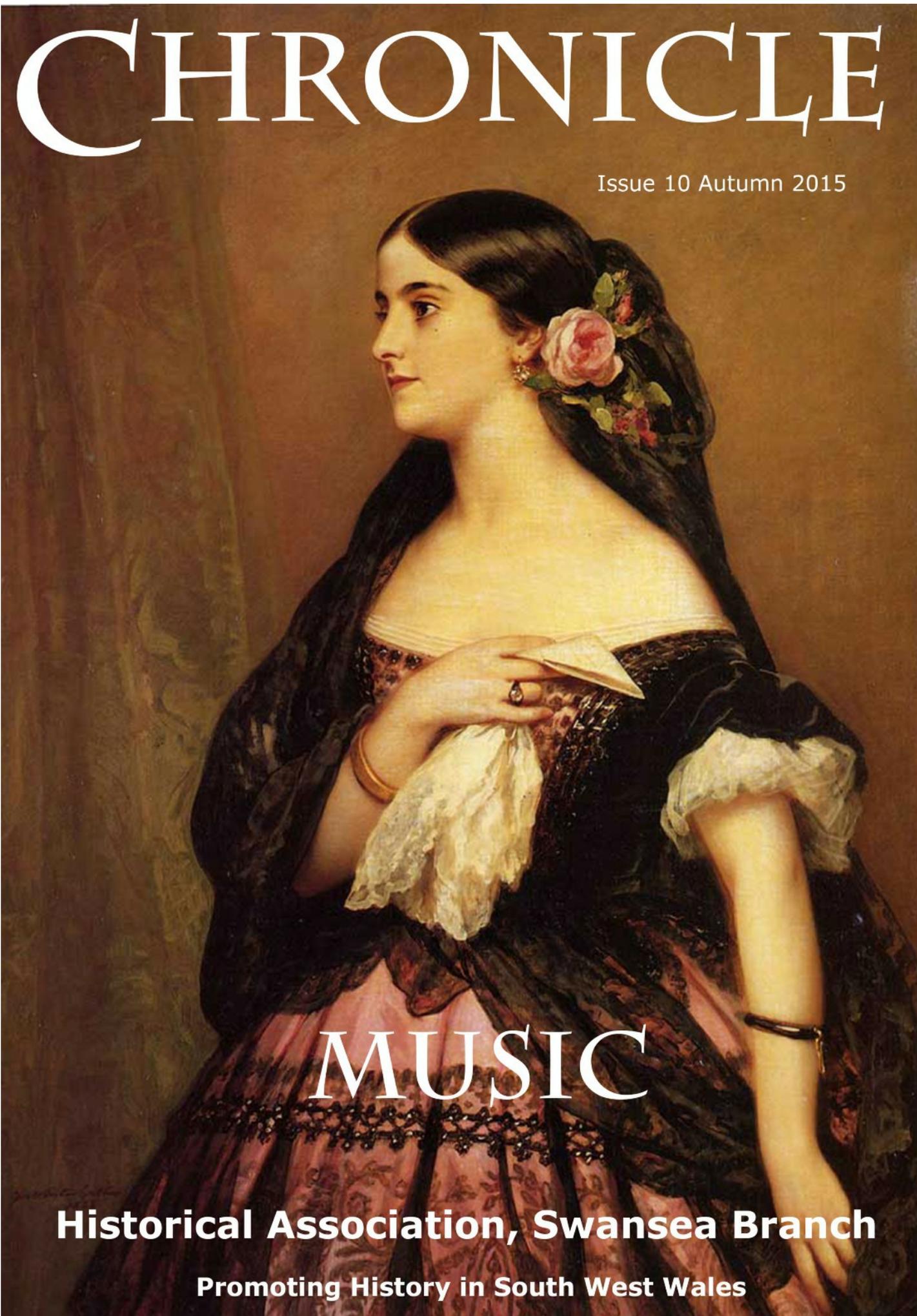


CHRONICLE

Issue 10 Autumn 2015

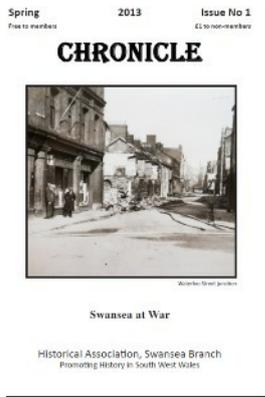


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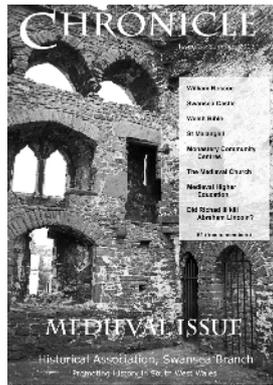
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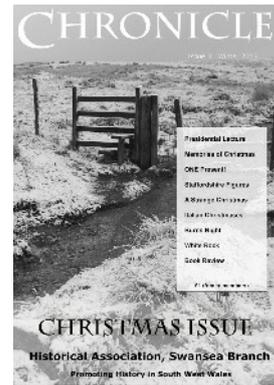
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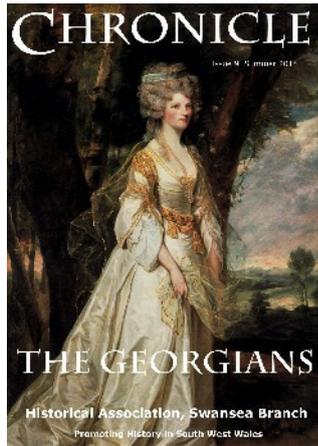
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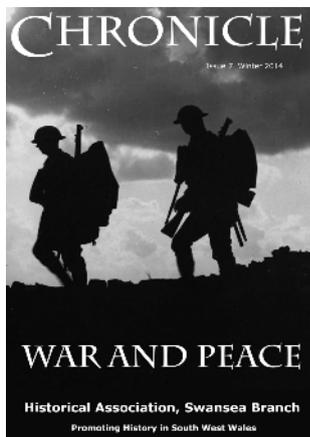


**This is the
10th
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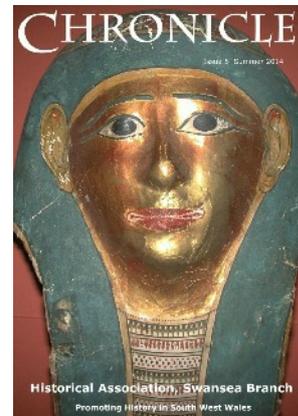


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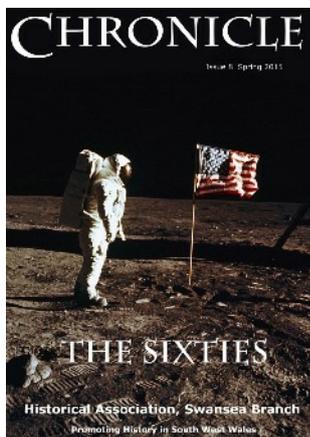


As editor, I would like to say a big thank you to all the people who have helped and contributed to making *Chronicle* such a success each quarter.

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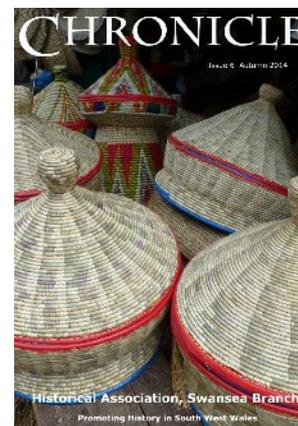


Without writers we would have blank pages. Thanks must go to Andrew for the excellent job he does on printing (often at one minutes notice).

