



Patron: Sir Richard Hanbury Tenison
President: Jane Glover
Vice President: Peter Powis
Conductor: Huw Williams

AUTUMN
2011

A History and Celebration

So, it is September 2011 – the start of a new season and one in which we shall be celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the choir's resurrection in 1991.

For those (now quite few) of us who have been members of Monmouth Choral Society for all those past nineteen years, it has been a breathtakingly busy and exciting time. We have learnt a huge variety of music under three brilliant conductors, working with three wonderful accompanists, and have performed in many vastly different and exciting venues, including those encountered in our trips to Budapest & Prague, Burgundy, Barcelona, the Black Forest and Tuscany. Literally hundreds of singers have been with us for shorter or longer stays and we like to think that for most their time with us has been enjoyable and rewarding; indeed, many continue to support us as audience members and as *Friends of MCS*.

But Monmouth Choral Society's history goes back much further than 1991 and perhaps the time is ripe for a brief reminder of that story:

The origins of the society can be traced back to the early days of Queen Victoria's reign. Its size and character have varied over the years and fortunes have fluctuated. A dip into Keith Kissack's fascinating book "Victorian Monmouth" tells of bitter internal wrangles aired publicly in the local press! It survived the First World War and the Depression only to be mothballed for a spell during WW II. Its post-war revival benefited from a new and fruitful relationship with Monmouth School, an important link which continued under Michael Eveleigh's long and successful stewardship right up to May 1991 when a serious decline in membership led the society to make a formal decision to close down.

"Final concert for Choral Society" ran the sad headline in the Monmouthshire Beacon of 31st May 1991. Dead but it wouldn't lie down! Led by its very own determined 'gang of five'**, with the enthusiastic backing of the internationally respected conductor Dr. Vernon Handley and his wife Catherine, and following an energetic summer campaign to recruit singers from a wide area, a re-formed and re-vitalised society was ready to give its first concert - under the baton of 'Tod' Handley himself - in St Mary's Priory Church on 15th December 1991. A new, permanent conductor, Mark Foster, joined us in January 1992, with John Clift as accompanist. Membership and reputation grew rapidly and the society soon established itself as one of the largest and most active mixed choirs in Wales.

And here we are, twenty years later, still going from strength to strength!
Jean Hancock

** Tony Ferguson, Jean Hancock, Peter Powis, Ian Scarborough, Sheila Vaughan.

Letter from the Chair & Committee

Dear Choir members and Friends,

We are delighted that Monmouth Choral Society is starting out on its 20th season and the programme for the coming year should provide us with plenty of opportunities for enjoyment and allow us to develop both musically and socially. We hope that the Verdi Requiem in November will prove to be a "blockbuster" opening concert. The work itself is dramatic and moving. We will be supported by four outstanding soloists and the Regency Sinfonia, who have played for us on many occasions over the years. To ensure we have sufficient forces to counterbalance the strong orchestral scoring, the choir will be augmented by singers from Cantemus Chamber Choir from Cardiff, which is also conducted by Huw. We are delighted that they want to join us for this concert and hope they enjoy singing it as much as we will.

To ensure as many people as possible can enjoy this exciting work, the concert will be in the Wyastone Concert Hall, two miles outside Monmouth. The hall will seat about 400 people, has a wonderful acoustic and comfortable seating for the audience. To celebrate our 20th anniversary,

we will be inviting people who have supported the choir over the years and we hope that our President, Jane Glover, will be able to attend. We strongly recommend that people are encouraged to buy their tickets in advance as we think there will be a lot of interest in this concert. We really want a sell-out, so please be active in encouraging people to come. There is plenty of parking space at Wyastone, but most involve a short walk. Let us know if you need to have a disabled parking space close to the hall. If there is sufficient interest, we will be running a shuttle bus from Monmouth. Please let us know whether you need either of these options when you are buying tickets.

The Christmas concert in St Mary's Priory Church, Monmouth on December 10th will also be a special event. This candle-lit concert will be a joyful start to the Christmas season and will include a selection of carols, some readings and congregational hymns. We are delighted to have as our soloist the celebrated counter tenor, James Bowman, who will sing a selection of songs accompanied on the lute by Anthony Holborne. As last year, there will be a social event after the concert in the Priory for choir members, Friends and audience. It would be great to have another packed house.

