



## February 2021 Newsletter

Editor - Phillip Tolley  
(all misspellings are mine)

## Choir Secretary — Gareth Spracklen — From Cradle to Choir

I was born on a November morning in 1952 bang on time and I have been on time ever since.

My mother was assisted in bringing me into the world by two neighbours Blanche Rosser and Doreen Wanklyn. Doreen was later to become a member of the Eurydice as obviously married to Jack Wanklyn, our next door neighbours at Bryn Terrace Brynithel. This was my first brush with the Orpheus. A few years later we moved a short distance up the road to Bryngaer Terrace after the death of my grandmother Spracklen .



My grandfather Dayton who lived with us suffered with extremely heavy nose bleeds and on one occasion I was sent by my mother to see if Towy Berrow was at home. He was a first aider, being the baths superintendent at Llanhilleth colliery, and lived close by in Belmont terrace. He was not home but his wife would send him over when he came home from work. Towy duly arrived and attended to my grandfather. (Was this my second brush with the Orpheus?)

Off to Ty'r Graig school I went and here I developed my interest in sport and games - indeed lessons were only a rest period between football in the school yard. I had no appetite for lessons, however I was in the top class. My teacher was Mrs Myfanwy Harding, later to become a member of the Eurydice, being married to Lance Harding who was a Committee man during the 70-80s. Another brush with the Orpheus.

Playing football after school on the road in Brynithel we would rarely be disturbed by cars. Only the buses on the half hour helping us to tell the time. However there were some car owners in Brynithel. The midwife Nurse Preece and a teacher who lived in the villas at Belmont terrace, who we regularly helped guide into his garage. This was Mr Arthur Cook. Another brush with the Orpheus.

My habit of resting in lessons between games of football continued and, as my final school years approached, I managed to achieve sufficiently good results to attend North Monmouthshire College of Further Education in Ebbw Vale to study General Engineering. There I achieved qualifications enabling me to gain a technical apprenticeship with South Wales Switchgear, Blackwood, studying Electronics at Newport College, Altyryn and progressing to the drawing office and becoming an Electrical Draughtsman.

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During this time I was surrounded by men of varying interests. Two in particular were keen gardeners who continually badgered one another about who was the best gardener. Enough was enough and a marrow growing competition was arranged to decide who was top dog - everyone entered. I came third and my interest in gardening was born. I have held an allotment ever since 1974.

As time on the allotment went on I struck up a friendship with Cyril Morgan, who also had an allotment at Brynithel, and I can remember him instructing me in a lesson on sowing parsnips. Another brush with the Orpheus.

Having now married and still living in Brynithel I was aware of the Orpheus contingent living in Brynithel. I would regularly see them 'blazered up' going off to concerts.

As retirement approached my hankering for joining a choir became a reality and off to the Orpheus I went in September 2009 and, as they say, the rest is history.

*I should note that all throughout this time I had no idea that the people who I had had a brush with were connected with the Orpheus. I did not become aware of them being in the choir until I joined myself.*

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## Men of Our Time

I wonder how often we look at history and remember that it is shaped by our own everyday experiences of the events that we ourselves live through? Right now, the Coronavirus pandemic is dominant in our lives and the catalyst for the longest period of continuous suspension, of our choir since its foundation. In its way the pandemic poses a similar level of threat to us that, we (the choir), have faced in previous times and continue to face. Be that world wars, 1918/19 flu pandemic, strikes, lockouts, depression and exodus; or, in more recent decades, modernity, cultural diversity, and changing taste. To date the choir always rallied and no doubt we will continue to do so. Thinking aloud, although a century or more separates us from the men of 1908, are we really that different when it comes to having a passion for choral singing and all this entails? I doubt it.

If it were possible, which of course it is not, it would be wonderful to sit down with some of the men from 1908 to share our experiences of the different ages. Instead, the best we can manage is to peer into the record books and perhaps imagine we were there.

