



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



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

On Saturday 16th March we shall be celebrating the life of Brian Mitchell, our accompanist until 2012, who passed away last summer. The concert, for which we will be joined by Mevagissey Ladies Choir, will take place at Gorran Church. More details on our website.

No: 38



PARTY TIME AT THE BREWERY!

Who said we couldn't run a 'you-know-what' in a brewery? Just three days before Christmas we found ourselves at St Austell Brewery (no, seriously!) for what many of us felt was one of the most enjoyable concerts we could remember (and, yes, we *can* still remember!).

The brewery has been very supportive of our Choir over the years, in more ways than one. You might say we've supported them quite well, too! Nonetheless, we had offered to host a concert for the benefit of their charitable trust.

It was the brewery's choice to put this on at Christmas – 22nd December, to be precise, at 2pm in the afternoon. We were a little sceptical, but it worked.

What no-one could remember was singing 'out of uniform' before. Seasonal shirts and sweaters were the order of the day, and what a colourful sight it made. Moreover, it had a magical effect on the mood.

Our music programme comprised a mix of the best of our Christmas and normal repertoire, evenly shared between two sets, which were separated by a half hour break.

We sang to a full house and it was clear that everyone enjoyed the afternoon. It was a great way to bring our year to a close and, hopefully, it's an event that we can repeat.

‘Best of the Year’ says MD



Graham invites applause for Phil Johns, ‘Mary’s Boy Child’ soloist

‘Probably our best performance of the year.’ That’s how, Graham Willcocks, our MD, described our Christmas concert with the Mevagissey Ladies Choir in St Andrews on Saturday 8th December. ‘I thought we did a great job’, Graham told us later.

It had been a wonderful way to kick off the season, with not only the Meva Ladies but also the Mevagissey School Choir joining us for this annual event.

The event was memorable for another reason – it was the first appearance of new Second Tenor Alex Pearce, meaning we had three generations of the same family on the risers. But more of that later.

The ladies, directed by Barry Farley and accompanied by David Robinson, got us under way with four pieces, including a couple of spirituals and a 19th century Basque carol. We followed with a preview of the piece which would be featured on BBC’s Songs of Praise the following – *Do You Hear What I Hear* – and three more pieces, including ‘*Mary’s Boy Child*’, with soloist Baritone Phil Johns.



Then it was time for children, numbers depleted by illness, but who nevertheless warmed hearts all round with 'Winter Wonderland', 'Child in a Manger Born' and 'High Street Hoping', a wonderfully funny number telling of A Whole Lot of Shoppin' Going On. All chosen by the choir members themselves. Well done, kids, and new choir leader Lauren Rees.

After the interval, compere Bill Collins introduced five more songs from the ladies, who then remained on stage while we came forward for a joint piece, the beautiful 'Shepherds Farewell', by Berlioz. Once the ladies had departed, we performed another set of five, concluding with our newest Christmas song, 'Blue Christmas', which proved a big hit. The evening concluded with While Shepherds Watched, to the tune of Lyngham.

Four Members Honoured



The St Andrews concert was memorable for another reason. Four of our stalwarts were called forward by Nick Nicholls to be awarded honorary membership of the Choir. Top Tenors Jim Hunkin and Roger Daniel and Baritone Bernard Hocking retired during 2018, after many years of service – and not just as singers! – while Top Tenors, Derek Way and Ivor Morcom, although still active members, were also deemed worthy of recognition. There is no question that each and every one has put in sterling contributions over many years and is richly deserving of the award.

Front row, l to r, Jim, Ivor, chairman Nick Nicholls, Derek, Bernard. Roger is in the red top behind Ivor

PENRICE AND THE 'SINGALONG'



Two days later, on Monday 10th December, we were at Penrice. Every seat in the room was taken by residents, friends and staff and, once again, it was very warm, which is not conducive to great singing and, if we're honest, we probably didn't give our best performance. But it's always nice to get the audience joining in, as they did, and we gave them a good 45 minutes of Christmas fare. In return they once again provided a wonderful spread for us. Many members later made their way to the nearby Polgooth Inn, where we ran through our Christmas repertoire again, this time with the help of the locals.

Another day and another concert, and the following evening some of us found ourselves at St Johns in St Austell for the traditional Christmas Singalong in a church packed with schoolchildren. Although this is not an MMC concert – it's hosted by Geoff Wheildon and the St Austell Concert Band - it's always great fun and enjoyed by many choir members. This was the 38th Singalong, which each year raised funds for an incapacitated local child.



