

THE MONTGOMERYSHIRE MAN



For our children and grandchildren.

THE MONTGOMERYSHIRE MAN

WHO DID NOT FORGET HIS ROOTS

The story of Edward Berwyn Parry Evans

WRITTEN BY MARGARET EVANS
SUPPORTED BY FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

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PUBLICATIONS

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Preface

‘FROM LITTLE ACORNS OAK TREES GROW’



Brimmon Oak, Newtown Powys.

‘Mesen Ddyry Dderwen’ is the motto of Berwyn’s primary school, Ysgol St Ffraid in Llansantffraid. It translates, ‘The Acorn becomes the Oak.’

It is Autumn and the ground is covered with acorns as I write this tribute to my husband Berwyn’s life. Not many acorns will become oak trees because the seed is crushed and does not take root. They are not in control of their destiny but we, as people, are in control of ours.

This is the story of a man who lived life to the full, never forgetting his roots deep in the ground where he was born in the

Tanat valley, the heart of Montgomeryshire. A story going back to the third generation and the God who has woven his way through their lives. The generations whose creative gifts were born, nurtured and flowed through Berwyn to bring life and joy to others, as God gave him strength.

Above all else a loving and faithful husband who kept family at the heart of his life and will live on through future generations. It is a call to all to recognise a heritage in the God who created us and allowed the circumstances of life to inspire and mould us.

I had not known at the time of taking this analogy the motto of Berwyn's primary school, but without doubt this man of God stayed faithful and became the oak.

He went to his rest requesting the hymn, 'Mae D'eisiau di Bob awr' ('I Need Thee Every Hour'), and the words of his beloved homeland, Peniath, on his lips.

Acknowledgements

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To our daughter Alison and granddaughter Miriam for helping me compile the contents. To my friend Anne Mundy and grandson David for proof reading. Thank you to our grandson John who so lovingly helped me care for his Taid.

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CHAPTER 1

The God of the Generations

*“Lord you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations,
before mountains were born you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.”*

Psalm 90:1-2



The Berwyn Mountains.

Edward Berwyn Parry Evans was born December 4th, 1940 in the village post office in Penybontfawr, at the foot of the Berwyn mountains, and would be known simply as Berwyn. He was the youngest of three children with a brother, Gareth (seven years older) and a sister, Olga (four years older).

His father, Richard Einion Evans, lived from 1896 - 1978 and his mother, Gwyneth Myfanwy (nee Parry), from 1912 - 1968.

Berwyn's father was descended from a farming family, one of six children growing up on the farm Peniath Isaf in Penybontfawr. His mother was born in Llangollen, one of four children. Her father first worked in the slate quarry but later became a preacher and she grew up in the Manse in Meifod and later the Manse of Sarnau Chapel where her father ministered for 18 years.

Richard was used to riding horses on the farm and volunteered at an early age to serve in the mounted cavalry in WW1. When he returned, he joined the civil service. Gwyneth was a young nurse.

They married on October 15th, 1932 in the Chapel in Sarnau.

It was reported to be a beautiful musical wedding, with the bride given away by her uncle John Morris (conductor of the Llangollen Mixed Voice Choir) and married by her father, the Revd. John Parry.

The story will begin with Berwyn's grandparents, whose lives and gifts influenced his life and were nurtured by his parents and his fine education.

Berwyn's paternal Taid, Edward David Evans (1864 - 1952), owned the farm Peniath Isaf on the hillside in Penybontfawr and he married Margaret Sussanah, Berwyn's Nain (1867 - 1937), who died before Berwyn was born. His Taid was known as a musician and conducted the Penybontfawr Welsh Male Voice Choir for some years. On his headstone the words are written: -

Hefyd Edward Evans y Cerddor Hunodd. (The musician)

MI A CEDWAIS Y FFYDD (I kept the faith)

CAWN ETO CWRDD. (We will meet)

He was presented with a watch after conducting the Penybontfawr Male Voice Choir for 40 years. The inscription date on the watch is 1923 which would imply that he started conducting at 19 years of age.

CYFLWYNEDIG GAN (presented by)
AELODAU CÔR PENYBONTFAWR
(Penybontfawr male voice choir)
MR EDWARD EVANS
EIN HARWEINYDD AM 40 MLYNEDD
(our conductor for 40 years)

These seeds of exposure to the world of male voice singing would have a real impact and bear much fruit in Berwyn's life. Margaret died before Edward, who finally sold the farm and spent his last years with his unmarried twin daughters in a house, 'Bronyde', in the village. They are buried along with other members of the family in the village chapel Bethania burial grounds.

Berwyn talked of his days visiting the farm and how Gareth would love to drink the whey from the creamery, which Berwyn found not at all palatable! He inherited a deep affection for Penybontfawr and would visit as regularly as his working adult years allowed.

Some years later, in giving talks on his experience and travels with male voice choirs, he would refer to the Mimosa Expedition which sailed from Liverpool for Patagonia in 1865. They formed a Welsh colony, where they could live in freedom to speak their language and have their own traditions of the Christian faith.

The leader, the Revd. Michael Jones was from the village Llanywchlyn on the shore of Bala Lake, at the foot of the Berwyn mountains. The Abercelyn County House proprietor used the money from his wife's inheritance to largely finance the epic journey. There was much loss of life en route and economic hardship on arrival, but now it is a vibrant, bi-lingual community. Berwyn recalls, *"My Taid would have known Michael Jones and possibly given him some music being conductor of the Penybontfawr Male Voice Choir in the 1800s."*

He would talk fondly of an Auntie Nansi Richards, the famous triple and pedal harpist, her bardic name being 'Telynores Maldwyn'. She was born in the village of Penybontfawr and died in 1979. Although not a family aunt she was affectionately remembered as such and Berwyn's father would drive her to concerts. She became the Royal Harpist to the Prince of Wales. Berwyn would regale visitors and at various other occasions, with the story of Auntie Nansi visiting the home of cornflakes manufacturer William Kellogg in the USA. Mr Kellogg was looking for a marketing idea for his product and Nansi Richards suggested the cockerel based on the Welsh word 'ceiliog' meaning 'cockerel'; now to be seen on the boxes of cereal all over the world!

Many years later, Elinor Bennet, Lady Wigley, renowned harpist and founder of the Harp College of Wales, with members of the London Montgomeryshire Society would raise funds to provide harps for the Patagonian community today.

Berwyn's maternal grandparents were from Llangollen. His Taid, the Revd. John Edward Parry (1878 - 1947) and his Nain, Emily Morris (1898 - 1942). It is not recorded how John Parry was called to the ministry from working in the slate quarry, only that he would preach in the mines to some acclaim. During the war, he served as chaplain to the Welsh people in munitions in Northwich. He married Emily Morris in 1910 and they would have four children (two sons and two daughters). The eldest was Gwyneth Myfanwy, Berwyn's mother, who was born in Llangollen in 1912.

Revd. John Parry accepted a call to be minister at the 'Independent Church' of Meifod and Maine in Maldwyn in 1925 and would forever after be known as the Revd. John Meifod Parry. After a few years in 1929 he accepted a call to Sarnau and Pentrebeirdd English speaking 'Congregational Chapel', where he would remain for the next 18 years. He was called Home suddenly one Sunday, while preparing for evening service. Revd. John Parry died in 1947 (aged 67 years) and Emily Parry in 1942 (aged 64 years).

Emily's brother, John Morris, was the conductor of Llangollen Mixed Voice Choir and had at one time taken first place in the annual Eisteddfod of Cerrig-y-Drudion. It is therefore evident that in Berwyn's grandparents and family were strong musical and faith genes.

A beautiful recollection of Berwyn's Taid, Revd. John Parry, was written in a letter from a gentleman in his congregation.

"The last time I had the privilege of hearing him was on a summer evening in mid Maldwyn. Jesus Christ's name frequently in his sermon that evening, but because he was using notes, he was frequently adjusting his glasses, on and off, and in the end they became such a nuisance that he placed them in his pocket. He could see further without them; he could see the glory of Christ and spoke about him with a sweetness and charm with which to surprise all present. The preacher faded out of sight and we saw only Jesus."

It was said of Berwyn following his Home-call, *"It is hard to see the face of God in a lot of people but not in the face of Berwyn."* Berwyn spoke fondly of his Taid and times spent at the Manse and on his knee.

Another characteristic spoken of Revd. Parry in the same letter, *"he was blessed with a great deal of humour, so he kept young at heart and in spirit. He was able to entertain the old and play with the children, but he held firmly to the reins of his wit and facetiousness to prevent him from doing anything that would damage the dignity of the pulpit."* Berwyn also had this gift and although he would not aspire to preach, he enjoyed addressing an audience. His empathy, gentle humour and wit delighted many at the innumerable talks, speeches and compères in his life.

These were the seeds of this generation of Berwyn's family that would be encouraged and nurtured in his home with his father, mother, brother and sister.

He always had a passion for the male voice harmony that would transport him to the grandeur of the mountains, beauty of the plains

and valleys, the winding rivers, lakes and glittering streams down the hillsides, which was for Berwyn, Montgomeryshire, home!

Members of the family still live in the village of Penybontfawr and work the farms. His second cousin Peter and wife Lorraine, who farmed Peniath Isaf, would always welcome Berwyn, the family and friends to visit the farm that once belonged to his Taid and where his father grew up. They would sometimes enjoy a lovely meal and other times a coffee and chat for Berwyn to absorb again the heritage he so valued and respected. The family stayed in the comfortable farmhouse and other accommodation provided by Peter's sister Lynda, and husband Emrys. They too farm in Penybontfawr and again would welcome Berwyn and family. Berwyn and Margaret enjoyed several happy meals in their home.

Berwyn's Uncle Spuriel re-formed the Penybontfawr Male Voice choir in 1951 that is successful today. Lynda retired in 2019 after being the pianist for the choir for many years. The choir have appeared at the 'Thousand Voice Festival of Male Voice Choirs' at the Albert Hall at the same time as the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir and with Berwyn singing with the London Welsh Male Voice Choir. It would be his whole musical journey on stage. It was as if something that had been born in him remained faithful. Berwyn enjoyed nothing more than to spend time in Penybontfawr with Peter and Lynda and to catch up with all the news.



*Taid and Nain Evans
Edward David and Margaret Sussanab
Penybontfawr.*



*Taid and Nain Parry with Berwyn's mother
Gwyneth and brother Edward.*



*The watch presented to Berwyn's Taid,
Mr Edward Evans.*



*Berwyn's Uncle Spuriel and Aunty Kesber
(conductor of Penybontfawr male voice choir)*



*Richard Einion and Gwyneth Myfanwy.
Married at Sarnau Chapel 1932.*



Gareth Olga and Berwyn.



Richard and Gwyneth's Wedding Party.



*Revd. Parry, wife Emily with Berwyn's
Parents, Gareth and baby Olga.*



Baby Edward Berwyn, 1940.



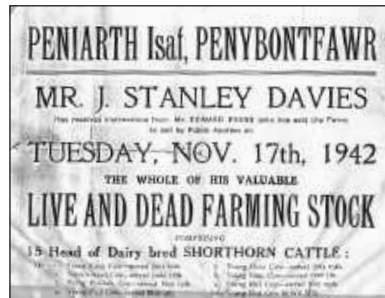
Berwyn's father, Richard Einion, in the mounted cavalry WW1.



Uncle John Morris (Berwyn's Nain's brother) with Eisteddfod trophies.



Penybontfawr Male Voice Choir.



Old Farm documents



*Supper with Berwyn's second cousins at Peniath Isaf
Berwyn and Margaret, Peter and Lorraine and Peter's sister Lynda*



Berwyn outside the Independent Chapel of Meifod and Maine.

Chapter 1



The Revd. John Meifod Parry at Sarnau Chapel.



Margaret and an Elder outside Sarnau Congregational Chapel.



Inside Sarnau Chapel

The Montgomeryshire Man



Auntie Gwyn and Auntie Enid at the piano.



Berwyn with Aunties Gwyn and Enid at Bronyde, Penybontfawr.

CHAPTER 2

Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain

*“My people will abide in secure dwellings,
and in quiet resting places.”*

Isaiah 32:18



Riverside, Llansantffraid

“A village means that you are not alone, being aware that in the people, in the ground, there is something that is yours, that even when you are not there remains waiting for you.”

Berwyn was almost three years old when the family moved to the village of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain, just a few miles from Penybontfawr. They lived in the gracious house Riverside, on the banks of the river Vyrnwy. These were very formative and happy years in Berwyn's life until he left to go to university. Llansantffraid is in the commot of Mechain Iscoed, north of the river Vyrnwy and near the town of Llanfyllin. Today it has around 1,200 inhabitants and is approximately 10 square miles. It was a natural environment for early settlers for hunting and fishing and many implements from about 6,000 BC have been found in the Vyrnwy Valley.

Berwyn's father continued to work for the civil service as the village postmaster. At Riverside he kept a small plot of land with fruit, vegetables, chickens, pigs and at times sheep. He had been a very good footballer and became involved with the village team when Llansantffraid Football Club was formed in 1959. Their first game was a 2-1 defeat to Llandrinio and Berwyn scored the first goal in front of a crowd of 300!