Also thanks to all the sponsors, both the private and business ones, who have enabled us to have extra pages, some in colour, who have given enough money to cover the cost of printing

'Chronicle'

6.



From the Editor

margaret.mccloy@sky.com



I started writing this letter while I was sitting in a garden in Newcastle, Northern Ireland, just where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea, a sight that inspired the well-loved song by Percy French. Born in 1854, French, like other musicians mentioned in this magazine, was a real polymath: musician, writer, engineer, entertainer and water colourist. The song became a great hit and was sung and recorded by many different musicians, including a version on the trombone by Chris Barber. Incidentally, the trumpet player in Chris Barber's band, was the grandfather of Max who has written about his time as a choirboy on page 5.

The first song that French wrote, was when he was a student at Trinity College Dublin in 1877; the very popular 'Abdul Abulbul Amir'.

Unfortunately, being naïve, he sold the copyright for only £5. Having to earn a living, he joined the Board of Works, as 'Inspector of Drains'. It was during this time that he wrote his best works including 'Phil, the Fluther's Ball'. He was a man of great talent and gentle humour and became editor of 'The Jarvey', a weekly comic paper.

Whilst some of the other musicians written about may not have been drain inspectors, not that we know, but most of them have full time jobs in differing capacities. Not for many is there the luxury of being a full time musician, but in their spare time, they have helped to enrich the lives of many people and many towns and cities. Wales in particular, owe them a great debt of gratitude for the time that they devote to music.



Water colour by Percy French

Oh, Mary, this London's a wonderful sight,

With people all working by day and by night.

Sure they don't sow potatoes, nor barley, nor wheat,

But there's gangs of them digging for gold in the street.

At least when I asked them that's what I was told,

So I just took a hand at the digging for gold,

But for all that I found there I might as well be

Where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea.

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Music

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“Those who wish to sing always find a song.”
— Swedish Proverb



Without music, life would be
a mistake

Friedrich Nietzsche



Alas for those who never sing, but die with
all their music in them.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Life as a choirboy in St George's Chapel ,Windsor Castle

At eight years old, I entered a stuffy room for an audition for the St. George's Chapel choir in Windsor Castle. I had never been part of a choir and had only been taking singing lessons for a few months prior, but fortunately I got the scholarship. Being in the choir gave me a multitude of memorable experiences, including singing for the Queen at Christmas and Easter, singing at Royal Weddings and the Annual Garter Day Service.

The choir has helped me by encouraging me to continue to study music, which has been one of the best decisions I have made.

Admittedly, the early mornings or long evenings practicing after school can be laborious; however, I believe that benefits of belonging to a creative group are unique. The encouraging social atmosphere amongst people who quickly become your friends has a hugely positive effect on oneself, which is, in turn, reflected in one's actions towards others.

The epitome of this for me was Ash Wednesday, when I was a chorister. The silence of the empty chapel was broken by the first chorus of Allegri's 'Miserere Mei Deus', its perfect harmonies resonating throughout the chapel. The simple homophony perfectly brought the voices together, before the melisma of the overlapping parts, creating the most beautiful progressions followed by a timeless Gregorian chant. Then, in the furthest end of the chapel, **the soloists echo at the edge of hearing:** the exquisite harmonies and suspensions creating music of pure emotion before the soaring top C.

In my opinion, it is the most perfect and emotional piece of choral music ever written.

There are many observable physical and mental benefits to choral singing: in a recent UK survey, singing in a choir was shown to have a great benefit on people's psychological well being. Given the very low costs of being part of a choir (often free and sometimes paid!), this research suggests that joining one is a "cost-effective way to improve people's well-being." A study at Cardiff University in 2012 showed that lung cancer patients who sang in a choir had a greater respiratory capacity than those who hadn't.

People who have experienced the positive effects of choirs are everywhere, including the England cricket captain Alistair Cook He has credited much of his discipline and organisation to the 6am wake up calls for practice when he was a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral, and recalls that being part of a choir encouraged development of such skills.

Planning ahead and sorting music, as well as commitment to a group where everyone's roles are interdependent, in my opinion, helps one cope in later life as a leader in challenging environments.

I have continued to sing during my senior school years and have recently travelled to India as part of the Eton College Chapel Choir – raising funds for The Indian Head Injury Foundation, who bring music to children living in slums with the charity Songbound.

Max Halcox

Miserere mei, Deus: secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.

Et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.

Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea: et a peccato meo munda me.

Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco: et peccatum meum contra me est semper.

The Joy of Singing

Listening to a recent radio broadcast of Ralph Vaughan Williams' impressive choral work, the *Sea Symphony*, I found that the image I had in mind was not that of mighty waves crashing against a rocky shore or ships battling against the power of the sea. In my mind's eye I was standing in the middle of a row of singers, the orchestra seated in front of the soprano section (the blast of sound from the horns!), the conductor commanding the performers. I saw the riot of colour of the Brangwyn panels, the faces of the audience, but most of all I remembered the experience, the joy, of soprano, alto, tenor and bass blending, interpreting the music printed on the pages before us, producing the sounds which the composer had intended when he first set down the notes on paper.

In common with others who have enjoyed singing since childhood I can hardly imagine life without music. I am lucky enough to have encountered talented musicians who encouraged an interest in music throughout my life. Chapel organists who stretched the capabilities and repertoire of the chapel choir – I can still remember the thrill of singing Vivaldi's *Gloria* from the chapel gallery as a schoolgirl – an inspired teacher who taught cerdd dant to nine year olds – the triumphant smiles when the separate, complementary lines of music not only blended, but finished together! Then there are the inspirational conductors – one who simply glows with the joy of music, another; the late Doreen Onions; who drew more from her choristers than they dreamt they were capable of.



Gregorio Allegri 1582-1652

Over the years I have rehearsed and performed with choirs of well over a hundred voices and those of less than ten or twelve. One memorable concert took place in a more or less disused ('friendless') church in a field on the Brecon Beacons. Apart from the difficulty of finding the venue, the lighting was interesting – with no electricity, we had been asked to bring candelabras or battery-powered lights. The instruments, including a harpsichord, were carried across the field! Amazingly, there was a large and appreciative audience. Unfortunately, as the evening went on, the candles were moved closer to the instruments, the music became invisible, the conductor and audience vanished into the gloom. Then the bats roosting in the rafters came out. A wonderful evening was had by all.

Whatever the size of choir, the aim is to sing as well as possible, to interpret the music to the best of the choir's ability. When every singer has put their heart and soul into the music, whether over weeks of preparation or merely one or two rehearsals, choristers come away from a performance with a feeling of satisfaction, if not exhilaration. As a chorister I appreciate this commitment in other choirs. One notable occasion was a performance of Handel's *Messiah* by The National Youth Choir of Wales at The Royal Albert Hall during the BBC Proms. The singing was superb and the choristers exalted at the end of the concert.

I have been lucky enough to have sung in choirs which have been, at the least, reasonably musically accomplished, but even less than musically talented groups enjoy their music-making. I remember a concert some years ago (not locally) where the choir was at variance with the organ, the tempo differed between sections and the pitch was very approximate. Yet at the end of the concert the performers all looked happy. The conductor was overheard saying how pleased he had been with the performance. All those concerned had obviously derived a great deal of joy from the evening.

