



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



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

No: 33

DON'T FORGET! We'll be on the Quayside at 7.45pm on Monday 31 July and every Monday in August



Two choirs joining together across the generation gap

A FEAST OF SONG

"Wow! What a night that was! Thank you so much for having us." So wrote Rebekah Bailey, Assistant Headteacher at Mevagissey School, who brought along her 27-strong school choir to join us on the night.

Talk about being upstaged! The children, aged six to eleven, were magnificent. Our Feast Week concerts over the years – this was our 42nd – have usually been memorable for one reason or another, but the sheer joy

of seeing the children perform with such talent and such obvious pleasure ensured that 2017 will be remembered as a special one.

The Mevagissey Performing Arts Choir**, as they like to be known, first sang with us at our Christmas Concert last year. It worked so well we invited them back for Feast Week.

They came on to stage close the first half of the evening's programme, filing down the aisle with an orderliness that our own marshal Humphrey Stobart would be proud to achieve.

Forming up in three rows in front of our risers, they faced the packed St Andrews church in silent excitement, and not a trace of first night nerves. Their first assignment was to lead us in '*Mevagissey Bay*', with young Connie, our soloist for the first verse.

"I had to really hold it together when you sang *Mevagissey Bay*", says Rebekah. "Watching our youngest little chap, just 6 years old, singing his heart out alongside you bigger boys was just magical." Rebekah, you weren't the only one!!

Credit should go once again to Geoff Pollard, a choir founder, but sadly no longer a member, who wrote this most evocative piece.

Rebekah (or should we say Miss Bailey?) adds that it was "also a great opportunity for our soloists Connie and Lizzie to perform in front of an audience in such a supportive environment. Lizzie sang the solo part on '*Hold Back the River*', the second of three more pieces performed by the children after we had left the stage. They also sang '*Drop in the Ocean*' and ended with the Adele hit, '*Hello*'.



Mevagissey Performing Arts Choir preparing to launch their careers.

Oh yes, and we did some stuff, too. MD Graham Willcocks had put together a mixed programme of old and new, as he tried to make it different from last year. So we kicked off with *'Blue Moon'*; *'Softly, As I Leave You'*; *'Close Thine Eyes'*; and *'The Floral Dance'*, (you can't leave that out of Feast Week), with Graham himself performing the solo. We then gave way to Paul Pearce, who gave us *'For Your Eyes Only'* and *'It Was a Very Good Year'* as effortlessly as ever. This was followed by our increasingly popular *'Back to the '60s'* medley – and then the children came forward.

Opening the second half, our MC for the evening, Choir chairman 'Nick' Nicholls, attempted to get his Cornish tongue around *'Au Fond du Temple Saint'* with only partial success – that's why most of us just refer to it as *'The Pearl Fishers'*. No matter. It got a tremendous reception, and is rapidly becoming a favourite. We then revived *'My Heart Will Go On'* and *'Bridge over Troubled Water'*; before introducing another new piece, *'The Way We Were'*.

Meva Cappella next entertained us with the Beach Boys' *'In My Room'* and *'Darkness in the Delta'*, a popular barbershop number from the Mississippi Basin, and a new one for them. Our final set began with *'No Arms Can Ever Hold You'*, followed by *'An Eriskay Love Lilt'* and *'Goin' Home'*, and closed with the now familiar *'We Rise Again'*. – No apologies, it's such a wonderfully rousing piece with which to finish.

Except it wasn't the finish! Calls for an encore prompted Graham to acknowledge the presence in the audience of Edna Liddicoat, 94 years young, whose favourite Choir piece from years ago was *'Gypsy'*, something we haven't performed for many a year. Well, we just had to, didn't we? Edna's daughter, Lynda Blewett, wrote afterwards to thank us. "It came as a total surprise. Mum is an incredible person and continues to inspire us all. She has raised over £80,000 for the Merlin MS Centre." Both Edna & Lyn thought our performance was "magnificent", adding "What a wonderful evening we all had."

Final word goes to Rebekah Bailey, who spared no blushes. "You are a talented bunch and hopefully our little boys will join you bigger boys in years to come. Thanks again for having us - you've made some little people, parents and teachers very happy!"

None happier than us, Rebekah! Or, indeed, the Feast Week committee, who were the recipients of all the proceeds – a magnificent £1,150.

