



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



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

TWO Christmas concerts this year! On the 9th and 17th.

And a Christmas CD! Details inside, at back and on website.

Autumn 2016

No: 30



Songs at Sunset - Cyprus

“WOW, DIDN’T WE DO WELL!”

These were words of Episkopi’s Lucy Oldenshaw after our triumphant tour of Cyprus. Commenting on our joint concert at Kourion, she added: ““We had a brilliant night. We’ve had incredible feedback from everyone so far, from audience members and, thanks to social media, from around the world, with lovely comments from the UK, Sweden and the Caribbean to name a few.

“I don’t know about you”, she told tour organiser Graham Rundle after our return, “but we are all suffering with a mixture of exhaustion, relief and post show blues over here. Hard to believe it’s all over! We have an amazing sense of pride at what we have achieved.” We, too, Lucy!

In short, a party of 71, set off for Exeter airport on the morning of Sunday 16th October, at the invitation of

the Akrotiri and Episkopi Military Wives Choirs. They included 32 singers, one musical director, one accompanist – and a baby. Or, if you like, Joel Fox (the newly-arrived offspring of accompanist Matthew and his wife, Carolyn) and 70 aunts and uncles. The Tywardreath contingent boarded the coach at 10 and, by midday, they had already reached – er, St Austell! But the journey was uneventful and by late evening we were enjoying the sandwiches and bottle of wine that Limassol’s Atlantica Miramare Hotel had thoughtfully placed in each of our rooms.

Two days of sunshine and self-indulgence later, we were the guests of the Achord Ladies Community Choir at the accommodating *Terra e Mare* restaurant in Limassol’s shoreline San Raphael district, where we

raised over €1,000 for the Royal British Legion. And on the night before we came home, we were ferried by coach to Curium Ancient Theatre, a 2,100-year-old, 3,000-seat amphitheatre overlooking the eastern Mediterranean, where we performed for 800 – plus.

In between, of course, we took things quietly, eating and drinking in moderation, and saving ourselves for the concerts.

Yeah, right!! In temperatures of 29-30c, we had a wonderful time. Some took trips, some swam or walked, some just soaked up the sun. And everyone just got on. The hotel was first class, the food yummy and inexhaustible, the drinks - well, expensive, until we discovered the 'happy hour', not to mention '*Happy Days*', a welcoming - and cheaper - bar, just two minutes along the beach, whose owners may still be wondering what hit them.

CURIUM – THE MINACK AT 30°!

So, what of the concerts? The big one, the reason we were there, took place on the night before we flew home. And what a majestic setting. Kourion, to give it its Greek name, was constructed towards the end of the 2nd century BC - pretty ancient, maybe, but not when compared with the combined ages of our choir, we reckoned!

When our singers arrived for their sound check, the sun was still high in the sky and, even when the ladies appeared, and the rest of the audience began filing in an hour or two later, it remained hot, the skies were still blue and the view breath-taking. Beyond the stage below them stretched a flat, but sloping, plain, ending, just a couple of hundred metres away in the bluest of seas. Night, coming soon after our 5.30pm start, fell swiftly, but the darkness enabled the MWC's sound and lighting team to demonstrate their prowess with a brilliant display, their beams of light, sweeping dramatically across the stage, the audience and the hills behind.

The ladies invited us to start proceedings and we obliged with five pieces, concluding the first half with *The Floral Dance*, which, despite a somewhat hoarse solo by our flagging MD, met with an Cornish-like reception, as our ladies unfurled a Cornish flag they had brought with them, and smaller versions were waved enthusiastically other members of the audience – who it turned out came from St Austell!



We filed off to be replaced by the 40-strong combined MWC choir, who sang five of their own favourites, including *'Bring Him Home'* and *'You Raise Me Up'*. A masterstroke by our MD at the start of the second half saw us replace *'Goin' Home'* with *'Fat Bottomed Girls'* – it would have raised the roof had there been one! *'Angels'* and *'Bo Rap'* went down well, too, with Graham Hoskins strutting his stuff on a borrowed guitar. Back came the girls with five more, including an *cappella* version of *'Seasons of Love'* and an *eight*-minute Abba medley.

