

# MEVAGISSEY MALE CHOIR

AUTUMN 2015

NO. 26



*"Where's that Canute when you need him"? (see P6)*

## Next concert

Saturday

14<sup>th</sup> November

Tywardreath Church  
with  
Canoryon Lowen

*Proceeds to Cornwall  
Hospice Care*

7.30pm

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL AWAYDAY!

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October saw the Choir embark on one of its longer away trips, to the Chapel Street Methodist Church, Penzance, for a joint concert with our friends, the Mousehole Male Voice Choir. Longer indeed for Second Tenor Chris Bale, who made a full NE - SW crossing of the county from Bude to be in place on time: a star man!

For nearly everyone else, the coach started from Par, a boon to several and certainly a novelty, although less of an adventure than negotiating its way on arrival through the cars parked on both sides of the already narrow road! On board with us were Lyn White and her two charming

daughters, Emma and Hayley, regulars on the Quay and at home concerts for the last couple of years, but making their first away trip. Enchantingly dressed for the occasion, the girls looked a picture in their customary front row berth.

The event lived up to its history and matched all expectations as the two choirs, huge admirers of each other's work, put on a stunning show. Somewhat unusually as the away team, we opened proceedings with four pieces: 'Anthem'; 'The Rose', with Paul Pearce standing in for Terry Coplin; 'Cornish Hearts'; and

The loss of Robin Hunkin in August left us all shocked and saddened. A tribute appears on Page 4.

*'Bridge over Troubled Water'* - a good first set even though our hosts risers proved a bit of a challenge, being less than totally uniform in height, and with deeper levels at each step!

Led by old friend Steve Lawry and accompanied by the excellent Annette Turton, the 65-strong Mousehole then appeared walking on to *'The Spirit Lives'*. This was followed by the jaunty *'Wade in the Water'*, skilfully and imaginatively accompanied by Maureen Nicholls on the flute. Among their Second Tenors we spotted Justin, son of Ernie Williams, a front row MMC Second for many of our Choir's early years and who sadly passed away this summer.

With no interval scheduled, events sped on nicely. Our second set included *'American Trilogy'*, apparently dedicated to some Californians in the audience. They asked to take back some Cornish rain with them as their local reservoirs are very low indeed! The recently introduced *'Only You'*, the resurrected *'Away from the Roll of the Sea'* and *'Hallelujah'* completed the set.

In unison with the audience, we sang *'Love Divine, All Loves Excelling'* as our hosts appeared for their second set, although we got ahead of the piano (come back Brian Mitchell on the organ!), and the last row was still moving at the end! No matter, Mousehole's *'Rock Island Line'* brought back memories of Lonnie Donegan and tea chest basses, while *'Lean on Me /We shall Overcome'* was particularly well received.

Paul Pearce had two solo roles in our last set, *'You Raise Me Up'* and *'Mevagissey Bay'*. Another star man. All went well and our big finish with *'Au Fond du Temple Saint'* was a resounding success.

Combining the choirs for a rousing finish with *'We Rise Again'*, *'Deus Salutis'* and *'Morte Criste'* was ambitious, but one that a standing ovation more than justified. All that was left was to repair to the Astro Club for a handsome array of refreshments and a memorable afterglow.



*Steve Lawry prepares the 'M & M Choir' for 'Morte Criste'*

## Biggest Catch yet for Harvest of the Sea

Our 'Harvest of the Sea' afterglow is proving to be a real winner. A record turnout at the Jubilee Hall on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November had us scrambling in the Hall's closets for sufficient chairs to seat everyone who returned from the annual thanksgiving service in St Andrew's.

As the long trestle tables groaned under the weight of the food provided by the Choir WAGs, the singers availed themselves of the Tribute firkin set up by the Fountain's Billy Moore and, for an hour or more, we had the opportunity to mingle with members of the community and not a few Friends of the Choir.

Earlier, as always, we had played our traditional part in the service, with two sets of four: '*Softly as I Leave you*', '*Calm is the Sea*', '*My Lord! What a Morning*', and '*Deus Salutis*', comprised the first, and '*Voice of the Child*', '*Lower Lights*', '*Deep River*', and '*Morte Criste*' the second.

A huge vote of thanks should go to our Choir ladies, not just for providing the refreshments, but preparing the hall, and acting as hostesses throughout. And who stayed behind to put the chairs away and tidy up, too.

The icing on the cake (sorry!) was to learn later that the service had raised £275 for the Fishermen's Mission!



*Our Harvest Supper Team*



## ROBIN HUNKIN



*Robin receiving his black badge early last year*

It was with tremendous shock and sadness that we learned in August of the passing of Robin Hunkin. Founder member of our Choir, leader of the Baritone section, soloist, member of our Meva Cappella quartet, and of the Music Committee, Robin quite simply appeared to be the rock on which our Choir was anchored.