*** Mevagissey Performing Arts Choir from Mevagissey Community Primary School was formed to celebrate the love and joy of singing for children, and has been running in its current form for three years. It performs throughout the year, both within the school and out in the community, supporting events, and last year won the Primary Schools Choir 2016 category at the St Austell Festival of Music and Speech.*

Although the MPA Choir is directed and guided by Rebekah Bailey, Assistant Headteacher at the school, the choice of songs, styles and performance opportunities is decided upon by the children of the choir.

To 'the least spoilt church in Cornwall'



St Swithin's, Launcells, dates back to the 11th century

It's always nice to sing somewhere different and, on Saturday 3rd June, we found ourselves making our first-ever trip to Launcells (pronounced *Lannsell's*), a tiny hamlet some three miles east of Bude. We had been asked to sing at St Swithin's Church, set in an idyllic wooded valley in a parish of some 6,000 acres and about 330 people.

The church itself was apparently built by the Normans - as the font is of Norman origin and Launcells Manor is mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book. Its first recorded vicar was Hugo de Moltone, in 1261. By then, during the reign of King John, Matilda, widow of William of Launcells, had granted Dud Wood, still part of Launcells Barton today, to the Abbot of Hartland, for ten shillings.

Originally dedicated to St Andrew, the church was re-dedicated to St. Swithin in 1321 and rebuilt in the 15th century. Its chancel is paved with a unique collection of 15th century Barnstaple encaustic tiles, many of which were found in the vaults when the floor was re-laid in 1932, while the church is also notable for its clear glass windows (some of which are very old), having escaped the Victorian obsession for stained glass. The tower has six bells, and a painting of them being rung at the accession of George IV in 1820, now hangs in Bude Castle Museum.

Now Grade 1 listed, St Swithin's was described by John Betjeman in his book, *'The 100 Least Spoilt Churches'*, as 'the least spoilt church in Cornwall'. It is also mentioned by Simon Jenkins in *'England's Thousand Best Churches'*

After what might be termed an eventful coach journey, we arrived with minutes to spare. Given the church had been waiting the best part of a thousand years for us to appear, perhaps we could have done better, but we did get a very warm welcome from our hosts. A quick spruce-up and we were ready to file on to the risers.

Top Tenor Graham Rundle, who proved an amusing and informative compere for the evening, introduced our first four pieces: *'Anthem'*; followed by *'My Heart Will Go On'*; *'The Rose'*, with soloist Terry Coplin; and *'Every Time I Feel the*

Spirit'. Second Tenor Paul Pearce then entertained us with *'Strangers in the Night'* and *'Mona Lisa'*.

Next we sang *'Nessun Dorma'*; *'Hallelujah'*; *'Mevagissey Bay'*, with Paul again taking the solo part; and *'Au Fond Du Temple Saint (Pearl Fishers)'*. Under a pre-arrangement with our hosts, we then invited the congregation to join us in *'Land of Hope and Glory'*, not something that is in our repertoire, but copies of the words were available for those who needed them.



Graham Rundle in sparkling form

After the interval, we returned with *'An American Trilogy'*; *'Only You'*; *'Home Lovin' Man'*; and *'The Way We Were'*. Following which, Meva Cappella delighted the audience with *'I Really Don't Want to Know'* and *'In my Room'*, so much



Meva Capella in full flow

so that they were called on for an encore, and they obliged with *'Tonight'*, from *'West Side Story'*.

Choir and congregation then sang *'Jerusalem'* and the concert concluded with our *'Back to the '60s'* medley and *'We Rise Again'*, with soloists Dominic McVeigh and Terry Coplin (or should that be duettists?).

For our own encore, we sang the old favourite, *'Lower Lights'*. We were then invited to partake of a sumptuous spread of refreshments

provided by our very generous hosts. For those in need of something a little stronger, Bude-domiciled Bass Phil Walter had arranged for us to stop at the Bay View Inn in Widemouth Bay for a pint. Sadly, time was pressing, and we had a long journey ahead of us, so a pint, and just a couple of songs, meant it registered as one of the shortest afterglows to date. Curiously, having performed a series of pop songs in the church, we regaled the pub regulars with a couple of hymns. Strange, this singing business!

The patrons loved it though. Just as had St Swithin's, whose organiser, John Lee, wrote later: "Thank you all so much for giving us all such a lovely evening. Everyone really did enjoy your concert, with several asking when you would be up again!"

