



**Welcome to the August/September lockdown special.**

## **Covid-19. Coronavirus Pandemic — Update**

The Choir has been in hibernation since the end of March, together with most of the choral world, while we await scientific clarification and government advice on the COVID19 effects of singing. We have also cancelled all our concerts for the rest of 2020. Each month we have hoped to be able to get back to some form of re-hearsals subject to social distancing rules while waiting for more information from the Welsh Government.

Rather than being in limbo the Choir Committee have now taken the decision that we will not attempt to restart full rehearsals this year but will instead aim to restart full rehearsals again on the 14 January 2021. This will of course still be subject to social distancing and we understand that there will be other issues to for choristers to consider including underlying health issues, the Flu Season, winter nights and possible snowfall. Some members may wish to stay away until such time as we have a vaccination programme.

If restrictions are lifted sufficiently it may be possible to hold some short sectional rehearsals later this year.

Excellent work has been undertaken by David Poole in measuring up the existing rehearsal spaces at Ebenezer and working out how many singers can fit in any rehearsal space within the distancing rules. We are also drawing up risk assessment guidelines so that, when we do restart, we have a safe environment to sing in.

Rules have also changed to allow up to 30 people to rehearse outdoors providing social distance rules are adhered to.

The Welsh Association of Male choir have provided an updated information about Choral Singing which you will find on the next page.



Afternoon everyone .....hope you and yours are well and coping with all the challenges facing us!!!

I know that many people are anxious about the current rules relating to choirs coming together again and i hope the following helps.

You will be aware that the regulations relating to most aspects of the current Coronavirus position are determined by the four home countries separately; some however are established by the UK Government. The current position in Wales as far as choirs are concerned is that groups of no more than 30 people are allowed to sing together outdoors as long as suitable mitigation and precautions are in place. You will find further information on the Welsh Government website:

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance>

In England the regulations were amended on 13th August and choirs in England have much more leeway for practice and performance including indoors. The new guidance for England can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts#arts-2-1>

We expect an announcement 'imminently' from the Welsh Government which may well bring the regulations in Wales into line with those now in place in England;

Best wishes and keep safe

Chris Evans  
WAMC

## **Steps that will usually be needed:**

- Providing space for performers and other attendees to be socially distanced from each other and from any audience, production team members or other individuals, wherever possible during training, rehearsal, pre-production, performance and any other form of performing arts activity.
- Working outdoors where possible. Where this is not possible, ensuring all rehearsal, training and performance areas, with particular regard to indoor and covered areas, have maximum ventilation whenever staff or audiences are present.
- Organising and designing repertoire, rehearsals, training and performance to avoid situations where performers cannot socially distance, wherever feasible.
- Reducing as far as possible any time that individuals are not able to maintain social distancing.
- Reducing group and cast sizes where possible to maintain social distancing. Conducting rehearsals and training in smaller fixed teams wherever possible.
- Adapting live performing arts to ensure they are safe. If that is not possible, consider the use of technology solutions to reduce interactions and ensure social distancing (for example for castings, rehearsals, training and performance).
- Removing non-essential common areas such as waiting rooms.
- Using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people maintain social distance, where possible.
- Positioning side-to-side or back-to-back and avoiding working face-to-face wherever possible.
- Screening of anyone prior to entry into venues, which may include, but not be limited to, a COVID-19 symptom questionnaire.
- Ensuring there is a clear policy in place for managing a COVID-19 positive individual, and abiding by government and PHE guidelines and reporting requirements.

## Meet the Choir



### Chairman - Mick Bishop

I joined the choir in May 2015 after being encouraged to do so by members of F Troop. I had been retired about three and a half years and having heard the choir sing I decided to take the plunge. That I was supported in practice by experienced and friendly choristers seated either side of me was a great help.

In my employ, I was the last Chief Highway Engineer at Southampton City Council before outsourcing. Prior to that I ran the National Local Government Group for Tribal Consulting, after spending several years as the Assistant Chief Highway Engineer at Birmingham City Council.

