

This year, the committee of our choir has decided to embark on a recruitment drive.

Naturally enough, this leads me to consider the benefits of belonging to the organisation. Let me begin with a couple of caveats. I am strictly a shower-grade singer. I don't read music; I probably (Tom Buchanan would say certainly) don't practice as often as I should, and I still make mistakes.

So I'm a pretty ordinary sort of man, and a very ordinary sort of chorister.

The choir has taken me to some fairly unexpected places. In the last ten years I have sung in the Millennium Stadium in Manchester as a part of a one thousand voice choir (0.1 % of the overall sound) and I have sung in the Albert Hall at a similar event.



We found ourselves singing on the Great Wall of China, too, when the temperature was just one degree with a wind chill factor that made it feel like a blast freezer.



We've been to Ireland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, too! And it's extremely unlikely that I would have done any of this on my own. I certainly would never have enjoyed it so

much – the spirit of *camaraderie* and common purpose give a particular feel to the whole adventure.

It's a bit like a musical Men's shed.

On Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, Ian Mackie and his wife, Sue, took the initiative in organizing a special Singing in the Pub – A "Brewery Bash Sing-along" according to the handouts.



Attendees were taught two popular songs – *What About Me?* and *Uptown Girl*. Choir members had spent a couple of hours on these prior to the event. Tom Buchanan, Michelle Nguyen and Simon Stone, who played piano on the night, made sure it was a very enjoyable evening. The beer and the pizza helped, too.



A couple of days later (Feb 20<sup>th</sup>) saw our normal Monday rehearsal shifted to the upstairs room at Kirks in Mornington. This was a "bring a friend" night, and an abbreviated rehearsal gave a dozen or so visitors an insight into how we operate, and of course all concerned were invited to our normal Baxter practice sessions. This one was largely the brainchild of Larry Evans, to whom thanks are due. Once again, a dose of beer and pizza helped the night along.



Our normal Singing in the Pub venture took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, except that we had some special guests along.

Colin Hughes invited the Federal Member for Dunkley, Peta Murphy and some of her colleagues along, and also present was Muriel Cooper, a Journalist from *Peninsula Essence* Magazine, with photographer Yanni Dellaportis. You may notice that the boys were particularly fastidious about dressing for the occasion.



Our Musical Staff remained their usual immaculate selves.



And so to St David's Day, (March 1<sup>st</sup>) and to the *Gymanfa Ganu* (Festival of Hymns) that traditionally goes with it. Covid forced a two-year hiatus, so it was good to be back!

St David is the patron saint of Wales, and his festival is extremely important to Welsh culture and the Welsh People. The Melbourne Welsh Church organises the *Gymanfa* which is held at St Michaels in Collins St



*Balcony Choirs and congregation. Photo Christine Manktelow.*

Five Welsh choirs (Melbourne Welsh, Victoria Welsh, Australian Welsh, Peninsula Ladies and Geelong Ladies) along with Excelsis joined the congregation in a festival of hymns, and sang prepared choir pieces under the direction of conductors Tom Buchanan, Faleiry Koczkar, and Jeanette John.

Soloist for the day was the very warmly received soprano, Carly Owen.



And of course there was a splendid afterglow at the *Crafty Squire* to follow.



St David himself is remembered in *Wikipedia* -

**Saint David** (Welsh: *Dewi Sant*; Latin: *Davidus*; c. 500 – c. 589) was a Welsh bishop of Mynyw (now St Davids) during the 6th century. He is the patron saint of Wales. David was a native of Wales, and tradition has preserved a relatively large amount of detail about his life. His birth date, however, is uncertain: suggestions range from 462 to 512.<sup>[1]</sup> He is traditionally believed to be the son of Saint Non and the grandson of Ceredig ap Cunedda, king of Ceredigion.<sup>[2]</sup> The Welsh annals placed his death 569 years after the birth of Christ,<sup>[3]</sup> but Phillimore's dating revised this to 601.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Hagiography



St. David as the teacher of Finnian of Clonard in a stained glass window restored to its 1181 appearance at Clonard



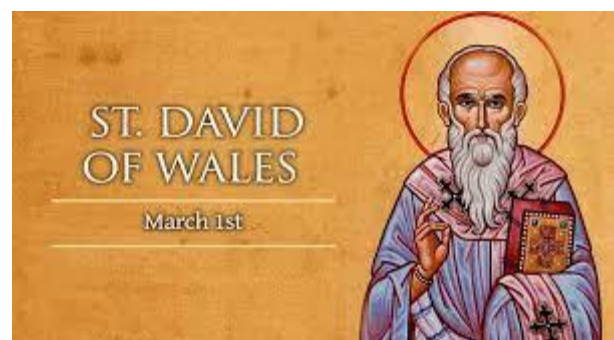
St David's Cathedral, St Davids, Pembrokeshire

Many of the traditional tales about David are found in the *Buchedd Dewi* ("Life of David"), a hagiography written by Rhygyfarch in the late 11th century. Rhygyfarch claimed it was based on documents found in the cathedral archives. Modern historians are sceptical of some of its claims: one of Rhygyfarch's aims was to establish some independence for the Welsh church, which had refused the Roman rite until the 8th century and now sought a metropolitan status equal to that of Canterbury (this may apply to the supposed pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he is said to have been anointed as an archbishop by the patriarch).

