

# Cambrian Male Voice Choir Tour to Malta 5<sup>th</sup> April to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

With temperatures in the Rhondda plummeting to  $-4^{\circ}\text{C}$ , members of Cambrian Male Voice Choir, family and friends departed for a ten-day tour of Malta. As part of the JP2 Memorial Festival 2013, we were invited to perform in three Easter concerts, two in Malta and one in Gozo. With the help of a grant of £1000, awarded by Interlink Community Funding and the magnificent contribution from our ladies committee we have been able to purchase a new uniform for the tour.



The Watts 83 seater luxury coach left The NUM at 5.10 a.m. The journey up to Bristol Airport was filled with a mixture of excited chatter and lots of banter. Having checked in, the party looked for refreshments in the airport.



For some it can be quite an anxious experience passing through airport security. Issues such as ensuring your cases are not over the limit, or desperately forcing the cabin luggage into the RyanAir cabin luggage measurement cage, or trying to crack a joke with security can backfire.



However, having overcome all these obstacles we boarded the RyanAir flight to Malta, non-stop.



Arriving at The Soreda Hotel in Qawra, it was a quick unpacking of the cases and explore the Hotel..... well find the bar. It didn't take long to recover from the journey.



The first evening was spent mainly in the Hotel, though a scouting party discovered two bars nearby, namely The Queens and Images. Both these watering holes would prove to be popular during the ten-day stay.

Fred, Peter and Linden visited the Mgarr Church prior to the concert and discovered their organ was only big enough to hold 4.5 octaves. In order to resolve the crisis, Brian and Linden hired a taxi and travelled a 70 mile round trip to hire a full size organ and guitar. Its one way of seeing the island.



Looking resplendent, our first concert was on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April in Mgarr Parish Church in Malta. We assemble at 5.00pm the bus arrives at 6.00pm due to a breakdown in communication between us and some chap called Danny.



The architecture both inside and outside the church was breathtaking. The acoustics inside the Church, helped to bring a richness and depth to our sound. With a full congregation attending, the choir sung a varied repertoire for the evening. The audience responded enthusiastically after each song and at the end of the evening, embraced the choir in an endless standing ovation.

The party then had a few days to explore the island. On Sunday a group ventured out to Sliema to find the location of St Patricks Church. The weather and temperature had changed and it was the one and only day we needed our cardi's and jackets. Eventually, thanks to Peter's built in radar, we find the Church, which also happens to be a part of St Patricks School.



It's Monday and we were basking in temperatures of 25<sup>0</sup>C. Some of the group visit the historic city of Valletta, while others go to the old capital the silent city of Mdina, and the breathtaking bay of Sliema. There was also time for a spot of sunbathing by the hotel swimming pool.

In the evening we enjoyed listening to and singing along with the Hotel artist Pierre. It was a great relaxing evening surrounded by friends, laughter, music and dancing.



Though for some members, the opportunity of watching Man Utd V Man City was too great a temptation. Man City won the match !!!!



Before leaving Tonypandy, Fred had directed every chorister not to overindulge in the lubrication until all the concerts were completed. It is a pleasure to report that every chorister heeded this request, bar none..... allegedly!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



The second concert was in the Church of St. Patrick in Sliema on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April. Father Joe Cini greeted us on arrival and we instantly felt relaxed and welcomed.



After a brief rehearsal, a few choristers strolled down to the promenade. Female joggers were encouraged with shouts of “Well done luv, keep going” and “Go on luv you can do it”. There was no such encouragement for any male joggers!



The church had produced a poster advertising the concert. Some of the choristers were tickled by the wording in the poster...

The concert was a great success. Once again a full congregation enjoyed our repertoire and responded with yet another standing ovation at the end of the concert. A trio of young ladies girls, who had become friendly with the choir, attended the concert. They stated at the end, how emotional they found the whole performance, especially when we sang Unchained Melody and Bring Him Home.



Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April, and it's the day of the last official concert. Prior to leaving the hotel, some of the choristers were still confused as to what room they were staying in. One chorister and his family, quite innocently, walked into a room, which was in the process of being cleaned. When they became concerned that none of their belongings were there, the cleaner very politely pointed out that they were in the wrong room. Theirs was next door.

The final official concert saw us travel, via ferry, to the island of Gozo to perform at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour & St Gregory the Great Parish Church in Kerzem.





With two bus loads boarded, the crossing was relaxing and the water tranquil. Blue skies radiated above us, warm sunshine warmed our bones and the gentle surge of the ferry's motors led us to Gozo and another memorable occasion beckoned.

The Chairman had organised a brief sightseeing tour on the island. We visited Ta Pinu Sanctuary and The Azure Window, which is a natural arch, created thousands of years ago when two limestone caves collapsed.



The concert in Kercem was celebrated in front of a capacity audience. Having changed into our suits in a catacomb, we entered the church.