### Librarian - Lyndon Smith

I became a member of the Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir in late 1985 just after the end of the 1984 - 1985 miners' strike at the age of 29 and at that time was working underground at the Six Bells / Marine Colliery's - a fact that would later prove to be a significant one in the history of the choir. Historically the core of the choir was primarily made up of men who like myself worked as a coal miner or in the mining industry. This way of earning a living abruptly came to an end in March 1989 with the closure of the Marine Colliery, leaving myself unemployed and with the unenviable label of being the last working coal miner in 81 years since the choir's conception.

Over the years I have been asked many times why I decided to join the Abertillery Orpheus and the simple answer to that question is - Because I was asked to by my father, who had recently joined the Bass section of the choir and was thrilled to be a part of this organisation, telling me how much he was enjoying not just the singing but the comradeship and friendship that he had been given.

## A Lockdown Diary

Hello boys of the choir, our ladies of the Eurydice and friends and followers ...

*As you have not heard from me since the pandemic Crisis hit us, immediately after our return from our successful tour of Kent, our illustrious and forward thinking committee has directed me to issue a communication to you all via our choir newsletter. It is to be along the lines "what have you been doing since the lock Down".*

I have been self isolating at my allotment where I have all that I need around me. I am speaking to you now from the Secretary's office of the 'Brynithel Organic Gardens' - The BOG off Shed

We are a group of elite organic gardeners who are flat out striving to find an organic vaccine for the coronavirus. Our Head Organic Gardener (HOG) up here in Brynithel is Phil Wallace, locally known as Basher. We have not seen much of him this summer as he has been called up by Boris to head up the infamous Scientific Analysis Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and attends cabinet meetings as a minister without portfolios. He is an expert grower and he knows his onions.

No doubt you are wondering what qualifies him for such an important role in this troubled time. Well I can let you all into a secret. You have all assumed "Basher" is his nickname, however it is actually the letters he boasts after his name. His very respected list of academic achievements Bac. A.S.H.E.R—which I can tell you is as follows: He is a Bachelor of the Arts, Science, History, Economics and R is for the R value. This was discovered by him while buying a round of beer in Kent. So you will agree he is well qualified for the role. As I said he knows his onions and along with the rest of the SAGE committee he will no doubt stuff this virus.

I am, as you will guess, the Secretary of the BOG. We have several interesting members in fact it's just like the choir really. Misers, meanderers, miserable gits and moaners. We come from all walks of life with differing interests and specialties in organic growing.

We have a member his name is Skip. He specialises in recycling organic matter. He grows and talks a load of rubbish. Another member he's a bit of a dope. He's on another planet all the time and we don't know what he grows. We call him Weed. We have a grower who grows huge cauliflowers he is known as Big Ears. Our best grower - he knows everything, grows everything, tells every one what to do - they call me Mr Secretary. Some of our members grow vegetables, some grow flowers - but mostly our members just grow old

The issues I am to up date you on are as follows

1. The currant crisis
2. Restricted movements
3. An organic vaccine
4. Up date from SAGE
5. Lock down fatigue

1.The currant crisis — There is no currant crisis at the BOG this year. Both black and red currants trees were pruned last autumn and had an organic top dressing in January and we had a bumper harvest this summer: **So this was fake news.**

2. Restricted movements / self isolating at home— Having to sit about all day I understand is restricting your movements. At the BOG we have an age old remedy for this problem. Regular hefty portions of stewed Rhubarb and custard. This will in deed have you scurrying about in no time at all it will also assist in clearing some cupboard space as the stock of loo rolls you were stock piling at the out break of this pandemic reduces. Your movements will definitely no longer be restricted.

3. An Organic Vaccine - We are striving night and day up here in the BOG to source a cure and we are currently testing the merits of gooseberry wine. We know it's purging effect is legendary and may well purge the virus. When results are in I will let you know through our grape vine.

