CHOIR NEWSLETTER

November issue

Year 30 November 2025

Hello everyone.
My apologies for the absence of our newsletter over recent months as family matters have taken absolute priority. However, I now hope to be able to regularly produce PMC's communication again and this edition will provide a review of our engagements and news over the summer months.

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November is the month of both solemn events - Remembrance Day - and joyous celebrations of Diwali, Hanukkah and the irreverent Guy Fawkes Night.
This month we celebrate:
1 Nov - All Saints' Day - commemorating the saints and martyrs who dedicated or sacrificed their lives to Christianity.
2 Nov - All Souls' Day – commemorating all the faithful who have departed.
5 Nov - Guy Fawkes Day - celebrating the Gunpowder Plot conspirators failure to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605.
11 Nov - Better known since 1918 as **Armistice Day**, November 11th is also the Feast of St Martin or Martinmas, a Christian feast to commemorate the death and burial of the 4th century St Martin of Tours. Famous for his generosity towards a drunken beggar, with whom he shared his cloak, St Martin is the patron saint of beggars, drunkards and the poor. As his feast day falls during the wine harvest in Europe, he is also the patron saint of wine growers and innkeepers. We've got a few Martins in our choir!
14 Nov - Children in Need Day - The BBC's annual fundraising day which raises moneys for children's charities across the UK.
30 Nov - St Andrew's Day - the annual celebration of the patron saint of Scotland.

November birthdays.

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A record month with 7 birthdays – Annette will be busy!

Frank Horsell (B2) Wednesday 5th Ian Evans (B1) Wednesday 5th Barrie Page (T1) Wednesday 12th
Annette Williams Thursday 21st Derek Williams (T2) Tuesday 26th
Phil Pritchard (T1) Wednesday 27th John Sheppard (B1) Thursday 28th

Chorister update

The summer months have proved something of a roller-coaster ride for the choir as we witnessed significant absences because of prolonged coughs, colds and various other infections which have affected the most resilient of choristers. Individual absences are too numerous to name but thankfully most are now returning.

Currently, Bottom Bass, **Graham Roberts** has been our main concern although he, too, has now returned home after a 3-week stint in hospital. It may be a few weeks before he's fit enough to return to practice and our best wishes go to him for a speedy and complete recovery.

Poor health and the ravages of time have meant that PMC have lost the services of two long-serving choristers in Baritone, **Ron Jones**, and Bottom Bass**, Roy Dixon** who have both recently announced their retirement from the choir. Second Tenor, **Mike Mayled** has also retired from the choir as he concentrates on caring for his wife, Wendy.

We whole-heartedly thank them for their huge contribution to the choir over many years of committed and dedicated service, and we hope that, although no longer active choristers, we will not lose contact with them and still see them at future choir events.

On a more positive note, we have also welcomed two new choristers into the PMC fold as a result of strong family connections with Baritone, **Gareth Jones**. Grandson, **Elliot Jones**, and brother-in-law, **Dave Roberts,** have both joined the ranks of the second tenors. There may be an useful lesson here for us all in terms of recruiting new members!

Recent engagements

Since the last newsletter the choir has sang at a number of events that reflect the wide range of organisations that PMC support, and highlights included:

In June, a joint concert with Pontnewydd Ladies at St Hildas Church. Griffithstown, which was the followed by a performance at Pontnewydd Golf Club to support their 150th Anniversary celebrations.

In July, a fund-raising concert for Great Ormond Street Hospital at Llanyrafon Social Club and organised by Premier Inns. This ws followed by a farewell concert for Mine Hosts, Steve and Simon, at the Horseshoe Inn, Mamhilad, as they pulled their last pints and left our shores for retirement in the Pyrenees of Southern France. The atmosphere and hospitality was exceptional and the afterglow even better!

August and September were relatively quiet months for the choir as Musical Director, Luciano Mogni, prepared to wed partner, Klervi, in an international wedding celebration. We wish them a long and happy life together.

Last month we performed, for the very first time, with Cwmbran Brass Band' at their Annual Concert at the Woodland Road Social Centre, Croesyceiliog. One of the last events to be held at that venue as they have now sadly closed.

New Choir Website.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken recently, particularly by Martin Carey and Graeme Davies, in creating a new website for PMC, moving it to a new website provider and transferring our

associated email addresses. The reason behind this change is to make it easier to navigate, update and modify where required.
This has proved a challenging and frustrating project and we thank Martin and Graeme for their diligence and determination in driving this workload through to a successful conclusion. Although some work remains to be done with populating the website it is due to go live w/c 10th November and its new address is:

www.pontnewyddmalechoir.co.uk

Consequently, the choir's email address has also been changed to:

info@pontnewyddmalechoir.co.uk

PLEASE MAKE EVERYONE AWARE OF THESE CHANGES

Gift Aid

Graeme has also taken on the responsibility of managing our annual Gift Aid submission which has also proved to be an equally frustrating challenge, particularly as we have 3 years worth of claims to process with HMRC. As part of this requirement Graeme will be requesting information from choristers to ensure our records are accurate and up to date.
Just to clarify:

- Gift Aid is a government scheme that lets charities like PMC claim tax relief on the donations, or in our case, the subs that you make to them.
- This effectively allows us to claim a rebate from HMRC of 25% of the value of subscriptions.
- However, to allow us to claim, choristers must pay tax in the UK of an amount at least equal to the amount we pay in subs i.e, £19 pm x 12 = £228 pa.
- Like any income, pensions are taxed once the amount goes over your personal tax-free allowance —currently £12,570 for 2024/25. After that, you are taxed at 20% on income between £12,571 and £50,270 per year.
- However, the State Pension for 2024/25 is £11,541.90 per year so, if you don't receive any other income, you won't reach the tax threshold. We cannot claim for those choristers who pay no tax.