The Society has just held its Annual General Meeting. Two members of the committee have stood down, Rosemary Mann and our Vice Chairman, Bill Mackereth. Our thanks to both of them. Alison Stuttard is our new Vice Chair and Angela Flynn has re-joined the committee and has taken on the role as our Concert Manager, no easy task, and we are very grateful for her help. All the other officers and members stay the same. Vivien Goddard, our Treasurer for the past five years was due to stand down, but due to exceptional circumstances with no other nominations, she has been re-elected for a further year. We are very grateful that she has been prepared to do this. If we do not have a volunteer to stand as Treasurer next year, the choir will be in an extremely difficult situation. The Treasurer is an essential post on the committee, but more importantly, it is vital for us to avoid difficulties with our charitable status. Please give serious thought to standing for this office next year. We will also need a number of new committee members. The choir needs a strong and active committee if we are to continue to be a thriving choir so please think now about putting yourself forward next year.

We hope you all enjoy the coming year.
Roz Williamson

The 2011 line up of officers and committee members

Officers:		Ordinary Members:	
Roz Williamson	Chairperson	Laurie Jarrett	Stage management
Alison Stuttard	Vice Chairperson		Publicity
	Newsletter	Jean Smith	Front of House/ Stewards
Judith Lee	Secretary	Jean Sheraton	Librarian
Vivian Goddard	Treasurer + Ty Cerdd + Making Music	Angela Flynn	Concert Manager
		Penny Thomas	
Other contacts:			
Wedding Choirs	Colin Copestake	Learning CDs	Sheila Jarrett
Friends of MCS	Jean Hancock	Membership secretary	Yvonne Nield
Music Purchase	Angela Flynn	Gift Aid	Carol Usher

A Sad Farewell

We have to say goodbye to Jeff Howard, our brilliant accompanist, who will be leaving us in December. He has been invited to take over conducting Cambrensis, a choir he has been associated with since he was 13. Unfortunately they also rehearse on a Tuesday night. We all want to thank him for the support, inspiration and fun he has given us over the past year. We wish him every success in the future and hope we will see him again.

The recruitment process for the appointment of a new accompanist has started and we hope to be able to audition candidates in November.

CONCERTS

Autumn Concert 2011
Saturday 12th November
7.30 p.m. at Wyastone Concert Hall

Verdi: Requiem

Christmas Concert 2011
Saturday 10th December
7.30 pm; St Mary's Priory Church, Monmouth

Spring Concert 2012
Saturday 10th March
7.30 pm; St Mary's Priory Church, Monmouth

Brahms: Eine Deutsches Requiem
(sung in German) with piano.

Summer Concert 2012
Saturday 9th June
7.30 p.m. in St Mary's Priory Church, Monmouth

A Jubilee Celebration Concert
with brass and organ

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 25th October** A choral master class on the Verdi to be run by David Hill, The workshop will be for the choir only.
- 6th December** Last Tuesday rehearsal of the autumn term
- 13th December** Bridges Christmas Concert (MCS has been asked to take part in this community event)

Choir Master class with David Hill

On Tuesday 25th October, David Hill, the celebrated choral conductor, will be leading the choir in a Masterclass session on the Verdi Requiem. This is part of our commitment to providing opportunities for choir members to develop their musicianship.

NB: the rehearsal will be from 7 – 10 p.m.

Among other things, David Hill is Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers, Musical Director of The Bach Choir and Associate Guest Conductor of the Bournemouth Sinfonia. For a more detailed CV, go to : http://www.caroline-phillips.co.uk/artists/documents/DH_BIOG.pdf

Choir Dress for the Verdi concert**Ladies**

For this concert, ladies will wear orchestral black i.e. black tops (with sleeves) and **full length** black skirts or trousers, black tights and shoes.

Men

As usual: DJ's with white dress shirt and black bow ties.

Singing in concerts

Just a reminder to all choir members that if you want to sing in a concert, you need to attend 70% of the rehearsals for that concert. For the Verdi, this means you will have to attend at least **8** rehearsals, including both of the final two rehearsals immediately before the concert.

Update on the MCS 2012 tour

So far, 30 people have signed up to go on tour to Tuscany from 10 -14th April 2012. We have not yet confirmed our booking with the tour company and would like a few more singers to join us. If you are interested, please see Roz Williamson or ring 01600 715364.