4. Lock down fatigue - As the pandemic continues and our movements and liberties remain limited, we are all struggling with the effects. But we must look at the positives.

- I. The misers among us are saving money so they must be happy
- II. the meanderers are now free to wanders aimlessly again
- III. All the miserable gits can carry on being miserable
- IV. And the moaners are happy having a field day as they have lots to moan about.

**In summary:**

The news from our man on the inside of Downing Street is very troubling.

Joe public is to continue to self distance but cabinet ministers can still do as they like for the foreseeable future.

There is no vaccine in sight.

Prohibition is, he thinks, imminent and will be in place before Christmas. So now is the time to panic buy. Your cupboards are now empty of loo rolls as your movements are no longer restricted. So stock up with everything you don't really need.

Write your Christmas present wish list but please don't wish for a white Christmas. It will restrict your movements again and rhubarb will be out of season.

We can't sing but we can keep smiling. We still have our sense of humour in the face of this pandemic and as in life concentrate and enjoy what you can do and don't moan about what you can't do.

Keep smiling keep safe

Signing off at the allotment  
Your Choir Secretary

**Tip of the month. Get your home brew kits in - While stocks last**

**DRAFT REPORT AND PROPOSAL FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF POSSIBLE  
CHOIR BUDDY SYSTEM**

**1.0 Aims and Benefits of Buddy Systems**

1.1 Throughout the lockdown period the Committee has tried to keep up to date with health and welfare issues and other needs within the membership. In employment and education, Buddy Systems are cooperative arrangements whereby individuals are paired or teamed to assume responsibility for one another's welfare or safety. Such arrangements can also offer opportunities to develop more inclusive management systems for clubs and societies such as the Choir in it's day to day running. They can reduce the pressure on individual officers to resolve everyday issues. Where matters arise that cannot be resolved through initial 'buddy link' they can be circulated around the system and/or referred directly to the officers of the Committee in the traditional way.

**2.0 Functions of a Choir Buddy System**

2.1 Some of the initial functions of a system would be to make sure that buddies are made aware of any health or transport difficulties that individuals are experiencing. Thus pick ups, home visits etc. can be arranged and information passed on to the Committee where necessary. Another important function would be to help and encourage new members through mentoring, first by a temporary link to an established buddy group, who would make sure that the prospective member is made to feel welcome. The Buddy Coordinator would select the temporary attachment based upon a section or locality. The new member would join the full system at a later stage. It is hoped that the new Choir Lottery will be of great benefit to the financial well being of the Choir. Along with the benefits there will be a commitment for ticket numbers to be registered before each draw. The buddy system can be useful in that those not able to attend rehearsal on any particular occasion can provide verifiable proof of ticket buyers and numbers by email to a buddy (crucially before the draw is made), or deliver the tickets to a buddy who will be attending practice. The scope and functions of a buddy system would hopefully evolve and extend over time.

**3.0 Possible System Structure**

3.1 For practical reasons it is perhaps beneficial for links to be arranged where possible on the basis of shared locality or from existing close friendship groups, in order to make any practical assistance easier. It is accepted that this may not always be possible however, and it is not a fundamental requirement for the system to work.

3.2 The initial concept is that each Chorister has a direct, functional relationship with two other members in an open loop. A working example using eight initial participants is shown overleaf. Perhaps the easiest way to visualise it is a group of people joining hands around a table to form a complete a circle.