Choristers are sometimes asked why we look so serious. It can be a difficult question to answer. However enjoyable, uplifting or moving the work in question, concentration is needed to give a good performance. I have sung in several church choirs and one highlight of the church repertoire is Allegri's *Miserere*, with its multiple parts, plainsong sections and the exposed, soaring notes of the treble solos. This is nerve-racking, glorious music, but holding your line or singing those high C's does not allow for any distraction. Similarly, a chorister's solo first verse of *Once in Royal David's City* beginning a candlelit carol service needs complete focus of attention, but the elated face later tells its own story. Smiling carol singers shaking a collecting tin in the market place simply do not require the level of commitment needed for the joyous experience of performing Handel's *Dixit Dominus* or J.S.Bach's *Jesu, meine Freude* in a great cathedral or concert hall. Years later, listening to the work in concert or in recording, memories of past performances and friends who sang on those occasions brings a mixture of joy and sadness, but overwhelmingly, the joy of glorious music and a shared experience remains.

Gwyneth Anthony

** Great news **

The Historical Association, which was created to support the study and enjoyment of history in 1906, have asked to put copies of '*Chronicle*' on their website. Two copies were given to Justin Champion, the HA president, to read when he came to Swansea to give the presidential lecture in September. The HA were delighted with the magazines and are in the process of downloading the first 8 issues, starting with the original one from Spring 2013. Then as each quarterly issue is printed, it will be put on their web site, enabling it to be read nationwide.

To access the site, go to : http://www.history.org.uk/resources/he_resources_87.html

Bryn Terfel Jones.

Born in Pant Glas, Caernarfonshire, North Wales. His father was a farmer. A native Welsh speaker. Knowing of another Welsh baritone called Bryn Jones he chose Bryn Terfel as his professional name. A family friend taught him how to sing from a young age starting with traditional Welsh songs. After winning numerous competitions for his singing, he moved to London in 1984 and entered the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he studied under Rudolf Piernay. It is recorded that initially he applied to the Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff but when the reply was addressed to "Miss Terfel" he was so annoyed that a Welsh college did not realise that Bryn was a man's name he accepted a place in London. Graduating in 1989 he was the winner of both the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Award and the Gold Medal. That same year he came second behind Dmitri Hvorostovsky in the Cardiff BBC Singer of the World Competition, but consoled himself by winning the Lieder Prize.



**Glorious is the Voice of Man, and sweet is the music
of the harp.”**

— Richard Llewellyn, *How Green Was My Valley*

Eisteddfod

The National Eisteddfod is seen as a celebration of the Welsh language. Traditionally held in the first week of August all the competitions are all held in Welsh. The venue is officially proclaimed a year in advance at which time the themes and texts for the competitions are published. Locations are generally known two or three years ahead. The Eisteddfod Act of 1959 allowed local authorities to give financial support to the event. Traditionally the Eisteddfod venue alternates between north and south Wales, so when it was announced that both the 2014 and 2015 Eisteddfod would be held in South Wales this was regarded as controversial and the decision was later reversed and Montgomeryshire named as host county for 2015. Hundreds of tents, pavilions and booths are erected in an open space to create the maes (field). The space required for this means that it is rare for the Eisteddfod to be in a city or town, and usually it is held somewhere with more space. Car parking for day visitors alone requires several large fields, and many people camp on the site for the whole week.

The festival has a quasi-druidic flavour, with the main literary prizes for poetry and prose being awarded in colourful and dramatic ceremonies under the auspices of the Gorsedd of Bards of the Island of Britain, complete with prominent figures in Welsh cultural life dressed in flowing druidic costumes, flower dances, trumpet fanfares and a symbolic Horn of Plenty. However, the Gorsedd is not an ancient institution or a pagan ceremony but rather a romantic creation by Iolo Morganwg in the 1790s, which first became part of the Eisteddfod ceremonial in 1819. Nevertheless, it is taken very seriously, and an award of a crown or a chair for poetry is a great honour. The Chairing and Crowning ceremonies are the highlights of the week, and are presided over by the Archdruid. Other important awards include the Prose Medal first introduced in 1937.

Adelina Patti (1843 – 1919)

She was born **Adela Juana Maria Patti** in Madrid, the last child of tenor Salvatore Patti and soprano Caterina Barilli). Her Italian parents were working in Madrid, Spain, at the time of her birth. In her childhood, the family moved to New York City. Patti grew up in the Wakefield section of the Bronx, where her family's home is still standing. Patti sang professionally from childhood, and developed into a coloratura soprano with perfectly equalized vocal registers and a surprisingly warm, satiny tone. Patti learned how to sing and gained understanding of voice technique from her brother-in-law Maurice Strakosch, who was a musician and impresario.

Patti's career was one of success after success. She sang not only in England and the United States, but also as far afield in mainland Europe as Russia, and in South America as well, inspiring audience frenzy and critical superlatives wherever she went. Her girlish good looks gave her an appealing stage presence, which added to her celebrity status.

Along with her near contemporaries Jenny Lind and Thérèse Tietjens, Adelina Patti remains one of the most famous sopranos in history, owing to the purity and beauty of her lyrical voice and the unmatched quality of her bel canto technique.

The composer Giuseppe Verdi was a great fan, writing in 1877 he described her as being perhaps the finest singer who had ever lived and a stupendous artist. His admiration for Patti's talent was shared by numerous music critics and social commentators of her era. She last sang in public in October 1914, taking part in a Red Cross concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London organized to

aid victims of World War I. In her retirement, Patti, now officially Baroness Cederström, settled in the Swansea Valley in south Wales, where she purchased Craig-y-Nos Castle. There she had her own private theatre, a miniature version of the one at Bayreuth, and made her gramophone recordings.

Patti also funded the substantial station building at Craig y Nos/Penwyllt on the Neath and Brecon Railway. In 1918, she presented the Winter Garden building from her Craig-y-Nos estate to the city of Swansea. It was re-erected and renamed the Patti Pavilion. She died at Craig-y-Nos in 1919 of natural causes and eight months later was buried at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris to be close to her Father



Pavarotti

Experienced his first singing success in the 1955 Welsh Eisteddfod in Llangollen. A member of The Corale Rossini, a male voice choir from Modena (that also included his father), the choir won first prize in the international choir section. He later said that this was the most important experience of his life, inspiring him to become a professional singer.

Ivor Novello

Born in Cardiff, Wales, was the son of a rent collector for the city council. His mother, Clara Novello Davies was an internationally known singing teacher and choral conductor. As a boy, Ivor was a successful singer in the Welsh Eisteddfod. His mother set up as voice teacher in London where he met leading performers, including members of George Edwardes's Gaiety Theatre Company, classical musicians such as Landon Ronald, and singers such as Adelina Patti. Another of his mother's associates was Clara Butt, who taught him to sing "Abide with Me" when he was a boy of six.

Novello was educated privately in Cardiff and then Gloucester, where he studied harmony and counterpoint with Herbert Brewer, the cathedral organist. From there he won a scholarship to Magdalen College School in Oxford, where he was a solo treble in the college choir. He later said that this prolonged youthful exposure to early sacred choral music had turned his tastes, in reaction, to lush romantic music. Although Brewer had told him he would not have a career in music, Novello from his early youth showed a facility for writing songs, and when he was only 15, one of his songs was published.

After leaving school, he gave piano lessons in Cardiff, and then moved to London in 1913 with his mother. They took a flat above the Strand Theatre, which became his London home for the rest of his life.



**We'll gather lilacs in the spring again
And walk together down an English lane
Until our hearts have learnt to sing again
When you come home once more.**

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The only thing better than singing, is more singing
Ella Fitzgerald

Be Happy, Sing in a Choir

A study of 4000 year old bone objects that were found in Lithuania, revealed that one object, appeared to be a bird's leg bone with holes drilled into it and had the appearance of a flute. A replica was made and a sound similar to a flute's sound was obtained.