Since then, the club has become one of the leading teams in Wales. In 1995/6 they beat the League of Wales' only professional team, Barry Town, in a penalty shoot-out to lift the Welsh Cup. Renamed Total Network Solution (TNS) in 1997, the club won the cup, and three years later in 2004/5 the Welsh Cup double. Their rise to fame has been remarkable since those early days of Berwyn's father's involvement and his own first goal for Llansantffraid Football Club!

Berwyn's mother was fully involved in village life and the Women's Institute, where she would contribute to the music, poetry and dramatic productions. At Riverside, Berwyn's parents gave residence to one or two elderly ladies with the professional care of his mother. Berwyn would talk of spending time with them and assisting with their mobility.

His parents were committed to Bethesda Congregational Chapel where his father was the treasurer and his mother the organist. His father had a fine bass voice that would harmonise

in singing the hymns. Sadly, the chapel closed in 1987 but it had nurtured Berwyn's faith and he would not forget the fellowship and powerful prayers of that time. Nor would he forget the regular visits of the minister on his bicycle with a bag of sweets to share!

The river Vyrnwy featured much in Berwyn's reminiscences as it would very often flood, bringing the resulting inconvenience and mess. He and his brother, Gareth, would help their father rescue pigs and chickens and sufficient timber from the fallen branches and logs that would last for winter fuel. It was then that Gareth and Berwyn were introduced to the challenge of the crosscut saw and the physical effort that delivers the logs. But a far more lasting benefit was to the voice and to harmony. Gareth with his fine tenor voice would lead Berwyn, a bass, in harmony as they sawed through the logs and set to with their axes. Having a very pretty sister and her friends, Berwyn would imagine it in the style of the film 'Seven Brides for Seven Brothers'!

Alongside the house stood an old mill and wheel where Berwyn would enjoy arranging barn dances in the barn with their amateur music, washboards and anything to contribute to a Skiffle group. Pat, an old school friend, writes: - *"Perhaps one of my warmest memories of Berwyn was when, as an 18 year old, he organized several barn dances in the barn above the garage at Riverside. We had such fun at those dances."* It seems the dances were enjoyed by village and school friends, with Berwyn clearly showing his organisational skills!

In the summer of 2017, Berwyn and Margaret had the pleasure of meeting up with Noel and Pat in Anglesey. They were on a Christian mission from Salt Lake City. Noel and his brother, Ifor, grew up in Penybontfawr and their parents were particular friends of Berwyn's parents, known as 'Auntie' Rosie and 'Uncle' Griff. On Margaret's first visit to Riverside, she was taken there by Berwyn's mother; possibly for their approval! Berwyn spoke of teaching his mother to drive for the sole purpose of visiting them! *"I only want to be able to get from Llansantffraid to Penybontfawr!"*, she would say.

There was always singing in the home, with someone playing the piano and others gathered round. Berwyn could remember his sister Olga and her friend Betty spending hours playing and singing together.

The children attended the primary school in Llansantffraid, Ysgol St. Ffraid before moving to Llanfyllin High School. They travelled by train that left from the village station. Gareth went on to do National Service in the RAF as a physical training officer and became the youngest Sergeant in the Air Force at that time. He then won a place at Loughborough University to do a degree course in physical education. His sister, Olga, was a pretty girl who clearly loved life. One year she became the village Rose Queen.

It was a typical village of that time, when the milkman would drop by and stop for a cup of tea; the minister cycle on his bike to bring a word of comfort; doctors and vets respond to a call and others willing to help with their skills; extra French lessons and a general response to other's needs. These experiences developed in Berwyn a nature which was always ready to 'lend a hand'.

It could be described as a simple, idyllic life, but tragedy struck the family when their beautiful daughter and sister, Olga, was killed in a road accident. She was being driven home from a school dance before leaving for college in the Autumn. Another young farmer's son was killed with her and there followed a great outpouring of grief in the village and neighbouring areas. Gareth was at an RAF station and came home to be a source of strength for the family. He had to return to duties and Berwyn, just 14 years of age, was then the one at home to help bear his parents' grief. A young schoolteacher, Vera, came to lodge with them that same weekend and said of these days what a strength Berwyn was to his parents. She married a farmer in the village and the family still work the farm. Berwyn would call in and enjoy so much talking to her of old times and changes in the community.

It was around the time of Olga's death that Berwyn's Uncle Emyr brought his friend, rugby legend Cliff Morgan, to Riverside to cheer the family. It was following his successful South Africa tour but sadly, as Berwyn says, '*it didn't seem rugby football had reached Llansantffraid yet!*'

Berwyn had such respect for his father volunteering for the mounted cavalry in WW1 at such a young age and was keen to gain more information but failed. He was mindful that his father never talked of the horrors he had seen.

This was Berwyn's village and home life that shaped and equipped him to move through life with an ease and welcoming acceptance of all people he met. His mother suffered a cerebral haemorrhage at 56 years old and died in Oswestry Hospital, just months before Berwyn was to be married, but thankfully she had already given her blessing. His father sold Riverside a few years later and moved to a bungalow in Oswestry where he died at home at the age of 82 years.

Berwyn wrote some poems that spoke of these years: -

London. (Written on a train from London after an interview.)

London that bastion of the Nation's wealth,
That place of commerce, speed and stealth,
What can you offer such as we,
is there that a country lad should see?

You have few woods no rolling plains,
But city blocks and noisy trains.
And hidden streets where evil roams
We have our quiet, crystal country homes.

I love my sleepy church and spire.
The birds my ever-present choir
The pure fresh air my constant cure
My country home so safe secure.

Mum's Gone

Death I find so hard to understand
When recent memories still are strong.
So hard to come to terms with, learn to stand
Alone first time 'gainst every wrong.

For how I miss my mother's care,
Ee'n though my years grow long.
A mother's sympathetic stare
Can make the weakest son seem strong.

The little things we need to share
That to a stranger seemed so small,
The inner bond so close, so fair
That never failed thro' rise or fall.

Her letters which to some seemed dull
To me each word conveyed her thoughts.
Each phrase, each stroke could often pull
My mind up short when tense and taut.

Who'll now present the unexpected farce?
Who'll clean the saddened family fire?
That thrived upon ever cheerful grace
That never seemed to tire.

I hope God helps me see the reason
Why Mom had to go so young.
When she gave strength to every season
To those she loved and lived among.

This at least my Lord must show us
For reasons good there have to be,
This world needs people like my mother
And he who needs her most is me.

14th February 1968



Gareth, Olga and Berwyn at Riverside.



Olga and Berwyn with their parents.



Berwyn's mother and father.



Berwyn in Llansantffraid football team, 1960.



Llansantffraid, 1970 (the team became known as *The New Saints (TNS)* in 2010)

		<p>St. Ninian's History</p> <p>PHOTO of a tiny village in Wales to one of the world's most famous cities, more than 1000 years ago, a number of footballers were taking place last night after Berwyn's top records were shattered.</p> <p>Five more last four months, the world's top football clubs have been trying to break the record for the longest winning streak.</p> <p>But it was the players of the tiny Welsh village of Llanantffraid galloping from London, who set a new record for by one of the greatest football clubs in Europe, TNS.</p> <p>After more 17 games in a row in 2010, TNS beat another Celtic League club, Partick Thistle, to claim the title of the new champions of Wales.</p> <p>The greatest change in the club's history came in 2010 when the club's name was changed to The New Saints.</p> <p>The 100-year-old club, who have won an FA Cup trophy, have also won 100 other trophies, after winning 72 titles through their conquest of Europe. TNS have "I will not let this team's flag with the European continent's star on the world and set a new Guinness World Record and are delighted to have done so."</p> <p>Montgomery, Wales club ever in the</p>	<p>Unheard Celebration in 2008</p> <p>PHOTO of a tiny village in Wales to one of the world's most famous cities, more than 1000 years ago, a number of footballers were taking place last night after Berwyn's top records were shattered.</p> <p>Five more last four months, the world's top football clubs have been trying to break the record for the longest winning streak.</p> <p>But it was the players of the tiny Welsh village of Llanantffraid galloping from London, who set a new record for by one of the greatest football clubs in Europe, TNS.</p> <p>After more 17 games in a row in 2010, TNS beat another Celtic League club, Partick Thistle, to claim the title of the new champions of Wales.</p> <p>The greatest change in the club's history came in 2010 when the club's name was changed to The New Saints.</p> <p>The 100-year-old club, who have won an FA Cup trophy, have also won 100 other trophies, after winning 72 titles through their conquest of Europe. TNS have "I will not let this team's flag with the European continent's star on the world and set a new Guinness World Record and are delighted to have done so."</p> <p>Montgomery, Wales club ever in the</p>
<p>Triumph: the New Saints soccer team and world-beating cyclist Kaja Tylek</p> <p>Night they toasted records from Wales to Indonesia</p> <p>(1/17)</p>		<p>Unheard Celebration in 2008</p> <p>PHOTO of a tiny village in Wales to one of the world's most famous cities, more than 1000 years ago, a number of footballers were taking place last night after Berwyn's top records were shattered.</p> <p>Five more last four months, the world's top football clubs have been trying to break the record for the longest winning streak.</p> <p>But it was the players of the tiny Welsh village of Llanantffraid galloping from London, who set a new record for by one of the greatest football clubs in Europe, TNS.</p> <p>After more 17 games in a row in 2010, TNS beat another Celtic League club, Partick Thistle, to claim the title of the new champions of Wales.</p> <p>The greatest change in the club's history came in 2010 when the club's name was changed to The New Saints.</p> <p>The 100-year-old club, who have won an FA Cup trophy, have also won 100 other trophies, after winning 72 titles through their conquest of Europe. TNS have "I will not let this team's flag with the European continent's star on the world and set a new Guinness World Record and are delighted to have done so."</p> <p>Montgomery, Wales club ever in the</p>	

Total Network Solutions team makes history.



Gareth (the youngest sergeant in the RAF)



Olga Margaret 17 years.



Olga as Rose Queen in Llansantffraid.



Riverside and mill-house in flood.



Cliff Morgan at the time he came to Riverside to the family following Olga's death.

CHAPTER 3

Ysgol St. Ffraid
Llansantffraid Primary School
Mesen Ddyry Dderwen



*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old,
he will not depart from it”*
Proverbs 22:6.

Berwyn talked little of his primary school days but did attend the village school.

In a book published in 1999 to commemorate the opening of the new school it is written in the forward by Revd. Llewelyn Rogers: -

“The story, which begins in 1878, reminds us of the honourable history of the church in the provision of education for the children of this and many other Parishes. In so doing the church was providing children with tools with which God’s whole creation, and their part in it, might be enjoyed and explored. It signifies that the process of the education, or ‘the leading out’, of children of Llansantffraid continues and gives reassurance that, even though there is change, there is stability. It is discovering anew how best to use the resources God has given, and dare I suggest, in that very faith which has formed its school, and which inspired conscientious Christian men and women of the last century to provide for the future.”

This philosophy was borne out in Berwyn’s life. It is poignant that the school motto, “Mesen ddyry dderwen”, translates to, ‘The Acorn becomes the Oak’ as Berwyn became like the oak in his personal stability that would nurture and support others.

Ysgol Uwchradd Llanfyllin High School, 1951-1959 ‘Bid Ben Bid Bont’



Berwyn spoke most highly of his high school days, which clearly influenced his life. The school motto ‘Bid Ben Bid Bont’ in Welsh is a saying, ‘to be a leader you must be a bridge’. This became a quality of Berwyn’s life.

In the Centenary Book of the school, he writes: -

“The Civil Engineering wind of change took me from Liverpool University across England to the Far East where for many years I was based in Hong Kong with my family. I returned in 1994 as General Manager UK of the Company. Who would say that embarking each day on a train to school was a spark for such travel?

Llanfyllin with its rural grace and dignity, the coerced opportunity of Eisteddfod and playing fields (with competitive Mechain). The bi-lingual ease of the school undoubtedly being subconsciously of benefit in international travel and business. Respect and appreciation of other creeds whilst to thine own self being true”.

It is interesting to look at the evolution of the school of which he spoke so highly as recorded in a book written for the centenary year. This is a brief overview of what is written. Llanfyllin High School is situated in rural surroundings in the centre of Llanfyllin. The first school in 1897 was a humble tin hut with just eight pupils, and the most famous of these was Clement Davies, the distinguished lawyer and leader of the Liberal party.

As the school grew, plans were drawn up for a new building. It was decided it should be in Llanfyllin, central to the areas it would serve: Llanfechain, Llanfihangel, Hirnant, Llanrhaiadr, Llangynog, Llanwddyn, Pennant and Llansantffraid. It was ready for use in 1900 with the donation of a playing field and provided for 36 boys and 18 girls with preference given to Montgomeryshire children.

