



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



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

Don't forget, we're back on the quayside on 29th July as well as every Monday in August. If you're real gluttons for punishment, you can hear us practising every Monday beforehand in St Andrews.

No: 39



What a stinker that was! Actually, no, just the choir performing the chorus in our new piece, Mr Blue Sky

A FEAST FOR THE EARS!

Mevagissey Feast Week is always a special time for the Choir, and this year was no different. St Andrews was packed again on Monday 24th June, and we can only apologise to those who were unable to get tickets. Without wanting to rub salt ion the wound, you missed a great concert. Don't just take our word. That was the message on everyone's lips as they left the church.

The concert brought an end to the first half of our year, by when you would normally have received two newsletters. Apologies but, due to difficult circumstances in the spring, all this year's news to date has had to be wrapped up in this issue.

Our Feast Week performance took place just two days after our latest trip to Noss Mayo so MD Graham Willcocks decided to use the same programme for each. Only a handful of our supporters made it to both, so that didn't matter. The only downside was that we choir members had to listen to compere Bill Collins' jokes twice!

While we were delighted that warm weather had arrived in time for Feast Week, it did make for sweltering conditions in the church although thankfully we were spared having to wear our jackets. The concert was also notable for the debut on the risers of new Second Tenor Charlie Whetter. More on him in the next edition. The only note of sadness on the night was the news that Ron Hocking, a founder member of the Choir 45 years before, had decided to retire. Ron, whose rumbling deep Bass voice will be greatly missed, has fittingly been made an honorary lifetime member.



Ron Hocking receives honorary membership from chairman Nick Nicholls



Graham Hoskins prepares to accompany us on Mr Blue Sky



George Phillips' harmonica adds to the poignancy of Tell My Father

The programme itself was an excellent mix of new pieces, like *Tell my Father* and *Mr Blue Sky* and old favourites such as *Mevagissey Bay* and *Floral Dance*. Just as at Noss Mayo, the solo spots were filled by Saul Sandey, now happily restored to our Bass section after a long absence, and Second Tenor stalwart Paul Pearce. Saul gave us the nostalgic *Sea Fever*, a

John Masefield poem set to music, and the Paul Robeson hit from *Showboat*, the much-loved *Oi' Man River*, midway through the first half. Paul entertained us with *Who' I'd Be* from *Shrek: The Musical* and the haunting *Empty Chairs and Empty Tables* from *Les Miserables* in the second.

As in Devon, we were urged to perform an encore and, as on the Saturday, we gave them *American Trilogy*. Those not overwhelmed by the heat and who were up for a little refreshment retired to Mevagissey Social Club for a pasty and a pint – and a little more, less formal, singing.

Noss Mayo – 18 and counting



View from St Peter's, Noss Mayo

Remarkably, our visit to Noss Mayo, was our 18th! In fact, other than a couple of concerts in Plymouth in the late '70s, this delightful village on Newton Creek, near the mouth of the River Yealm just south of Plymouth, was the Choir's first ever venue outside Cornwall!!

Thanks to the late David Foard, one of our founders, and his White Fish Authority colleague, Harry Shears, a Noss Mayo man, the Choir made its first appearance at St Peter's in 1979. Sadly David is no longer with us, but three of his fellow founders were on the risers again this time.

It had been three years since our last visit in June 2016, so most of our programme for the evening was new to the audience, and they showed their appreciation in time-honoured style. Church warden Jane Barrett said afterwards: "All I can say is 'Wow'! She apologised for the absence on the night of Vicar Anne Legge, adding: "She really missed something!"

New pieces like *Mr Blue Sky*, accompanied by Second Tenor Graham Hoskins on guitar, and *Tell My Father*, with Bass George Phillips on harmonica, went down particularly well. Afterwards we traipsed down the hill towards the creek to slake our thirst at the Swan Inn, only to find a rock band in residence! They couldn't last the pace though and, when they disappeared, we broke into a traditional afterglow in pleasant evening air. Before facing a two-hour coach ride home.



Saul Sandey takes the applause after his solo.

Brian is Remembered in Style

On Saturday 16th March, we celebrated the life and music of Brian Mitchell, our accompanist until 2012, who passed away last summer. A much-loved member of the Mitchell boatbuilding family of Portmellon, Brian passed away last summer, aged 87. Well known throughout Cornwall for his organ-playing, he had been awarded 'The Cornwhylen Cross' by the Cornish Gorsedd for his contribution to Cornish music.

