

# MEVAGISSEY MALE CHOIR

SUMMER 2015

NO. 25



*Singing to the First Full House at Plymouth Guildhall for 22 years!*

## RECORD BREAKERS!

Plymouth's Guildhall was sold out for the first time in 22 years on Friday 24th July when Mevagissey Male Choir appeared as special guests in a concert given by the chart-topping Plymouth Military Wives Choir.

Close to 800 paying customers had been shoehorned into a building designed to hold somewhat fewer for the Military Wives' first ever concert on home territory since their formation just four years ago by Gareth Malone.

Fanfares make you sit up. So it was with the opening at the Guildhall. Everyone was already on the edge of their

seats by the time the first guests, the Corps of Drums of HM Royal Marine Cadets, emerged at the back of the hall and played their way on to the stage.

The wonderful military drums were followed by two violinists, Money Highland Hughes and Giselle Fitsimmons, playing the hauntingly beautiful 'Ashokan Farewell'. Next, a lone voice from the balcony heralded the arrival of her Military Wives Choir colleagues, also making their way forward from the back of the hall, and already in full voice.

Don't miss our quay concerts, 7.45pm every Monday from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August. For further information visit our website – [www.meva-choir.co.uk](http://www.meva-choir.co.uk) or our Facebook page.

After 'Let the River Run', 'Do You Hear My Voice' and their 'traditional' Vera Lynn war songs medley, they gave way to Plymouth's 'Britain's Got Talent' finalist Michael Collings, before we made our first contribution, a set of five pieces – 'Nessun Dorma', 'Blue Moon', 'Angels', 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and 'Pearl Fishers'. It drew the accolade of 'absolutely brilliant' from compere, BBC Radio Devon's David Fitzgerald.

The first half ended with the ladies returning to perform their moving 'Stronger Together' and the number that first brought them fame, 'Wherever You Are'.

It was Mevagissey who opened the second half, with 'Homeless', 'Hallelujah', 'Voice of the Child', 'Only You' and 'We Rise Again', whereupon the ladies re-emerged, accompanied by a pair of dancers. As a finale to the set, the female partner was encircled by her colleagues while she shed her costume, to reappear in her Choir purple dress and turquoise shawl, in her place in the front row of the Choir.

Another guest, 'the Singing Soldier', John Reid, performed 'In My Dreams', followed by two more from Michael Collings and five more from the MWC. The evening ended in grand style with Mevagissey joining the ladies on stage for 'Tell Me It's Not True', with a solo by MWC Chairman Lorraine Smith.

A veritable feast awaited us in the lounge following the performance – they evidently thought a lot of our pasties at Eden – and we all spent a very pleasant hour relaxing before boarding the coach for the trip back across the Tamar.

Final word (almost) goes to the MWC. "Thanks to all at Mevagissey Male Choir for your exceptional performance...simply stunning sound. We are so happy with the overall outcome and selling out the venue for the first time in 22 years a great achievement!! Thank you to all you wonderful men and your family and friends for your contribution to the success of the night. We look forward to next time."

The show – for show is what it was - was a resounding success, superbly organised and choreographed by the ladies. And Mevagissey Male Choir were extremely proud to be part of it.



*Joining forces for 'Tell Me Its Not True'*

## ***Cyprus Next!***

The Guildhall event was our fourth appearance with the Plymouth ladies, after Ashburton in 2013, The Minack in May last year and our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party at Eden a few weeks later.

Our links with the Military Wives organisation have been further strengthened with our recent acceptance of an invitation from the Military Wives Choirs at R.A.F. Akrotiri and Episkopi in Cyprus to perform joint concerts with them next year for the entertainment of the troops and their families. Thanks to the sterling efforts of Graham Rundle, we have arranged a trip from 16<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2016. In May next year, of course, we shall be singing again with the Culdrose Military Wives, at the stunning open-air Minack Theatre in Porthcurno.

## FISHERMEN'S MISSION BRINGS FLEET BLESSING SERVICE TO MEVAGISSEY

We found ourselves singing on the Mevagissey quayside a little earlier than usual this year when The Fishermen's Mission arrived in town for *'The Blessing of the Fleet'* on the afternoon of Saturday 27 June. Traditionally held on Mission home soil in Newlyn, the decision was made this year to take the service 'on tour'. First stop was Mevagissey, which apparently boasts the youngest set of skippers in the county.