What a pleasure it was for us then to join our hosts on stage and have their soprano Rosie Simpson lead us in *'Whispering Hope'*. There can be no higher praise than that, if you'd closed your eyes, it could have been Alison Harvey! We ended in the traditional way, with all 74 voices combining in the powerful *'Morte Christe'*.

'Songs at Sunset' had been over two years in the planning, Lucy tells us, and was the result of much hard work by many people, among them their shared MD, Elena Gonata. "The pressure was on to learn a high number of songs from scratch, especially so for the newer members of the choir. We were very conscious that, because the audience were paying to watch the concert, we wanted it to be as polished as possible."

In the event, over 700 tickets were sold – more than were printed - and our own Geraldine Way found herself drafted in to write out more. With children, of whom there were many, admitted free of charge, the attendance was likely to have been 800-plus.

The evening was particularly memorable for one lady in the audience. Steffi Poole's father, the late Denis Borash, had been a Bass in our choir in the '90s, and she had been impatient to see us ever since hearing we were coming. Some of our longer-serving members not only remembered Denis well, but Steffi too. Her verdict?

"Thank you for a brilliant evening! It was lovely to chat to the guys (& Geraldine!) who remembered my Dad. It made me quite homesick to hear the Cornish accents!! Hope you'll be making a return visit in the not too distant future!! I like to think that Dad & Harold Miller [our former MD] were looking down on us at that stunning location!"

There were many more tributes. Karen Barrowcliffe was just one, posting "Such an amazing evening with two fabulous choirs. Thank you for a fabulous evening," on Facebook.

Once the singing was over, we were driven back to the Officers' Mess at Akrotiri for 'refreshments', a delicious curry and brandy sour and gin and tonic by the urn-ful, (see photo)before enlightening the ladies on the delights of a choir afterglow.

Thanks to Graham Rundle

But this was not before we took a moment to make a presentation to Graham Rundle, as a token of our thanks and appreciation of all the hard work he had put into organising the tour and making it such a memorable success. It was a tired, but very happy, group that disembarked at Exeter at 3am on 24th October. Thanks again, Graham!



OVER €1,000 RAISED AT ACHORD CONCERT

On the Tuesday evening, we had been driven 15 minutes to the eastern edge of Limassol, to an 'events establishment' called *Terra e Mare*, for what turned out to be a fun-filled evening in concert with the local Achord Ladies Community Choir. A wonderful night. But don't take it from us. This is what Julie Edwards, Achord's talented MD has written!

Male voice choirs are a rarity in Cyprus, so when the Mevagissey guys flew in to Cyprus, it was 'all systems go' to make sure that they were well supported and that as many as possible heard them. We were extremely excited about sharing the stage with the gents.

Terra e Mare was packed out for the charity concert as Mevagissey and Achord joined forces to raise money for the Royal British Legion. Over 300 people cheered and clapped and, with three standing ovations throughout the evening, obviously had a thoroughly enjoyable night.

*Mevagissey Male Choir gave a tremendous performance, featuring various soloists and being very ably accompanied by the young Matthew Fox. Achord matched their strong, full sound but the climax of the evening came when the choirs combined to perform *Morte Christe*. There weren't many dry eyes in the house at this point - truly hair-raising, goose-bump stuff!*

What could have topped off such an amazing evening? Finding out that both choirs' efforts had raised over €1000 for charity by doing something they all love and enjoy. Achord is now looking forward to making a return visit to Mevagissey next summer to join, once again, with Mevagissey on their 'home ground'. What an honour to share the stage with such an amazing group of gents - we can't wait to do it again!



Achord, led by Julie Edwards

MEVAGISSEY MALE CHOIR

Julie was so impressed that she is planning to form a male voice choir in Limassol! (Steady on, boys, it's a hell of a journey for rehearsals).

What she doesn't mention is that the choir had only been formed some 18 months before, although they sang like veterans. Or that they were accompanied by Jamie McVicar, whose wife, son and daughter, came together for two delightful spots as the McVicar Bass Quartet.



When we took our first picture of this poster, there was no car in front of it. By the time we rounded up enough Choir members to pose in front of it, somebody had parked in front. The picture we didn't get was of Second Tenor Des Honey precariously balanced on a narrow 3ft wall to take this one!



The ladies start in bright sunshine...

... and continue in darkness.



DID YOU KNOW...?