OVER £600 RAISED FOR ST PETROCS



And so to St Augustine's of Hippo in St Austell, where, on Saturday 15th, we sang for St Petrocs, the charity for the homeless. Our special guest was our favourite soprano, Alison Harvey, who not only entertained us with four pieces, including her delightful rendering of *'In the Bleak Winter'*, but also enabled us to reprise *'Shepherds Farewell'*, by generously learning and performing the soprano part. Compere for the evening was Top Tenor Graham Rundle. It was a lovely evening (the church has an excellent acoustic), capped by the news that it had raised net proceeds of £646.46 for St Petroc's, excluding donations made via the charity's own collection boxed on the evening. In the words of Linda Binney, St Petrocs Administrator, wrote to say "Thank you for thinking of us, it really does make a difference".

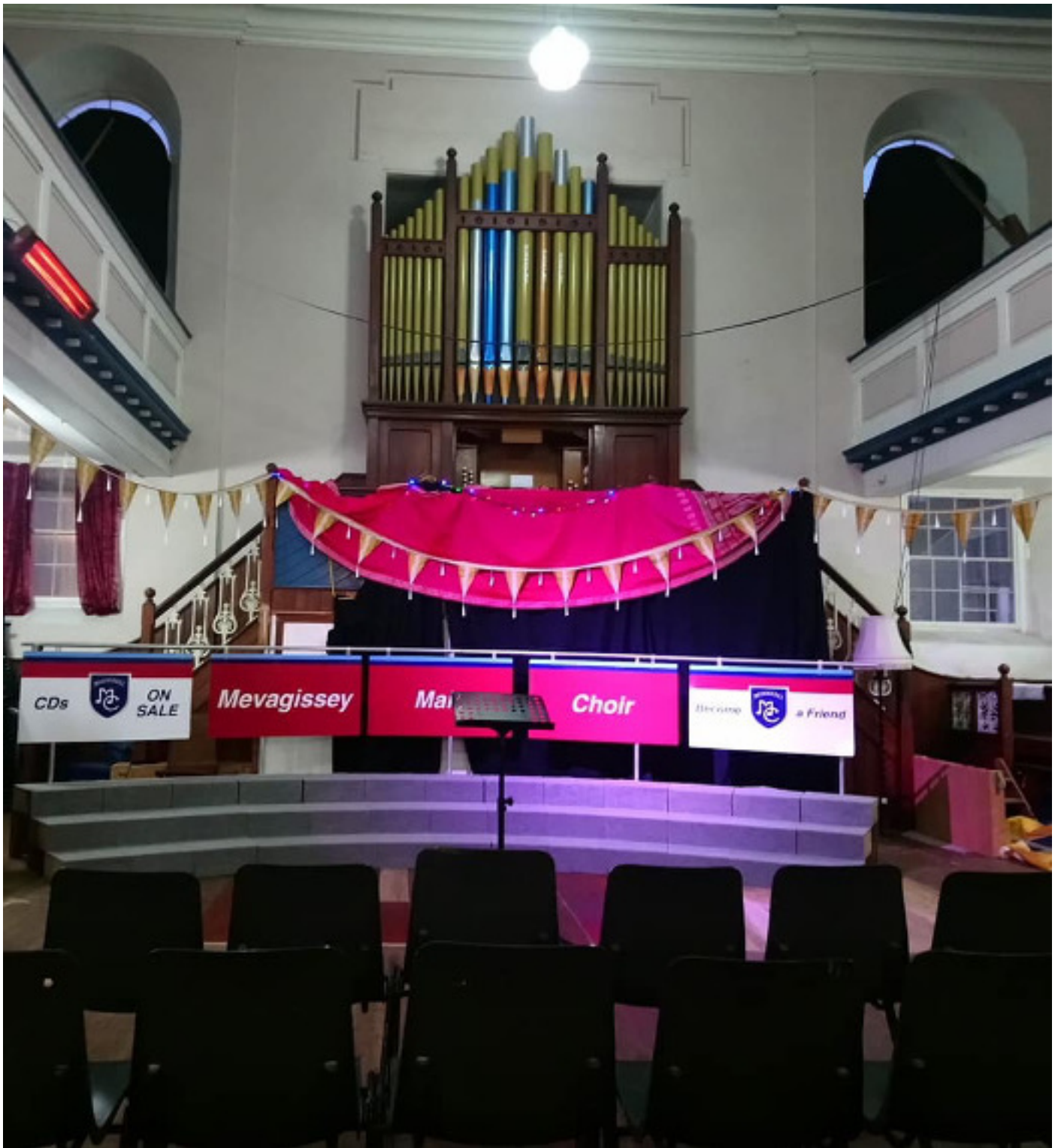
Songs – *and Heaps* - of Praise

Many readers got in touch to say how much they'd enjoyed our performance on BBC's Songs of Praise on the Sunday before Christmas. As most of you know, the recording took place in Penzance in September. The producers initially asked for *'Do You Hear What I Hear'*, which we duly performed, but they also wanted a 'non-Christmassy piece' that they could use during the year. We suggested *'Lower Lights'* so we got that in the can, too. When it came to the editing, however, they decided that the back-up piece suited the theme of the programme better, so that's what they used. They have promised to feature the original choice next year.

Old friends Douglas Robertson and Jane Evans from Surrey wrote: "We were all very impressed with the Choir's performance and agreed how smart you all looked - a credit to the Choir and to Mevagissey. *"Lower Lights"* was particularly eye-pricking, and we've never heard you sing it better.'

Jimmy Miller, of Falmouth, who has been involved with Cornish choirs for many years, said: "I would like to congratulate Mevagissey Male Choir for their singing on 'Songs of Praise'. The choir has a very good tone and balance. I particularly enjoyed the lovely legato line you had in your performance - a very pleasing sound."

'BEST I'VE HEARD FROM A MALE CHOIR', SAYS ASHBURTON SOLOIST



Stage is set in front of the Arts Centre's symbolic organ pipes

It seems a long time ago now, but our first concert following our previous newsletter was way back in October, when we made the trip to Ashburton in Devon. It was our first visit to the town since 2013 when we were joined for the first time by the Plymouth Military Wives Choir.

This time we were at the Ashburton Arts Centre and our guest performer was local soprano Rosemary Turner.