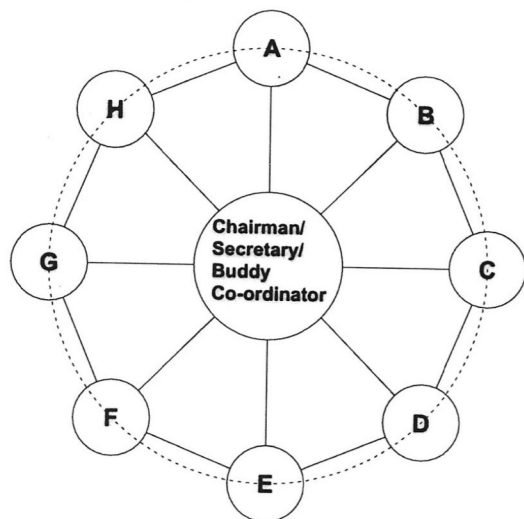
3.3 When a new prospective member arrives at practice his contact details will be given initially to a two or three man group who will act as mentors until he formally accepts membership. On becoming a full member the current links will need to be broken to allow him to join into an extended system. The Buddy Coordinator can select an appropriate position, again based upon location or friendships. If a member leaves the Choir the two members with a shared link to the departing member simply join to complete the circle again.

**4.0 Development and Implementation**

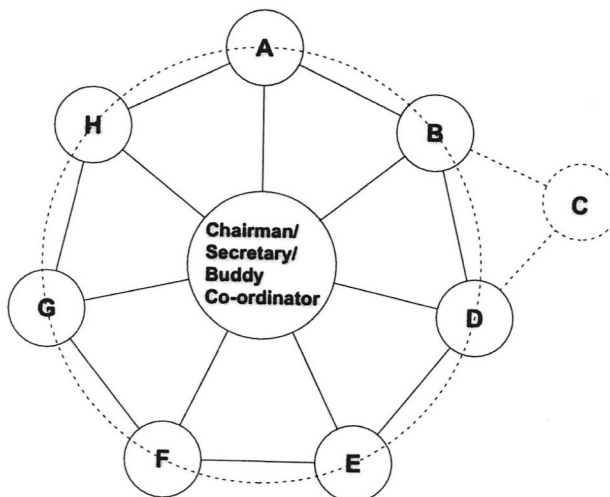
4.1 The first stage would be to assemble and maintain a complete list of home, telephone and home addresses for the Choir. Once established, each member would need then to make sure that details of his buddies were kept up to date. A Coordinator would need to set up the initial link chain, refresh and maintain the links as the Choir changes over time. Buddies should try to communicate informally and regularly.

4.2 It is proposed that the issue be placed upon the Agenda for the next meeting of the Choir Committee and discussed with a view to securing support from the full membership.

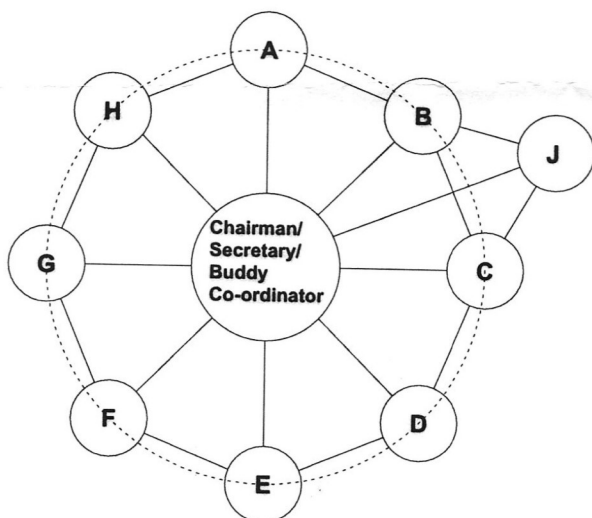




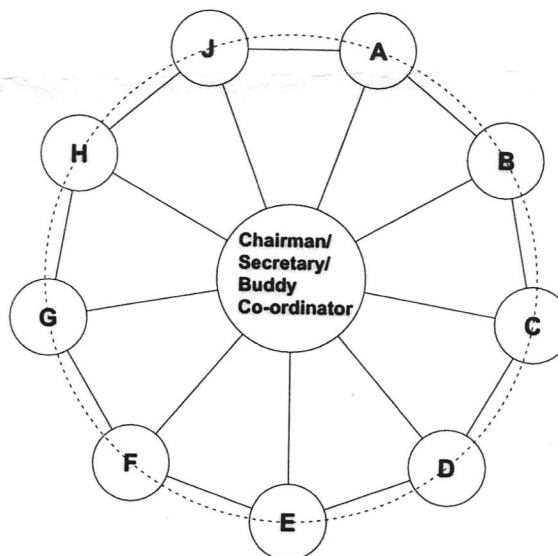
INITIAL SYSTEM - 8 MEMBERS



REDUCED SYSTEM - 7 MEMBERS



INTERMEDIATE SYSTEM -  
NEW PROSPECTIVE MEMBER  
(MENTORING PHASE)