For those who've not been to Cyprus, it has a very British feel about it, not least because of the road traffic system. Some of our number were relieved and surprised to find the Cypriots drive on the left and are controlled by traffic lights that would look at home in St Austell. And thereby, it emerged, hung a tale.

Midway through the 20th century, when cars first started to appear on the island, its government asked the Brits for advice on how to stop drivers crashing into each other. A policeman called Don Young was despatched to introduce some rules, install some infrastructure and implement a Highway Code. Naturally, what resulted was a very British system.

Don then retired to Mevagissey – Tregony Hill to be precise – where he was to have the pleasure of standing next to David Leeson in the Bass section of, yes, the Mevagissey Male Choir! Don had a bit of a stammer, David recalls. 'His first concert was at the Cornwall Coliseum in Carlyon Bay. We had a great audience, and got tremendous applause. At the end, Don turned to me and said: "B-b-b-bloody hell. This is f-f-f-fantastic."'



Most of us were here somewhere! ↑

Cliff Burnett's daughter, Cassie, who works in Cyprus as a diving instructor, had been looking forward to diving with her Dad..... ↓



... Together with Terry Coplin and Chris Williams, ← they had a brilliant time feeding fish from their hands in the crystal clear waters.



Our soloist and accompanist tune up for the big event



Lunch in Kyrenia, ← the Mevagissey of the Eastern Med!



Ron finds a friend. →



From Curium to Portscatho



It seemed we were no sooner off the plane than we were in Portscatho, performing for the Roseland Music Society. With only five days between unpacking and pitching up at the Memorial Hall, we had no time to rehearse so stuck to programme comprised of songs that had gone down so well in Cyprus.

They went down pretty well here, too. An enthusiastic audience filled the venue for what was our seventh visit since 2000, and appeared to love every moment. The hall has a wonderful acoustic and we made the best of it. Demands for an encore were without a rendition of *Fat Bottomed Girls*. It's not suitable for every venue, but it was greeted with delight here.

Top Tenor Alan Dibb stood in as compere and, for someone who was unable to be there, did a wonderful job of telling everyone how well we'd done in Cyprus! And it was great to have Bass Steve Flavell, who had been poorly of late, back on the risers with us. And, indeed, to see Top Tenor Ivor Morcom in the audience.

With applause still ringing in our ears, we set off up the road for the Royal Standard for the afterglow. Not the smallest pub we've ever been to, but not far off it, surely! Still, we managed, of course!

A HALL FOR CORNWALL – A BALL FOR MEVAGISSEY



They said it couldn't be done! Well, most of us had misgivings at various times. Had we taken on too much? Were we going to lose money? Would anyone come?

The doubts were justifiable. We booked the Hall for Cornwall at the turn of the year, believing it would be the perfect venue for a return visit by the Plymouth Military Wives Choir. It was the first time we had booked such a prestigious venue at our own risk. Only when we came to read the small print in late spring did we realise what a mouthful we had bitten off.

Our worries intensified when we found that the HfC admin department themselves had forgotten about us, and when we discovered our guests, the Plymouth MWC, were incommunicado in New York, where they were performing at the Carnegie Hall!

Should we change the venue, abandon the idea even? Fortunately, your choir is nothing if not determined and resourceful, and, pulling as a team, but with special thanks to Bass Peter Bowker, the show was kept on the road. And guess what?

It was a HUGE success. Over 400 turned up on 10th September, more than 150 bought a programme and 37 bought CDs. As a result, we ended the evening more than £2,500 in surplus - and that was after paying for the PMWC coach, their MD and accompanist, AND making a substantial donation to their charity. Bravo.



Chairman Nick thanks Alison, as a bouquet awaits.

What of the entertainment? A triumph. The HfC sound people had brought the stage forward to the beginning of the seating, making for a much more intimate atmosphere, and had worked wonders with the acoustics. The singers responded. The ladies performed superbly, as ever, and our dear friend Alison Harvey sang as beautifully as only she can.

It was the fifth time we had sung with Plymouth Ladies, who once again thrilled the audience, this time treating us to 13 pieces in total. Mevagissey performed ten, with Meva Cappella adding two more, and Alison delighted us with *Lovely, Lonely Man*, from *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang* and the Gershwins' *Someone to*

Watch over Me in the first half – as well as joining us for *Whispering Hope* in the second, of course.