At this time the headmaster, Mr Hawke Dawes, saw the value of practical science, *“It is my estimation a very valuable subject from the educational point of view and quite as much for girls as for boys and for the dull ones as for those who are bright.”* He was assisted by two mistresses and two masters who taught Welsh, English, Latin, Greek, French, German and Spanish and all the Sciences, including shorthand and bookkeeping. The first cricket match was played against Welshpool in 1889 and the first football match in 1900,

also against Welshpool. Some students would go on to have trials for Wales.

In 1893 the Powys Eisteddfod was held at Bodfach Park in Llanfyllin, when the pupils were set the subject, "*What can the universities and intermediate schools do for Wales?*" The first School Eisteddfod was held in the school in 1921 with a shield for the winning house, presented by former local pupils of the school. Mr D T Davies donated his Eisteddfod chair won at Pontrobert, which is still used for the chairing ceremony today.

The impact of WW1 on the school was minimal but several of the old boys lost their lives in distant lands and there was a constant change of staff.

A new headmaster, Mr E T Griffiths, commenting on the new Education Act 1918, says, '*The Act opens our horizons and the ploughman's children will at last have equal opportunities with children of fortune, for the Act aims at last not only in educating the ploughman's son but bringing the ploughman himself, the artisan, the labourer, in fact all, to a proper realisation of the importance of education.....*'

In 1925 the literary talent of pupils was recognised and a collection of poems 'Y leuencid y Dydd' was compiled and published. There were many short stories and poems with a section of Welsh poems translated by the pupils from English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

In 1937 the school made an ambitious trip, for that time, to Windsor by train, where they enjoyed a river trip and sightseeing. Then a more adventurous journey to Paris, crossing from Newhaven to Dieppe. Llanfyllin School was one of the first schools to venture to foreign parts and at the same time pupils who could not travel could go to the Urdd Camp in Llangrannog.

During WW2, a letter dated 1941 was received by the headmaster Mr Lloyd Thomas from an old pupil, John Rowley, Assistant Commissioner in India, Raipur. He writes, "*I shall never forget my*

debt to the County School.” He returned to become head of BBC Wales and the letter is now in the National Library in Wales.

During the war, Llanfyllin would host evacuee children from Birkenhead and Liverpool to avoid the air raids. They invariably learnt Welsh and spoke well of their time in the school and the town. One lady writes: - “*School days started with morning prayers, Welsh and English on alternate days. There was no excuse for not being able to speak Welsh and so we just had to pick it up.*”

The school speech day was held for the first time since the war in 1950. The guest speaker the following year was Mr Harold Watkins, author and lecturer. He was one of the first eight pupils 54 years earlier and in his address spoke these words, “*Learning was an empty discovery if it did not lead to the betterment of mankind.*”

Berwyn’s brother Gareth and sister Olga were pupils at this time.

A performance of ‘The Mikado’ featured the young Elizabeth Vaughan who would later become a world-famous soprano. She was also the first soloist at the ‘1000 Male Voice Choir Festival’ at the Albert Hall in London in 1969. Berwyn would perform at this event with the London Welsh Male Voice Choir and the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir some years later.

The school also gained notable success at the Urdd National Eisteddfod in 1950 and at the end of the day were only one point short of the highest mark for Wales.

Berwyn joined the school in 1951 with its history of growth in academic and cultural achievement and later became a Head Boy.

In 1952 the foundation for a new school was laid at Llwyn Maes and declared an architectural masterpiece. It was described, ‘*a building in which every child should be inspired: it would be a child of dull spirit who would not respond to the light, colour and grace of this huge building with its wide, sun filled corridors, halls and classrooms.*’ The large assembly hall and grand piano are used for school and town events. In the foyer there is a memorial to old pupils who had given their lives in the two World Wars.

A pupil at this time was the great Welsh comedian, musician and entertainer, Ryan Davies, who sadly died at an early age of 40 years. He was one of the young men to carry Berwyn's sister Olga's coffin following her tragic death in the road accident.

The school started a 'String Puppet Club', and one student became proficient at making puppets with papier mâché heads and built a theatre in woodwork class. They then put on very successful performances.

Berwyn also talked of his challenging canoe expedition down the River Tarne in Bordeaux with five other Montgomeryshire people of the Welsh League of Youth (Urdd),

Llanfyllin High School became a leader in comprehensive education when the headmaster, Mr Lloyd Thomas, was anxious there should be equal opportunity between the grammar and secondary modern pupils. Then came a new headmaster, Mr Elwyn Gwyn Jones in 1955, from Penrhyndeudraeth who had a keen interest in folk singing and cerdd dant along with teaching mathematics and chemistry.

Mr Robert Richards, who joined the school just 10 months after it opened, said in his speech at the Jubilee celebrations: -

"What one would claim for the school is that in the sacred intimacy of real friendship, some of which have stood the test of 50 years, the pleasant ways of learning were made known to us, and our feet set in paths that have brought joy and enrichment of life, much beyond the dreams of avarice."

These words so epitomise Berwyn's experience of Llanfyllin High School and it is with this background that he would develop certain attributes. He retained a keen, empathetic interest in the War years; a love of Eisteddfod, the music and poetry, and attempted to write verse himself; he was always mindful of the practical skills of others, as in construction the bricklayer, carpenter etc; he enjoyed travel but was never too keen to canoe again! He loved to entertain the grandchildren with string puppets and was always most hospitable.

During his time in Cardiff, Berwyn would meet Ryan Davies who was then living near St Fagans. He took the opportunity to ask if he would speak at a Business and Professional Women's Club in Cardiff where Margaret was a member. There was great excitement when he agreed, and it brought her considerable favour!

Berwyn was an enthusiast for all sports but most especially Welsh rugby! Years later when visited by the pastor of the church he was asked, "*do you enjoy sport?*" to which Berwyn replied, "*well, let me put it like this, if it moves, we watch it....!*" He later took the Irish Pastor to a Wales v Ireland game at the Millennium Stadium and was beyond thrilled when Wales won!

A fellow pupil of those times recalls that Berwyn insisted he came to the library at lunch time, as he was going to form a choir. Despite his protests, he went along and found to his surprise he both enjoyed it and could sing! A foretaste of the future purposes in Berwyn's life!

Reflecting on the acclaimed gracious structure of the later Llanfyllin High School, it is interesting when researching a school for his son, Berwyn acknowledged its gracious accommodation with light pouring through the large sash windows. Could he have seen the potential for inspiration in learning here as had described his old school?

It is clear to see that so many of the influences seen and unseen of Llanfyllin High School permeated the understanding and personality of Berwyn as he advanced in life.

The desire to make music was always part of him and in much later years he took to learning the cello again. He was fortunate to find the distinguished cellist, Alice McVeigh, just round the corner from home. Alice has played with the Royal Philharmonic and BBC Symphony orchestra, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and more. Berwyn became her eldest pupil and so enjoyed his lessons and occasional practice duets with the accomplished Alice, who said of him that he

was very musical and would be particularly comfortable in a group playing chamber music.

In 1997 he was given the privilege of compèring the 'Centenary Concert' arranged by the Llanfyllin High School Old Pupils Association, held in the newly updated school hall, Theatre Llwyn. It was almost 40 years since Berwyn was a pupil and it gave him the opportunity to meet many old friends. It also brought together considerable talent from present-day pupils and those of previous years. At the time of the Centenary Concert there were 750 pupils and eight of the staff and former pupils.

In 2012, as President of the Montgomeryshire Society in London, Berwyn presented the prizes for the 'Montgomeryshire Annual Schools Competition', for Essay and Art and Further Education Achievement. Llanfyllin, with other schools in the area, was among the prize winners. He maintained many of the friendships made during these school years and meeting up with them in later life was always a joy.

Berwyn's poems:

The Mood changes with the changing times.

If I could sit and see my life before me,
Stand and think what lies ahead,
Wish for riches health and splendour
Would I regret what I had said?

Would I repeat those vicious stories,
Would I react those evil ways,
Could I look on while others suffer
Victims of some ill-gotten power.

Or would I act to stop those failures,
Should I say what should be said,

Could I strike with temper blazing
And then somehow still keep my head.

Foot and Mouth.

The Mute Countryside.

A hideous plague creeps through the glades with stealth
To thrust the blade into the heart of our fair land
To those with cloven hoof, its prey their health,
It reaches out its deathly hand.

This hand that passes sentence without thought
Of suffering caused to man and beast.
That comes and leaves the pastoral scene distraught
And revels in its fiery feast.

The work of many men and years,
Lies buried, burnt all victims of its call.
And left just empty fields and tears
And strange unseemly silence over all



Berwyn 6th form photo.



Winner of the 100yards.



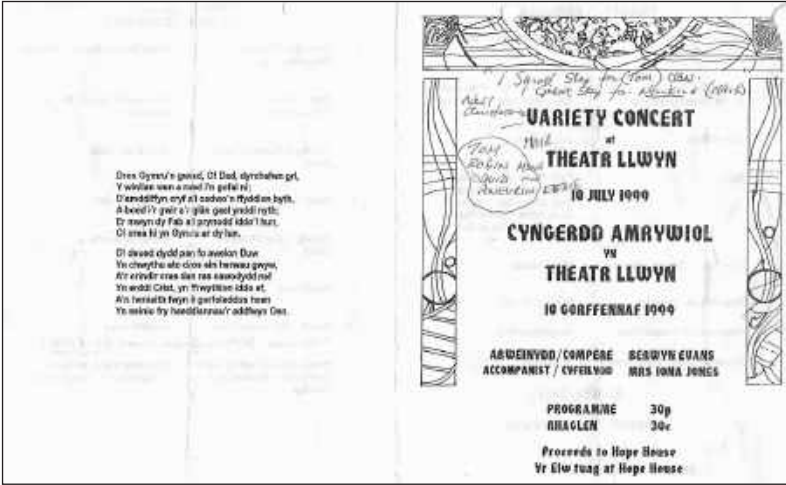
Berwyn second from right on the front row.



Olga at the school prize giving, 5th from the right back row next to family friend Noel Owen.



Berwyn climbing into the canoe with the Welsh League of Youth.



The Centenary Variety Concert with Berwyn as the Compère.



Old school pupils at Llanfyllin Reunion.



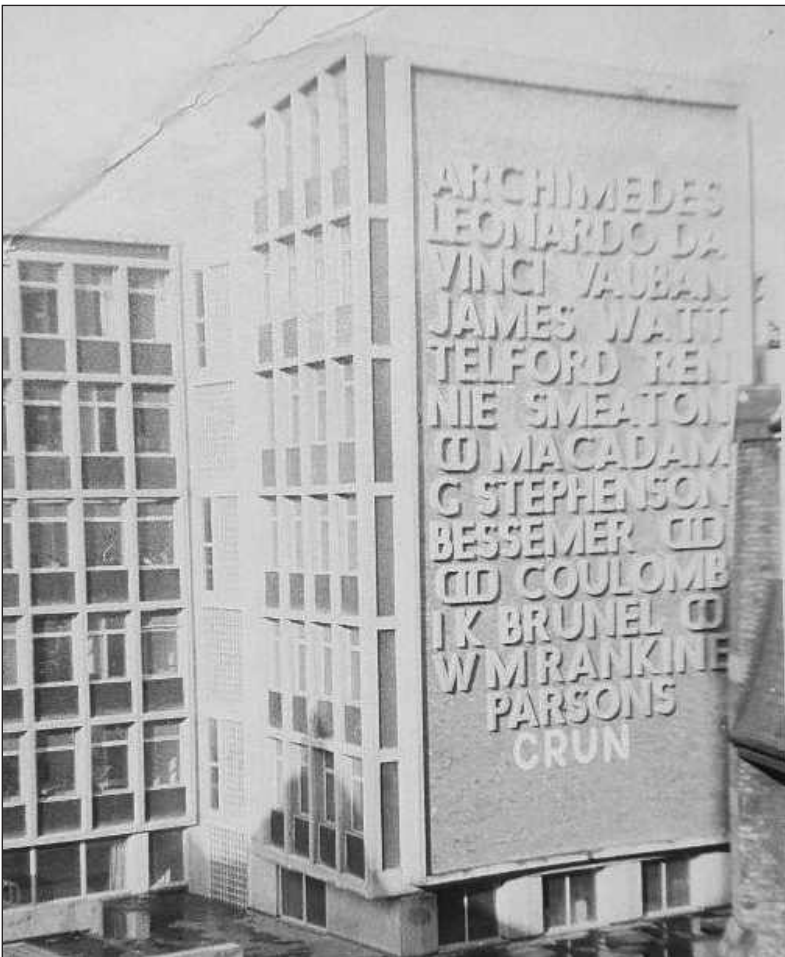
Berwyn presenting awards on behalf of the Montgomeryshire Society to a Llanfyllin pupil.

CHAPTER 4

Liverpool University

*“The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and
the ear of the wise seeks knowledge”*

Proverbs 18 :15.



“Haec otia studia fovent”

Berwyn went on to Liverpool University from Llanfyllin High School to read Civil Engineering. The motto of the University translates: -

“The leisure makes our studies flourish”. This seems to have been borne out in his time there!