After studying the organ in Truro as a boy, it wasn't long before he was sharing organist duties with his cousin, David Rundle, in the Mevagissey Congregational church, now St Andrew's. He next became the resident organist at St. Peter's in Mevagissey and, when Mevagissey Male Choir was formed in late 1974, soon became its regular accompanist, a position he held until his retirement in 2012.

He was also accompanist for Mevagissey Ladies Choir, who, to our delight, were able to join us for the tribute, which took place in St. Goran Parish Church, where Brian was still playing into his early 80s.



Brian also played for the Ladies Choir

It was fitting then that his successor, Matt Fox, also a Gorran resident, should play Handel's *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*, a piece that was almost Brian's signature tune, as the huge audience gathered at St Goran Church on the night.

We were also delighted that the Rev. Canon Pat Robson MBE, now retired, but formerly priest in charge of St Goran with Caerhays, and an Honorary Canon Emeritus of Truro Cathedral, was able to act as MC for the evening. Pat had had known Brian for many years.

She introduced our first set of four – *Speed your Journey, An Evening's Pastorale, Angels and Bohemian Rhapsody*, following which the Ladies treated us to *Lullaby of Broadway; Summertime*; a medley of Gershwin hits; *Shenandoah* and *The Sun and Stars are Mine*.

After the interval, we returned with four more; *Floral Dance; American Trilogy; Goin' Home* and *Au Fond du Temple Saint* before Paul Pearce stepped up to perform *Almost Like Being in Love* and *On a Clear Day*. Our final set began with *We Rise Again*; followed by *You Are So Beautiful; The Way We Were*; and the two newest additions to our repertoire, *Tell My Father* and the lively *Mr Blue Sky*, with Graham Hoskins on guitar, getting its first outing and drawing a great reaction from the audience.

All proceeds from the evening went towards a fund to employ a local Gorran nurse and a music bursary for a local school. While the Choir got a new member! Charlie Whetter wrote to say 'Thank you for a for a delightful evening at Gorran last night. Your repertoire was superb, exciting, moving, uplifting. Loved *Mr Blue Sky*. You all looked to be enjoying yourselves too. Well done.' The following Monday Charlie arrived to sign up as our newest Second Tenor!



Paul Pearce steps up to sing, watched by father and son in the back row, 2nd and 3rd from right

GEORGE'S HARMONICA DEBUTS AT BETHEL

Two weeks earlier, we had performed at Bethel Methodist Church, Church. Unfortunately, due to illness and other factors, no report is available, although the concert was a success. It was particularly notable for our first performance of the moving *Tell My Father*, featuring George Phillips on the harmonica. More than one hanky was observed in the audience – due to the words of the song, rather than George's playing, we should add!).



Graham sets out the background to the story of Tell my Father as George prepares to launch his solo harmonica career - in full glow of the spot-light

Bude Concert Raises Funds for Cancer Research

We have Second Tenor Chris Bale to thank again for latest trip to Bude. Chris and Bass Phil Walter, who make the 90-mile round trip to Mevagissey every week, work very hard to keep us in the public eye – and ear! - on the north coast and at the beginning of April, we were back for what was our eighth visit to Bude Methodist Church alone since 1994.



Looks like a bit of 'ooo-age' in Bude

This time were singing in support of Cancer Research and the Church Improvement Fund. Bass Mike WD Thompson recalls that the magnificent building near the waterfront was packed with an enthusiastic. Compere for the evening was the incomparable Choir favourite, Adrian Wilton, whose inexhaustible enthusiasm for Cornish choirs and inimitable delivery of gentle yarns soon had the audience relaxed and ready to enjoy the music.

The programme Graham Willcocks had chosen for the evening showed the enormous range of the MMC repertoire and the ability of song to send listeners on an emotional roller coaster from the triumphant affirmation of our immortality in *We Rise Again* to the depths of despair in *Tell My Father*, and everything in between.

We were all captivated and enchanted by the **Coastal Belles**, a trio we had not met before and who provided two interludes. Cath, Meg and Jo sang in 3-part harmony arrangements of their own, but with a difference. In the first half they sang *Someone to Love*, *These Boots are Made for Walking*, made famous by Nancy Sinatra, and the traditional *Foreign Lander*. Midway through the second half they gave us *Ho Hey*, an American folk song, *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*, the World War II hit, and *The Parting Glass*, a traditional Scottish folk song.