Singing in Hereford and Gloucester Cathedrals

About 40 members of the choir sang Choral Eucharist in Hereford Cathedral in August and many of us had lunch together afterwards. It was a privilege to sing in such a wonderful building and both the music and the social time together meant we had a very enjoyable day. The choir was made very welcome by both the clergy and congregation and we hope we will be able to sing at another service at Hereford in the future. A big thank you must go to Huw for encouraging us to try this. In view of our enthusiasm, Huw has already booked a date for the choir to sing Evensong in Gloucester Cathedral on Monday, August 13th 2012. Again this will be a great opportunity to sing in a magnificent building with a great acoustic. We will try to organise a social activity for the same day.

Come and Sing Days with Bristol and Gloucester Choral Societies

Adrian Partington and Bristol Choral Society are running two Come and Sing events: Messiah on 26th November 2011 and "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" on 4th February 2012. Details are on BCS's website www.bristolchoral.co.uk/come_and_sing

Adrian Partington also leads Gloucester Choral Society's Sing Saturdays. On 21st January 2012, there will be a chance to sing through the Brahms "Eine Deutsches Requiem" in advance of our own performance in March and then the Bach "Magnificat".on 19th May 2012. For more details go to: www.gloucesterchoral.com/programme/sing-saturdays

Our Patron Sir Richard Hanbury-Tenison

At the recent AGM, the choir sent their good wishes to our Patron, Sir Richard Hanbury-Tenison. We hope to see him and his wife soon.

News of Friends of MCS from Jean Hancock

In memoriam: Miss Kay Westcott and the Revd. Jean Tunnicliffe. June was a sad month for us as we learned of the deaths of two of our most longstanding and loyal *Friends*, both well known and active members of the local community. We were able to include a short tribute to Jean in the insert for our 'Songs for a Summer Evening' programme and a number of her personal friends and choir members were present at her funeral service. Kay passed away on 29th June. Her many years of devoted service to St Mary's Priory Church were recognised in the warm tributes paid to her in the funeral service at St Mary's, again attended by many of her friends from church and choir. Kay's support for Monmouth Choral Society began many years ago when her father was a regular singing member - I well remember him from my first days with the choir in the 1970s!

Warmest good wishes to Ginny Blakey who, following a laryngectomy, is working hard and successfully with her new voice box. She is now having radiotherapy treatment at Velindre but is looking forward to being out and about again very soon.

Welcome back: Nick Morgan. Though no longer able to charm us with that lovely tenor voice, Nick is eager to retain his links with the choir and has asked to rejoin the *Friends*. At the moment he is feeling extremely tired after undergoing both chemo and radio therapy in recent months; we hope he will soon be feeling much stronger.

News of choir members:

Ann Stirrup (2nd alto) is having a 'Gap Year' in Devon! We wish her well and look forward to seeing her back next year after her travels.

Derek Sole (tenor) has sadly decided to leave the choir after many years of singing with the society—we send him best our wishes for a speedy recovery from his hip operation.

A fond farewell to Fay McGrath (Altos) who has been an enthusiastic and committed member of the choir for many years. She hopes to be able to join in some of the wedding choir engagements.

We are delighted to welcome new and returning members to the choir. The new singers are:

Tenors: Peter Blood.

Sopranos: Rita Butling, Rebecca Lobley, Deidre Mahon, Elizabeth Munday and Frances Pullen

We still have vacancies for tenors and basses but unfortunately, we currently have no vacancies for altos.

Raise money for the choir by going on holiday to West Wales

If you would like to book a holiday or short break in a cosy cottage close to the beach in Aberporth, Ceredigion and, at the same time, help us raise funds for the choir, please contact Mr D Rowlands on ddrowlands@live.com or telephone 01594 862802.

Photographs and details of the cottage can be found on www.aberporthcottage.co.uk.

Until 31st December 2012, Mr and Mrs Rowlands have very kindly agreed to give 10% of the rental* from bookings by choir members to choir funds. So, if you do book, please let him know of your connection to Monmouth Choral Society. NB: The offer **excludes** high season bookings, which are basically the school holidays.

WEBSITE

A reminder to everyone – please remember to use our website regularly. Copies of each week's notices go up and there will be regular updates on concerts. www.monmouthchoralsociety.co.uk

NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be coming out at the end of January — if you have anything that you think may be of interest either serious or as a bit of fun please let me have it for inclusion by the end of September. Many thanks. Alison Stuttard. Tel: 01594 810934 or email: ali_stuttard@hotmail.com