There are no records we know of until January 1910. Here are a few snippets from that year:

- ♦ The 'Orpheus Glee Singers' increased numbers from 21 to 32.
- ♦ Weekly contributions were 3d.
- ♦ Practice was moved from Carmel Chapel to Trinity Chapel.
- ♦ A Collard and Collard piano cost 32 guineas and was being paid off at a rate of 12/6d per quarter.
- ♦ Saturday night dancing was not an excuse for absence from practice.
- ♦ Smoking was banned during practice and all choir business.
- ♦ Fines were imposed for lateness and absence.
- ♦ Singing the Party's music outside of practice was not allowed (rescinded).
- ♦ The charge for a cold supper at a choir social event was 1/10d.
- ♦ Henllys provided a 36-seater charabanc for a trip to the West Country and six cases of non-alcoholic drinks were taken aboard.
- ♦ The Chair was replaced twice, Treasurer once.

Founder Members confirmed by 1910 records: Wilf Alexander. Tom Bundred. David Cheedy. G Davies. H Dykins. Tom Elliott. W Flowers. G Gough. Arthur Hawkins. Bryn Hinson. Stan Hone. T Huddle. Joe James. WJ James. James Partridge. Tom Powell. E Rees. W Saunders. Abe Sneddon. WT Spence. TH Spencer. WH Turgalt. Mog Williams. R Winstone. JC Wright.

*Mick Bishop*

## **The Orpheus Glee Singers**

**South Wales Gazette September 9th 1910**

*At the Blaenau Gwent Primitive Methodist Church on Wednesday week a grand concert was given by the Orpheus Glee Singers conducted by Mr T. Bundred. In the unavoidable absence of Mr T. Evans, M.E, the chair was taken by Mr T. Hill of Cwmtillery.*

*The programme opened with a pianoforte solo by Mr C. Gough, followed by a glee "Roman Soldier" by the Glee singers. Miss Gladys Brown then sang "Dear homeland" and Miss Pembry recited the "The Dandy Filth" which the glee singers rendered "Pease be still" Messrs H. Dykins and E. Lloyd gave a violin duet and Mr J. Williams sang. Miss Pembry rendered the "Song of the shirt" and Mr Abe Lewis sang "Neath the dark waves" with effect. Mrs Bundred Morgan followed with a solo, "The Swallows" Messrs A. Lewis and J. Williams sang a duet, "The two beggars" and were encored, after which Miss Pembry again recited. A quartet "Simple Simon" was encored and the Glee party concluded with "Crossing the Plain"*

*The concert was a great success and all the artistes acquitted themselves admirably. The accompanists were Messrs L. Hone and C. Gough, A.L.C.M.*

*On Saturday the choir had a cold spread in the Carmel vestry, when the choir and all the artistes who took part in the concert numbering nearly 50 were present. After the spread an entertainment was given and was much enjoyed. The spread was provided by Mrs. Jenkins, of the Dorothy Restaurant, Carmel Street, to whom much praise is due for the excellent repast provided.*

*All the arrangements were in the hands of Mr. Powell, the energetic secretary of the Orpheus Glee Singers.*

**South Wales Gazette November 4<sup>th</sup> 1910**

*Benefit Concert: On Wednesday evening a benefit concert was held at Trinity Chapel in the interest of the children of the late Mr John James of Church Street. There was a crowded attendance over which Mr E Jones Williams J.P. presided.*

*An excellent programme was given by the following talented artistes: Soprano Misses Kate Michel, A.L.C.M.; Mr H Clist; duettists, Miss G Partridge and Master D Morgan, elocutionist, Madam H J Gwillim; and pianist, Master Leslie James. The Orpheus Glee Party, under the conductorship of Mr T Bundred, rendered glees and choruses. The accompanist was Mr Amos Harding, A.L.C.M.*

*The various items were much appreciated and a substantial sum was realised for a very deserving cause.*

## **AOMC Repertoire WordSearch**

The Xmas wordsearch included 24 titles, 16 of which were found in the January Newsletter. The February Newsletter includes the last remaining titles as listed below, plus three extra titles.

Please note that there are no spaces between words on the grid and none of the letters are used more than once. The words can go in any direction.

Blame it on the Bossa Nova

Gweddiaffricanaidd

Softly as I leave you

Eli Jenkins Prayer

Stout Hearted Men

Cwm Rhondda

Gwahoddiad

Sloop John B

Old MacDonalds Farm

The Anvil Chorus

The Gypsy

Bobby Shafto

Find the repertoire listed above in the WordSearch Grid on the next page.

Please note that there are no spaces between words on the grid and none of the letters are used more than once. The words can go in any direction.