The Coastal Belles, our Bude-iful fellow guests!

Their perfect pitch, crystal clarity and body percussion gave a unique sound which entranced everybody. We hope we will be able to hear them singing with us again very soon!!

The organisers provided a sumptuous feast in the Church Hall after the concert, for which we were all very grateful, after which member retired to the nearby Falcon to slake their thirst and end the evening in the customary way.

We heard later that the concert had raised £412 for church funds and £400 for the Bude branch of Cancer Research UK.

WE PLAY OUR PART IN THE CORNWALL CHORALE FESTIVAL

On Saturday 4th May we were honoured to act as hosts again for the St Johns leg of the Cornwall International Male Choral Festival. This biennial event is spread over five days and this year attracted almost 60 choirs from places as far flung as Australia, Canada, Croatia, Finland, Holland, Lithuania, Russia and South Africa. We choose not to compete but are delighted to play our part by anchoring one of the concerts. Our guests this time were Bridgend Male Choir, Shropshire's Much Wenlock MVC, Tamar Valley MVC and Dagilelis Boys' Choir from Lithuania.

The concert was admirably compered by BBC Radio Cornwall's Naomi Kennedy (although the programme promised Naomi Campbell!) who introduced the men from Shropshire first, followed by our neighbours from the Devon border. We were third up, with Mr Blue Sky; Tell My Father and Back to the '60s, which alone is 11 minutes long, of course. And it's fair to say we made an impact, bringing the venue alive. However, we were lucky to precede the Lithuanian boys, who were nothing short of sensational. Aged between 10 and 18 they are of course all music students and it showed. Wow! Sadly for the Welshmen, it was they who had the task of following the boys!



The Dagilelis Boys from Lithuania – sensational!!

Many of the singers retired to the White Hart afterwards where St Austell Brewery very generously laid on refreshments.

It was after this that Helen Wardle posted "Lovely (Cornish male) choir on 'Britain's Got Talent' show

tonight but not a patch on

Mevagissey Male Choir in my opinion, so why not give it a go? Just a thought!" Thanks, Helen, but no thanks. Can you imagine what Graham would put us through if we were competing on tv?

And so to St Mawes

There's a first time for everything and singing in St Mawes, just 16 miles from Mevagissey on the Roseland, was something the choir had never done in all its 45 years. Until May this year, that is, when we performed to a full house at the Memorial Hall and raised over £2,500 for the RNLI.

This small fishing village at the end of the Roseland peninsula is a Mecca for the boating and yachting fraternity and boasts three boatyards with numerous moorings and anchorages for visiting yachtsman in and around the Roseland Peninsula. And in July 2015 it hosted the first 'St Mawes Boat Show', showcasing many local marine businesses.

We were performing in the centrally located St Mawes Memorial Hall and had no problem selling all 120 seats available. Our increasingly popular concert repertoire met with a near-rapturous reception – *Anthem; Mevagissey Bay*, and the guitar-accompanied *Angels* and *Bohemian Rhapsody* comprised our first set.



It was at this point that we welcomed our guest for the evening, the lovely Sarah Carbis, from nearby Ruan High Lanes. Drawn to music at an early age Sarah began flute and singing lessons at primary school, then developed her love of music at Truro School where she joined all the musical groups she could including the choir,

Sarah's sax meets with the Choir's approval!

the wind band, jazz band and symphony orchestra, as well as St Anthony's Noyse in Portscatho and Cornwall Youth Jazz Orchestra outside of school. She was encouraged to pick up the saxophone at the age of thirteen. she studied both flute and saxophone in her first year at the University of Birmingham to study Music, but classical saxophone eventually became her primary instrument. She continued to play in a variety of ensembles including directing her own saxophone quartet. On graduation, she returned home to Cornwall and is currently studying for her chartered accountancy exams while at a firm in Redruth. She still plays regularly with St Anthony's Noyse and loves to perform when she can in her spare time.

Sarah treated the audience to *The Ash Grove*, a traditional Welsh melody chosen partly, she says, because the arrangement is so well suited to the soprano saxophone, “which gave me the perfect opportunity to settle my nerves and relax into the performance”. They didn’t show, Sarah! She followed this with *Après un Rêve* by Gabriel Fauré, a French song meaning “After a Dream”. chosen for its beautiful, somewhat haunting melody – “and for my mother, who was at the concert, and who sang it when she was studying her degree in Music”.