A reliable fellow student says, *“This was our home for the next three years. There we had a whole drawing office to ourselves, open till late in the evening. There we would get together, to chat, plan social activities and sometimes.....work!”*

He also recounts, *“There were about 30 of us in four working groups practising geology the first week and surveying the second. We enjoyed the spectacular scenery but not the fact that we would soon get banned from the only pub, Gwydyr, in the village. The landlord’s wife it seemed, didn’t like students!”*

He remembers, *“I organised a coach trip to my hometown Radcliffe, nominally to tour a waste recycling plant but the highlight was the evening dinner at the pub in nearby Bury. The meal of course was followed by the usual music and singing of, “We are the Engineers” along with Liverpool sea shanties. Berwyn providing the accompaniment on the piano. We supported local Rag week known as Panto in Liverpool, toured around Liverpool, aboard Malcolm’s car, an Austin Sheerline singing songs ...*

Berwyn shared a flat in Liverpool with his cousin, Richard, who was studying Veterinary. He remembered his mother and Auntie Kesher, from Penybontfawr, taking them there.

He became a committed supporter of Everton Football Club and remained loyal in spite of his brother and nephews being avid supporters of Liverpool. They would enjoy the banter and excuse to call one another when there was a local derby!

This was the era of the Beatles singing at the Cavern Club and their song ‘Penny Lane’. Also, Cilla Black and other artists who they would have heard in the days before they became famous.

Berwyn went along to the university Aelwyd but there is no record of choir involvement.

During these years he suffered a lot of pain with a back condition Ankylosing Spondylitis, and at times would have to drag himself around but it didn't prevent him achieving his honours degree.

Many years later when living in Hong Kong and walking in the New Territories there was a chance encounter with Wilf and his wife; Wilf had studied with him and was now also working in construction in Hong Kong.

Berwyn kept in touch with friends made in the University years and later enjoyed reunions with his Civil Engineering year. These gatherings were in interesting parts of the country when about fifteen couples and singles went along. The first of these well organised events was in Liverpool then Chester, Aberystwyth, York, Cambridge, Ironbridge, Liverpool, Shrewsbury, Portsmouth and Sheffield.

The first reunion in Liverpool 2001 was an opportunity for the men to visit the Civil Engineering department as guests of the Professor. Also a ferry cruise to enjoy reminiscing on the views over Merseyside and a visit to the Maritime museum, Albert Dock and the Beatles Centre. It was a lovely time for everyone to catch up and talk of where life and career had led them since leaving in 1963. He missed one or two then joined the reunions in Cambridge in 2009. This included an enjoyable boat trip on the river Cam and walk around the streets of learning. It was on this occasion one of couples received news of their dear son's sudden death. It was shocking but possibly significant to be with such 'old friends' and an affirmation of these friendships over the years!

In 2011 the reunion was in Ironbridge which was of considerable interest to the engineers and a very convivial time.

A return visit to Liverpool in 2013 coincided with the year two couples were celebrating their Golden Weddings; Wilf and Diane and Dave and Meryl. Berwyn raised a toast and gave an amusing speech with reference to their courting years at university.

It was littered with engineering terms in appropriate and less appropriate places!!

It went as follows: -

“We secretly envied them ... we were home sick sometimes too.

I would remember quite clearly; we would watch carefully whether a letter would arrive for either of the lads. A letter that smelt differently to any of the chemicals that we knew. We would watch in the library quietly shuffling pages...from Meryl page 3 of 9, from Diane chapter 3 or 4 page 6 of 8! We could see this, we thought pragmatically of a way of easing these lads’ burden, we could pen a few letters for them. Like ghost writers The girls being country girls would never know! We had a template just for guidance just formal enough to get the point across that we were studying hard.

For the attention of/ to whom it may concern.

Dearest Meryl/Diane (Please delete as required)

I miss you very much and the SHEAR STRESS of leaving you on the station platform was a strain that I found difficult to GAUGE the STEEP CRITICAL PATH from the station was a GRADIENT that was almost HYDRAULIC (I have a difficult condition in this respect) You looked lovely and I’m sure that people comment on your SLENDERNESS RATIO. When we lay down together on the verge by the student’s union feeling that PASSIVE EARTH PRESSURE, I could not help reverting to the ACTIVE PRESSURE mode! Forgive the TENSION of the evening leading to this. In passing, and I don’t want to bring SOIL MECHANICS into this (although I am in the soils lab and doing CBR and CONE tests,) but as I admired your relaxed figure, I thought your ANGLE OF REPOSE was lovely. I noticed also that when I slipped it was to a SLIP CIRCLE ...what a delight!! You to me are the BENCHMARK for all that is CONCRETE in our relationship. You are the BRITISH STANDARD (BS3264). No-one can CRUSH my ardour and my STRENGTH ... whether tested at 7 or 28 days.

Once again my lovely, let us remember those BENDING MOMENTS together, let us look forward, indeed prepare for that CONTRACT between us, that WELDING day. I swear that from that Day as we have discussed I will ensure that there will always be a REASONABLE FACTOR OF SAFETY when called for but a LIMITED DEFECTS PERIOD.

Your ever loving student/ boyfriend/ dependent/ (delete where necessary)

At the reunion in Shrewsbury in 2015 Berwyn and Margaret enjoyed organised walks in the historic market town and the birthplace of Charles Darwin and a visit to the Shrewsbury museum and art gallery. There were the usual enjoyable lunches and dinners together. Similarly, in Portsmouth in 2017 they visited the historic dockyard and wooden warship, HMS Victory.

Berwyn was best man for Dave and Meryl, who married soon after graduation. They held a Golden Wedding reception at the Lake Vyrnwy Hotel when Berwyn gave another entertaining speech. Dave and Berwyn knew of one another from school football days when Llanfyllin would play Oswestry.

“I thought Dave had real talent a probing inside forward but you could see he had the looks, the brains, the charisma and poise and the modesty to go into Civil Engineering! He was quiet, fashion conscious and we all thought he looked good in flares; a strict diet etc, never more than 5 pints at one sitting! In his frequently attended favourite night club the Cavern he would always insist on leaving early.... that is early in the morning! (It was later that we told him LSD meant £sd.)”

Such was Berwyn's humour and affection for those days and the people.

He did go on to say, *“We understood however his single mindedness when he met Meryl...she was the anchor, she was the attraction, and she was Welsh! I know from the west end of the frontier town of Oswestry. How did she ignore the cravings of those*

doughty lads just over Offa's Dyke? Would that she could have travelled a few miles westward to the edge of the great Shropshire plain to Montgomeryshire!"

The last reunion Berwyn and Margaret attended was in Sheffield in October 2019. There was a guided tour of the Kelham Museum and of Cutlers Hall with the celebratory dinner. Berwyn was not so strong, but this would be his last time to address these dear and faithful friends with his usual humour and affection.

It had been Berwyn and Margaret's 51st wedding anniversary just a short time before and Margaret came upon Psalm 45. It is addressed to the 'Director of Music', entitled 'A Wedding Song'. This was appropriate for the occasion of their anniversary and for Berwyn who had lived a life with music and the ability to find the right words for whatever occasion.

"My heart is stirred by a noble theme
As I recite my verse for the King;
My tongue is the pen of a skilful writer.
You are the most excellent of men
And your lips have been anointed with grace,
Since God has blessed you forever."

Margaret spoke and paid tribute to the joy of being married to a man from the esteemed profession of Civil Engineers and in all gathered she saw the same quality of professionalism with humility.

It was timely as Berwyn would leave us just seven months later in the Spring.



In the Drawing Office at Liverpool University (Berwyn second right)

The Montgomeryshire Man



Thurstaston first field trip with Berwyn on the far left.



Outside the Brown Cow Pub (Berwyn keeping a low profile on the far right!)



Berwyn playing the piano for a pub singalong.



University graduation. Berwyn in his blazer (centre stage Jane, dummy head!).



Reunion in Liverpool 2003.



Liverpool Reunion 2013



Berwyn possibly debating the prowess of Welsh rugby to English supporter John!



Berwyn giving a speech at Dave and Meryl's 50th Wedding Anniversary Celebration at Lake Vyrnwy Hotel.



The last reunion Engineers' Dinner in Sheffield 2019.

CHAPTER 5

Career Path and Family Life

*“May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us -
yes, establish the work of our hands.”*

Psalm 90, verse 17





Following an Honours Degree in Civil Engineering in 1963 Berwyn entered a Graduate Training Scheme with I.C.E and Cheshire County, moving to site positions with Freeman Fox and Partners.

During his time in Chester he maintained his Welsh links with the Aelwyd and was involved with a small choir. Most notably he joined with three others to form a Pop Group who entered and won at the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Caergybi in 1966. One of the group wrote, *“Berwyn was so musical, and he arranged the tune, ‘A White Sports Coat and Pink Carnation’, to the words ‘Sosban Fach’*. They went on to audition with the BBC and were offered a slot but unfortunately one of the group got married and moved to the USA. Berwyn remembered the days in Chester with affection and most especially his red MG that he always regretted selling! He enjoyed meeting with friends from this time at the Eisteddfodau in Montgomeryshire, and other times of choir concerts in the area.

Birmingham 1967-71

In 1967 Berwyn joined contractors Sir Lindsay Parkinson on the Midland Link elevated motorway as Section Engineer. Following this he joined Sir Alfred McAlpine as Section Resident Engineer on the Abergele By-Pass.

During his time in Birmingham, Berwyn attended the Welsh Chapel and the Aelwyd held there. Margaret was a staff nurse at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham. One evening she was about to go off duty and told by the Senior Staff Nurse that she herself must hurry as she was going to the Aelwyd that night. On asking, *“what is an Aelwyd?”*, she then said, *“I was born in Wales to a Welsh mother could I come along?”* Anne is from Cefn Canol near Llanfyllin; a Welsh speaker, who attended Llangollen High School. She most kindly whisked Margaret away to her flat and on to the Aelwyd where the first person she would meet was Berwyn!

After the evening of some music and dancing, Berwyn offered to give them a lift home and having dropped Anne off at the flat took Margaret back to the Nursing Home and promptly invited her out!

The first occasion was to a small gathering in another Welsh couple's flat. She was picked up from home in Solihull, being a weekend off, then driven in his Mini with him singing merrily, *“What a day for a Daydream,”* while ably reading the map and steering the car! Margaret was impressed, and the rest is history! Although she was a little confused when he said he was a Consultant. To a nurse this would be a Jaguar and white wellingtons with blood, not a Mini with black boots and mud! A Consultant Engineer became apparent!

What are the chances of a young woman from a suburb of Birmingham meeting and marrying a young man from a village in Montgomeryshire! Also, Margaret's mother's name being Olga and she Margaret, Olga Margaret being the name of Berwyn's beloved sister.

Margaret invited Anne to her 21st Birthday Party where she met her first cousin Tony and they too would marry. Tony also grew up in Birmingham and now there were two very happy Birmingham/Welsh marriages!

Berwyn and Margaret married in 1968, she having completed her nursing, midwifery and Health Visitor training. They lived for a short time in Harborne where their first daughter, Alison Kate

was born at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Berwyn was proud to take Garonwy his friend from Llansantffraid days to meet his first born and the start of a new generation.

During this time Berwyn sang with the Canoldir Male Voice Choir which was in its infancy. It was founded in 1966 when at a St David's Day celebration at the Birmingham Welsh Rugby Club some inspired Welsh exiles came together with some English comrades to form a choir.

Cardiff 1971-74

Berwyn was invited to join Holland, Hannen and Cubitts as Chief Engineer and Deputy Project Manager on the Old Green Interchange scheme at Newport. His career progressed and he joined MJ Gleeson and later Cubitts Civil Engineering as Project Manager in Cardiff. The family lived in Rhiwbina, attended the Baptist chapel and Berwyn sang with the Birchgrove Male Voice Choir.

A second daughter, Nerys Helen, was born in Cardiff Infirmary. Berwyn, while giving her a feed, would urge, '*say Barry John!*' It was the time of the rugby giants; Gareth Edwards, Mervyn Davies, Gerald Davies, Phil Bennet and more. Berwyn was in Cardiff to see it all! His commitment to Welsh rugby never wavered and after a poor match he would console with, "*well we taught the world rugby!*"

After two years the job was completed and Berwyn's next contract involved a move to Somerset.

Bridgwater 1974-76

This was a position with Holland, Hannan and Cubitts as Agent on the Sewage Works and Sewage Scheme in Bridgwater. The family lived in the pleasant rural village and friendly community of Wembdon. They attended the church, Alison the primary school, and Nerys the village play group. Berwyn joined a mixed choir, 'The Joan Atkin Singers', who performed some significant concerts in the area.

It was a time of caravanning when there were many family weekends of fun and holidays in the West Country. Most especially was the arrival of their son, Peter Berwyn, at Musgrove Hospital in Taunton, who completed their family. He would one day take the mantle of this indefatigable confidence in the Welsh rugby team!

At the same time Tarmac/Cubitts secured a consultancy contract with the international Japanese contractor Aoki Corporation in Hong Kong and Berwyn was approached to join them. The Bridgwater contract was now completed and a new chapter in his career and family life was about to begin.



Berwyn and his red sports car in Chester.