They're not the first to get it wrong!

It was described by our MD as a "sometimes difficult but eventually tremendously rewarding concert". Ok, he was commenting in the early hours of the morning, but we'll take every bit of praise we can get!

Alongside new-ish pieces like 'You Are So Beautiful/Wind Beneath My Wings; Tears in Heaven; Only You' and our increasingly popular '60s medley, we brought back a few that we hadn't done for a while, such as 'Deep River'; 'Jesus Shall Reign' and 'Ave Maria'.

In between, Rosemary entertained us with six pieces, three in each half. They included 'I Feel Pretty' from West Side Story in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Leonard Bernstein's birth, and Robbie Burns' in the first, and 'My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose' midway through the first half, and 'Summertime'; and 'Somewhere', another tribute to Bernstein, in the second.

The event was admirably compered by our old friend Adrian Wilton, whose Cornish

jokes, while often familiar, never fail to raise a hearty laugh. And, when it was all over, we were treated to some of the best food we have ever been given after a concert.

But, back to Graham Willcocks. After what he called a 'tough' first half, in the second "our performance improved to the point that I cannot remember enjoying myself more." He told us that Rosemary Turner, while joining us for some of the best food we've ever been treated to at a concert, had described our programme as the best she had ever heard from a male choir - a wonderful mix of traditional and modern and very entertaining. "She should know", he added. "She sings with many choirs."

On a more philosophical level, he referred again to Rosemary's comments. "We must entertain. That is the way we have to be. If we ever fail in that goal, we shall die like so many other choirs."

He reserved particular praise for the six top tenors who did a magnificent job. Finally, many thanks were due to Second Tenor Chris Bale for working so hard to set up the whole event.

Joint Tavistock Concert Raises £600 for Cornwall Hospices

Just a fortnight later, on 20th October, we were back in Devon, this time for a joint concert with the Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir. Held at St Eustachius Church in Tavistock, the event was raising funds for Children's Hospice South West. We opened the concert with five pieces, following which Tamar gave us *'African Prayer'*, *'When I Fall in Love'*, a couple of Beatles songs, and the spiritual, *'Where Could I Go but to the Lord'*. The two choirs combined to bring the first half to a close, with *'Speed Your Journey'* and *'Jesus Shall Reign'*.