Led by Matthew Fox – Graham Willcocks was unavailable due to family illness - the Choir gathered on the newly extended jetty, with the Sharks Fin restaurant surprisingly distant, and sang a few Quay Concert standards to begin the proceedings. Prayers were said for the men working at sea and Rev. John Kendall of St Andrews gave an address on the theme of Christ stilling the storm (Anglican minister Marion Barrett also attended). There was a good audience who joined in with *'Will Your Anchor Hold?'* and *'Eternal Father Strong to Save'*



## Honouring Bude's Heroes

Saturday 11th July found us on the north coast, celebrating the charity work of Ray Shaddick and Candy Baker at Bude Methodist Church. A former presenter of Radio Cornwall's 'Sunday Choice', the Boy from Bood', as Ray is known, promoted many choirs, but always gave a special mention to Mevagissey. His work on behalf of Cancer Research has been recognised by the award of the BEM, while Candy has an MBE 2014 for her efforts in support of the town's Stratton hospital.

A full house turned out for the concert, which had been organised by our own, Bude-based Second Tenor Chris Bale, and which was expertly compered by another former Radio Cornwall stalwart, Tamsin Thomas, now running pr and fundraising for Cornwall Hospice Care. With the pulpit directly behind the Choir on the risers, poor Tamsin's pearls were delivered out of sight of the audience! It was a credit to her professionalism that nothing was lost.

Despite being a little short on numbers, the Choir made an excellent job of a full and varied programme, comprising 16 pieces. Interspersed between our sets, the audience was treated to two numbers by Meva Capella – '*I Really Don't Want to Know*' and '*Bye Bye, Love*' and were even invited to get to their feet themselves for '*How Great Thou Art*'.

Graham Willcocks coped manfully with a creaking floorboard directly under his feet at the music stand, while the contributions of pianist Matthew Fox and guitarist Graham Hoskins were as accomplished as ever.

'Morte Christe!' went up the cry for an encore, whereafter we trooped off to the church hall for pasties and tea, and thence to the Falcon to quench the drier throats and entertain an incumbent wedding party with our afterglow.

The concert raised £329-60 for Cancer Research and Stratton Hospital League of Friends. And the Choir sold a magnificent total of 31 cds – we must have been doing something right!



*Choir Treasurer David Leeson presents Ray with a shield and a Choir tie as a mark of our appreciation of his support for male choir singing*

## A FEAST OF ENTERTAINMENT

Mevagissey Feast Week is a wonderful celebration of mid-summer and the bounty of the seas and, by tradition, Mevagissey Male Choir has been a huge supporter of this festival. As usual, there was standing room only in St Andrew's. Not necessarily as usual, it was a very warm evening and the Choir, numbering no fewer than 52, were in shirtsleeve order.

How delightful it was to see much-missed local GP and former Choir Baritone, Chris Tiley, step up to compere the evening. His was an outstanding performance of great panache, combining a series of witty jokes, new entries from the Uxbridge English Dictionary and moments of quiet reflection for absent friends. We are extremely grateful to him.

The unquestionable stars of the show, however, were Africa Entsha, who we must now learn to call Simply Soweto, it seems. This remarkable group first delighted and astonished the Feast Week audience in 2013 with their inimitable Zulu spirit, and their sets full of style, rhythm, harmony and movement. They did not disappoint in 2015. One of the evening's highlights was when the five joined the Choir in '*Homeless*'. The contrast between the formal stillness of our Choir in white and the Africans, dressed in black, and dancing as vigorously as they sang, brought the auditorium to its feet in appreciation. Thank you, Simply Soweto, for a great show, we look forward to having you back soon!



Our own programme featured powerful performances of newer works like '*We Rise Again*', '*Pearl Fishers*' and '*Only You*', while traditional favourites like '*Cornish Hearts*' and the ever popular '*Floral Dance*' couldn't be omitted. Graham Willcocks smiled broadly throughout - always a good sign - and Matthew Fox gave a masterly performance as accompanist, not least in '*Gospel Train*'.