Fascinating research, but there is a well-known older instrument, and that is the human voice. As old as man and used for millennia to entertain, inspire and engage spiritually with anyone listening, either willingly or unwillingly. 'Sing lustily', instructed John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, 'and with good courage. Beware of signing as if you were half dead, or half asleep, but lift up your voice with strength'. I have been singing with good courage since the age of eight when I was a church chorister. My life has been richly influenced by chorale music ranging from the 9th century to the contemporary music of the 21st century. It has been a journey of self-tuition. A recent study by Professor Sharples, of the Wellness Promotion Unit, determined that group singing is a powerful activity with health benefits such as well being and increased self-confidence, empowerment and interpersonal skills lowering feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety. I have introduced many people to choral music, men and women who had very few links with music but are now enthusiastic members of local choirs who are glad to have new choristers to swell their ranks.

Research has found that 'singing in a choir was better for one than playing sport'. And probably safer too! 'People who sang in a choir had a stronger sense of being part of meaningful groups'.

The quality of music that I have rehearsed and performed with Swansea Philharmonic Choir has kept my brain working continuously. I am a founder member of this choir, having sung with

them for 54 years and at every concert that they have given, which must run into the hundreds. The friendships made and the social aspects of singing in a choir are tremendous. You can't over-estimate it. It has been the driving factor in my life and is available to everyone. My main reason for writing this article is to stress the value of choral singing for older people which can go a long way to ease their loneliness. With modern technology, music can be obtained by the press of a button, but research shows that if you can participate in a choir, it stimulates a different part of the brain. When voices soar together, it accentuates involvement and provides a vital way of improving your well being.



As William James said 'I don't sing because I'm happy; I'm happy because I sing'.

And I am happy with the oldest instrument that I have been gifted with, which is still as strong as ever, my voice. Use it or lose it. I would advise everyone to use it.

Sid Kidwell

Pontnewydd Male Choir

Edward V11 was on the throne when several men, working in local industry in Cwmbran, decided to start a male voice choir.

That was back in 1904 and it has been in continuous existence ever since throughout two World Wars and the Great Depression. Originally known as The Upper Cwmbran Male Voice Party, it entered its first Eisteddfod in 1906 in Pontclun.

In 1918 the choir moved to Pontnewydd Mission Hall for practises. 1924 saw the choir making the first of many journeys to the Royal Albert Hall. In 1930 the link with Upper Cwmbran was finally severed when the name was changed to the Pontnewydd United Male Voice party.

That year also saw the election of the choir's first President Mr T. W. Horton. The choir sang at the first post-war Caerleon Eisteddfod. Also performing as an 'under 16 boy soloist' was a very young Master Walford Hutchings.

Walford Hutchings MBE, now retired and the honoured Emeritus Conductor, took over the reigns as conductor in 1970, having been an accompanist for three years. In 1972 the choir changed its name once again to the Pontnewydd Male Choir.

As a registered charity the Choir has raised thousands of pounds for worthy causes, giving concerts all over the UK. The choir has also travelled extensively overseas and in 2014 the choir visited the Normandy beaches and sang at the American cemetery and Bayern cathedral.

Since its inception, the choir has benefited from the great loyalty of its officers and choristers .

The present conductor and Musical Director, Pauline Carey, has recently left her position as accompanist to take up the baton. She began playing the piano when she was six ears old and whilst still a child ,played the piano and organ at Richmond Road

Baptist Church in Pontnewydd. Aged 16, Pauline became assistant pianist with *The Mellowtones*, a male choir mostly comprising of Girling's employees in Cwmbran. Captain Girling invented a new mechanical braking system for the Hudson Cycle Company and the Midlands firm is now famous the world over for its Girling braking system.

20 years later Pauline became the Musical Director Pontnewydd Male Choir. The assistant Conductor is Keith Jones and the new accompanist is Annette Williams.

The President, Brian Davies was delighted this year, to be able to hand over a cheque for £1000 to The Welsh Warriors, Richard Hunt Foundation, which has been set up in memory of Pte Richard Hunt. A brave ' Welsh Warrior' who was the 200th soldier to lose his life whist serving in Afghanistan.

The choir have just given their 110th Annual concert with guest artists tenor, Wynne Evans and harpist and singer Caitlan Prowle.

Throughout the second World War, the choir continued, sometimes with only ten choristers at practise. Now, with membership of around seventy people, the choir looks set to carry on singing



Muzak, Jingles and Earworms.....

an assault to the ear or brilliant advertising ploys?

If music be the food of love, as Shakespeare famously declared, surely he would be now be horrified by the growing use of Muzak. Background music that is commonly played in places where people meet or gather – shopping centres, larger stores, restaurants, telephone call holding centres, airlines (during the stressful take-off and landing procedures), surgeries, hotels, lifts.....the list grows ever longer.

The idea appears to be that such background noise acts as a soothing influence in what could be potential stressful situations. Soothing ? Ask anyone who has to listen to Vivaldi's truncated *Spring* movement on a constant loop while waiting for a human voice to break in and change an estimated gas bill just how soothing the experience really is! Sadly, the Doctor also feels that you need to hear Vivaldi when waiting to renew your prescription on the phone. By the time you get through, it makes you feel like asking the doctor to add some anti-depressants as well.

Even worse than the forced Vivaldi diet, is the traducing of what would have been originally a stylish piece of Jazz or pop (yes....pop music can indeed be surprisingly potent) to the bland processed version that Muzak demands. All the characteristic high and low notes are banished to the middle octaves in case the joy they give distracts the listeners' attention.

Worryingly, it appears that such ploys actually work. It has been proven that different types of music *can* influence behaviour patterns. Bland background tunes do indeed slow the shopper down, encourage a look and linger approach to

purchases, while upping the tempo and volume at closing time, urges those shopping at the end of the day to decide quickly to buy (or not) and head out of the shop.

As Lily Tomlin said, 'I worry that the person who thought up Muzac, may be thinking up something else.'

The influence of music as a tool to control and influence individuals has long been known. The advertising jingle used successfully is a powerful device to separate consumers from their cash. When it works it can help sell an often indifferent product over a better quality un-jingled item. Even better for the advertisers is when a catchy jingle morphs into an earworm, (think irritating musical tinnitus) that slowly and insidiously promotes a brand while driving those it infects to distraction.

Kenza Eastwood.



My whole trick is to keep the tune well out in front. If I play Tchaikovsky, I play his melodies and skip his spiritual struggles.

Liberace

A Life in Surgery and Song

For the Welsh, singing is as much a symbol of the nation's character as rugby and the daffodil.

It is called *The Land of Song*, and for good reason, because singing is so often the way in which the Welsh express themselves. Whether it be in the sonorous voices of a male voice choir, minor keyed hymns in the chapels, or rugby anthems on the terraces of the Millennium Stadium, each in their own way are giving voice to the very soul of this ancient Celtic nation. And there is a passion about Welsh singing – we call it *hwyl* – a pathos and a fervour that resonate from the very heart of the Principality.

When the architects were planning the building of the Millennium Centre in the rejuvenated Cardiff bay area they decided to place, at the front of the building, in letters 2m high, a reflective glass inscription that tells you all you need to know about the place of singing in Wales. The inscription reads

*IN THESE STONES
HORIZONS SING.*

It was with this background of music, and singing in particular, that I was raised in Wales. Indeed, my earliest memories of childhood are of my mother, who had a wonderful soprano voice, teaching me to sing. As a boy soprano I often sang duets with my mother and she taught me not only technique but, more important, the sheer joy of singing. So, it is not surprising, or at least not to me, that on a particular occasion, when I wanted to capture and articulate a dramatic and very emotional moment, I chose to do so in song rather than in words alone.