*Winners at the Urdd National Eisteddfod
in Caergybi in 1966*

Huw, Maggie, Berwyn and Sarah.



*The Engineer meets the nurse graduation
Liverpool 1963.*



*Graduation at the Queen Elizabeth
Hospital Birmingham 1967.*



Old Green Interchange Scheme in Newport 1971-1974.



The winning Pop Group meet again at an Eisteddfod in Mold.



Gathering of friends at the Eisteddfod in Montgomeryshire.

CHAPTER 6

The Hong Kong Story begins!

*“In all your ways acknowledge Him and
He will make your way straight”.*

Proverbs 3, verse 6



Country Apartment

The invitation for Berwyn to go to Hong Kong came from a former senior colleague, Maldwyn John. He agreed to join Tarmac as Commercial/Operational Contractors Consultant, acting for the Japanese Company Aoki Corporation. Maldwyn was also Welsh, and the Japanese colleagues enjoyed working with them. Berwyn talked of the times he and Maldwyn would resort to Welsh to communicate some information, much to the incredulity of others at the meeting! It was an especially useful tool!

He went ahead of the family to find a home and begin work. As Peter was only just born the family waited six weeks to go out and join him. In those days, the flight was 24 hours and two landings for re-fuel on the way. The long journey was so worth the joy of being together again and the wonderful new experience in this far off hot and humid land. A lovely memory is of the little girls running as fast as they could down the ramp at the airport terminal into their waiting Daddy's arms!

The home was a low rise flat, Country Apartments, on the South of the Island in Stanley, overlooking the lush vegetation towards Stanley Bay and a short walk to the much-visited tourist attraction, Stanley Market. Alison attended Quarry Bay Primary School and Nerys was in a local playgroup. Soon some parents came together over their concern for the rising five-year-olds, who were not eligible in the English School Foundation of Hong Kong until after that age. Berwyn committed to the decision to found a new private school to meet this need. It began in small premises in the Wanchai district, with about 25 children and initially called 'Starters' then later renamed Kellett School. It is now highly successful having progressed to Secondary level and situated in Pokfulam. Margaret was at home with Peter and adjusting to this new life with a few hours attached to a General Practitioner as a Community Nurse.

Berwyn was fast establishing himself professionally and socially, becoming immersed in the Welsh community. Along with family life he started the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir and a year as President of the St David's Society. The family attended St Barbara's Stanley Fort Army Church and the children the Sunday School.

Although they had entered Hong Kong life to the full, with many enriching experiences, they had only committed to a period of three years. Berwyn accepted the opportunity to return to the London office in 1979. He would not only leave the work situation but also the Hong Kong Male Voice Choir which was now well established and growing in numbers and opportunities.

Back in the family home in Bridgwater, the longer-term contract with Tarmac meant a move to Wolverhampton. This was not too daunting but at the same time the Japanese company Aoki were anxious for Berwyn to return to Hong Kong and join the company. After much soul searching the decision was made and Berwyn severed his contract with Tarmac to join Aoki Corporation.

This became a defining moment in the life of Berwyn and Margaret as they had not intended to raise their family in the Far East. However, it was one that would encompass their ongoing purpose in life and bear much good fruit. Berwyn's position was now Deputy Manager of the Hong Kong office and later he became a director of the company to set up and manage contracts in the area.

He went out before the family to find a new home. This time it was a very gracious flat with a garden in Shouson Hill, Deep Water Bay and more central on the island. A lovely Sri Lankan lady, Charlotte, lived with them and was invaluable in supporting the family. She was greatly loved and appreciated. After seven years she returned to Sri Lanka and sadly died before the family had opportunity to bring her for a holiday to the UK.

Berwyn settled back into working life and returned to the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir and the St David's Society. He also held Welsh conversation in the home in Shouson Hill and was immersed again in the Welsh community. The family attended St John's Cathedral and Margaret became involved with the Sunday School, CLARES Ladies Fellowship and the Elderly Centre of the Christian Family Service Centre in Kwun Tong.

The children continued their education and moved from primary education at Kellett School to secondary at South Island School. Peter later went to public school, Kings College, in Taunton. Both daughters became Head Girl and entered University from Hong Kong. Alison went to Swansea to eventually qualify as a Speech and Language Therapist, and Nerys to Birmingham to become a lawyer. Peter went to Cardiff University to gain a degree and join British

Midland to train as an airline pilot. This had been his dream and perhaps born out of the many flights to and from Hong Kong from the age of six weeks to late teens.

Berwyn's professional life progressed and he enjoyed every opportunity to be involved with international companies and their different cultures.

The Hong Kong Male Voice Choir was well established, performing many concerts in the Colony, Bangkok, Singapore and the Philippines.

After another twelve years Aoki Corporation would move Berwyn back to the UK to work on a contract on the Underground Jubilee Line in London and this was their final departure from Hong Kong in 1994.

It would be another complete story to quantify and convey all the wonderful times of expatriate Hong Kong life. Living without wider family draws you together for deep friendships. The close proximity of all aspects of life gives opportunities for involvement in many cultural and social activities. These friendships and experiences would continue into life back in the UK.

Aikawa San, Berwyn's former colleague, had been a regular visitor to the home, and it gave son Peter, now a British Airways pilot, the greatest pleasure to fly his father out to Japan to meet up with old colleagues. There are also lasting friendships with British colleagues that go on into retirement and others made in the Welsh community and Hong Kong Choir.

The contract in London would involve making a new home in the village of Locksbottom near Orpington, Kent. In the next village, Prattsbottom, are good Hong Kong friends Lance and Brenda who also returned to the UK. Not too distant in Reigate is a Hong Kong colleague of Berwyn's, Roy, and his wife Anne. It was these friends and others who had returned to the UK and to other countries who decided to have a five-yearly reunion in the Far East. The first was back in Hong Kong, then to Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

They were amazing times of renewed friendships of younger years bringing up our families. The children also keep the friendships made during this time.

These now local Hong Kong friendships of Lance and Brenda and Roy and Anne have been so supportive in the time of Berwyn's failing health and now to Margaret.



Berwyn (far left) with Maldwyn John (far right), 1977.



Berwyn with the children outside Country Apartment, Stanley, 1976.



Aikawa San visits the family at Christmas.



Work with Aoki Corporation begins.



Work on Site with Aoki



Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir with Lansford Roberts, 1978.



The Presidents and their wives at the St David's Day Ball, 1978.



Family on St David's Day.



Berwyn as President of the St. David's Society, 1978.



Berwyn supporting Margaret at 'The Christian Family Service Centre in Kwun Tong.'



Charlotte enjoying guests from England (Peggy, centre former Missionary in China and her friend)



Hong Kong Friendships taking a walk together in Hong Kong.



Nerys (right) and Clara at Kellett School (originally known as Starters)

CHAPTER 7

The Story of the Hong Kong Male Voice Choir (1976-1995)

*“...He who has begun a good work in you
will carry it on to completion.”*

Philippians 1:6



Outside St. John's Cathedral, Hong Kong

This chapter records the most rewarding years of Berwyn's recreational life and how the generational gifts that had been born in him achieve a lasting legacy.

Berwyn worked hard enjoying all his professional involvements, providing a good living for the family and contributing to the physical structure of Hong Kong, which he so respected. The choir, however, became a more personal and lasting achievement in its growth over 40 years. It had become a recognised choir that travels internationally and a community of friendship that continues today.

The early beginnings of the choir were born out of a genuine innate ‘Welshness’ that was proud and protective of its homeland and culture. Mary Bewley, Welsh speaking from Anglesey, married to an Irish Judge in Hong Kong soon recognised in Berwyn a kindred spirit.

Berwyn went ahead of the family to find a flat and prepare for their arrival with the newly born, six-week-old Peter. Mary being an already seasoned Hong Konger was ready with direction and advice. She would tell the story of going with Berwyn to buy a second-hand cot and the seller mistaking her as the new mother!

Unexpectedly, maybe they did conceive, as in their deliberations to honour the culture of their shared roots in North Wales, the story unfolds and the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir is born!

THE HONG KONG MALE VOICE CHOIR 1976 ONWARDS AN ACORN OF AN IDEA!

Berwyn writes: -

‘The Welsh have always had a presence in this most distant British Colony in Business, Legal, Journalism, Education and most certainly Military with understated strength. On the engineering side, perhaps not so evident although the transportation system in the Colony was seemingly just about able to cope with the continuing increase in population in the late 1970’s. At this time, the quite exceptional Mass Transit Railway Project was to start bringing international construction expertise and techniques to complement the industrious Hongkonger.

To the Expat coming to the East with families the novelty was quickly tempered by the work ethic and need to engage fully with the place and in so doing perhaps with new churches, new societies, new sports and even cultural awakening.

The St. David's Society was a small but vibrant society, bilingual with members mostly in the Civil and Government Service. They would meet monthly in the Dickens Bar of the Excelsior Hotel in Causeway Bay for serious nostalgic discussion.

The Welsh Ball on 1st March traditionally had the trappings of Welsh fare; Welsh lamb, cheese and a good band with dancing and a Welsh entertainer if possible.

There had to be a piano and the joy of active and expected harmonic hwyl.

The Ball in 1977 had as President the Minister of the Union Church, Revd. Cyril Clark and the formidable Welsh bass Delme Jones as guest artist. This was good and so good that various and varied Welsh took to the piano. The guests were not persuaded that impromptu Welsh singing was melodic or even harmonic. A week later the Editor of the South China Morning Post saw fit to publish a letter from an English guest, the content of which was less than gracious about the quality of the singing. I was at the Ball and remember this having come to Hong Kong with my young family in August 1976. The President of the David's Society 1977/8 was a young Welsh-speaking woman from Anglesey, Mary Bewley and her Irish husband. Mary had come to Hong Kong as a teacher, and she was particularly disturbed by the perceived slight of the article although accepting a grain of truth Mary suggested that we try to develop something better for the following year.

I had sung with the Canoldir Male Voice choir in Birmingham, a mixed choir in Somerset and the Cardiff Arms Park choir and had a particular interest in male voice singing. We were living in Stanley and attending the Army Church at the Barracks along with another family Major Glyn Jones, the army dentist and his family (home in Llanfair Caereinion) Where two or three are gathered! We now had a two-part harmony! On the ground floor block of where we lived, I heard one evening the strains of

male voice singing. This was a group who really enjoyed a good sing and active in the Hong Kong singer, so not difficult for us to get together.'

So it was in the flat in Stanley that a group of eight, essentially Welsh men, gathered around the piano with Berwyn as conductor. Here they would diligently rehearse so they could be ready for their first appearance at the St. David's Day Ball in 1978 in the Holiday Inn, with Mary Bewley as President. After their appearance Berwyn wrote: -

"We did not exactly take the place by storm, but it was organised and harmonic and possibly the first time Are Y Nos and Mentra Gwen had been performed in the Colony."

This acorn begins to take root and the choir is established of mainly Welsh singers with a Scottish addition; Carlisle, whose wife Euren Scott was a Welsh speaker from Anglesey and a close friend of Mary Bewley.

Berwyn writes: -

"The choir soon began to grow with others from the St David's Society joining the ranks and several now non-Welsh but eager to learn.

The choir would meet at the Victoria Barracks and with a new pianist, Lyn West, wife of chorister Morley.

This period really got the choir on its feet and the growth just needing the family geographical roots to be nurtured through the years when Americans, Australians, English, Scots, Irish, Japanese, Thai and Chinese would feed on the traditional roots through the repertoire."

The Repertoire began to expand, and Berwyn was grateful to a chorister who had contacts in London Welsh choral circles, who obtained appropriate music. He also wrote home himself to obtain some preferred arrangement as sent by a contact of his Aunts, JRyddid Williams then Conductor of Cor Meibion Myndd Mawr. Berwyn built on all his earlier experiences of choirs and conducting

that had been an integral part of his life and the choir progressed to a repertoire of Llanfair, Ar Hyd y Nos, Comrades in Arms, Myfanwy, Gwahoddiod, Morte Cristi, The Old Woman, O Jesu Mawr, Men of Harlech, Grandfather's Clock, Cwm Rhondda, Calon Lan and Oes Gafr Eto.

They were now ready to accept invitations to perform with some integrity and accomplishment.

Early Performances 1977- 79

The choir were invited to sing in the not yet completed immersed tube of the tunnel across the waterway to Kowloon; this to entertain and delight his Japanese colleagues no doubt! Whatever, as they emerged through the exit somewhat bedraggled and lost in the streets of Kowloon, they were greeted by some very surprised Chinese locals! They later performed at the actual opening of the Mass Transit Railway line in May 1985.

Another invitation was to sing for a Welsh girl's 'engagement dinner' at a smart hotel where they remunerated with the princely fee of 500 dollars and their first paid performance!

The Mass Transit Railway had a Folk Club that invited the choir to join them at 'The China Fleet Club.' This first stage engagement was notable as they were forced to carry the piano from the basement to the second floor, entering puffing and sweating but singing triumphantly a rousing "Oes Gafr Eto".