The whole thing was expertly and amusingly compered by 'Bishop Tim', Bishop of Truro. And the evening concluded with everyone coming together for the powerful *Morte Christe*. Hardly a dry eye. Even our MD enjoyed it.

Afterwards, we retired to the Hop Store, above the Old Ale House around the corner from the Hall, where we drank beer, ate pasties and sang again with the ladies, including Alison and her husband, and a fine time was had by all.



Eat, Drink and Be Merry



A week after our success at the Hall for Cornwall, we had a chance to let our hair down in more relaxed circumstances. Bases Simon Lawday and Peter Bowker had organised a barbecue at the Barley Sheaf pub in Gorran.

A gratifyingly large majority of members, wives and friends gathered in the pub's garden for what was simply a very enjoyable party. An excellent spread of food was available and a wonderful atmosphere was created.

And, yes, we did have a sing, late on in the bar, and in pretty informal fashion. Seemed to go down well with the locals, though!

Take Us Home for Christmas

As if the excitement of the Hall for Cornwall and Cyprus wasn't enough, this autumn has also seen the launch of our first ever Christmas CD – *'Sing for the Child'*.

Come November each year we learn wonderful new music for the festive period – and freshen up traditional pieces – but then find we have only two or three opportunities to perform them, before shelving them for another twelve months. So we thought it was time to record them. Eleven of our favourite yuletide pieces are included and on several we are joined by the exquisite voices of the Mevagissey Ladies Choir, while Meva Cappella perform *'Silent Night'* as only they can.

It's a steal at £10. Get your copy in good time for Christmas, either via our website – www.meva-choir.co.uk – or by contacting any Choir officer.



HARVEST SUPPER – BEST YET!

Just a week *before* we left for Cyprus, we sang at St Andrew's *Harvest of the Sea* service, an annual event in which we have been honoured to be asked to take part since 1983. Once again, the church was full for the 3pm service, conducted by The Rev Danny Weadon. Our first set comprised *Deus Salutis; Lower Lights; Goin' Home;* and *Away from the Roll of the Sea*. In the second, we introduced two new pieces to the St Andrew's congregation, *Home Lovin' Man* and *Every Time I Feel the Spirit*, along with the more traditional *Calm Is the Sea* and *Gwahoddiad*.

For the fourth year running we invited all members of the congregation back to the Jubilee Hall afterwards for tea, coffee and an excellent spread of cakes and savouries generously contributed by members' wives and partners – or a pint of beer for the thirstier among us.

These sessions are proving a remarkable success, allowing members and locals to inter-mingle informally and for friendships to be made. Our particular thanks go to the ladies for making the effort to ensure our guests are suitably fed and watered. It proved the perfect send-off for our Cyprus trip.



Some of the Choir WAGs who served up a treat!

QUAY TO SUCCESS?



This little lad was determined to get in on the act.

Seems a long time ago now but our quay concerts were a lot of fun again, although rain drove us inside St Andrew's for the first. Nevertheless, the church was full and thereafter the quayside was packed each week. Our programme varied little, other than the identity of the compere – we should thank Messrs Dibb, Collins, Rundle, Bowker and Scarratt respectively.

We stuck pretty much to the same programme although, with guitarist Graham Hoskins missing, we had to drop *Angels*, and *Bohemian Rhapsody* on the fourth evening. Many feared we might get caught by the rising spring tide that day, but we managed to clear the quay in time.

We also had to drop Home Lovin' Man temporarily, although that was because we still hadn't got to grips with the words – wind in the eyes, sand in the hair, etc.!



Will David Succeed in Waking the Dead?

If you see new Baritone David Lethbridge looking at you too closely – well, it may be too late! David's last job involved "making enquiries into all forms of death, both natural and unnatural, and preparing files and running inquests on behalf of the Coroner". He's retired now, of course, but old habits die hard, they say.

Born at Redruth maternity hospital to parents who lived in Falmouth, David decided, at the age of 17, that a policeman's lot might be happier than working with the rest of his family in the docks, and, he crossed the border to join the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary in Plymouth as a police cadet.

