Graham says he has loved singing ever since his choirboy days at Tywardreath's Well Street Methodist Chapel. Later, when in the Army but home for Christmas, he would go to the Cornish Arms in St. Blazey, "where in age old tradition we would all stand around in a circle, pint in hand, and sing Thomas Merritt carols", he remembers. Whenever overseas, however "all the Cornish lads would get together at Christmas to sing 'Lyngham' in the German pubs, which always went down well".

His passion for Mevagissey Male Choir was evident from the effort he put into his recruitment drive last year. "We have a great Choir", he says, "and one of the best musical teams in the business. But there is no room for complacency", he adds. "We must build

on the music content, and put some fun into the songs we learn to attract newer, younger members. If we don't we will surely go the way of some other choirs, and simply fade away."

Graham says he "looks forward to helping the Choir progress to greater heights, with the emphasis on recruitment. I believe we can look forward to a fantastic year, especially with our 40th Anniversary coming up in May. I can hardly wait!"



*Enjoying a Belegtes Brot in Hamlyn*

## Chris Bale Receives Black Badge at Annual Dinner



*Bill Moore and Lynn Porter at Bosun's Diner*

year running. Entertainment was once again provided by the duo *Double Brandy*, who had almost everyone on the dance floor at one point.

The evening was particularly special for Second Tenor Chris Bale, who was awarded his Black Badge for long term service to the Choir. Chris has been singing with us for 18 years now, which is really impressive when you remember that he travels from Bude every Monday for practice! Chris has worked tirelessly in support of the Choir – last year alone he was responsible for our invitation to replace the Fisherman's Friends at Penstowe Park

and for organising our concert with the Military Wives at Ashburton – which has led to their acceptance of our invitation to join us at the Minack Theatre and the Eden Project this year.

Among other events that Chris has helped put on are RNLI concerts at St Michael's Church, Bude (175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary) and at Holsworthy, the joint concert with Fortuity in 2012 for Candy Baker's 80th birthday, in aid of Stratton Hospital Fund, and the Bideford concert in aid of the Primrose Appeal, where Rosemary Turner sang the beautiful Easter Hymn. Chris was also instrumental in taking the Choir to the Royal Albert Hall with the Federation. "I am most proud that the concerts have been sell outs and brought male voice singing to so many people", he says. Well done, Chris!

Our Annual Dinner & Dance was once again a huge success, thanks to the efforts of Social Secretary Simon Lawday and Geraldine Way. More than 70 Choir members, partners and friends pitched up at the Bosun's Diner on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January, to eat, drink and generally let their hair down. It was especially pleasing to welcome special guests Billy Moore and Lynn Porter, proprietors of Mevagissey's Fountain Inn, and huge supporters of the Choir, not least by feeding us after Monday night practice. As always, the food and service were excellent, particularly given the numbers catered for, justifying returning to the same venue for the sixth (I think!)



*Chris Proudly Grasps His Black Badge*



*A Full House at the Bosun's Diner*

## *Jo Bowls Us Over*

On her first appearance at a Choir gathering, Jo Scarratt, wife of new baritone Tony – more on whom later - made an instant impression. She turned out to be an expert ten-pin bowler, racking up five strikes in a row at one point and generally cleaning up at the St Austell Bowl!

Bowlers who put two balls in the 'gutter' were obliged to wear a jester's hat, while anyone achieving a strike got to wear a 'best bowler' hat, as worn here by Angela Hoskins and Anna Flavell (purely for demonstration purposes, of course!).

The bowling evening, which took place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November, turned out to be a fun evening for all, and our thanks go to Simon Lawday for organising the event.



## DOMINIC DEBUTS AT BETHEL

Our final non-Christmas concert of the year took place at Bethel Chapel on Saturday 23 November, in aid of The Hospice and The Cardiac Unit, Treliske.

The programme followed the traditional format, with two sets of four songs in each half. The first two were either side of two songs by soloist Paul Pearce, while, at the midway point in the second half, we heard songs by, first, the Choir's Octet, and, second, the *Meva Cappella* quartet.