In 1978 Berwyn was appointed President of the David's Society, which was quite a privilege as he had so recently arrived in Hong Kong. The choir would perform at this event. It was the year Prince Charles was visiting the Colony in his capacity as Colonel in Chief of the Gurkha Regiment and coincidentally the time of the St David's Day Ball. His Royal Highness being the Prince of Wales, of course, warmly invited as honoured guest. Sadly, it was deemed a security risk at the venue so he could not attend.

Berwyn writes: -

“My personal disappointment was somewhat mitigated by appointment with Sir John Curle, the then Director of protocol, with an invitation (or was it a summons?) to attend a reception at Government House for representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, in particular Commonwealth Countries, resident in H.K. And so, I headed for Government House and duly took my place at the end of a line of Diplomats, Consuls, from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Antigua and other strategic places. The Prince arrived and I was finally introduced as this year’s President of the St David’s Society. I said how much we all regretted his not being able to attend. He replied regretfully this was not possible but handed me a message to read to the members. This was written in Welsh.

At this point I remind readers of the proposed change to the British Constitutional arising from the devolution for Wales and Scotland issue. The referendum was being held in both those countries on the Thursday before the Ball and the results were to be announced on the Friday. Newspapers printed for the Friday and rushed to the plane could just about reach Hong Kong for the early evening on the Saturday Ball. Winsome Lane who was the Secretary of the Society, through her journalistic connection, arranged for the latest Western Mail edition to be air lifted to Hong Kong. I had prepared two speeches, where Wales would have been the newest member of the Commonwealth and otherwise! It seemed quite auspicious having the prospect of the Prince of Wales at our March 1st celebrations with the result of the Referendum on the same day. There seemed to be something historical about the coincidence in one of her Majesty’s few outposts. It is history now however, that the vote was firmly against devolution and in Scotland.

What is not historically noted is that the ‘Hot Press’ edition of the Saturday March 1st Western Mail with a full spread on the

Devolution issue and front page special note of this being flown out to Hong Kong for the Ball, duly arrived at Kai Tak late on Saturday afternoon. The story does not have a happy ending however, since the papers were mislaid at the Airport and our dreams of a latest edition Welsh newspaper being presented at the door that evening to each guest and H.R.H. were not realised. The following Tuesday my employer, Aoki Corporation, were wondering what their Senior Welsh speaking employee wanted with four hundred Welsh newspapers delivered to the Office by courier from Kai Tak!”

It was a very enjoyable evening with entertainment by a harpist and the Hong Kong Choir, now 11 choristers who performed well to the mutual enjoyment of the audience and themselves.

Departures but growth!

1980 saw the departure of Lyn, the choir pianist and husband, chorister Morley West. Another founding chorister's wife took over as pianist, Dawn Roberts, the wife of Elfed Vaughn Roberts. Also, Major Glyn Jones and his family of the initial founding partnership in the Stanley Fort chapel the three years previously returned to the village of Llanfair Caereinion. Then in the words of choir chairman Professor Peter Harris: - *“a critical moment came with the departure of Berwyn”*, as Berwyn and family were also to return to the U.K. Peter now took over the baton from Berwyn as choir conductor.

However, the choir continued to make progress and proving it was bigger than the man and the spirit to come together to enjoy singing in the Welsh tradition of Male Voice harmony, well established.

In the words of Peter Harris, *“the choir did not falter and soon faced two great challenges. In May 1980, the Rhos Orpheus choir visited Hong Kong and showed us what could be done! This*

was an extraordinary episode, which reached its zenith when the choir joined forces to sing with the great men at a Noson Lawen.”

The other occasion was a performance as the star attraction at the International Artists Charity Ball, before the Governor Sir Murray MacLehose and his wife, held at the Crystal Ballroom, The Holiday Inn.

During that period, they also performed at the St David's Day Ball and a Folk Evening.

Berwyn's return

Just over a year later Berwyn and family returned to Hong Kong as Berwyn was encouraged to take up a position with Aoki Corporation as General Manager of their contracts. This position would keep the family in Hong Kong for the next twelve years. The choir had now gained in numbers to more than 25 choristers and continued to perform at a variety of engagements. It is impossible to mention them all during that time but here is a summary of some of the more significant occasions and concerts.

They sang at a reception given by Sir Denys Roberts, the Lord Chief Justice, to welcome George Thomas, leader of the House of Commons to Hong Kong.

Another interesting engagement was a 'Medieval Banquet' at the China Fleet Club hosted by the Round Table Hong Kong Ladies Circle. This inspired an innovative costume of brown monks' habits complete with hoods to support the medieval theme.

Soon after there was a charity concert for Oxfam at the Union Church in aid of the East Africa Appeal which increased funds appreciably! Berwyn was back to conducting a full programme with Dawn as pianist and Peter Harris now the Chairman.

With an increase in invitations of varying formality it was decided to have a uniform for less formal occasions. Berwyn writes: -

“We introduced a red shirt with badge as no2 uniform with, of course, Dinner Jacket no1. We looked and sounded the part, a bone fide Welsh Male Voice Choir numbering in the upper 20s. A departure from the no2 was the monk’s habits that went down well at the Medieval Banquet”

After they sang Morte Cristi and Kumbaya at a wedding ceremony in St. John’s Cathedral and Speed Your Journey outside the church Berwyn recognised that they were now both sounding and looking good.

He writes: -

“they were audibly and visibly improving”, and from then on they would become regulars singing at weddings.

Some of the events included families, such as the opening of the Prince of Wales Pub, at Sun Hung Kai Centre in Kowloon. There were other occasions which visiting families to Hong Kong enjoyed and these events were developing friendships and happy memories for the children.

The Hong Kong Male Voice Choir is now well established and has so many engagements with the consequent administrative work that required better organisation. Although it was associated with the St David’s Society, it was considered expedient to become independent but still affiliated to the Society, and so became officially named, THE HONG KONG WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR (HKWMVC) in 1981. The first meeting of the choir committee was chaired by Professor Peter Harris on 8th December 1982.

Berwyn writes: -

“The minutes accurately done by Mike Benson capture the whole ethos of the choir facing the future under their formal name. A great record. Mike joined us on parole from the Police and the introduction of the peerless ‘Newsletter’ in the summer 1982 was a journalistic treat beside reminding us of all that we had or should have done and survived a busy yet cultural

time! Compulsive reading for all with a masterful tongue in cheek reporting. So was born the choir annual 'Singing Weakly!'

It should be clarified that Mike was working in the Police Force!

At the St David's Ball in 1982 Sir Harry Secombe was a guest. The guest soloist was the Welsh tenor Trebor Edwards and the choir also performed. As a result of Sir Harry's appreciation of their singing he agreed to become their Patron, a great honour for the choir. He also agreed the following year to return and perform in concert. This was arranged at the Hong Kong City Hall with the HKWMVC supporting. The Concert was a great success and Berwyn was commended in a newspaper report for his comic wit that brought more laughs in his three-minute introduction to the choir's programme than the comedian compère for the evening! Following this the HKWMVC 'boys' produced a poster: -

'Berwyn the Three Minute Comic'

Berwyn writes: - *"A great evening when we sang Nant y Mynydd, Take me Home, Myfanwy Gwahoddiad and Sailing (with actions) with 42 choristers on stage to support Sir Harry. Of these 30 were engineers of one sort or another. An interesting observation."*

Following the concert, Sir Harry invited the choir to join him in concert at the Sydney Opera House, but unfortunately international regulations made it unable for them to attend.

On Friday 21st May 1982, Hong Kong welcomed its new Governor, Sir Edward Youde, from Penarth, Glamorganshire, the first and only Welsh Governor. Like Lord MacLehose before him, he would be entertained on occasion by the choir and attend the St David's Day Balls.

In June of that year the famous Welsh entertainer, Max Boyce, came to Hong Kong to perform in concert at the Harbour View, Holiday Inn with the HKWMVC supporting. He then agreed to join them at the Noson Llawn, with the choir appearing in their

monks' habits. It was on this occasion Berwyn attempted to play the saw, with some considerable ineptitude, and an amusing script to play for time! Such was his humour that the great Max himself was reduced to tears of laughter as Berwyn persisted to finally achieve some kind of a tune!

A chorister remembers: - "*His performance on the saw at a Noson Lawen provided jaw dropping entertainment.*"

The choir now had regular invitations to perform on cruise liners and their first maritime engagement was on board the Canberra with Welsh pop artist Tammy Jones. They sang on the Pearl of Scandinavia for a charity concert for the British Red Cross with Sir Philip Haddon Cave and more dignitaries present. The choir had its own 'Tom Jones': Terry Brewster, who with his fine voice could mimic him with great accuracy and did so on this and other occasions. Berwyn writes: - '*A certain Terry Brewster, bringing the ship down, with an understated Delilah in a mix of English and Cantonese, the top brass seated in the front row were (humorously) told, "I usually get a standing ovation!"*'

The following year they performed on the QE2, recently relieved of its duties at the Forces base in the Atlantic, at the time of the Falklands War. This time with the privilege of being on the programme with Joe Loss and his orchestra.

Berwyn writes: -

'Singing the Welsh Anthem with Joe Loss and his orchestra was a night to remember.'

They went on to sing on the Love Boat, Oriano and more.

As the years went on there were other and varied concerts which included to sing at RAF Sekong to entertain the troops; the sophisticated shopping centre, the Landmark to entertain shoppers; several clubs including the Foreign Correspondents Club, Hong Kong Club, Yacht Club, Football Club, Helena May Ladies Club and more.

The Choir helped launch the 'Hong Kong Folk Festival' at Island School which continued as an annual event along with an annual Aids Charity Concert in St John's Cathedral. Further engagements were plentiful which they eagerly embraced. There came other invitations, such as a production of 'Guys and Dolls' at the Arts Centre when they were short of singers!

Berwyn writes: -

"Guys and Dolls in the Arts Centre in 1983 would have been in trouble without some Guys from the choir. Our accompanist John Meir co-opted some to help out. The producer said, when we realised we needed extra sound the Welsh choir seemed the obvious group to turn to and they made great gangsters but there was a problem, they didn't realise they had to dance!"

It was always a special time when choirs from Wales visited Hong Kong and Berwyn had the opportunity to communicate in the Welsh language. The ladies' folk choir from North Wales, 'Party'r Ffynnon', came to celebrate their 20th year in 1982. They had won many awards including a first prize at the Machynlleth Eisteddfod and appeared on the BBC and at the Albert Hall. In Hong Kong, the Choir performed with them at a concert at the 'Lok Yuen Hall' and at the Hong Kong University. It was especially enjoyable, when 'Party'r Ffynnon' joined them at the Noson Lawen at the China Fleet Club. They stayed in choir member's homes and Berwyn and Margaret had the pleasure of Zorah and Nest which their children so enjoyed.

There were more memorable visiting choirs and in 1989, 'Cor y Traeth' from Anglesey were invited by the St David's Society, for a concert at the City Hall, when the HKWMVC would join for some items.

Berwyn writes: -

"It was a real treat to hear them rehearse inside the Cathedral with its all Welsh speaking membership."

In 1990 'Cor Godre'r aran' sang at the St David's Ball with the baritone Tom Evans as soloist and Eirian Owen as conductor. The

HKWMVC also performed and the evening was a great success with Welsh music and culture now at its best! In 1992 The Haverfordwest Choir joined the HKWMVC in concert at the China Fleet Club.

Also, in 1990 the Choir were privileged to join a concert by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain at the City Hall. This would be a stirring and memorable evening.

Appointments in Bangkok.

During these years Berwyn, en route to the UK, had a brief stopover in Bangkok when he visited a recommended hostelry, the Bobbies Arms. He was told of a Welsh community in the city and invited to leave a contact message. From this transpired an invitation for the HKWMVC to sing at their St David's Ball.

On their first visit over 30 men performed at the Ambassadors Hotel in the steaming heat! They opened with a rousing 'Oes Gafr Eto,' which woke the caged parrot that continued to squawk loudly on the outside balcony. The following year, now a lasting annual event, a member of the choir, Bill Morrison (of razor-sharp wit), brandished a packet of Paxo stuffing – the parrot soon shut up!

On a visit Berwyn introduced the choir and their new Conductor John Edwards,

“Diolch yn fawr iawn gyfeillion am y croeso cynnes yma unwaith eto gan gymdeithas Gymraeg yn Bangkok.

Dyma'r pumed tro i Gr Meibion Cymraeg Hong Kong deithio i Thailand, a fel Llywydd y Côr rwy'n falch i weld wynebau cyfarwydd yn y gynulleidfa heno. Rwy'n siŵr fod llawer ohonoch yn cofio' un neu ddau o'r cantorion sydd gyda ni hefyd.

Thank you for the warm welcome you have given us again on this fifth visit of the HKWMVC to the Welsh community in Bangkok. As the President of the choir, I bring you best wishes from Hong Kong and I am also pleased to see old familiar faces in the audience.

Our choir is rather like the vintage classic car where some parts need replacing, some are a little worn (Terry Brewster asked me not to name names!) but the vehicle, whilst kept well-oiled, is basically unchanged. I am pleased however to introduce our new driver who, as an economy measure, also tunes cars! Please climb aboard for your St David's celebrations..."