The occasion was the death of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in the Spring of 2002. What struck me was the depth of emotion, or more precisely, the range of emotions, that was expressed at that time by the British people. Many thousands queued for hours to file past the coffin to pay their respects.



Then, to have the music sung by choral societies across the country, has added a new dimension and brought me immense pleasure. As I watched the huge crowd walking slowly and solemnly past the coffin I wondered, if they were a choir, what would they sing? What music would encapsulate all the different sentiments and feelings, the array of emotions etched on the faces of the people paying homage to someone they had probably never met but who had played a major role in shaping Britain for over a century? And so, I decided to see if I could compose a piece of music that would portray that varied assortment of emotions. The words seemed to choose themselves; the language of the Requiem mass was the obvious expression of a prayer for the dead.

I made life a little more difficult for myself by deciding to use the full mass rather than selected parts of the mass, as other composers have done. What may have triggered this decision was reading that Verdi had been the only one in relatively modern times to have used the complete mass setting in his Requiem, and, so, here was a challenge!

My intention, originally, was to compose this music solely for my own enjoyment; just for a sense of personal achievement, if you like. However, I asked someone, who I greatly respect and who has forgotten more about music than I will ever know, if he would edit the music and, for my education, correct any mistakes. He agreed to do this and to orchestrate the piece, but on one condition – which was, that if I liked the orchestration, then I would agree to perform the work. Do you not find, sometimes, that a simple meeting or event can take your life in a completely different direction and change your path from the one you intended?

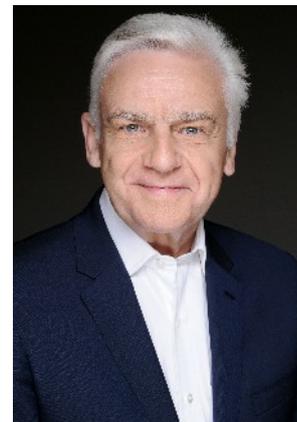
And so it was, not only did I like the orchestration but I found others liked the music too. The first performance was at St John's, Smith Square, in London and done on a much grander scale than I had ever imagined. The music has elements of Welsh tradition, with parts that a male voice choir could sing and sections in a minor key that burst forth into the major key. It is hard to express fully the huge joy and excitement at hearing my own composition performed by a full orchestra, led by one of Britain's top conductors, and sung by magnificent choristers and soloists. Requiem captured the mood and emotion of the mourners paying respect to the late Queen Mother? I leave others to decide that.

My professional career has not been in music but in surgery and, more recently, in the development of new drugs to treat cancer.

As a result, there are some people, fortunately only a small number, who have asked what authority I had, or what training I had that allowed me to think I could compose a major choral piece. Surely I didn't imagine I could compete with the great composers? Of course not! But that wasn't the intention. To those who ask why, I simply refer them back to my Welsh heritage and point out that it is as natural for me to express my emotion in song as it is to speak the words.

I am thrilled that so many people have enjoyed listening to the Requiem. But it has had consequences. Now I am being asked what else have I composed?

These queries, coupled with the sheer enjoyment on my part of the whole composition experience, have prompted me to write another choral piece. This time it's an Easter oratorio that depicts the key events of Holy Week, from the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, through to His betrayal in Gethsemane, to the crucifixion and then on to the day of resurrection.



Again, my good friend, Jonathan Rathbone, has orchestrated the work and it is due to be recorded at Abbey Road studios in November this year, with a large orchestra and choir, a famous Welsh tenor taking the solo lead and a renowned Welsh conductor leading the orchestra.

Such things dreams are made of.

Christopher Wood

CDs and DVDs are available to buy at <http://woodrequiem.com/order.html>

If you wish to listen to this music, it is available on Spotify and iTunes. Just type in Wood Requiem.

You can also see a recording on youtube.com

Swansea Bach Choir Anniversary

The Swansea Bach Choir celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year

Formed in the autumn of 1965 the choir was largely made up of young singers, most of whom were studying in various universities and colleges or still at school. The choir's inaugural concert was given at St Catherine's church, Gorseinon on 18th December 1965. Two days of torrential rain washed away some roads, preventing one or two of the orchestra from reaching the church. Members of the audience who braved the elements had to negotiate a large pool of water flooding the porch to gain access to the church. Despite the appalling weather conditions the concert was well attended and was reasonably successful, establishing the Bach choir as a new musical force in the area.

From this first concert, which included the Christmas Oratorio (Parts 1 and 2), the music of J.S.Bach, and that of his Baroque predecessors and contemporaries, was to become a major part of the choir's repertoire. The early concerts featured many of his church cantatas alongside works by more recent composers, in particular Benjamin Britten.

Interesting and less usual repertoire were to be an important feature of the choir's concerts from the outset. Works by Monteverdi, Heinrich Schütz, Bouzignac, Delalande, Domenico Scarlatti and several members of the Bach family were being heard in Swansea when they were still generally unknown and neglected elsewhere.

The BBC soon took an interest in the choir's activities and works such as 'Solomon' by William Boyce, the Christmas Story of Heinrich Schütz, and a Schubertiad were broadcast on radio or television. A range of influential musicians, including Roger Norrington, Andrew Parrott, Christopher Hogwood, David Munrow, Emma Kirkby, the Early Music Consort, and the

Hanover Band made frequent visits to Swansea to work with the choir. Local musicians including conductor Wyn Davies, and singers Eiddwen HARRY and Deborah Rees were also associated with the choir in its early days.

Within a few years the Bach Choir became an important part of the activities of the University's Department of Extra-mural Studies and this association proved invaluable to its development. It allowed the choir to cultivate a strong educational ethic, becoming a recognised training ground for young musicians wishing to develop their skills and stylistic awareness. Several past members of the choir, who went on to study at various universities and colleges of music, enjoy flourishing careers as solo singers, professional choristers, and choral conductors here and abroad.

Always conscious of the most recent developments in research and performance practice the Bach Choir engaged London-based specialist ensembles and soloists to accompany the performances of works such as Bach's Mass in B minor, the Johannes-Passion and Matthäus-Passion, Monteverdi Vespers, and the late masses of Haydn. For the 'Schubertiad' given at the Brangwyn Hall a Graff forte-piano, made in Vienna during Schubert's life-time, was hired for the occasion. Authenticity and historically aware performances were established as an essential part of the choir's ethic.

While maintaining a concern for 'authenticity' in its performances of early music the Bach Choir has also taken a lively interest in more recent writing and has developed an enviable reputation for its performances of large-scale works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Whereas the choir has made short tours to Germany, France, Finland and Denmark, and has performed in several large churches and cathedrals in Wales and England, the vast bulk of its work has been focussed in Swansea, where it has the good fortune to have a number of excellent concert venues available. The Brangwyn Hall has seen the choir perform the Brahms Requiem, Poulenc's Gloria, the Duruflé Requiem, Messiah, and several other large-scale works.

St Mary's Church and All Saints' Church Oystermouth have proved ideal for performances of the Bach Passions, church music by Handel, Mozart and Haydn, and works for unaccompanied choir ranging from the seventeenth century to pieces by Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, Rheinberger, Pizzetti, Domenico Scarlatti, Frank Martin, Britten, Morten Lauridsen and many others.

Now, under the influence of its current director, Greg Hallam, the choir is engaging with new audiences by performing in several other attractive venues in the city and further afield, consolidating the work of previous years and investigating new areas of the choral repertoire. The achievements of the past fifty years are being steadily built upon and this 50th Anniversary year is sure to be marked by several notable performances as the choir embarks upon another fifty years of fine singing.