We returned with *Only You; Hallelujah; Tears in Heaven; and The Pearl Fishers* before a brief interval after which we were back with *Mr Blue Sky*, with Graham Hoskins on guitar again; *You Are So Beautiful/Wind Beneath My Wings; The Rose, and We Rise Again*.

Sarah was then welcomed back, challenging Matt Fox, as she put it, with Bach’s *Sonata in G minor*, a piece very typical of the baroque style from the 1600-1700s, long before the saxophone’s invention in the early 1840s. “I fell in love playing Bach on the flute, but I find it transfers well to the sax, and many other instruments too, because the range of notes isn’t huge although the melodies can be very intricate and challenging. This is a perfect example.”

She closed with the contemporary *Live and Let Die* by Paul and Linda McCartney. “I love the contrasts in this song, the ballad-style verses interspersed with driving, rhythmic orchestral interludes - a wonderful blend of traditional and electric instruments working together.

Our final set comprised *The Way We Were; Tell My Father*, accompanied by George Phillips on harmonica; and our *60s Medley*.

With all tickets sold, at £10 apiece, we raised £1,200 for the RNLI along with the proceeds of a raffle to which local businesses had been particularly generous.



Compere Graham Rundle sets the mood

KINGS AT THE CASTLE

Father's Day found us at Caerhays Castle, where the incumbent Williams family were launching their first-ever Summer Fete in the castle grounds. And what a good fist they made of it. The castle, an English Heritage Grade 1 Listed Building, sits in beautiful gardens overlooking Porthluney Cove between Gorran Haven and Portholland on the Roseland peninsula, and is famous for hosting the largest collection of magnolias in the United Kingdom.

The fete, which made good use of all the grounds around the castle, had something for everyone, Flower Festival, Treasure Hunt, Dog Show, traditional games and many stalls. And, of course, music. Supplied by us, and others. We were asked to perform in front of a good crowd in the courtyard, where we gave 40 minutes of our best stuff at 1pm on what was a pleasant afternoon. Proceeds went to Cancer Research.



Caerhays Castle



Castle and Fete are to the right of the picture

CONGRATULATIONS...

... to Baritone (and deputy MD) Mike S Thompson and his wife, Sarah, on the arrival of their family, Ethan, 3, and James, 1, a month ago. Mike tells us they "already love singing, as well as bike rides, going to the woods, looking at the boats (and especially the forklift)! Ethan recently joined the library and as a discerning reader, his first loan choice was a book called "Pants". James' favourite word is 'backpack' and he can often be seen on Mike or Sarah's back taking in the view.

Friends Write...

It's always nice to hear that people are enjoying the newsletter, but this response after the last edition was a bit special.

"Thank you so much. For many reasons we are unlikely to get to Meva this year. This newsletter then feels very special. Can you ever explain why, when reading about something you love, it makes you want to cry? **Teresa Jenkins, Wimbledon**

Many, many thanks for this! I always love to read your newsletter!!!! My father has been very ill and I have been so busy, so I 'missed' your last newsletter which includes my embroidery article! However, I have just seen it!!! I am so thrilled with it!!! I am going to print it out and take it down to Hove to read to my dad. He is blind now and in an RNIB home! a huge 'thank you' for including my embroidery in your wonderful newsletter. I feel very honoured!
Sally Adams, north London

Thanks as always for the MMC newsletter, which always makes me wish I was still singing with the choir. How I miss it. I wanted to comment mischievously, though, on your point that having three generations of the Pearce family singing at the same time is a 'first'. I remember three generations of the Hunkin family singing in the same concert: Francis, David and David's son (whose name I can't remember). I think there was a concert with all three at Heligan. **Paul Newman, Bath**

Anyone know if Paul's got a point?

Meanwhile, **please, please, please....**

...if you like what we do, please support us with a donation to help us buy more music and pay our music team. Almost all the money we raise from the concerts we give goes to charities and other good causes. So it's to you that we must turn for the help we need in keeping our Choir going. This can be done by cheque or by BACS, made payable to Mevagissey Male Choir and sent to our Treasurer Graham Hoskins at 71 Tehidy Road, Tywardreath, PL24 2QD. Our BACS details are Sort Code: 20-74-20 and account number: 70717940. Please write 'Friend of MMC' in the payment reference field.