As with the previous churches, the magnificent architecture was breathtaking. Every song was rewarded with deafening applause that could be heard all over the island.



With two standing ovations to finish, we made our way back to Bugibba knowing we had upheld and enhanced the reputation of Welsh choral singing on the Island.

The event organizers were so impressed with our concerts they invited us back to Malta in the summer, to sing at their other churches.

Returning to the Hotel quite late, some of the party ventured out to the Queens to unwind after a highly charged octane day.



Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April and it was back to some sight seeing in the morning. Some people ventured into Mdina and were treated to an informative and knowledgeable walk around the city by Malta expert tour guide Linden Evans.



To ensure no-one missed any pearl of wisdom, Linden could be seen standing along side some important monument, with his right hand raised, shouting "My group over here!".

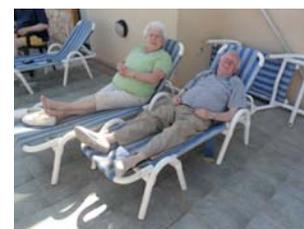
Everyone promptly returned to the hotel for dinner, which was then followed by one of the main social events of the ten days .....the pool party.



The rooftop pool was basking in brilliant sunshine as the tour party invaded one balcony on the roof. With Adrian and his guitar in full flow, the singing soon started. Fellow guests,



sunbathing on adjacent balconies showed their approval.



One member, dressed in an unusual costume, brought howls of approval from those present and howls of disapproval from back home. Fortunately, or unfortunately depending on your viewpoint, no photographs exist which are suitable for display on this website.

In the bar, late in the evening, our party started to sing, but were immediately stopped by the manager frantically waving a finger in everyone's direction. Not to be outdone, after the manager left, our chairman started a singsong in very hushed tones. Any new visitor to the hotel witnessing this, must have thought the lunatics had taken over the asylum.

The after midnight party was held in Images with many attending.



Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April was another glorious day. The main event was a concert for the guests staying in the hotel. This took place in the piano room of the hotel. It seemed like the whole hotel turned out to listen. With Fred winning over the audience, the one hour concert proved a great success. To top it off, a number of CD's were purchased by members of the audience.



The evenings entertainment centred around karaoke, with a number of choristers, family members and friends entertaining the masses.



Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April was yet another glorious day in Malta. It was also Brian Downes 70th birthday. Under the cover of darkness, a cunning plan was conceived to present Brian with a birthday cake,



to commemorate the occasion. The hotel staff did not let us down, and Brian seemed genuinely surprised to be on the receiving end. He graciously accepted the kind gesture, from all his friends in the touring party.

The evening and early hours of the morning ended up in Images, with more volunteers willing to share their melodic tones, to the congregation.



The last full day of the tour...Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April. People were packing and generally chilling out before the long journey home tomorrow. The piano and organ were returned to the shop. This time a car was hired. Linden drove, Peter navigated and Steph tried to ensure common sense prevailed. By all accounts it took them 2.5 hrs to find the shop, and 30mins to get back to the hotel. Peter blamed Linden, Linden blamed Peter, no-one blamed Steph.

At 8.00pm we gathered for the end of tour party. What a great occasion it turned out to be. Between prizes being awarded, new choristers being forced to sing solo, the piano/guitar journey being re-enacted, Linden's party pieces and communal singing, everyone ended the evening in a happy mood. Here is a selection of photographs from the early part of the evening.



And here are some of the prize winners .....



(Best behaved on tour..... Sam and Morgan)



(Worst behaved on tour..... Arthur)



(Loudest on tour .....David)



(Best sun tan on tour ..... Mike)



(Worst sun tan on tour ..... Mike)



(Most sociable on tour ..... John L)



(Hardest working on tour ..... Nancy)



(Best entertainer on tour .....Adrian)



(Best 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration on tour ..... Brian)



The audience was then treated to a re-enactment of the journey, to return the organ/guitar. The driver was Linden, with Peter navigating. The cheesed off passenger, reliving the nightmare, was Steph.



Then it was the turn for individuals to perform their party pieces. A makeshift stage was prepared and queues of people waited patiently to be called. The old and the young entered into the spirit of the occasion.



Not to be outdone, the chairman performed his traditional, world famous act, involving his disappearing thumb.

The evening finally gave way to communal singing in the hotel ..... until 11.00pm when the manager came in again. Some troopers then marched down to The Queens or Images for a final night cap, others, wisely, made their way to their rooms.

The tour had come to an end. The journey home was without incident. According to Peter's itinerary, we were due to arrive in Tonypanyd at 8.30pm. but we actually arrived at 8.29pm..... and it was cold.



Finally, we wish to congratulate Peter and Steph Davey, who organized the tour. Their meticulous planning and emphasis to detail, ensured the whole ten days passed without distraction.

Every member of the party wishes to pass on their thanks and appreciation to them, for making the tour such an enjoyable experience and a brilliant success.

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