It is still impossible to think of Mevagissey Male Choir without mentally picturing Robin, in his traditional position in the back row of the Baritones, from where he would perform his inimitable *'Homeless'* solo, stepping forward only to join the rest of Meva Cappella for one of their barbershop pieces. Having only just turned 60 last April, he seemed to have so many years of singing in front of him.

The youngest of three Mevagissey brothers, Robin was just 19 when Gary Mitchell and Geoff Pollard knocked on the Hunkin door and asked if he and David would like to join the new choir they were forming. "Although our eldest brother Brian and I had sung as children, Robin had never shown much aptitude or interest", David remembers. "He said that he didn't think he would be good enough, but agreed to give it a go. I think it is fair to say he turned out to have the best voice of us all. At 19 he was the youngest founder member, and he took to it like a duck to water."

But Robin was so much more to Mevagissey than a leading member of its male Choir. As David puts it: "Robin was a Mevagissey man to his bones. Born in Mevagissey, he spent his entire life in Mevagissey, and he died in Mevagissey. His passion for Mevagissey, and Feast Week in particular, was immeasurable", he adds, "and, over the last 20 odd years, his commitment and vision have taken Feast Week from a low key local event to the spectacular festival that it



*Singing with Meva Capella – Robin is on the far right*

has now become.” His organisational skills were also to play a huge part in the success of our Choir and it was Robin who led the team that put together last year’s spectacular 40th anniversary concert at Eden.

And yet, above all, as Brian adds, “Robin was a family man. He adored his wife Rosie, and children Ben and Kim, and was blessed with four beautiful grandchildren; Isla, Bow, Jaxon, and Livia, who, in turn doted on him.”

We said goodbye to Robin at the Glynn Valley Crematorium in Bodmin on 14<sup>th</sup>

September, where the Choir sang ‘Hail to the Homeland’ and ‘Mevagissey Bay’. His passing leaves a huge gap, not just in our Choir, but in Mevagissey. Ben sums it up: “He was involved so much in the village, it seems to me he was like the glue that held Meva together.”

Certainly, without him, the Choir will always have a feeling of incompleteness.

## Ernie Williams

Only a few weeks earlier, we had learned of the passing of Ernie Williams, at the age of 91. Ernie had joined the ranks of our Second Tenors in 1975, where he sang until ill health forced him to quit in 1994. He was made a Life Member of the Choir on his 90th birthday last year.

A D-Day veteran, a talented footballer – he represented the RAF against the Army in Berlin in 1945 - and one of the few actual fishermen to have been involved over the years, Ernie was Mevagissey through and through, and was a keen supporter of the Choir until the end.



*Ernie Williams, front row 4<sup>th</sup> from right, and Robin Hunkin, back row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left, at the Choir’s first ever quay concert.*

## HIGHER QUAY REQUIRED

Our later August quay concerts this summer were, of course, overshadowed by Robin Hunkin's passing; particularly the fourth, which took place on the 24<sup>th</sup>, only days after the news. No formal announcement was made on the quayside and the programme was unaltered, in deference to our largely transient and unknowing audience, but, immediately after the concert, Choir members made their way to the Mevagissey Social Club, where, after a few words from chairman Nick Nicholls, we paid our respects with a few moments' silence.

For the second year running, the weather did not intercede with any of the five concerts, but we still found ourselves at nature's mercy, with the summer's exceptionally high spring tides forcing us to abandon the quay early on the first Monday and to avoid it completely on the fifth. (See P1 photo)

The first concert, in front of huge sunlit crowd on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, was dedicated to the Nepal Earthquake victims, with Roshni Tamang Mitchell, the Nepalese daughter-in-law of our Top Tenor John Mitchell, giving a brief but emotional personal account of the tragedy part way through the performance.



*Roshni Tamang Mitchell's appeal helps raise nearly £750*



*Mevagissey Harbour as a successful quay concert closes...*

However, the performance had to be curtailed, as the tide crept up and over the dock, and began lapping around the risers. Despite it being the only *a cappella* performance in the series, the amount of electrical equipment around made it imperative that we drop the two penultimate numbers and go straight to our finale. A disappointing end but a hugely successful evening - total donations amounted to £746.70, all of which went to Shelterbox, the local charity working in Nepal.

A week later, on the 10<sup>th</sup>, another large crowd gathered for the second of our summer performances,

this time with the accompaniment of Matthew Fox on keyboard and Graham Hoskins on guitar. Midway

through our second piece, we did well to maintain our composure as a low-flying seagull deposited a 6-inch gurnard at the feet of an astonished lady in the front row of the audience. However, the concert continued without further alarm, concluding with our version of *'Fat Bottomed Girls'*, which had them dancing and cheering on the quayside.