EXTENDED SYSTEM - 9 MEMBERS

POSSIBLE CHOIR BUDDY SYSTEM -  
INITIAL FORM, GROWTH & REDUCTION

## Choir History Quiz

As promised here is a reminder of the questions and their Answers (**in Bold**) to the Choir history quiz which featured in an earlier Zoom quiz session;

1. How many countries have the choir sang in ? (8, 9, 10, **11**)
2. Choir sang before Wales Rugby match in Cardiff Arms Park. Who were the opponents ? (Tonga, **Italy** Japan, Rumania)
3. What year was this ? (**1992**, 1993, 1994, 1995)
4. After the choir sang in the closing ceremony of the rugby world Cup, a photo of Kevin Thomas with a famous celebrity appeared in the Western mail. Who was it ?  
**Rolf Harris**
5. What year was this ? (1998, **1999**, 2000, 2001)
6. Before the choir sang with the world choir, a chorister was slapped across the face by a barmaid in the Queens vaults. Who was it ? (Alan Nash, Brian Matthias, **Glyn Andrews** Kevin Thomas)
7. How many choirs made up the world choir in 1993 with Shirley Bassey ? (100, 120, 150, **180** )
8. How many choristers went to Missoula, USA ? (22, **24**, 26, 28)
9. What year was Missoula tour ? (2004, 2005, **2006**, 2007)
10. What state is Missoula in? .. **Montana**, Mississippi, Nevada, Missouri
11. What year did the choir tour Canada ? (1999, **2000**, 2001, 2002)
12. Tom Bundred conducted the choir for how many years? (25, **29**, 33, 38)
13. How many choristers in the choir in 1919 ? (100, 120, 130, **140**)
14. When the choir sang with Peter Karrie in 1993 which West end musical was he famous.? (**Phantom of the Opera**)
15. Orpheus and Eurydice are legends from which mythology? (**Greek**)
16. What musical instrument is on the choir badge ? (**Lyre**)
17. How many recordings have the choir made ? (Lp/cd/cassette) (3, 4, **5**, 6)
18. Robert Lloyd, our former patron, sang which voice part? (**Bass**)
19. How many conductors has Abertillery had since 1908 ? (6, **8**, 10, 12) \*
20. 1931 live radio broadcast, first choir from this area, where was it recorded ?  
(**Cardiff Railway Station**)

\* *Conductors—Tom Bundred, Ivor Screen, Mrs Edmonds— Jones, Mr Arthur Cook, Mr W J Easy, Mrs Olga Guley, Martin Budd and Stephen Bard*

**The Welsh Association of Choirs.** As of 28 June, 350 CDS and 27 DVDs have been sent to 188 Care Homes with a further 36 CDs donated to every hospital radio station in the Principality. AOMC submitted the following list of 13 care homes and nursing homes in the Abertillery area, who should now have received these items.

- Beacon Lodge
- Bynwood Care Home
- Cwm Celyn Nursing Home
- Cwm Coed
- Cwrt Mytton
- Chilton Place
- Forest View Care Home
- Grosvenor House Nursing Home
- Glanbury Care Home
- Pen-y-bont Care Home
- Pen-y-Wain
- Plasgeller Care Hom
- The Acorns

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The next Choir Quiz, via Zoom, will take place on Friday evening 18th September. If you would like to join please contact Kevin Harris. If you are a regular contributor then Kevin will post you the Zoom link via email.