Meva's Shirley Introduces Us To Yealmpton



Yealmpton Community Methodist Church – light, airy and a great place to sing

On Saturday 8th July, the Choir paid its first ever visit to Yealmpton, just a few miles east of Plymouth. We were invited by Shirley Hrydziuska, who lived in Mevagissey – she was also a parish councillor - until her husband's ill health forced them to move closer to their family in August last year.

The village, which derives its name from the River Yealm that flows through it, has a 400-year-old stone cottage where a version of the famous rhyme Old Mother Hubbard is said to have been written, and is also famous for Kitley Caves, where green marble used to be quarried.

The Community Methodist Church turned out to be a small, but spacious, unfussy, square building, light and airy, with a high ceiling that made it a pleasure in which to sing. It was built in the early 20th century to provide a permanent home for the village's Wesleyan Methodists. Work began in 1906, with the church opening three years later, on 1st December 1909. Little then changed until 2000, when a series of improvements, including removal of pews, new ceiling cladding, a new heating system, improved lighting and a carpeted and levelled floor, created a more flexible and comfortable building.

And so it was. Except for the heat! Even jacket-less, and with the large doors open on to the street, it was very warm. Our programme included all our new numbers – and more. With Meva Cappella incapacitated due to Top Tenor Dom McVeigh's domestic crisis, we were two pieces short, so we added 'My Heart Will Go On' from 'Titanic' and 'You Raise Me Up' – quite an appropriate coupling, when you think about it!



Graham Willcocks leads the clapping in the Floral Dance

It was a busy night for Second Tenor Paul Pearce, who not only had to split his two solos – 'Younger than Springtime' and 'A Very Good Year' between the two halves, but also to lead us in 'Mevagissey Bay' and 'You Raise Me up'. Our MD was also called on for extra duties, filling in for the holidaying Bill Collins on 'Floral Dance', and for Dom and Terry Coplin in 'We Rise Again'. And he did the compering! A word of praise, too, for the Top Tenors – just six of them, but they did us proud.

During the break, Angela Brimblecombe led the twelve strong Yealmpton Gospel Singers in two upbeat pieces, 'Working on a Building' and 'Siyahamba' – of which MMC followers will be hearing more in due course!!

Some 200 turned up to hear us and Shirley tells us they raised £500 for St Luke's Hospice and Christian Aid. "I've lots of friends in Meva", she says – she still goes back to help with Feast Week. "The concert here was everything I dreamt of. To me you will always be the best in Cornwall."

Sadly, she was unable to join us for our excellent afterglow at the Rose & Crown. "I was so tired, as I had not slept much for two or three days worrying about the concert, as I had never done anything like it before." Better prepare for doing it again, Shirley!



The Yealmpton Gospel Singers



Outside the Rose and Crown – you just can't stop these guys once they get started

PUTTING ON A SHOW AT STITHIANS



Rebecca Wills - the charming maid who entertainingly compered the evening...

standards and quality of their produce. And it was already well established in 1838!

Our venue was the Luncheon Marquee where we met the St Stythians Brass Band, with whom we were to share the evening's programme, and our compere for the evening, Radio Cornwall's Rebecca Wills.

It was the Band, led by the MD James Burns, who got the show under way promptly at 8pm, with a series of popular pieces that warmed the audience up nicely. We then trooped on to deliver: *Anthem; Floral Dance; The Rose; The Way We Were; and Every Time I Feel the Spirit.*

It was to Stithians Agricultural Show on Monday 17th July. We're always delighted to perform on a Monday because it's better than practising, which is what we would otherwise be doing. But we were also delighted because it was a great concert, and we couldn't but wonder why it had been so long since last went there, way back in 1985.

Stithians Show is the largest one-day agricultural show in Cornwall and one of the largest in the country. It's far more than that though, with livestock a substantial horticultural marquee, an arts, crafts and cookery section as well as cattle, horses and birds.

The origins of the Show are still shrouded in mystery, but it is thought to have begun as a challenge between local parishioners over the



...and Bill Collins, who had no maid with him

After another entertaining session from the Band – not to mention a series of amusing stories from Ms Wills, we returned with ‘Back to the ‘60s’ and ‘We Rise Again’, either side of an impromptu ‘All My Lovin’ from Meva Cappella. Then it was the band’s turn again, with a couple of pieces, before we trooped back on to lead the audience in ‘Trelawney’ and the ‘National Anthem’. It was then a short trip to ‘The Star’ in Stithians village, where we ended the evening in traditional style.