He was stationed in Bodmin and St Austell as a senior cadet - the old police stations (anyone remember them?). He eventually graduated to the force as a constable and was posted to Truro, the old Victorian police station, and around west Cornwall. Promoted to Sergeant in 1980, and to the newly created post of custody sergeant, he was one of the few riot-trained sergeants, and spent a year travelling back and forth to Derbyshire during the miners' strike.



Having completed 46 years, he retired in 2002 - and was promptly nabbed by the constabulary who wanted him as Coroner's Officer, stationed first at Bodmin and St Austell, and finally in Truro, where he remained until they knocked the building down in 2012! Was it *really* the only way they could get rid of him?

Since then he's had more time to spend on walking and cycling, and his main hobby as a postal historian. That's collecting letters with postmarks on, specifically on the mail carried by the Falmouth Packets from the 1690s to the 1870s. Also, ship mail carried by private ships into Falmouth and other smaller Cornish ports from the 1700s to 1915. David's Falmouth Packet Collection has won gold medals at national and international exhibitions. He also collects Cornish postal history, primarily village postmarks and stamps of some other countries.

As a younger man, David played centre forward for the Falmouth hockey team for over 20 years, and even represented Cornwall. He's also a member of the Police sea fishing section.

Now living in St Austell with Hazel, a local girl born and bred, and two Russian blue cats, he heard about our Choir from one of its members and "I thought I would give it a go!", adding, "I enjoy singing with the choir, and in the pub afterwards, which has made me more confident. They are a very friendly and welcoming group, which really helps when you first join.

David's test piece was "*Every Time I Feel the Spirit*" - and "*The Way We Were*", which was unexpectedly thrown in!! His favourite? "*Hail to the Homeland*", being a patriotic Cornishman!"

PLEASE HELP US ADD TO OUR REPERTOIRE

Once again we are indebted to those who have made generous donations to our Choir. We really do need your support. The proceeds from most of our concerts go to charities and other good causes so we must look elsewhere for the funds to buy the music we need to continue learning new songs for your enjoyment – and to hire the best musical director and accompanist in the business! We no longer charge a fee for becoming a Friend of the Choir and receiving this newsletter, so please help us by giving generously to ensure the continuing prosperity of our Choir. Cheques should be made out to Mevagissey Male Choir and sent to Mike Tate, Hillside House, Biscovey Road, Par, Cornwall, PL24 2HW.



The Choir 'rising again' in Curium

FEAST WEEK PROCEEDS

Most of you will remember that Mevagissey had a very low-key Feast Week this year as the town continued to reflect on the passing of Robin Hunkin. Our traditional Feast Week concert in St Andrew's was one of the few events to take place, as we paid tribute to Robin. We are both proud and delighted to have been able to present a cheque for a massive £1,575 to Rose Hunkin for donation to the charity of her choice.

THREE WAYS TO HEAR US AT CHRISTMAS

Our traditional Christmas concert with the Mevagissey Ladies Choir takes place on Friday 9th December at St Andrew's. This year we will also be joined by students from Falmouth School. Then, on Saturday 17th December we are holding a concert at the Holy Trinity Church. If you can't make either, settle back with '*Sing for a Child*', our new Christmas CD (details on p11).

2016/2017 CONCERT DIARY

| Date | Comment | Venue | Time |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------|
| Fri 9 Dec | Jt Christmas Concert with Meva Ladies + Falmouth Sch. Students | St Andrew's, Mevagissey | 7.00 pm |
| Mon 12 Dec | Private Christmas Concert | Penrice House, St Austell | 7.30pm |
| Sat 17 Dec | | Holy Trinity, St Austell | 7.30pm |
| 2017 | | | |
| Sat 14 Jan | Choir Christmas Dinner | Bosun's Diner | tbc |
| Sat 29 Apr | Int'l Competition Hosting | St John's, St Austell | 7.30pm |
| Sat 3 Jun | | St Swithin's, Lancell | 7.30pm |
| Mon 26 Jun | Feast Week Concert | St Andrew's, Mevagissey | 7.30pm |
| Mon 17 Jul | Stithians Show | Stithians Show Ground | tbc |
| Mon 31 Jul + 7, 14, 21, 28 Aug | Quay Concert | Mevagissey Quay | |
| Sat 3 Oct | Ilfracombe | Emmanuel Church | tbc |