Choir Friends Lynne and Arthur Leigh have written to say it was "a great show as normal and we were very moved by the rendition of '*Mansions of the Lord*'. The concert really enhanced our visit and it is so uplifting to see the pride in audience faces at the singing of '*Cornish Hearts*'."

As we closed with the traditional '*Lower Lights*', there was no doubt that this was another vintage evening's entertainment. There has never been a poor Feast Week Concert and it is hard to imagine one while it continues to attract such enthusiastic audiences year by year – no better way to keep the Choir on its toes.

## NOTEABILITY DO ST AUSTELL PROUD



Saturday 20th June saw the boys make the, in some cases very short, trip to launch St Austell Feast Week at All Saints church, for a joint concert with NoteAbility, a local, 60-strong, community choir led by Matt Douglas. The weather was fine and the car park was only a pound so spirits were high.

Three MMC members 'doubled up in the azure colours of NoteAbility; Alan Dibb and Derek Way from the Tops and Rob Collins from the Second Tenors. Mike Watson, long time MMC stalwart, is also a member. There was serious quick change activity at half time.

Compere was the incomparable Adrian Wilton who had new and old stories that set a relaxed, lively tone through the concert. And, in the front row sat the Mayor of St Austell, clearly enjoying the music and stories as a welcome break from chairing meetings about closed toilets, vanishing shops and expensive car parks.

NoteAbility's repertoire is truly varied, from pop - *'Da Doo Ron Ron'*, taken at a jaunty tempo - to a medieval Italian song *'El Grillo'*, via a look back at the St Austell food riots of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in *'Enough Was Enough'*, composed by Matt himself, who directed from the keyboard. Their final item, *'Hey, Lucy'*, mingled a number of Beatles favourites in his own arrangement. In between, impressive solos were performed by Charlie Whetter and Lorella Jacinto. Altogether, NoteAbility set the musical bar high.

Tea was served to the patrons in the interval and MMC started the second half with *'Nessun Dorma'* followed by *'Mansions of The Lord'*, where the 'humming' verse echoed the 'Mevagissey Sound' of yesteryear.



Our Meva Capella quartet were in fine form with *'Tonight'* from *'West Side Story'* and *'Bye Bye Love'* of Everly Brothers fame.

The *'Pearl Fishers'* went well, with the Second Tenors newly arranged in their two segments for the humming. *'Only You'* was crisply rhythmic and lyrically sound and *'We Rise Again'* gave an ideal big finish.

Congratulations go to Alan Dibb for the smooth organisation of the programme - and to everyone for a superb afterglow at the White Hart.

## Thank You

Due to a bout of surgery I have been a little incapacitated in recent weeks and I am therefore indebted to a number of people for their assistance in gathering and contributing information and photos for this edition. They are, in no particular order, Bernard Hocking, Roger Mitchell, Jo Scarratt, Mike Thompson and Nick Nicholls.

As always, my thanks also go to my regular helpers: Carolyn George (photos), Graham Hoskins (printing) and Jane Stubberfield (formatting).

## Festival Proves Perfect Setting for Concert No. 1,000



Well, we duly completed our 1,000<sup>th</sup> concert on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, when we joined four other choirs at St John's in St Austell as part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cornwall International Male Voice Choral Festival.

Following Taunton Deane MVC, we performed a set of six of our most popular pieces – *'Blue Moon'*, *'Hallelujah'*, *'Mansions of the Lord'*, *'Angels'*, *'Bohemian Rhapsody'* and *'Au Fond du Temple Saint'*.

Described by Douglas Robertson and Jane Evans, Choir Friends from Surrey, as "the highlight of our holiday", the concert was a celebration of male choral singing. "We were privileged to hear not only the Meva Choir, but also the Festival-winning choir from Switzerland (Männerstimmen Basel), our local Epsom Male Voice Choir, and those great guys from Wales (the South Wales Gay Men's Chorus). A great evening indeed."

The celebrating continued back at St Austell Brewery with an excellent afterglow with our fellow choristers.

So what did our founder members make of the 1,000 landmark? Gil Blamey summed it up. "Proud that the choir has reached 1000 and to be part of it," he said – "especially after the great concert at Feast Week 2015."

His fellow Second Tenor, Roger Mitchell, was a little more expansive. "We've had good bad and indifferent; soaked in sweat and frozen to the bone. But always doing our best and looking forward to the next time."