It was a rare appearance for the Octet, who sang beautifully, while the *Meva Capella* performance saw the debut of Top Tenor Dominic McVeigh, who proved an instant success! Dominic was substituting

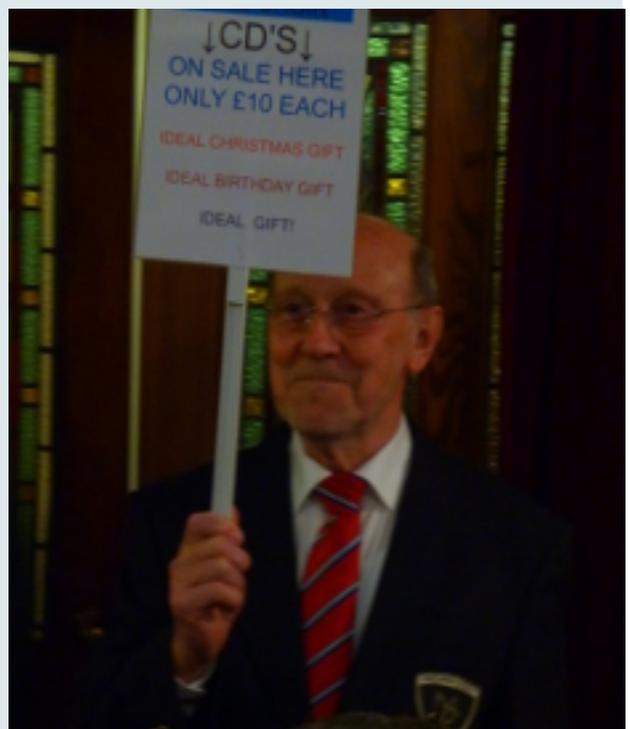


for John Mitchell, who has been a stalwart of the main Choir and *Meva Cappella*, but who has decided to lighten his load. John has kindly offered to help Dominic and in future they will share *Meva Cappella* duties.



The Bethel concert was also notable for a maiden appearance as Master of Ceremonies by Bass Peter Bowker, who nobly volunteered when our usual comperes were unavailable.

We also found a job for Bass George Phillips – but would you buy a CD from this man?



## First Harvest Supper Proves a Winner



The annual 'Harvest of the Sea' service at our 'home' church, St Andrew's in Mevagissey, was, for the first time, followed by a Harvest Supper at the Jubilee Hall next door. The event, held in the afternoon of 19 October, was hailed by all to have been a huge success.

Churchgoers, Choir members and friends were invited back for sandwiches, savouries and cakes, along with teas and coffee, all provided by the ladies of the Choir.

For those wanting something a little stronger, Billy Moore from 'The Fountain' had provided a barrel of beer and some wine.

It proved a wonderful opportunity for members, partners and supporters to meet, chat and relax.

Earlier, more than 30 Choir members had turned up for the service, singing two sets of three songs each: first, *Ride the Chariot*; *Calm is the Sea* and *Lower Lights*; followed by *Mevagissey Bay*; *Deep River* and *Cornish Hearts*.

We subsequently received a letter from St Andrew's thanking the Choir for its part in the Harvest of the Sea, which had raised £200, and for our hospitality in the Jubilee Hall.

## John Lewis Celebrates

Founder member, John Lewis, who is still active with the Choir celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in November. Congratulations John!

## *Tony Scarratt – Our First Poster Boy!*

Ever eaten a Steak and Seaweed Pie? If so, chances are it was made to a recipe developed by our new Baritone, Tony Scarratt. Tony helped create the delicacy(?) which caught the eye of Rick Stein, who featured it on his 'Taste of the West' TV programme.

Tony qualified as a Master Butcher at London's Smithfield College in the '60s, and, for many years ran a traditional butcher's shop in Ilfracombe with his wife Jo. "We made all our own sausages, bacon and pies," he says. The steak and seaweed pie was concocted for a national competition.

The seaweed should have been no surprise, as the sea was in Tony's blood. He had 'run away' from his Goring on Thames home to join the Royal Navy at the age of 16, and spent eight years on the wave, until the blood got the better of the sea , – if you see what I mean!

In 1974 Tony arrived in St Austell as area manager for a food company, and met and married local girl Jo. Five years later they bought the Ilfracombe shop, which they ran successfully while bringing up two sons, Stephen and Paul, both of whom have followed Dad into the Royal Navy.

Soon after arriving in Devon, Tony was involved in founding the Ilfracombe Male Voice Choir, which celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013. Tony, having helped organise the event, Tony returned to celebrate it with them.