The choir includes in these weekends a visit to the Kanchanaburi and Chungkai war cemeteries at the River Kwai where they sing 'Gwa Haddiod' at the graveside of a Welsh soldier with someone, if possible to play, 'The Last Post.' A member of the choir at the time was Jack Edwards, who was prisoner of war under the Japanese for three-and-half years. He spent most of this in forced labour in a copper mine in Taiwan. Jack acquired a piece of Welsh slate and had engraved,

*"In memory of all who perished building the Thailand
Burma Railway in Japanese Prisoner of war camps and
since as a result of their harsh treatment and
suffering. None of us should forget."*

The HKW MVC placed it beside the Bridge over the River Kwai to commemorate their visits and the 50th anniversary (1942–1992). Jack was then resident in Hong Kong and devoted his life to obtaining compensation for POWs and their widows. His presence added poignancy to these visits, and he was greatly respected. He died in Hong Kong in 2006 and was a good, inspirational friend in the Choir.

It was on such a visit members of the choir shared a table with Lord David Puttnam, film Director of 'Chariots of Fire', out filming for his film 'The Killing Fields'. The Choir were already singing, 'Cat Like Tread' and quickly rehearsed 'Jerusalem' for the occasion. A signed score of 'Jerusalem' shows Sir David's appreciation of the choir's company and entertainment.

The Choir now moved rehearsal venue to The Oak Hall at St John's Cathedral and, not to take the analogy too far, the acorn too, had now become the oak! The rehearsals continued every Tuesday evening for their very full programme of invited events always including the annual St David's Day Ball. It is recorded that one year they sang at 32 venues always well received, except for the very occasional over-merry evening when they weren't too sure their presence was appreciated! However, never did they fail to raise their game to sing at the Annual rugby 7s!

Berwyn writes: -

'The most rewarding of these engagements is the choir being invited to be the main artists at the St David's Ball in 1983 as opposed to supporting act.'

The reputation of the Welsh musical and cultural heritage at the Ball had been well restored following those derisory comments reported nine years earlier in the South China Morning Post.

Berwyn retires from Conducting

And so the time came when Berwyn, at the Annual General Meeting in 1986, retired from almost ten years of conducting, while retaining some responsibility for its welfare and acting as concert compère.

He writes: -

'This will be my last report to the choir as your conductor and is given with a degree of regret but relief also, at the end of another eventful year. We are a choir that can provide for most occasions. This is something to be proud of and means that we fill a social need in Hong Kong.'

The St. David Society of Hong Kong Ball was one of the highlights of my tenure with the choir, since we were at last the guest artists having been supportive of so many others. We rose to the occasion and it will be one of my finest memories. It was an example of what a choir can do.'

And so, I come to the end of my period with you, an end preceded by committee deliberations on repertoire and other subjects, showing that we are in this ninth year a choir that wants to progress.

I started my journey with eight men and finish with maybe forty. This must be the most international of Welsh choirs but accepting gratefully the enormous contribution of all others I am happy when I see it strive to remain the most Welsh of international choirs. This was the seed and this I hope will remain the fruit.

We must all of us who are keen enough to be members work hard to maintain the reputation and the integrity of the choir.

So, my parting message to all members of the choir as I give my thanks for all the good times and the support members and accompanists have given me is to parody one of President Kennedy's statements: "Think not of what the choir can do for you, but what you can do for the choir."

Signed Berwyn

A chorister writes: -

'I arrived in Hong Kong in February 1980 and straws in the Welsh wind made me aware that some of my countrymen gathered together to sing on a Tuesday evening in the Naffi in Victoria Park and so I knew where my future lay. A choir from Wales – name now forgotten- visited Hong Kong and I went along to one of their performances at the old China Fleet Club. It was there, for the first time, that I saw the HKW MVC in action when they joined the guests on the stage. I pitched up for rehearsals something to which I looked forward to providing the necessary light relief from the stresses of the working week. Many of the most potent memories of the choir are a product of the spontaneous wit

possessed by many of fellow choir members. It was so often a case of 'you had to be there to capture the moment' and I am very happy to say, 'I was there.'

A lovely story of how wide and far these friendships reach can be told in a chance encounter. Norman Owen, the American chorister and co- writer of the choir shows and his wife Roberta and son, Robert, were travelling through Somerset on holiday during the summer break. Berwyn and the family were also enjoying their annual break in the UK home in Wembdon when they called in and were invited to stay overnight. Over breakfast the next morning there was telephone call from a friend in the village. On explaining to Norman and family that she was the daughter of China missionaries who had stayed with us in Hong Kong, Norman exclaimed, "*my parents were missionaries in China.*" It transpired that they were together in China and this friend's mother came swiftly to meet the son of her dear missionary friends of so many years ago!

In speaking at a Rotary Lunch at the Mandarin Hotel in 1991 recognising the 'Four Way Test' of Rotarians, Berwyn chose this comparison with a choir.

1. Is it the truth?

The sound of music is the truth of human endeavour.

2. Is it fair to all concerned?

You cannot have a good choir without shared responsibility to each section each voice. The good choir is fair in its allocation of this. It doesn't need stars that stand out.

3. Will it build good will and better friendship?

I have seen men's boredom, loneliness and introversion lift with the conviviality of a choir. Business and social worries left behind on wings of song.

4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Yes definitely, physically for the lungs in particular and morally for its innocence.

Over the years the choir increased its ranks with Chinese and ex patriots from several different countries, although still most with Welsh connections and the choir maintaining the Welsh roots in its repertoire and sound. Just before the handover of Hong Kong in 1997 the choir sang for Governor Chris Patten and his wife Lavender at Government House.

This is only an overview of the choir concerts, venues, visiting choirs and entertainers performed in the earlier years and there is much to tell since Berwyn's departure in 1995. Above all else, is the pleasure it gives to others and the opportunity for men to unwind in the community of song that honours Wales!

On an occasion he recalled how the choir was now singing in several places in the Far East, Vietnam, China, Philippines, Thailand and Australia and his words: -

"... not forget the early days at the St David's Ball in Hong Kong where the performing really started with Myfanwy, Yfory, Y Darlun, that there was a similar event 1st March 1943 with loyal toasts with Welsh songs, Y Bwythyn ar Y Bryn, Ar Hyd y Nos, Y Delyn Air sung by the Welsh Male Voice Choir in Stanley South of the island, the venue, the Japanese Internment camp. Yes, we have been there before, yes we keep the tradition and our flag flying with the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choristers in many choirs back in the UK now."

Choir Shows

The combination of gifts and personalities led the choir to go into theatre!

There were some very talented choristers both musically, in writing and the ability to act. Such was the camaraderie between them that they were willing to try anything together.

It is fair to say these shows spanning over 20 years and annually, with one or two exceptions, attained a very high standard of entertainment. The scripts, following the first show which was

written by John Okenfold, were by two academics in the choir, lecturers at the Hong Kong University. Norman Owen a historian and Elfed Vaughn Roberts, a political scientist.

They covered a variety of parodies of Welsh life, and all were very amusing with perhaps the exception of 'King and Country'. This looked at the First World War in prose and song and had serious intent.

Others played on the character Dai in different situations in life and amusingly portrayed by members of the choir.

The first of these: -

Holyhead Revisited is about a sometime, part-time Ambassador to Hong Kong arriving to receive an award, which involved interviews to be reported in the press etc. A send-up of an otherwise credible event!

King and Country. This play focuses on World War 1 and naturally drew on the famous poets Siegfried Sassoon and his 'Good Morning Good Morning' and Wilfred Owens 'Dulce et Decorum' and excerpts from Robert Graves' memoirs. Almost every word spoken in the show were those of people who lived through the war or died in it. This production would be presented seriously.

Pub and Pulpit. A play based on a theme that is as old as Welsh cultures itself, portrayed in two characters. The first is of a stern unyielding non-drinking non-conformist, grey personality, speaking Welsh and attending bardic and pantheistic ritual at Eisteddfodau. The other is of a no-good boyo from the valleys duly armed with a leek, a pint of Hancock's bitter, potbelly, mouthing Sospan Fach and worshipping the oval ball! The play seeks through dramatic investigation of the contradictions in Welsh culture to find a basic unity, which brings these two seemingly irreconcilable groups together!

Dia Pan or Heir to Hong Kong Dai, is the central character engaged in an innocent sentimental journey for truth. It is set in a village of Penycae yn Rhosienerchrgog wrth Tai Nant! Will and Bert worked down the pit for 45 years despite earlier school days

showing poetic gifting. Solly was from a long line of Welsh gentry who since the Act of Union with England has been adding an extra barrel to his name!

What a Performance with The Band of The Royal Regiment of Wales is a play based on the night before the handover back to China and the Governor Neil Kinnock composing a letter to his mate Dai back home!

Shows to follow were all greatly enjoyed and the scripts worthy of being on record. They would include: - **History of Wales, Dai Nasty, Dai Aspora, Dylan, Positively Hong Kong, Clash of the Titans, Dai Bad the Sailor, Back from the Future and Dai Vinci.**

The choir was in the chorus or as a character in the show. In the early days they frequently depended on the good nature of their fellow performers to cover any forgotten words or other digression, which only seemed to add to the amusement for the audience! The Conductor of the choir would find himself with ultimate responsibility.

Berwyn writes: -

“Preparation to the choir is a combination of perspiration and desperation as the time of the Show draws near. The tenseness from the hours of practice when every little detail, every moment, every nod and wink must be choreographed and orchestrated. The reward is the respect of the true music lover and the love of the wife and partner when the men come home exhausted but still singing at 4 in the morning!”

Prophetic words and vision

Over the years there were some prophetic words from Berwyn!

It was at the Annual General Meeting 1984, Berwyn writes: -

“Musically our basic repertoire on the lighter side has shown growth. There is room for a new major piece along the lines of ‘Comrades in Arms’, for our own interest and development. However, I am still surprised at the over-all good quality of our singing when you consider the dedication we put into practice!

I am sure we all accept that of the two-hour practice we must be achieving less than 50% good learning time. This is not good enough and limits how much material we can tackle.

I will admit to a failing in not demanding more discipline. A more experienced and certainly a more technical conductor would not have tolerated the current standard of discipline. So, as I have said before we both get what we deserve and presumably until either of us decides to change we will suffer the inevitable frustration, which many of us feel at 9-45 on a Tuesday evening. I am close to saturation point on this matter.

I would suggest however, that whereas it would take a miracle for me to become an Andre Previn or even a Nicholas Routledge or even John Mier, it needs little effort for the choir members to exercise some restraint in drinking and talking.”

On another occasion: -

“The choir in terms of accuracy, knowledge and application is generally no worse than the conductor. We are developing a better feel of the music without getting lost in the academic side of it. We know that enjoyment can still be had on our level of performance and together we are learning mutual tolerance and somehow in my humble opinion, is just about getting us there”.

And more: -

So, this is our year again, a story of a choir whose locations for concerts must be as exotic and varied as anywhere in the world. Do we want to grow? Then we must feed the choir with good new members. Do we want to improve our singing? Then we must temper our chat in rehearsals. Do we want to reach the standard of the average competitive choir in Wales and compete in Eisteddfod? Get a better conductor. Through it all thank you each and every one of the members for their individual and varied support.

The Hong Kong Male Voice Choir is not insignificant; however, it also has charm and will undoubtedly have its place in history and where and which category others will judge.”

Berwyn did not know then what lay ahead and the choir many years later in its 40th year would make an appearance on the Llangollen Eisteddfod stage, although not competing, representing Hong Kong. So, it was during this period of growth Berwyn saw it advisable to hand over the baton to a musically more experienced Conductor. It was true to his nature to put the future of the choir before his own pleasure as Conductor and Musical Director. He had achieved his priority of bringing the sound of Wales to Hong Kong and more than that the pleasure and relaxation of singing in a convivial community.

Berwyn continued to sing with the choir and compère its programmes for the next eight years until in 1994 when his work in Hong Kong came to an end. Aoki Corporation brought him back to the UK to work on a contract as an extension of the Jubilee Underground line to the Millennium Dome site in Greenwich, London.

Life President

On 7th November 1986, a letter was written on behalf of the choir inviting Berwyn to become **Founder President of the Hong Kong Male Voice Choir** that would later become **Honorary Life President**.

This accolade was a lasting testimony to the Montgomeryshire man who allowed his roots to shape him and never forgot to honour them. The acorn of a vision had now become the oak!

On Berwyn's Home-call a chorister and friend wrote,

It is extraordinary that so many of my fond memories of life have involved Welsh Choir events. And it is, that had it not been for Berwyn starting the choir in Hong Kong I would not have joined. I consider myself hugely lucky. Berwyn really did change the lives of so many people. And if you read the bulletins that come from Hong Kong that lives continue to be changed- not just for members of the choir but for their families, new recruits, exiles but also all the thousands of people

who have enjoyed concerts or benefitted from funds raised at charitable gigs. It is really his legacy.