Incidentally, this might be a good moment to add apologies to Baritone John Pearce who has been a regrettable omission from previous 'founder member' lists and has duly been awarded his red badge.

## John Lewis



*John Lewis, back row 2<sup>nd</sup> from right, with other choir founders*

The Choir has lost another of its stalwarts. News of the passing, at the age of 81, of John Lewis, a founder member and, until recently, an ever-present in our Baritone section, came in May. He had been in poor health for some 18 months.

Those who knew John from the early days say he was a very enthusiastic Choir member from the outset, and worked as hard as any to raise funds to pay for music and matching trouser and shirts – in those days the Choir performed in shirt sleeves! He served on the Committee and was well supported by Audrey, his wife, herself a very gifted musical entertainer

and many of our older supporters will remember performances with the once very popular Contact Club.

John and Audrey, who pre-deceased John by several years, arrived in Mevagissey around 1970 with their two sons, purchasing a property at Cross Terrace, School Hill. His skills as a roof slater and tiler were soon in great demand, and his business, J W Lewis & Son, grew rapidly, eventually employing a large labour force in Trethowel, St Austell.

Through his hard work and friendly nature, combined with his established love of male voice singing - he would travel long distances to hear his favourites, the Treorchy MVC – he made many friends locally, so, when the idea of a male choir in Mevagissey began to take shape, he was a natural.

When he wasn't working or singing, John and Audrey loved to ski, taking many holidays with a large group of friends from various parts of the country, in the small Austrian town of Lofer. Almost until the end, John remained a very fit man - he was still clambering over roofs at 75 – and was proud of his daily walks that took him to Pentewan, Heligan and beyond.

A service was held at St Andrew's on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June, where, at John's own request, the Choir sang 'A Celtic Benediction' and 'Gwahoddiad'.

## Denis Drew

We were also saddened to hear of the passing of Denis Drew, a well-loved member of our Bass section and our Chairman for 12 years until he stepped down in the mid '90s. He was 17 years a Choir member and many will remember his deep and richly resonating voice. There was an excellent representation from the Choir at a service held for Denis at St Pauls, Charlestown, on 8<sup>th</sup> July, and our thoughts are with his partner Esther, also mother of greatly missed Top Tenor Ralph Rowe.

## ‘GRANFER’ NICK TAKES THE CHAIR

When Graham Rundle stepped down as chairman in the spring, we didn't have to look far for a successor; there cannot be a more popular Choir member than Top Tenor 'Nick' Nicholls who, in May, was unanimously voted into the post. Bass Steve Flavell was elected Vice Chairman.

Typically, Nick's first act was to pay tribute to Graham's (continuing) contribution and few will be surprised to learn that, asked his ambition for the Choir, his response was simply "to remain a friendly, grounded group of men."

Born at Calamansack Farm, in Port Navas on the Helford River, you can't get more Cornish than Nick. When he wasn't entertaining holiday-makers by diving into the estuary for money, he studied to become a teacher and, in 1964, was appointed science and maths teacher at Fowey Community College. He went on to become Head of Science and Deputy Head and barely a concert takes place these days without one or more of his former pupils in the audience.

Nick has been a member of our Choir since October 2006, but he's been singing since he was 14 (that's an awful lot of singing!). From his first duet, *'The White Rose'* at primary school age with cousin Rosalie, singing Constantine Carols at the local football club, and taking part in Ralph Reader's 'Gang Show' in the '50s and '60s, he's hardly had time draw breath! He joined the Fowey Male Voice Choir in the late '60s, and then the ECLP Eastern Area.

It was two former pupils, Second Tenor Cliff Burnett and sadly missed Top Tenor Ralph Rowe, who, as Nick puts it, made 'continual strong representation' – on other words, 'nagged' – him into joining us. Having thankfully recovered from a very serious illness just over three years ago, he now confines his singing to just three practices a week, plus concerts, with three different groups! Plus any weddings, funerals or birthday celebrations that want a song or two.

Despite passing his voice test with *'The Old Woman'* his favourite Choir piece is *'An Evening Pastorale'*, a soft, tranquil air that somehow couldn't be more fitting.