Tamar's answer to George Phillips

After the interval, we returned with *'Au Fond du Temple Saint'*, *'The Way We Were'* and the '60s medley, and our hosts performed five more pieces, among them *'Some Enchanted Evening'* and *'You'll Never Walk Alone'*. We all came together again for *'Gwahoddiaid'* and *'Morte Christe'* - a rousing finale!

Tamar's John Edwards wrote to tell us that the concert raised a magnificent £800 for Cornwall Hospice South West and that they were looking forward to visiting us in 2019.



Nice to see Carolyn aiding Matt at Tavistock

AN AFTERNOON WITH AN OLD FRIEND



Jack is in the centre, with the gold motif on his shirt

In between our two trips across the border, a dozen of us popped over to Lostwithiel, for a mini-concert at the Cowbridge Nursing Home. Cowbridge is now home to our former chairman Jack Hicks can be found and Home Administrator Julie Cameron had asked if we'd come across and sing to the residents. Stephen Gibson promptly organised it.

Jack had been a very popular member of the Choir in his day and it was a real pleasure to see him again. We were unaccompanied, of course – it was a weekday afternoon - but we wore Choir shirts or sweaters, and had a decent programme of traditional songs, such as *'Calm is the Sea'*; *'Haven of Rest'*; *'Lower Lights'* and *'Gypsy'*. All went pretty well, although we were pleased that Graham Willcocks wasn't there to hear our attempt at *'Blue Moon'*!

No matter, the biggest reward for all of us was that Jack himself, whose son and daughter, Derek and Debbie, were in the audience, was able to join us for most of the programme, Remarkably, he remembered both the words and baritone part. Julie wrote afterwards: "Everyone said how lovely the concert was and Jack certainly enjoyed himself." She also thanked us for the gift of a copy of Sing for the Child, our Christmas CD.

OUR 35TH HARVEST OF THE SEA



Jawing in the Jubilee Hall

At the end of October, we were invited to perform our traditional role at St Andrews' 'Harvest of Sea' service. It was our 35th! With Graham Willcocks out of action, Mike S Thompson stepped into the breach again and led us through two sets of five pieces in a packed church. Helen Blamey, Church Secretary, said afterwards: "We greatly enjoyed the Choir's contributions, and the support of your conductor and pianist. The Choir's presence makes it a very special occasion in our annual calendar." She reported that £94 had been donated to the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen and to the Sailors' Society.

Once again, members of the congregation were invited to join us afterwards for a spread in the Jubilee Hall. And what a spread it was. The tables were groaning with plates of food provided by members wives, to whom are, as always, extremely grateful.

The Dinner's a Winner – Again!

For the third year running, the Choir held its annual dinner at the Carlyon Bay Golf Club – and it just seems to get better and better. The food once again was superb and the service even better. Fascinating to see some of those who find it difficult to clap and sing at the same on the risers, exhibiting a few moves on the dance floor to numbers ranging from the Beatles to Abba.

Alex Joins Dad and Grandad on the Risers



Eighteen-year-old Alex Pearce's appearance on the risers at our St Andrews Christmas concert was memorable for at least two reasons. It was the first time, we believe, that three generations of the same family had performed in the Choir. And it brought down our average age by probably 30 years – well, so it seemed.

Alex has joined his Dad, Paul, in the Second Tenors. Grandad John is a Baritone, so they are able to alongside each other in the back row.

Both John, now 84 and a member since the Choir was formed in 1974, and Paul, 51, who joined in 1998 and has become a regular and popular soloist for us, say they are "proud and delighted" that Alex is now singing with them.

Alex himself, who has only recently started work, and attended his first choir practice just three months ago, says he is 'thrilled' to be performing with his Dad and Grandad.

GEORGE WALTZES INTO THE BASSES



George commandeers a Cuban plantation steam loco!

If you detect a little swaying among the Basses this year, look no further than new member George Ellis. George and his wife Rosalie were Gold Medallists in Ballroom and Latin American dancing.

They loved to go cruising every year until Rosalie fell ill. Sadly, she passed away last summer which is when George began to look around for something to keep him busy. Despite being born 'down the road' in Grampound, he'd never heard us sing but some friends recommended him to come down to the harbour one Monday evening in August. As Caesar might have said: "I heard the choir, saw the notice about new members,

and here I am!"