Thanks...

...once again to all those who have contributed to the newsletter with photos, reports, etc., including Carolyn George, Sylvie Thwaites, Ryan Tate, Mike WD Thompson, Jane Stubberfield.

Party Time!

Just before Easter we found time to entertain ourselves. Our third, self-styled Entertainment Evening took place in the Jubilee Hall with 14 'acts' of dubious quality, mostly made up of Choir members and other halves, put on a music hall style show.



Eat your heart out, Leonards Sachs!

Matt was followed by Bass Paul Uzzell, on the trumpet – then on to increasingly bigger brass up to the tuba; chairman and Top Tenor Nick Nicholls' missus Lesley with a hilarious self-penned monologue (and an encore!) and Baritone Robin Murphy accompanying himself in a couple of ditties before being joined by his (new) wife Rosey in a third.

Up next were 'The Portmellon Plonkers', a group consisting of a tea chest bass expertly played by Baritone John Pearce and three ukuleles with, Gary Mitchell, a co-founder of the Choir, leading the singing – all great fun and well received. Mary Phillips and Helen Hereward, other halves of Basses George and Les, then sang beautifully, accompanied by George on harmonica and Helen herself on flute. They were followed by special guests, 'Think Twice', a 14-year-old pianist and song writer (Ewan) and his 18-year-old friend (Faith), with two modern and one self-written piece. Taking us up to the interval were Press Gang, a shanty group composed partly of Choir members.

Bass Peter Bowker took on the role of Leonard Sachs – we had Peter to thank (or blame?) for organising the event again – and he began by introducing our favourite accompanist Matt Fox, who played an amazing compilation of music dating from 1642 to 2018 – 18 different melodies – all seamlessly melded together.



The Chairman's Wife, Les Nicholls in poetic mode



Married two months and she's off – Rosey Murphy



What is George up to?

Beer and pasties were available at the break, and a heads-or-tails 'raffle' run by former member Alan Dibb. The show got under way again with some community singing – all beautifully led by Rosey in her coarsest cockney accent and accompanied by Peter playing the piano *a la* Les Dawson — so poorly that he got hooked off the stage after one number and replaced by Matt.

Mevagissey QuayNotes – an *a cappella* quartet comprising Top Tenor Dom McVeigh, Second Tenor Darren Lyons, Baritone Mike S Thompson and Peter, were on next, with two songs and finishing with a solo by Dom, with Peter on concertina. Then up stepped Baritone Tony Scarratt, unrecognisable in full beard set and outfit, telling stories with great humour! And then the Portmellon Plonkers returned.



The Quaynotes – Dominic, Darren, Mike S Thompson and Peter Bowker

Helen Hereward next played two beautiful melodies on her flute, accompanied by Matt Fox and she was followed by the Mevagissey Muppets with a sketch written by and starring George Phillips. It brought the house down!! Second Tenors Paul Pearce and Graham Hoskins then came on as a duo, backed by the Claptonettes – Angie Hoskins and Lesley Dibb. Press Gang came back just before the finale, when all performers were on stage to sing *Cornwall My Home*.

The evening, which had started at 7.30, ended at 10.35 and raised a profit after expenses of £650.00 from a sell-out audience. 15



Relaxing after our Noss Mayo concert

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Venue	Comment	Time
Mon 29 Jul	Mevagissey Quay	Quay concert	7.45pm
Mon 5 Aug	Mevagissey Quay	Quay concerts	7.45pm
Mon 12 Aug	Mevagissey Quay	Quay concerts	7.45pm
Mon 19 Aug	Mevagissey Quay	Quay concerts	7.45pm
Sun 25 Aug	Bude Castle Grounds	RNLI	8.00pm
Mon 26 Aug	Mevagissey Quay	Quay concerts	7.45pm
Sat 21 Sep	Indian Queens Meth Ch	Harvest Festival	7.30pm
Sun 13 Oct	St Andrew's	Harvest of the Sea	tbc
Fri 6 Dec	St Andrew's	Christmas concert	7.00pm
Mon 9 Dec	Penrice House	Private	7.30pm
Sat 14 Dec	St Augustine's	St Petroc's in aid of homeless	7.30pm

Please check our website for updates.