Nick married a Yorkshire lass, Lesley, an SRN (now retired), and they have a son Ashley, a mining engineer, and daughter Kate, a children's psychiatric nurse who presented them with their first grandchild, Beatrix, just over a year ago. Bea is now the new number one in his list of interests, which includes, apart from singing, gardening, motor-cycling and boating (he still takes his turn in the Fowey Gallants safety boat).

His most memorable moment with the Choir was our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert last year at Eden. Outside the Choir? Just look at the picture!



## Former Chancellor in at the Deep End

As Napoleon might have said - Mevagissey is a choir of shopkeepers. For the fourth time in three years we welcome a Mevagissey merchant to our ranks. New Bass Chas Bailey, proprietor of 'The Harbour Trading Co' and 'Quaycraft', passed his voice test in May, joining Top Tenor Dom McVeigh ('Kit and Caboodle'); Second Tenor Mark Dooling ('Café Movieland') and Baritone Mike Thompson (Tea on the Quay).

Having spent many happy holidays in Cornwall, Chas pitched up in Cornwall in 1997, with his wife Ann and two daughters, Susie and Lisa, for no better reason than that they loved the county, and fancied running a business here. They ended up buying two! Sadly, Chas lost Ann last year but the two shops are "still being run by Susie and Lisa - with a little help from me!"

Back in the mists of time, Staffordshire-born Chas was a Marine Engineer for Shell Tankers which took him to many far flung exotic places – "and some not so exotic", he says! He believes this also helped engender his love of the sea and a desire to move to Cornwall.

He started singing many years ago when he was asked to help in a production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. He auditioned for the chorus and ended up playing The Chancellor! However, male voice choirs were new to him,



although he'd heard of us, of course, in the years since moving here. Then he brought in Second Tenor and electrician Paul Pearce to do some work on his properties, and there was no way out. Paul's silver tongue got to work. "He suggested that, as I had sung before, I should consider joining the Choir and each practice day he would ring me to nag me into coming along, which I eventually did.

"I thoroughly enjoyed it, and was very moved when I first heard the sound that we all make. It certainly made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. I have also found everyone to be really friendly and welcoming, and am now looking forward immensely to performing with you all."

When he's not working or singing Chas likes to get out on the golf course or to walk the coastal path. And he hasn't lost his love for Musical Theatre since his G&S days. Curiously, he doesn't mention cooking. But, then, that pose at the barbecue

doesn't look terribly convincing, does it?

*Chas to Fire Up the Basses*

## DONATIONS RECEIVED

The Choir members would once again like to say a big 'thank you' to the Friends of the Choir for their continuing support. Since the last newsletter we have received generous donations from John and Eileen Bye (Rochester, Kent), Juliet Inkester (Mevagissey), Dickson & Bibbi Lee (USA), Bernice Legg (Bridgwater, Somerset), Douglas Robertson (Weybridge, Surrey), Diana Jane Evans (Epsom, Surrey) and Barry & Jen Sams (Old Windsor, Berkshire).

As readers will know, proceeds from most of our concerts go to various charities, so voluntary contributions from our supporters are vital to our ability to continue, helping pay for our training, our uniforms and, most importantly, our music. Cheques should be made out to Mevagissey Male Choir and sent to Hillside House, Biscovey Road, Par, PL24 2HW.

## CONCERT DIARY

### 2015

Sat 1 <sup>st</sup> August	MS Centre/MNDA Funds	Sticker Football Club	7.30pm
Mons 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> August	Quay Concerts	Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Thu 20 <sup>th</sup> August	Regatta Week	Fowey Town Quay	6.30pm
Mon 24 <sup>th</sup> August	Quay Concert	Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Sun 30 <sup>th</sup> August	Songs of Praise	Charlestown Quay	5.30pm
Mon 31 <sup>st</sup> August	Quay Concert	Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Sat 26 <sup>th</sup> September	St Austell Flower Festival	St Augustine's, St Austell	7.30pm
Sun 18 <sup>th</sup> October	Harvest of the Sea	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	4.00pm
Sat 24 <sup>th</sup> October	With Mousehole MVC	Chapel St Chapel, Mousehole	7.00pm
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
Mon 14 <sup>th</sup> December	<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 15 <sup>th</sup> – 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	Jt with Akrotiri and Episkopi Military Wives	Cyprus	