Our third concert, on the 17<sup>th</sup>, was even less eventful, but no less well attended and appreciated on another fine evening, while our fourth, as touched on above, was understandably more subdued. Hopes that we might complete all five concerts on the quayside itself were dashed again by King Neptune. We arrived to find the dock under water and, although the tide was now receding, it wasn't ebbing fast enough to enable us to set up in time to finish before dark. So it was off to St Andrew's, where, gratifyingly, we sang to a full house.

As always, each concert was followed by a fun-filled afterglow in the *Fountain Inn*, where holidaymakers were treated to a traditionally less reverent – and, Graham Willcocks would say, less polished – repertoire.

Comperes for the five concerts were Bill Collins, Graham Rundle, Alan Dibb, Peter Bowker and Roger Mitchell.



*.... and later outside the Fountain*



*.... and later still!*

## St Augustine's – England's Only Winner on 26<sup>th</sup> September

It's always a pleasure to sing at St Augustine of Hippo Church in St Austell, partly because we so enjoy the acoustic there.

So it was on the evening of Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September when we arrived to take part in the celebrations surrounding the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the St Austell Flower Festival – and gorgeous the flowers were too!

Compered expertly, and wittily, by Bass George Phillips, himself a member of St Augustine's, we enjoyed a wonderful evening of relaxed singing, even though a good percentage of those on the risers had half a mind on Twickenham, where, unbeknown to them, the Welsh team were dashing their dreams! (Sadly, no afterglow had been organised given that so many were desperate to head home and watch the recording. Two crashing disappointments then – England out and no afterglow!)

The evening's programme showed a number of changes from other recent performances, with the guitar dropped for once, and one or two older pieces, such as *'Take Me Home'* and *'Close Thine Eyes'* resurrected. Despite the unfamiliarity to some members, the performance did not suffer and some pieces – *'Morte Criste'*, *Au Fond du Temple Saint*, *'Only You'* and *'We Rise Again'* met with their now customary enthusiastic ovation.

As an encore, we sang *'An American Trilogy'*, much to the surprise and delight of two visitors from Delaware in the USA.

The evening was notable for one other event. It marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Graham Willcocks' appointment as Music Director and a suitable presentation was made during the proceedings by Chairman Nick Nicholls (pictured).



*Graham Willcocks – unbeaten after 20 years – if a little bowed!*

## CHARLESTOWN WITNESSES ROGER'S DIRECTING DEBUT



*Calm is the Sea – Fowey Lifeboat arrives at Charlestown for Songs of Praise*

Despite an exceptionally strong turnout at Charlestown Harbour on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August, we were missing both Graham Willcocks and Matthew Fox – a unique experience in recent years. And no amplification either.

We had gathered at 5.30pm to take part in the annual Songs of Praise service, organised on behalf of St Austell & District RNLI, and conducted by John Keast OBE. Mount Charles Band were there, and so was the Mayor of St Austell, Cllr Brian Palmer.

But we needn't have worried. Once the Fowey Lifeboat had arrived and safely moored within the harbour, allowing us to get under way, the combined pitch pipe skills of Graham Hoskins and conducting talent of Roger Mitchell ensured a dazzling performance of our four pieces: *'Deep River'*; *'Haven of Rest'*, *Calm is the Sea*; and *'Lower Lights'*.

Our songs were interspersed with performances by the band and congregational hymn singing – favourites such as *'Eternal Father Strong to Save'*; *'How Great Thou Art'*; and *'The Old Rugged Cross'* - throughout the concert, which also heard an appeal by Simon Hannaford, the Lifeboat Sea Safety Officer for Fowey Lifeboat Station.

A sizeable audience was also treated to a drill display by the army cadets, and the service ended with the lowering of the flag.

## Who Needs the Red Arrows?

An already busy month became even busier when we agreed to sing at this year's Fowey Regatta. Would we come and sing in the Town Square after the Red Arrows flypast on Thursday on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August, they asked.

It seemed a good idea at the time. Unfortunately, not only did the weather close in preventing the airmen from putting in an appearance – it didn't do the sailing much good, either – but, somewhere along the line, messages became confused and we were re-allocated to the Fowey Hotel.

Could be worse, we thought. And it was. On arrival at the hotel, some 300 yards down river from the quay, we discovered that a band – '*Not the Beatles*' – had been commissioned to perform outside the guests' lounge. We were despatched to the 'lower garden', a wonderful venue on a good day, but....