John Hugh Thomas
President

Programme for the Anniversary Year

Sunday 22 November at 4. pm

St David's Church Swansea

RACHMANINOV – VESPERS

Saturday 12 December at 7.30 pm

Stradey Castle

Sunday 13 December 3.00 pm

St Gabriel's Church, Brynmill

MUSIC FOR ADVENT

Saturday 19 March at 7.30 pm

St. Mary's Church Swansea

HAYDN – CREATION

this will be the choir's 50th Anniversary concert

Sunday 10 July 2016

All Saints' Church Oystermouth

BACH INSPIRED

music by Bach, Mendelssohn,

and the premiere of

a commission by Swansea composer

Gareth Treseder

(this concert will be part of the 2016 Gower Festival)

The Swansea Bach Choir continues to perform challenging choral works to the highest possible standard in and around the Swansea area including well received concerts at the Gower Festival. The choir has been described as "an oasis of fine singing".

The choir continues to recruit members from all age groups by audition.

You can contact the Musical Director via the website www.swanseabachchoir.org.uk to discuss auditions or call John Lever on 01792 204967 for general information on the choir.

To keep in touch with the what the choir is currently doing our facebook page is : www.facebook.com/SwanseaBachChoir or look on the website.

I just acquired a choir, I bought it for a song.

Jarod Kintz

El Systema A Better World through Music



El Systema began in Venezuela in 1975 with 5 children in an underground parking garage under the guidance of José Abreu, a Venezuelan educator, musician and activist . For many years its official name was Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de las Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela, (FESNOJIV)

To say it another way, it is "free classical music education that promotes human opportunity and development for impoverished children,"

These children, many from towns are provided with 4 hours of musical training and rehearsal per week day after school, as well as work on the weekends

Abreu said: **"Music has to be recognized as an agent of social development, in the highest sense because it transmits the highest values – solidarity, harmony, mutual compassion. And it has the ability to unite an entire community, and to express sublime feelings."**

An important product of El Sistema is the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra. In the mid-1990s, Abreu formed the National Children's Youth Orchestra, and many young musicians graduated from it to the Simón Bolívar orchestra which grew considerably in size. The Simón Bolívar B is now the touring orchestra and, in 2007, it made its debut at the

BBC Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall and later at Carnegie Hall under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel.



Gustavo Dudamel, B.1981, grew up with the Simon Bolivar Orchestra and at age 15 was one of their conductors, though he does say at that time, others as young as 12 were also conducting He is now the principal conductor and musical director with the orchestra and musical director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

Just four decades on, some two million children, most of them from communities living below the poverty line, have grown up in the orchestras of El Sistema.

Rhona, A soprano in Caracas



Theatro Municipal de Caracas
built in 1881, the oldest opera house in
South America.

Rosalinda in Die Fledermaus was my first performance as principal soprano with Opera Metropolitana de Caracas, Venezuela. The art and music of the City of Caracas was welcoming and invigorating and best illustrated today by the charm and talent of Gustavo Dudamel, the inspirational Venezuelan conductor.

In 1987 the average age of the population was thirty eight and Venezuela was a democracy. My first recitals were of English song, Britten, Bantock, Bridge, Vaughan Williams and Quilter. I formed a quartet, violin, cello, piano to perform English Songs to open the Turner Exhibition in *Mueso de Art*. They sponsored us as the British Consul said they had no money; sadly a typical example of the lack of British support for both concerts and the Opera.

It was essential to be accepted by Venezuelan society; wealthy families and fanatic opera-goers; they were regular visitors to the Met in New York. I was told, 'if you forget your words, look at the audience they'll be miming them along with you.'

It was also essential to be accepted by the *Venezolano politico*, as I was an *extranjero*, an outsider. The invitation came, an invitation to a private party in Cora Cemasero's home. Cora was a fanatic, look-alike Maria Callas and possessed a replica Callas' wardrobe. That night she descended her magnificent Napoleon staircase singing a Tosca aria, she had everything except the Callas voice. What a relief, as I was next on. My regular accompanist knew everybody and introduced me while seated at one of two Bechstein grand pianos.

I sang arias from La Boheme, Figaro and Don Giovanni and obviously passed the *extranjero test*, as they agreed to invite me to sing at the opera auditions in only eight hours' time.

Meaestro Chossett, the El Director accepted me as a principal, but first I'd had to learn, on the spot, a Czardas, an aria described in Putman's Opera Book, as '*a display piece of high order and unusual dramatic technique* and in Spanish, a new language. Twenty minutes later I was given my first roll as Rosalinda in Die Fledermaus, and twenty minutes later I realised this was the lead. This roll involved a lot of acting and at one point speaking Spanish with a Hungarian accent! The gala performance was in front of President Herrera and of course my family. My two year old son thought the stage was on fire when fireworks went off in the last scene. I went on to sing: **Lauretta**-Gianni Schicchi; **Sussana**-La Nozze de Figaro; **Marenka**-Bartered Bride; **Rosalinda**-Die Fledermaus; **The Spinster**-Lord Byron's Love letters; **Sister**-Suor Angelica; **Inez**-La Favorita.

All these performances were in Theatro Municipal de Caracas, haunted by famous voices such as Callas. We toured into the Interior, beautiful tiny theatres and cinema's, performing to audiences who'd never heard opera or seen such costumes and makeup, one memorable place was Cumana. As I was leaving Caracas a new Opera House was just finished and I was accepted into that opera company; Who knows what my future career would have been if I could have stayed. For five years I lived the life I was trained for.

Rhona Campbell

What's happening in Uplands

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Sketty Street Market

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Uplands book shop

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We are also registered school suppliers and welcome school visits to choose from our extensive range of children's books.

Book Review

POEMS ABOUT TRAINS THAT FLY

Trainspotters by Greg Freeman;
pub. Indigo Dreams, Beaworthy, 32pp £6.00

Not being a train spotter it is easy to assume that any poem collection on the theme will run the risk of being crammed with banal rhymes and forced rhythms to keep in tune with a train. This collection blows away any such prejudice.

Greg Freeman's first collection of poems is thoughtful, intelligent and the poems are beautifully structured. Despite all the poems having something to do with trains, the work is very diverse in its treatment of the same subject. 'They call us/train spotters, but it's not that./ We hear the grunt and bark of a dragon, /crawling down the mountain's heart.' (Trainspotters) The unpredictability of the train is captured in two very powerful poems about the Burma railway through which we learn that his father was a prisoner of war who was used to build the notorious cutting in the Tenasserim Hills.

As a lover of trains Freeman steers clear of sentimentality or nostalgia. When he deals with the question of his first love of trains, the result is the excellent poem, 'The Clackety Clack' which ends with the powerful statement that the lure of trains comes from 'that illusory sense of heading somewhere.' This concept of travelling between somewhere and nowhere, is a view Dickens shared in the early days of train travel.



In the old Branch Line we travel with him from pre Beeching times to the modern day. Firstly, we stand with him in his boyhood as he waves to the driver of the hurtling steam train. Then he returns with his girlfriend, to find everything overgrown. Ten years further on, he revisits, this time with his children: 'found sacrilege/conversion, solar panel, investment opportunity./ From progress, to ruin, to heritage.'

This is an exciting and enjoyable first collection and I look forward to more books

from Greg Freeman.

Peter Read

The reviewer is author of *Read Only: A collection of poems* Published by Pinewood press and over 10 performed plays.

**We came there each spring, scuffling in the coalyard,
Picking primroses by the side of the line;
Watching smoke until it disappeared.
Looked for a wave from the driver and fireman,
Counted the token number of passengers.**

Greg Freeman

If music be the food of love ...and you love music, read on.

Music is alive and well in Swansea and South Wales. With the BBC Symphony Orchestra performing in the Brangwyn Hall, the Taliesin Theatre screening the very best of opera live and churches throughout the region presenting organ recitals, sung masses and oratorios we are surrounded with the chance to hear amazing music.

