



an extract from "In Tune"

The Quarterly Newsletter from the **Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir**

Reflections on the Cymdeithas Corau Meibion Cymru 2004 Festival at the Royal Albert Hall

October 2nd 2004 what a day! Up at the crack of dawn to get to our appointed bus pick up points, all of us with fingers crossed that the early promise of a bright morning would hold for the day. Suffice it to say that Rogers usual scheduling of two coaches went like clockwork. The coaches following separate routes arrived at the Albert Hall almost simultaneously. There, at the meeting point, a positive throng of choristers was assembling. In what seemed no time at all we were admitted to the amazing series of corridors, tunnels and stairways to find our way to subterranean changing rooms, all made easy by excellent signposting and stewards.



In no time at all we were ready and heading for the stage. No problem for the experienced "Been there done that Choristers" but for the first time on to the stage seating area, to confront the huge empty hall, it was very different to a view from the audience. Among the assembling massed choirs one could not help but think of how small those on stage had looked from the floor of the hall. Being amongst them was quite different. The seating all numbered and allocated by choir was fine. Here and there empty seats had not been taken up, an odd seat at the end of

our row was particularly advantageous for my neighbour, and myself for, if he will forgive me, our seat filling posteriors were more than ample for the space provided. Budging along the row onto the empty seat gave both more comfort and standing space. Alas, this fine ploy was soon thwarted when the stage manager promptly removed the empty seats and we were back again to chummy shoulder-to-shoulder contact.

Allocated seating, however, was soon sorted out and rehearsal began. This too zipped along apace, with the Conductor rapidly making known his approval or not of our efforts. Disapproval, however, whilst clearly indicated, was done in a humorous way. One such incident occurred when he stopped the rehearsal, looked pointedly at one section of the choir without speaking. Then softly he said; "Marvellous, I've never heard anything like it.....not right of course but b..... marvellous". Holding up his open hand, palm facing the choir, he moved his hand behind him to give him a view such as the choir might see, quietly he looked at it for a few moments. "What's wrong with that?" he asked, "What do I mean when I do this?" Again his palm was shown to the choir. His gesture was quite clear and murmured responses of 'quiet' or 'quieter' were made. "Well why don't you do it?" This gentle rebuke immediately had the desired effect. As did other similar directions as we went ahead. There were times when his face suggested I might make something of this lot with a few more weeks of practice.

Rehearsal ended and we were free until 6.30 pm. Now, be it known, that scarce as they may be in the immediate vicinity of the Albert Hall, the "Been there done that brigade" had navigational skills which led them straight to an excellent hostelry. Where, as they knew would be the case, very decent pub lunches were to be had.....instructions that inebriate choristers would not be re-admitted to the hall were of course strictly observed. If you had time across the mews from the pub you could always pop into a car showroom to order a new Ferrari.

Whilst in the area of expensive living why not visit Harrods, said to be able to supply any or all food, fashion or furnishing requirements. This it seems they can pretty well do. Though one shudders still, at some of the prices. A nice little Afghan Carpet, true about twice the size of our sitting room, was a nice little six-figure

sum, that is of course six figures before the decimal point. But enough, it was time to head back to the R.A.H.

The dressing rooms provided were impressive, bench seating, unlimited hanging space, even showers. One member is said to have soon found the all round illumination of the dressing mirrors to complete his make up. Ties were tied and we were nearly ready. Of course there were the suave “Been there done that group” who sauntered in at what seemed the last minute....plenty of time to get ready was implied. This was indeed true but suddenly finding he had come without his choir slacks, caused some little concern for one member. Don’t panic! Don’t panic! A hasty whip round was made to find grey slacks that had been worn by others to travel, so that these might be pressed into service. The alternative suggested, that the whole choir should appear uniformly trouser-less, following the precedent set elsewhere when blazers had been become locked inaccessibly in someone’s car, such that we had all to appear only in shirts without blazers but that is another tale. There may be some connection with this trouser situation, the photograph of the choir in the programme and the decision of the committee to organize new grey uniform slacks for us all. Another publicity photograph is a must. You must look in the programme at the photograph of Queens Island Victoria Male Choir. Contrary to what this may appear to show, the front row was not comprised of leprechauns perched on high chairs they were indeed excellent full size chaps.

Onto the stage for the performance. One can but say very, very creditable with some pieces very, very moving. When the choir was not itself performing, we were treated to performances of great excellence by other artists and the youth choirs and the Youth Jazz Band impressed everyone. Make a note for the next date in 2007.

Anon.