St Stythians Band strikes up

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING BANNER

Some time in April, our intrepid publicist, Bass Peter Bowker, strung our Choir banner across the railings on the Catholic Church corner of the Asda roundabout in St Austell. A week or two later, we noticed it was missing. It was suggested that perhaps the Council had removed it, so Peter asked the Council. Three times. Each time, they promised to investigate and phone him back. They didn't. So we wrote, simply asking if they had the banner. With the help of Mevagissey councillor, James Mustoe, we eventually received an emailed reply from Rachael Tatlow, the Council's Highway & Environment Manager, apologising for not responding but denying that her team had removed the banner. Had it been stolen, then? We called in at the police station, where we reported it as a theft, and we were given a crime number and the advice to post a message on social media. Great idea. Two days later, someone replied insisting that the banner was at Tregongeeves – the Council depot. getting a crime number etc. So, back we went to Rachael Taplow. Lo and behold, they did have the banner, after all. When they were going to notify us, who knows? We collected it on 24 May, six weeks after it went missing. By then, though, we'd spent £111 on a new banner. But in stepped a fairy godmother, in the shape of Dawn Stallwood, formerly Blamey, now a London lawyer, but still a keen Choir supporter, with a cheque to cover the cost. Thank you, Dawn!

It transpired, by the way, that we had transgressed by positioning the banner on the railings where it could be a distraction to motorists. Unlike the posters on the railings outside the council offices in St Austell themselves, next to the pedestrian crossing, then ?

P Uzzell – the Last Piece in the Bass Jigsaw?

It was music that brought our newest Bass to Mevagissey. But not male voice singing. Paul Uzzell's first love is brass bands and, when we first came across him, he was clutching a tenor horn.

Paul arrived in Mevagissey in 2013 having bought a retirement home here eleven years earlier. But he couldn't wait until retirement. The call of the Cornish Brass Band heritage - and the fishing - proved too strong he gave up his career as a self-employed computer consultant in Stratton St Margaret, near Swindon, and found a job as a buyer for Waldons of Sticker, now part of the T. Clarke construction group.

As a musician, Paul certainly has all the credentials. "I love playing, conducting and teaching brass bands and have played in several top bands and performed in all the major contests: National Finals, English Open, British Open and at most major venues like the Royal Albert Hall, Symphony Hall and Bell Vue."

He says he's been playing and reading music for over 50 years now. He'll be at home in the Bases, then. (I don't think)

All brass band careers come to an end, however, and Paul thought he could put his love of music to different use. "I watched the Choir in the pub on a Monday night and on the quay during the summer, got to know a few of the members and decided to join. I've never sung in anger before, just in the shower and on brass band coaches on the way home from gigs." It's ok, Paul, it's only required if you are the MD.

Paul is married to Jacqui, with whom he's pictured here holding the Royal Trophy, the top prize at the West of England Bandsman's Contest, also known as Bugle Contest, at St Austell Band Club. He also has three sons from a previous marriage. In whatever spare time he has left, he goes fishing, something he's loved doing since his parents took him to the Thames as a boy.



Paul's favourite choir piece is *'American Trilogy'*. "I've played the Goff Richards arrangement several times in the past, accompanying male voice choirs such as Bargoed, Cross Keyes and Pontarddulais. But he chose *'Back to the '60s'* for his voice test – although it's unlikely he had to do all twelve minutes!

"I enjoy the company", says Paul, "and the different style of music making. I am now really looking forward to singing at the Minack".