The tradition that he was born at Henfynyw (Vetus-Menevia) in Ceredigion is not improbable.<sup>[1]</sup> He became renowned as a teacher and preacher, founding monastic settlements and churches in Wales, Dumnonia, and Brittany. St David's Cathedral stands on the site of the monastery he founded in the Glyn Rhosyn valley of Pembrokeshire. Around 550, he attended the Synod of Brefi, where his eloquence in opposing Pelagianism caused his fellow monks to elect him primate of the region. As such he presided over the synod of Caerleon (the "Synod of Victory") around 569.<sup>[5]</sup>

His best-known miracle is said to have taken place when he was preaching in the middle of a large crowd at the Synod of Brefi: the village of Llanddewi Brefi stands on the spot where the ground on which he stood is reputed to have risen up to form a small hill. A white dove, which became his emblem, was seen settling on his shoulder. John Davies notes that one can scarcely "conceive of any miracle more superfluous" in that part of Wales than the creation of a new hill.<sup>[6]</sup> David is said to have denounced Pelagianism during this incident and he was declared archbishop by popular acclaim according to Rhygyfarch,<sup>[7]</sup> bringing about the retirement of Dubricius. St David's metropolitan status as an archbishopric was later supported by Bernard, Bishop of St David's, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Gerald of Wales.

The Monastic Rule of David prescribed that monks had to pull the plough themselves without draught animals,<sup>[5]</sup> and must drink only water and eat only bread with salt and herbs.<sup>[8]</sup> The monks spent their evenings in prayer, reading and writing. No personal possessions were allowed: even to say "my book" was considered an offence. He lived a simple life and practised asceticism, teaching his followers to refrain from eating meat and drinking beer. His symbol, also the symbol of Wales, is the leek.



And a visit to the financial engine-room to round out the reporting period. Dominic Xuereb and the troops did the magic at Bunnings yet again. Thanks to all concerned. It means we all pay lower annual subs. Nice one people!



## CONGRATULATIONS, TOM!



The Australian Welsh Male Choir congratulates Tom Buchanan on his Australia Day award.

Tom has been recognized as an outstanding Australian for his work in musical performance, musical education, and the fostering of community choirs.

Couldn't happen to a nicer bloke. The official citation is as follows:

### MEDAL (OAM) OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA IN THE GENERAL DIVISION

Mr Thomas Maxwell BUCHANAN, VIC  
For service to music, particularly through choirs

- Australian Welsh Male Choir, Melbourne
- Musical Director, since 2015.
- Principal Accompanist, 2007-2015.
- Deputy Conductor, 26th London Welsh Festival of Male Choirs, Royal Albert Hall, United Kingdom, 2018.
- Choirs - Other
- Musical Director, Excelsis Choir, Mount Waverley, since 2013.
- Musical Director, Mornington Peninsula Welsh Ladies Choir, Frankston, since 2018.
- Co-Conductor, Male Choirs Association of Australia Festival, Wollongong, New South Wales, 2017.
- Past founder, Yarra Philharmonic Choir, Melbourne.
- Musical Director, Casey Choir, Berwick, two years.
- Musical Director, Mornington Peninsula Chorale, Frankston South, nine years.
- Musical Director, Out of the Ordinary Catholic Choir, Clayton Campus, Monash University, three years.
- Member, Monash University Choral Society, Clayton, one year.
- Accompanist of the Cranbourne Chorale, one year.
- Various local and international fundraising activities through choir performances.
- Conductor, Annual Gymanfa Ganu - Welsh singing festival, Melbourne Welsh Church, three occasions.
- Composer, concert and chamber musician, and accompanist, current.
- Education
- Head of Music, Kingswood College, Box Hill, current.
- Musical Director, Kingswood College Male Voice Choir, Box Hill, since 2019.
- Music Teacher, Eltham College, Research, current.
- Past Piano Teacher, Christ Church Grammar School, South Yarra.
- Awards and Recognition include:
  - Joan Earle Prize for Excellence in Piano Studies, Monash University, 2004 and 2002.
  - First Prize, Concerto Competition, Monash University, 2006 and 2002.

Many thanks to our Patrons and Sponsors. We are most grateful to all who help to cover the substantial costs for a choir of our size, especially to the late Mr Baillieu Myer AC, Mrs Tamie Fraser AO, and Dr Haydn James. Our Sponsors: -



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*N.B. Deadline for inclusion of articles is the 20<sup>th</sup> day of February, April, June, August, October, December. David Brown. Editor. All correspondence to Secretary AWMC*

### COMING EVENTS

#### MARCH

Weekend 18 – 19

Celtic Festival Weekend, Shepparton.

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> - 8pm – Singing in the Pub Kirks on the Esplanade, Mornington. Booking essential. [03] 5975 2007.

#### APRIL

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> - Singing in the Pub Kirks on the Esplanade, Mornington. Booking essential. [03] 5975 2007.

#### MAY

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> – 2pm Mt Martha Bowls Club.

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> – AWMC Open night rehearsal, Mechanics Institute Frankston [TBC]

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> - Singing in the Pub Kirks on the Esplanade, Mornington. Booking essential. [03] 5975 2007.

#### JUNE –

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> - Deakin Edge, Fed Square, concert.

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> - Singing in the Pub Kirks on the Esplanade, Mornington. Booking essential. [03] 5975 2007