George's working career was spent in banking. He joined Lloyds Bank at 17 and, after two years' National Service with the RAF in West Germany, he returned to the bank's Newquay branch, dealing with the introduction of their mortgage scheme, which was expanding rapidly in the late '70s and early '80s. In 1993, aged 54, George was offered early retirement whereupon he spent some time as a voluntary driver for the NHS transport scheme. By then, he had tragically lost his first wife, Jean, at the early age of 47. "But I have two lovely daughters, Jacqui and Susan, who have supported me throughout." He remarried in 1997 and "blessed with three stepdaughters, Jenny, Jane and Julie. I thank God for the support of the family!" he adds.

It's not just the Choir that keeps him busy now. George is a keen – "that doesn't necessarily mean good" – gardener, specialising in roses. He has recently joined the St. Austell Probus Club and he's a keen follower of the Pirates and desperate to see the new Cornish Stadium become a reality!

George admits to never having sung "seriously", at least as an adult, "but the Choir for me has created a whole new interest," he says. "I wish I had joined years ago! Without exception," he adds, "I have been welcomed as an "old friend" by members, both "old" and "newish", and I will never forget this."

Having only joined the choir in September, George's 'repertoire' is extremely limited so far, but his favourite piece so far is "Speed Your Journey", which got him through the voice test. As he says, "I am looking forward to my first year!"

As this newsletter was being put together, George was preparing to go into hospital for major heart surgery. It should have happened in December, but he sucked a Polo mint on the morning of the op and was turned away! We now hear it was successful and he is home. We all wish him a speedy recovery.



This moving mural at Mevagissey War Memorial was captured by Second Tenor Paul Horsman in November

CONGRATULATIONS...

... to Baritone Robin Murphy who, on 7th February married his long-time partner, Rosey

SOME THINGS MAKE IT ALL WORTHWHILE

It's always a pleasure to report instances where the Choir has been able to bring comfort to people at a distressing time. Michelle Kilburn-Bond wrote to us in June asking for a recording of our 'Back to the '60s' medley for her father who had heard us perform it the quay the previous summer. Having subsequently been diagnosed with a brain tumour, he had been too ill to come to Mevagissey to hear it again in 2018.

Although we hadn't then recorded it (we have now!) another Friend had filmed it and we were able to send a copy to Michelle. Her dad died in October and people attending his funeral were greeted with our recording of 'Away from the Roll of the Sea'. Why that piece? Michelle's 7-year-old son, Seth, is also a big fan, and would "listen to it as he went to sleep", Michelle explained.

PETER PASSES THE BUCKET

Congratulations to Peter Bowker and his team of volunteers who took it in turns to stand outside Tesco in St Austell with buckets on Monday 17th December. Their efforts brought in £385 in donations and they sold eleven CDs.

Peter has now handed over the fundraising reins to fellow Bass Rod Richardson. During his three-year tenure he helped raise around £10,000 – a wonderful effort.

However...

... for all Peter's efforts it's you, our followers, whom we rely on most to keep our Choir going. When you pay to hear us sing, usually the money is going to a charity or good cause. To buy new music is costly, and our excellent music team – Graham Willcocks and Matt Fox – have to be recompensed. This is only possible with your help. This can be done by sending a donation to Mevagissey Male Choir, either by cheque or by BACS, details of which can be found on our website.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Venue	Comment	Time
Sat 2 Mar	Bethel Church	Church anniversary concert	7.30pm
Sat 16 Mar	Gorran Church	Brian Mitchell tribute	7.30pm
Sat 6 Apr	Bude Meth Church		tbc
**Sat 27 Apr	Jubilee Hall	MMC Variety Night	tbc
Sat 6 May	St John's, St Austell	Int Festival with 4 other choirs	tbc
Sat 25 May	St Mawes Memorial Hall	St Mawes RNLI	tbc
Sun 16 Jun	Caerhays Castle	Cancer Research	2.00pm
Sat 22 Jun	St Peter's Church, Noss Mayo		7.30pm
Mon 24 Jun	St Andrews	Meva Feast Week	7.30pm
Sat 6 Jul	Yealmpton Meth Ch		7.30pm
Mon 29 Jul	Mevagissey Quay	Quay concert	7.45pm
5/12/19/26 Aug	Mevagissey Quay	Quay concerts	7.45pm
Sat 21 Sep	Indian Queens Meth Ch	Harvest Festival	7.30pm
Sun 13 Oct	St Andrew's	Harvest of the Sea	tbc