By then, Tony and Jo had retired, choosing to return back to Cornwall. "Whilst house hunting", he says, "we stayed at a very welcoming guest house in Tywardreath, run by Graham and Angela Hoskins where we saw a Mevagissey Male Choir poster". They talked to Graham about it, following which "Jo and I came to a rehearsal, where we spent a very enjoyable two hours listening,

then on around to the Fountain for a pint and to carry on singing - this obviously was where I was meant to be."

And it wasn't long before Jo had joined Champagne Cornwall Chorus.



*Tony's Suggestion For the Choir's New Leisure Wear!*

Tony has immersed himself in Cornish culture, from helping out at Lanhydrock for the National Trust and joining Sea Watch to survey the sea life around the Cornish coast, to playing Euchre for the Par Inn.

He's also an 'am dram' fan - "anything from panto, full production musicals and Shakespeare to playing Owen the Farmer in 'The Vicar of Dibley'", and including Victorian Music Hall. This explains his photo, which shows him in 'The Gasman Cometh' , "a musical sketch the IMVC did a couple of years ago."

## Ray Flies in From Penzance

In contrast to Tony Scarratt, Ray George is a new convert to singing – but, just like Tony, he is a tribute to Graham Rundle’s recruitment poster campaign.

Although he ticks most of the Cornish boxes – born, schooled and married in Penzance, employed by HM Coastguard – Ray had never caught the singing bug. “As a child I used to go carol singing, annoying all the neighbours”, he remembers. “But until this year I’d never done more than join in with sing-alongs in local pubs.”

So what persuaded him to join Mevagissey Male Choir at this stage in his life? “I just happened to see the “Wanted” poster that was displayed in St Austell,” he says. To be fair, Ray had already been thinking of joining a choir. “A couple of years ago I mentioned it to our daughter, Amanda, knowing that she had always loved singing and hoping that we could sing together. But unfortunately we were unable to find the time - and now she’s moved to Oxford! But I think that was just a coincidence!”

Ray didn’t cross the Tamar until 1979, when he joined the Royal Air Force. And then he made up for lost time. He not only travelled all over the UK, but spent six months on Ascension Island in the South Atlantic – even managing a ‘day trip’ to the Falkland Islands.

By this time he was married to Carolyn, also from Penzance, and, as well as Amanda, they had a son Keith, who now lives in London. Ray still works for what is now known as the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, which he joined in 1996. “This has taken us to such exotic places as the Outer Hebrides, Brixham and Falmouth”, he says.

Ray, who now lives in Par, loves walking the coast path, is a whiz on computers and a keen photographer. Indeed, before he graduated to the risers, he could be seen snapping away in the aisles at our concerts. That job has now passed to Carolyn, it seems!

Ray is pictured here in the 747 Flight Simulator at Bournemouth Airport. “It was taken a couple of years ago”, he says, “and I enjoyed a full hour’s ‘flying’, including several ‘take-offs’ and ‘landings’. Although the landings were rather untidy and involved a bit of ‘off-road driving’, my take offs were OK - until the Instructor decided to include an engine fire!”



## Carol Singing at St Andrews and Penrice

Our Christmas programme included both a three-choir event with the Mevagissey Ladies and Mevagissey Primary School at St Andrew's Church, and our annual visit to sing to the elderly residents of Penrice House.

The packed audience at the St Andrew's Christmas Concert on 14<sup>th</sup> December particularly enjoyed *Joy to the World* and *Lo! He Comes an Infant Stranger*, for both of which we were joined by the Ladies.

Two days later we were generously treated to the now customary magnificent buffet by the staff at Penrice House after our carol concert, following which many members made their way to the now traditional afterglow at the Polgooth Inn, where the carol singing continued.

Any stories or comments for the Newsletter?

Please contact:

Mike Tate - 07730 683324 or [miketate@live.co.uk](mailto:miketate@live.co.uk)

## CONCERT DIARY

Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2014	St James Church, Torpoint	Joint Concert with Torpoint Ladies	7.30pm
Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2014	Minack Theatre	Choir Funds	
Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> May 2014	Eden Project	40 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Concert	7.30pm
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2014	Sterts Theatre		
Monday 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2014	St Andrew's Church, Mevagissey	Feast Week Concert	7.30pm
Mondays 4 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> , 25 <sup>th</sup> August 2014	Mevagissey Quay	Quay Concerts	7.45pm
Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2014		Joint Concert with Bath Silver Ring Choir	7.30pm
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2014	Crediton		