Now we faced a new problem. In the heavy drizzle, there was doubt whether we could use our electrical equipment. After lengthy debate, a solution was found. Matt Fox, and his electronic keyboard, were housed beneath a temporary awning. We could proceed. All we needed now was an audience.

We must have done something right because, by the time we had finished our relatively short programme, significant numbers of tourists had stopped on the road above us to peer down over the wall, and were applauding appreciatively.

Not our finest hour but we made the best of it!



*Making Music in the Mist*

## A VINTAGE PERFORMANCE AT STICKER FAYRE

A cavernous marquee, at the end of a miserable day, and a tight stage area where Graham Willcocks was constantly at risk of toppling backwards into the audience. Not the makings of a great night, particularly so soon after our triumph in Plymouth Guildhall.

And yet. According to our regular followers, we put on a superb show. The event was the Sticker Country Fayre & Vintage Rally, just three or four miles from Mevagissey, where we were performing on the evening of Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August, with all proceeds from the Fayre being shared by the Merlin MS Centre, Cornwall's only therapy centre for people with multiple sclerosis, and the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

We had a strong and full repertoire that was well appreciated by the many visitors who ventured into the marquee. Among the newer pieces included were 'Au Fond du Temple Saint'; 'Only You'; and 'We Rise Again', while 'The Gospel Train' and 'Yellow Bird', not heard for a while, were resurrected. And we gave a first public outing to 'Fat Bottomed Girls' which has since proved a real winner in our more secular venues.

'Blue Moon'; 'Deep River'; 'The Rose'; 'You Raise Me Up'; 'Hallelujah'; 'Nessun Dorma' and 'Mevagissey Bay' completed the performance along with the two guitar-accompanied pieces, 'Angels' and 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and, what weren't to know, the last performance by Robin Hunkin of 'Homeless'.

### OUR FRIENDS SAY ...

It's always good to hear that the work we put in is appreciated. Here are a few comments from Supporters far and wide:

*"On my first visit to Mevagissey, I heard of your choir, attended a performance and heard the angels sing. I've heard other choirs, but truly, you're the best. As I believe I mentioned, I kayak to your CD's".* Bibbi, Washington State, USA

*"We bought a CD after the [Minack] concert and whilst listening to 'Cornish Hearts' as we drove home, I was amazed to realise that I was crying as I turned to Alan I noticed he was to. It isn't often that music can move me to tears. We were so touched by your concert we joined our local 'Rock Choir' our return home. We now consider 'I really don't want to know' as our song.* Sue, Yorkshire

*"My husband Gene and I would like to thank you for your fantastic performance in St Austell on September 26. American Trilogy was absolutely brilliant and it was very nice meeting members of the Choir at the reception following the performance."* Anne, Delaware, USA

*"It's always a pleasure to come and listen to you. Nicola, our daughter, regularly says 'when are we going to see the men sing' when at home and approaching holiday time. As for me personally I have been listening to the choir since the '80s. It really relaxes me and helps me chill out on our holiday."* Gavin, Judith and Nicola, Barnsley

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

All members of the Choir join me in thanking you, the Friends of the Mevagissey Male Choir, for your continuing support. Not only through your attendances at our concerts whenever you can, and your written and vocal encouragement, **but also, of course, through your donations**. We exist, not just for the joy of singing, but also to raise funds for charities and good causes. We would find it much harder to do so without the benefit of your generous donations, which help pay for our training, our uniforms and, of course, our music.

We no longer charge a membership fee but we do rely on your good will and your generosity to ensure we continue to set the standard in male voice singing in Cornwall. In this respect we would particularly like to thank Dickson & Bibbi Lee (Washington State, USA), and Kathryn & Pietro Abate (St Austell) for their recent contributions.

Cheques should be made out to Mevagissey Male Choir and sent to Hillside House, Biscovey Road, Par, PL24 2HW.

## AND ALSO...

Thank you to Roger Mitchell (report), Carolyn George (photos), Jane Stubberfield (production) and Graham Hoskins (printing)

## CONCERT DIARY

### 2015

Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> November	With Canoryon Lowen	Tywardreath Church	7.30pm
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup> November		Probus Church	7.30pm
Sat 12 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas Concert	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	7.00pm
<i>Mon 14<sup>th</sup> December</i>	<i>Christmas Concert (private)</i>	<i>Penrice House</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>

### 2016

Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> May	With Culdrose Military Wives	Minack Theatre	7.30pm
Sat 25 <sup>th</sup> June		Noss Mayo	7.30pm
Sat 23 <sup>th</sup> July		St Enoder	7.30pm
Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 29 <sup>th</sup> August		Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> – 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	Jt with Akrotiri and Episkopi Military Wives	Cyprus	