The Gower Festival, takes place in the wonderful old Gower churches, the **Jazz Festival** is live, inside and out in many venues and **Proms in the Park** transforms Singleton park. This year the **Festival of World Music** came to Margam Park with artists from all over the world playing a great variety of music on a great variety of instruments.

The Swansea Festival of Music is now renamed the Swansea International Festival, headed by its new Artistic Director, Lyndon Jones. His ambition is to establish the festival on an international standing. The 2015 programme brought us a diverse fortnight of recitals, opera, ballet, arts and the spoken word.

The area of Swansea and south Wales has produced many musicians who have achieved worldwide recognition. Amongst them are Catherine Jenkins (singer), Carl Jenkins (composer, who recently composed a fanfare celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the National Waterfront Museum), Max Boyce (singer, entertainer), Llr Williams (one of the world's leading pianists), Geriant Davies (opera singer), Bonny Tyler (singer, whose recording of '*Eclipse of the Heart*' is among the bestselling singles of all time), Steve Balsamo (Jesus Christ Superstar), Rhrdian Griffiths (trumpeter) to name just a few. I'm sure that you can think of many more. I haven't even mentioned Tom Jones

If you prefer to discuss music, **the Friends of Welsh National Opera**, meet most months.



Catherine Jenkins

If you prefer to join in the music and sing, amateur choirs flourish. Amongst the many are **Dunvant Male Choir, Gower Chorale Choir, Morryston Ladies and separately Morryston Male Voice choir and the Morryston Orpheus Choir, Swansea Bach Choir, the new Swansea Carer's Community Choir** (for carers and friends, no experience necessary), **Swansea Male Choir, Swansea Philharmonic Choir and Three Cliffs in Harmony Choir**. Mostly they have a website and they all have phone numbers and they all welcome new members.

Material collected by Jo East

From the Boathouse to Brown's Hotel: on the trail of Dylan Thomas at Laugharne

by Greg Freeman

“Eighteen straight whiskies!” The passer-by’s bemused comment to her companion on their way out of a museum that celebrates a poet was accompanied by the haunting cry of a curlew close to the Boathouse at Laugharne, once occupied by Dylan Thomas and his wife and children. Dylan lived at the Boathouse, overlooking the stunningly-beautiful Taf estuary, for his last four years before his death at the age of 39 while on a US tour, with “Eighteen straight whiskies ... I think that’s the record” remembered as one of his last remarks, and regarded by some as his epitaph



In Laugharne, which provided inspiration and material for his radio play *Under Milk Wood*, he and his wife Caitlin would head for Brown’s Hotel of an evening, leaving their children to fend for themselves. The Boathouse is now open to the public and administered by Carmarthenshire county council; in another time the welfare of the Thomas children might have been investigated by the county’s social services department.

In the words of one of his biographers, Andrew Lycett: “The house’s position, set tight against a red sandstone cliff, made for dampness which was not helped by the sea lapping against its lower walls at high tide. It was a haven for rats. On the other hand, not many buildings have their own private harbour at the back or an outside wooden verandah offering magnificent views over the Taf estuary.”

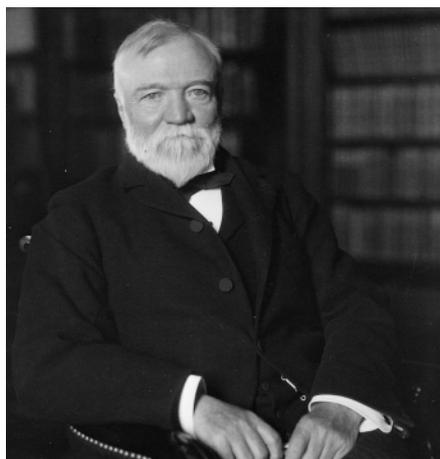
You can watch a 20-minute film in the Boathouse, and look at some of Dylan’s letters, most of which seem to be about money, or, more accurately, his lack of it, before sitting outside in the courtyard of the tearooms, and gazing across the estuary if the weather is fine. It certainly was when we were there. Afterwards we went for a drink, as you do, in the celebrated Brown’s Hotel as part of the pilgrimage, and found it full of pictures of Dylan and Caitlin, as well as the voices of an Irish male voice choir on their way to take part in a competition with their Welsh counterparts.

It is said that, despite his constant money worries, Dylan Thomas was at his happiest in the Boathouse. It was provided for him by a besotted benefactress, and its nearby shed became his place of work. After being installed there, having written little for the previous two years, he quickly produced ‘Over Sir John’s Hill’, with its references to hawks and herons, and ‘Poem on his birthday’: “By full tilt river and switchback sea / Where the cormorants scud, / In his house on stilts high among beaks / And palavers of birds // ... Herons spire and spear.” The penultimate poem in my *Collected Poems* edition, ‘In the white giant’s thigh’, begins: “Through throats where many rives meet, the curlews cry”. And you wonder, how his poetry might have developed and changed, looking out on that view every day?

I visited Laugharne with my wife Gillian on our way back from a holiday in Pembrokeshire. We returned to our hotel, with its Dylan’s Bar and Dylan burger on the menu, on the outskirts of Swansea to find ourselves locked out. We were unable to raise anyone and had to spend an uncomfortable night trying to sleep in our car. It seemed an appropriately Dylanesque escapade, although somewhat bizarre for people of our advanced years. I thought I heard a poet laughing, somewhere.

From Carnegie Hall to Edwardian Wales

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), the Scots-American industrialist, was ‘the world’s first modern philanthropist’. In the winter of 2013-14 an exhibition held at the Scottish Parliament by the Carnegie Trust UK (with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) celebrated his international educational and cultural legacy. His native Scotland was prominent, but Carnegie did not neglect Wales, especially in helping to found public libraries where none had existed before. His Welsh legacy has been neglected, but the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales’s website, www.coflein.org.uk now records upwards of thirty libraries to which he made generous donations of several thousands of pounds in the decade before World War I.



These Carnegie libraries changed the lives of the communities they served, in all parts of Wales from Dolgellau to Barry, Llanelly to Wrexham. Now that public libraries are facing financial difficulties and an uncertain future, Carnegie’s support for communities keen to sponsor free libraries for the general public is an inspiring example of private wealth devoted to the public good.

These libraries, often built by local architects in a variety of styles – baroque, neo-gothic, classical, art deco, arts and crafts – still stand and are listed buildings. Some – such as Bangor (1907), Abergavenny (1902) and Skewen (1905) – still function as libraries, a few are neglected (such as Aberystwyth (1905)), and yet others have been strikingly refurbished (Dolgellau (1904) and Cathays Cardiff, 1907) or are now devoted to other community purposes (Bridgend, 1906). Occasionally Andrew Carnegie attended their openings which attracted patronage from local elites; at Abergavenny, busts of Carnegie and the Marquess of Abergavenny adorn the entrance (yet are rarely noticed). In contrast to miners’ libraries, Carnegie foundations were established in rural as well as urban and industrial communities across Wales. Appeals for book donations of the broadest taste might be world-wide; and, as at Cathays (1906), separate reading rooms were provided for women and children.