2026 and onwards

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The committee met with our MD last week to explore Luciano's observations and plans for improving choir practices, repertoire management, section organisation, and lyric learning, as well as preparations for Christmas concerts and the scheduling of upcoming Friday performances to maximise attendance.

The discussion was very positive and productive and the main points to emerge were as follows:

a) Luciano expressed gratitude for Sarah's ongoing involvement when he started, as it made his transition much smoother.

b) Luciano has gone through nearly all 80 songs in our repertoire, and he acknowledged Jonathan Kerl's excellent work compiling the list.
c) He observed that songs rehearsed consistently reached a high standard, but quality declined if they were not practiced regularly.

d) Luciano admitted to occasionally making last-minute decisions and introducing changes unexpectedly. To address this, he now plans to share a pre-announced monthly list of songs to work on, allowing choristers to rehearse at home ahead of practice sessions.

e) Learning lyrics remains a top priority. While supporting choir members in this is challenging, it's agreed that everyone must strive to fully learn the lyrics. Encouraging those less familiar with the words is important, as this will significantly enhance performance and audience appeal.

f) Introducing new music will be gradual. Luciano believes learning 5 or 6 new songs per year is realistic. Each concert would feature a core set of about 9 songs, supplemented by these new pieces, with the concert repertoire updated annually. Keeping records of which songs are performed at each venue is also recommended.

g) Luciano noted an imbalance in the number of members across the four sections and encouraged group members to sit closer together rather than spreading out. Currently, some section members overlap with others; creating walkways between sections was proposed. Vulnerable sections could benefit from having a strong singer to provide support for others.

h) Luciano sees value in teaching song techniques, believing it could improve the choir's overall sound—especially in smaller sections—and help individual singers grow. He pointed out that elite choirs achieve their unique sound through such technical skills.

i) For Christmas performances, song lists will be provided so everyone knows what will be sung. Practice for Christmas music begins on 18 November 2025. "God Only Knows" might be included, with a search for a better arrangement ongoing. Jonathan will make red folders of our Christmas music available for use.

j) There are many Friday concerts scheduled over the next few months, which Luciano acknowledged. However, attendance tends to be higher on Fridays, so even if a practice session is lost, it's worthwhile to have more participants at the concert.

l) Luciano agreed to keep January 2026 free except for the concert on the 23rd. Starting February 2026, there may be more concerts each month.

m) Luciano recognised recruitment challenges, citing common reasons such as lack of interest, not being able to sing, or waiting until retirement. The latter group appears most promising. Ideas discussed included adding contemporary music to attract newcomers and developing a unique choir identity to stand out from others.

Some of these changes we will begin implementing immediately, so will notice a slightly different look to the practice room.

Engagements.

PMC - Confirmed Concert bookings

Item	Date	Arrival Time	Venue	Address
The Church of St. Cadoc	25/10/25 Saturday	6:30 7:00 start	The Church of St. Cadoc, Raglan.	Chepstow Road, Raglan. NP15 2EN
Remembrance Concert	07/11/25 Friday	6:30 7:00 start	St. Davids Church	2, Station Road. Cwmbran. NP44 1NY
Joint Remembrance Concert with Newport Male Choir	14/11/25 Friday	6:30 7:00 start	St. Patricks Church	151 Cromwell Road, Newport. NP19 OHS
Concert Cwmbran Library	03/12/25 Wed	6:30 7:00 start	Cwmbran Library	Gwent House, Gwent Square, Cwmbran. NP44 1PL
Noahs Arc at Ikea Cardiff	14/12/25 Sunday	1:30 2:00 start	Ikea Cardiff	Ferry Rd. Cardiff. CF11 0XR
Leadon Court	16/12/25 Tuesday	3:30 4:00 start	Leadon Court	Thornhill, Cwmbran. NP44 5TZ
Tesco Extra, Risca	20/12/25 Saturday	1:30 2:00 start	Tesco store	Pontymister Ind Est, Risca, Newport NP11 6NP
Gethin Evans Benefit Charity Concert	23/012/26 Friday	6:30 7:00 start	Croesyceiliog Secondary School	Woodland Road, Cwmbran. NP44 2YB
Rehearsal for Annual Concert	17/04/26 Friday	7:00pm	St. Davids Church	2, Station Road, Cwmbran. NP44 1NY
Annual Concert	18/04/26 Saturday	6:45 7:15 start	St. Davids Church	2, Station Road, Cwmbran. NP44 1NY

. **And finally……**

A man gets stuck on an escalator during a power cut. A security guard comes up to him and says "why don't you just walk down?" He replies, " I can't. I'm going up.

I was getting into my car when a man said to me "Can you give me a lift?" I said, "Sure. You look great. The world's your oyster. Go for it".

Book titles:
Dating period furniture by Anne Teak
Entertaining with friends by Maude de Merrier
I was a failed lion tamer by Claude Bottom
Improve your memory by Ifor Gott
My Political memoirs by Liza Lott
The World of hairdressing by Aaron Floor

Best wishes
Ian