S	R	E	Y	A	R	P	S	N	I	K	N	E	J	I	L	E	A	B	T	A	Y	J	P	V
O	J	O	Q	R	R	T	I	F	G	U	B	P	Z	E	F	D	O	H	V	S	B	H	I	P
F	B	G	C	U	I	K	R	C	A	F	K	L	F	R	D	B	E	O	I	T	B	X	V	W
T	O	C	J	U	C	P	F	Q	E	T	T	N	V	N	B	A	N	G	V	P	J	C	Y	W
L	G	W	A	H	O	D	D	I	A	D	U	J	O	Y	N	A	P	E	Z	W	A	I	D	V
E	U	M	M	F	L	R	W	R	V	V	R	H	S	V	S	X	T	P	G	M	D	R	D	Y
Y	S	U	U	P	C	L	J	P	E	Q	R	H	I	S	G	J	X	O	L	D	H	B	P	E
A	K	B	M	B	A	W	Z	O	R	M	A	L	O	I	F	M	X	G	D	N	O	N	D	A
S	T	P	Y	F	T	N	C	J	W	F	C	B	P	J	R	V	O	L	R	W	A	Q	R	X
I	H	Y	D	U	R	Q	B	C	T	H	E	C	I	Y	H	A	D	A	J	W	C	W	I	W
L	N	B	W	N	F	P	W	O	O	H	U	V	I	O	C	Q	Z	L	I	Q	P	P	Y	M
E	M	E	B	H	S	J	K	R	T	B	N	N	I	F	E	Q	B	F	H	H	H	V	R	H
A	S	W	M	J	M	Q	U	N	X	C	V	Q	Z	E	J	L	K	L	K	C	Q	O	B	T
V	Z	L	C	D	K	S	O	O	L	D	M	A	C	D	O	N	A	L	D	S	F	A	R	M
E	D	X	O	K	E	T	G	W	E	D	D	I	A	F	F	R	I	C	A	N	A	I	D	D
Y	D	Y	G	O	I	T	U	D	B	H	A	E	F	N	X	V	F	O	M	C	C	V	D	M
O	Q	J	S	E	P	I	R	I	Q	B	C	N	R	G	E	B	H	T	J	G	J	C	B	S
U	U	D	M	N	Y	J	V	A	O	X	I	Z	N	O	A	T	D	E	D	K	K	C	Y	X
D	G	A	R	W	Q	F	O	O	E	T	X	Z	T	V	W	D	S	Q	M	F	Z	J	X	K
H	L	M	R	B	R	F	E	H	K	H	G	H	U	T	J	M	L	V	O	I	Z	O	Y	A
B	B	X	C	I	S	I	X	J	N	D	T	B	Y	A	O	Q	W	O	Z	D	E	H	O	T
N	E	R	Y	L	E	J	M	G	Z	B	E	U	V	G	D	G	B	F	F	D	N	Q	Y	Y
T	H	R	B	X	W	R	O	F	D	W	L	B	O	B	Z	S	D	T	R	U	L	F	K	M
Q	A	K	Y	S	P	Y	G	E	H	T	B	V	Z	T	R	S	X	A	L	R	Q	N	A	P
F	Z	Y	Z	Q	X	O	D	Q	W	S	H	E	P	B	S	T	O	V	N	D	C	U	G	D

## In Memoria

Unfortunately we continue the year with the sad news of the loss of another former choir member.

**Denis Roles:** Denis was a former Baritone chorister and a very able and hard working Choir Secretary. He unfortunately passed away after a long illness. Gareth Spracklen and Dai Poole represented the choir at Denis' funeral which took place on 22 February 2021, while Mick, Lyndon and Kevin stood at the Crematorium entrance.

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Ian Waite, who conducts the Tredegar Orpheus Male Choir, has set up a new facebook group called 'Bored Choristers'. Several of our members post contributions. The group has been set up to reconnect choir members who are unable to meet and sing together. More details can be found here <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1059421447888591>

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This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the formation of 'Eurydice' Ladies. A booklet is being put together to celebrate this milestone. If you have any memorabilia related to Eurydice please let us know. There will also be a feature on 'Eurydice' in the May Newsletter.

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We hope that, as the Welsh Government COVID-19 restrictions are eased, we will be able to organise a outdoor get together for the 'Orpheus' family including members of the ladies choir, male choir members, friends and supporters.