Ralph Griffiths

Our Contributors

Max Halcox	Student at Eton College	John Hugh Thomas	Musician
Sid Kidwell	Citizen Historian	Rhona Campbell	Opera Singer, Poet
Ralph Griffiths	President of Swansea HA	Greg Freeman	Former Guardian sub editor
Christopher Wood	Consultant Surgeon and Composer	Gwyneth Grindrod	Co-ordinator
		Jo East	Public Relations

The Egyptian Experience

Carmarthenshire County Museum

On Saturday 18 July a record number of people came through the gates of Carmarthenshire Museum to enjoy the fine weather and 'The Egyptian Experience'. The event, celebrating the civilisation of Ancient Egypt had been planned over many months by the Carmarthenshire Museum staff and volunteers, in conjunction with members of the Swansea Branch of the Historical Association, the Egypt Centre at Swansea University and the Friends of Carmarthenshire Museum. The Egypt Centre has one of the best collections of ancient Egyptian artefacts outside the British Museum, and Carmarthenshire Museum is fortunate in having a small Egyptian collection, much of it donated by Ernest Harold Jones. Harold was a renowned artist and archaeologist whose family had connections with Carmarthen. He worked for many years in the Valley of the Kings, painting the sites in watercolours, and a small display of artefacts and his paintings had been arranged in the upstairs Exhibition Room.

Volunteers from the Egypt Centre showed fascinated children how to write hieroglyphics and sample the rudiments of Ancient Egyptian mathematics (such as were used to build the pyramids). The cellar, converted by volunteers from the Egypt Centre and Carmarthenshire Museum into a Pharaoh's tomb, with brightly painted murals round the walls, offered instruction in the arts of mummification every hour, and from the look on the faces of families returning up the stone steps, the adults had been more 'spooked' by the procedures than their offspring! Nearby, a large statue of Anubis, God of the Dead and Mummification, crouched on his gold plinth, beautifully crafted by one of our volunteers, and in Reception was a charming copy of the famous bust of Nefertiti, a work kindly carried out by the pupils of Abergwili School.

During the day there were two talks, both introduced by the Historical Association's Colin James who also gave the votes of thanks. Nan Evans gave an illustrated talk on Harold Jones, and after lunch Syd Howells talked on his work at the Egypt Centre. Both of these were well attended.

Meanwhile, lots more fun in the grounds ... Toby Peterson had set up a mobile smithy and was demonstrating his highly skilled craft of wrought ironwork.

Sally Pointer, demonstrated Egyptian make-up, wigs and clothing on girls from Abergwili Community Youth Group (the Friends had once again enlisted the help of the Group in various roles around the Museum grounds under the watchful eye of their Leader, Bidy). Sally and members of the Egypt Centre, together with some of the 'Friends'

were wearing Ancient Egyptian dress, and so many children, from tots to teens, had turned up in wonderful costumes to be judged in the Fancy Dress Parade.



winner of
fancy dress prize

There was a splendid raffle of a hamper of Egyptian themed cosmetics (donated by the HA), another of themed foodie goodies from the 'Friends' and a superb book on Ancient Egypt (kindly donated by Oxbow Publishers).

Sincere thanks are due to Karmen and her helpers from the Historical Association for undertaking the tremendous amount of organisation and liaison with the other groups involved, to the volunteers from the Egypt Centre for putting on such a splendid show and to all whose hard work helped make the day such a resounding success; maybe some time in the future we'll have another similar 'Experience'.

Gwyneth Grindrod

Gwyneth assisted the curator, was co-ordinator of the project and judged the fancy dress competition.

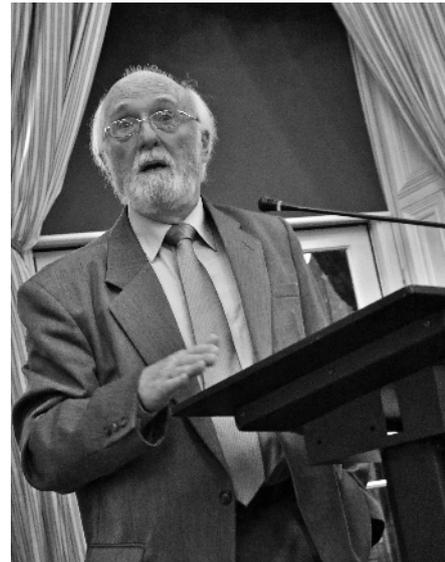
Egypt gave birth to what later would become known as 'Western Civilization,' long before the greatness of Greece and Rome.

John Henrik Clarke

The branch held a successful Summer Social at Sketty Hall in August which was well attended and much enjoyed.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Fellowship Award to Dr John R Alban. He is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the School of History at the University of East Anglia and was formerly County Archivist of Swansea. He was introduced by Branch secretary, Colin James and presented with a framed certificate and a print by the branch Chairman, John Ashley.

After the presentation, Dr Alban thanked us for his award and entertained us with a sustained talk about his past working life in Swansea and his present life in Norfolk.



Photographs by Jeff Griffiths



Later in the evening, Dr John Law was presented with a framed print of HMS Sheffield anchored in Venice. This was in recognition of his many years as Branch Chairman. He was thanked for all the hard work that he had done since he helped the rebirth of the branch nearly a decade ago. He is now the President Elect.

He thanked us in a short speech and said that he looked forward to his forthcoming time as President. He said that he had been admiring a similar print in a Swansea pub for years and was delighted now to own one of his own. He will still have an excuse to visit the pub, if only to compare the two prints.



Branch News



The Sketty Hall Project is coming along well.....

Did you know that a locomotive called Sketty Hall was built in December 1929? It was withdrawn in July 1963.

It was named after the fine Georgian Mansion in **Swansea**.

Does anyone know how this GWR, 4900 class train came to be so named?

Robert Leonard, who is doing research into Sketty Hall, recently came across a photograph of Officers and staff at a VAD military hospital that seemed to be in Sketty Hall. VAD standing for Voluntary Aid Detachment during WW1.

On looking at the Red Cross site, listing all VAD hospitals, there were 4 shown in Swansea, at Hendrefoilan, Mirador Brynmill and Parc Vern. There was no mention of Sketty Hall being used for this purpose.

Can anyone shed any light on this? Does anyone have any other photos taken there.?

During WW2, Sketty Hall was requisitioned for use as the ARP area headquarters but there are no records that have been found for its use during WW1 when Richard Glynn Vivian was the owner.



The Heart of Wales Project is steaming along nicely. More news in the next edition of *Chronicle*.

Would anyone be interested if we ran a branch excursion on this line?

Please email answers to any of these questions to the editor: margaret.mccloy@sky.com for inclusion in the next Branch News

The branch is running a **poster competition next year for primary schoolchildren** entitled, **“Why History Matters”** .

The competition will provide an opportunity for school children aged 9-11 (Years 5 and 6) to demonstrate, through the creation of a vibrant, colourful and informative poster, why history is such an important subject.

The content of the posters entered could be linked to the local Swansea area or a theme being studied (Tudors, Stuarts, World War II etc). In all instances they should show, in keeping with the title above, “Why History Matters.”

Posters can be created using computer software or by hand .



HA Swansea Branch Programme 2015/ 16

Talks on Saturdays at 11.00, National Waterfront
Museum, Ocean Room



21st November John White

The Gallipoli Campaign

19th December Professor John France

Armies of World War One

16th January 2016 Dr Robert McCloy

In the Footsteps of St David:

A City Region?

20th February 2016 Sid Kidwell

**Memories of Swansea's Three Nights'
Blitz: 75 Years On**



19th March 2016

Professor Caroline Franklyn

And Jack Orchard

**Fiddle & Fidget: the Friendship of
Hester Thrale and Elizabeth
Montagu**



Individual membership: £10

Concessionary membership: £5

Family (household) membership: £15

Student (to 30 September 2015): £5

Cheques to :

**Historical Association, Swansea
Branch:**

**HA Membership Secretary, 156
Chemical Road,**

Morrison SA6 6JQ



Membership Form

Name

Address.....

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email