FRIENDS WRITE

I am Secretary of Swift Singers choir but Mevagissey is our adopted second home. We love to hear your choir and I wanted to say how much we enjoyed Monday's concert yet again. The choir sang beautifully. The '60s medley was good and fun - Carol Selwood, Essex

We were so happy to just hear your practice, though it's hard not to applaud even when Graham "corrects" you. Best wishes to you all, and I've made a note for next May at the Minack already. And, of course, you'll all be with me on the river this summer, if only through my ear buds – *Bibbi Lee, Washington, USA*

I loved seeing my mother and father in a trance when you all sang at your rehearsal in June - it made my heart feel so happy and at peace knowing they were able to hear you sing in person again. Best of luck and well wishes to you and the choir - Stacia Lee (Bibbi's daughter)

We had a lovely evening, and thoroughly enjoyed the concert. Thanks again - *Tina Little, Edinburgh*

And, from north London, schoolteacher Sally Adams has written to say:

"I am walking the south west coastal path every summer 'in sections' with my friend Rowland. I always carry in my rucksack my embroidery and I stitch anything and everything I see which I like. So far, I have waves, seagulls, kestrels, tin mines, islands, heather, sandy beaches and, of course, now the Mevagissey Male Choir!

"I really adored listening to your choir that warm summer evening just after we had eaten our chips sitting on the harbour wall and watching dolphins! I must put the dolphins into my embroidery next. You have 'pride of place' right in the middle. I am about halfway along the path, so I have half my material left. Listening to your choir that evening was certainly one of the highlights of my holiday. Thank you! PS I am listening to your 'Mevagissey Bay' CD as I write this!

Sally



FISHERMAN'S MISSION

We were delighted to support The Fishermen's Mission once again for the Blessing of the Fleet, an annual service held on the quayside.

It took place this year on the afternoon of Saturday 17th May, and, with MD Graham Willcocks unavailable, we were led by Matt Fox. He introduced five pieces, four of them with a marine theme – 'Calm is the Sea'; 'Lower Lights'; 'The Mermaid'; and 'Haven of Rest'. The fifth was the Cornish anthem, 'Hail to the Homeland'.

Sandra Porter, representing the Mission, commented later: "Even though the weather was a bit uncertain, the service was well attended and, as always, the Choir were brilliant. I did love the choice of songs this year. Thank you so much for your continued support – it is very much appreciated and the Choir definitely make a massive contribution."

Thank you

As always, many thanks to those who have supported us with donations over the past three months, including Bibbi Lee, Yvonne Thomas, Rachel Reeder and Rob Livingstone, Alan and Sylvie Thwaites and all those who have helped fill our collection bucket, either on our practice nights or in The Fountain afterwards. We have also received a donation from Mevagissey Parish Council, for which we are very grateful. It is your support that enables us to pay, primarily, for our new music. As you know we like to update our repertoire continually with new, exciting and challenging pieces, but music does not come cheap. You can help make it happen.

...and to

As always, thanks to Carolyn George, Sylvie Thwaites, George Phillips and others for keeping the newsletter supplied with wonderful photos of the Choir and its performances. And to Jane Stubberfield and Graham Hoskins for more technical contributions.



Our Grahams – well, two of them – take a breather during the break at Yealmpton

QUAYSIDE CONCERTS

Next week, we return to the Mevagissey quayside for the first of our five summer concerts. The Choir has been entertaining audiences with their Quay Concerts since 1987, notching up 138 to date – although not all have been on the harbour. Rain has occasionally forced us inside at St Andrew's.

We begin on Monday 31st, July, and we will be in the same place, same time (7.45pm) every Monday throughout August.

2017 DIARY

Date	Comment	Venue	Time
Mon 31 Jul	Quay Concert	Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Mons 7, 14, 21, 28 Aug	Quay Concert	Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Sat 9 Sep	Barbecue – to be confirmed	Barley Sheaf, Gorran	7.00pm
<i>Sat 23 Sep</i>	<i>Provisional</i>	<i>St Germans</i>	
Sat 7 Oct		Holsworthy Arts Theatre	2.00pm
Sun 15 Oct	Tbc - Harvest of the Sea	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	4.00pm
Sat 21 Oct	With Mousehole MVC	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	7.30pm
**Thu 30 Nov	AGM	Mevagissey Social Club	7.30pm
Sat 9 Dec	Christmas, with Ladies and School	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	7.00pm
**Mon 11 Dec	Tbc - Private event	Penrice House	7.30pm
Tue 12 Dec	Informal Christmas Singalong	St John's, St Austell	7.30pm
Fri 15 Dec	Christmas concert	Holy Trinity, St Austell	7.30pm

2018

Sat 13 Jan	Dinner/Dance	Carlyon Bay Golf Club	7.30pm
<i>Sat 5 May</i>	<i>With Cyprus Ladies</i>	Minack Theatre	7.30pm

** = private

Italics = provisional