Berwyn was remarkable. As a musical Director he was patient, as an MC thoughtful and funny and as a friend loyal and supportive. I have a whole raft of Welsh hymns and other songs that I know well because Berwyn taught me them. Mike

Choir Anniversaries

The 20th Anniversary Concert was celebrated on RTHK radio station when the choir sang twelve mostly Welsh pieces, among them Land of My Fathers, Men of Harlech, Panfo'r Nosy n Hir, Tydi A Roddaist, Comrades in Arms, Sunrise sunset, Calon Lan and more. They also made a disc of this occasion.

25th Anniversary Concert. Berwyn and Margaret returned to Hong Kong with ex-chorister Richard Davies and his wife Lesley, to join in the celebrations held in St John's Cathedral. The choir now had 63 choristers and sang 16 pieces with a repertoire including Calm is the Sea, Heaven is My Home, Welsh Trilogy, Diolch I'r Ior, My Lord What a Morning, Calon Lan, American Trilogy and Gwadhoddiod. Peter Yue, St John's organist, played a prelude founded on the Welsh hymn tune Rhosymedre. The closing remarks were given by the Very Reverend Stephen Sidebotham, once Dean of the Cathedral who was back in Hong Kong for an interim period with his wife Peggy. They had welcomed Berwyn and Margaret to the Cathedral Fellowship in 1981, where the family worshipped the next twelve years. It was a significant time and place to be celebrating the 25 years of the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir.

The sudden passing of a founding chorister and dear friend, John Bush, with whom Berwyn had shared a flat in Hong Kong until the family arrived, brought much sadness. However, many friends in the choir came together in the Oak Hall of the Cathedral to pay tribute in words and song. It was a reminder that the choir was not

all about singing but a family of choristers with responsibility and affection for one another. They later had a celebratory dinner with cake and impromptu singing.

The weekend following, the Choir travelled to London to join the 'Concert of '1000 Voices', at the Royal Albert Hall. Choirs from all over Wales and other invited international choirs come together in Concert with celebrated guest artists and the Cory Band. For their first of more occasions at the Albert Hall, the Chairman of the HKWMVC, David James (a Welshman) said: -

"There were now 12 nationalities represented among its members so was bound to be the most multicultural on stage."

Around 50 choristers joined the event in their new jackets in black with Mandarin collar and red trim. Berwyn, along with four other ex-HKWMVC members now sang with the London Welsh Male Voice Choir (LWMVC). It was a rewarding occasion to be on stage with the choir he founded 25 years previously and their ability to learn the demanding Albert Hall programme without copies! Also appearing was the Penybontfawr Male Voice choir from Berwyn's family village, which his grandfather and uncle had conducted and his cousin, Lynda Thomas, the present pianist. He was seeing his choral journey all on stage together!

The 30th Anniversary saw the appointment of a new Patron, Lord Martin Thomas, following the passing of Sir Harry Secombe. To mark this anniversary the choir performed a '30 Years Young' concert at the Academy of Performing Arts. As they financially support students from the Academy, some took part. They also made a disc, '30 Years Young'. Shortly following, the choir travelled to Australia to sing at a 'Gala Concert' at the Sydney Opera House. Here they would meet with Berwyn who was not only there with the Comrades Choir but also the 'Master of Ceremonies'. He even had his own dressing room with his name on the door! Later that year the Choir again appeared

at the '1000 Voices' at the Royal Albert Hall and they would meet up for a united 30th Celebration with the Hong Kong Exiles at a venue in London.

The 40th Anniversary was very rewarding for Berwyn, as it saw HKWMVC he founded in the Far East, making its first visit to Wales. They came to the Llangollen Eisteddfod and the area where the love of Welsh Male Voice Choirs was born in him. His musical journey had come full circle and he was there to receive them!

They had several engagements: -

St Collen's Church; Eisteddfod performance on the World stage; Eisteddfod performance at Centenary Square in the town centre; joint concert with Cor Bro Glydwr at Christ Church Bala and an Eisteddfod Outreach Performance at Dol Y Wern Residential Home. They joined the Parade of Nations representing Hong Kong in their striking jackets with mandarin collars. A concert was held at All Saints Church Gresford after which Lord Martin Thomas of Gresford, choir Patron, and his wife Joan invited all the choir and their wives for a beautiful evening and supper in their lovely garden and home.

After the close of the Eisteddfod, the HKWMVC met together with some exiles for a 40th Year Celebratory Lunch. There were several founder members, including the last to leave Hong Kong, Terry Brewster (the Choir's own Tom Jones), and his wife Jackie. This was a very poignant occasion for Berwyn, as the Choir's Life President, to address the gathering and encourage them to stay true to their roots in the Welsh Male Voice tradition. He emphasised the other core value to maintain the bond of friendship that had been the strength of the Choir. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunities given him and the reward of seeing and hearing how established and successful they had become, from its early beginnings under his baton. He knew he had limitations, but the seed was sown; the seed that would see the fulfilment of a choir fit for the Eisteddfod stage.

They now had a recently appointed professional Musical Director, Colin Touchin. It has become a choir that brings honour to Wales and God has truly blessed this calling on his life.

At the HKW MVC exiles' reunion earlier that year Berwyn spoke: -

“The home on Tuesday evenings was very much St John’s Cathedral where we would meet and enjoy the company. There were visitors a plenty, Cory Traeth from Anglesey rehearsing in the Cathedral with an all Welsh speaking membership, a revelation. Rhos Male Voice en route to a China Tour. Haverfordwest Male Voice, Parti’r Ffynon Welsh Ladies Choir, the lovely Filipino ladies’ part of the Christmas Hospice Concert and the Hong Kong Medical choir and orchestra. The Band of the Royal Air Force and the great occasions with the Royal Regiment of Wales and the goat!

What a privilege to sing, to be heard, to entertain, be entertained, have roots and grow from those roots.

*Diolch am y cyfle,
Berwyn.*

These were the last occasions for Berwyn to gather with his beloved choir, for within months he would be called to his Heavenly home. We thank God he was able to be at the Llangollen Eisteddfod and the celebratory lunch where he sat with such deep friendships as Elfed Vaughn Roberts, Terry Brewster and the later arrival of Bill Morrison. Bill entered as Berwyn was giving his final speech, announcing in his lasting wit, “hasn’t he b..... well shut up yet!”. Perhaps he should have brought the packet of Paxo! Such memories and such friendships that are surely God-given for our pleasure and strength.

A friend and chorister who was at that lunch wrote: -

“Berwyn’s passion for Wales, its language, family, friends and choir was boundless. Few of us will forget the heartfelt address he gave at the Choir lunch at the conclusion of the Llangollen Eisteddfod. It was

peppered with reminiscences, anecdotes and razor sharp asides with his co-conspirators Terry, Bill and Elfed, what a debt we owe them and what a legacy they have bestowed upon us. Berwyn was an exceptional man, a man for all occasions. Calon Lan Yn Llawn Daioni – A Pure Heart, Full of Goodness.” Jim

At the time of Berwyn’s small family gathering on the day of his Committal Service, when numbers were restricted due to the Covid pandemic, the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir would gather on Zoom and sing Gwa Haddiod and pay tribute to their Life President.

Margaret had taken his ceremonial badge to the undertaker expecting they might lay it in close proximity, but they had attached it so perfectly to his casket. We were not alone that day, his choir were with us, and he would be so thankful for their act of kindness for he never forgot their friendship and the immeasurable pleasure they had brought into his life.

There are many beautiful tributes to Berwyn from his friends in the Hong Kong choir and it would be impossible to include them all but reasonable to refer to a few:

“Graced with a dry wit and sardonic humour, he was invariably good-natured and gracious and proved himself to be one of the most popular people I have ever known.” Elfed

“He was a man of great energy with a passion for Welsh music and singing. He had a nose for a choir opportunity and fixed some remarkable gigs....

Still going strong after 40 great years, the Choir Berwyn likened to a family and that owes him so much, we will miss him enormously. Wonderful man – tragic loss.” Mike

“In the early days when I joined the choir, Berwyn gave me a great deal of encouragement, and gave me the music for my first ever solo in Welsh, (Can yr Arad Goch) and the chance to perform at the Ball. He attended my wedding in Cardiff Castle

and gave a blessing at the reception, and (of course) one of his inimitable speeches, An inspiration and a true gentleman.” Neil.

“In these strangest of times, when every day-every hour -seems to report legions of deaths, it is a measure of the man that Berwyn’s passing, this single dark sadness, should affect so many of us and personally and deeply.

By creating a choir Berwyn began a fellowship wider and stronger than he, or anyone else, could possibly have imagined. Berwyn’s journey was always predominately sociable, always set down in the landscape of ‘hwyl’.

Sometimes it is overlooked that for the first seven years or so the burden of making the music - and truly Herculean it was - Berwyn bore more or less alone. With little formal musical experience, he carried this responsibility with vigour and great humour achieving the choir’s survival in a city renowned for its various and competing distractions.” John



The Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir sing at the St David's Day Ball 1978.



*Mary Bewley from Anglesey with her daughters.
President of the St David's Society 1977*



Berwyn succeeds Mary Bewley as President of the St David's Society 1977.



Sir Murray MacLehose at the St David's Ball 1997.



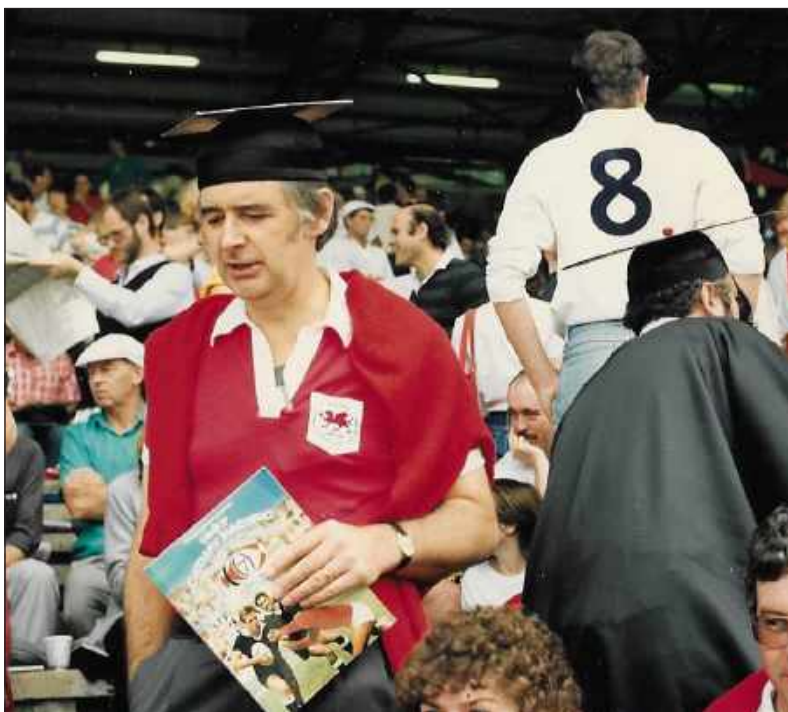
The four Society Presidents. England Ireland Scotland Wales.



The early HKW MVC singing in the tunnel, 1978.



The HKW MVC singing in the Landmark Shopping Centre.



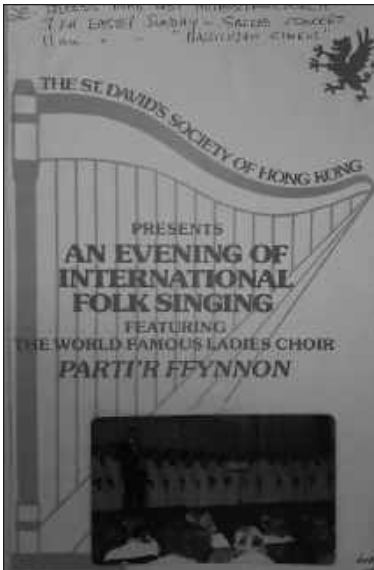
Berwyn at the Rugby Sevens.



The HKW MVC Choir at the Rugby Sevens



Berwyn introducing Parti'r Ffynnon



Lok Yue Hall April 1982 with Parti'r Ffynnon.



Concert at Union church, Kennedy Road in aid of Oxfam's East African Disaster Appeal



The first Welsh Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Edward Youde from Penarth, 1982



Opening of the Prince of Wales Pub – a family occasion.



Sir Edward Youde attends St. David's Day Ball, 1983



*Max Boyce in Concert at the A.C. Hall
Hong Kong, 1982.*

*Noson Llawen - Berwyn plays the saw with
Max Boyce present.*



Max Boyce approves of Berwyn's performance.



*Berwyn commended for his humour at the
Harry Secombe Concert.1983.*



*Harry Secombe concert at the City Hall
featuring the HKW MVC 1983.*



Berwyn Evans: filling a musical gap.

A choral calling

Philip O'Mullan

COR TRAEATH, the Welsh male choir that won the choir section at the 1989 National Eisteddfod of Wales, is in town this week to perform several concerts.

The choir was invited to Hong Kong by the St David's Society of Hong Kong and the territory's own 40-strong Welsh Male Voice Choir.

"We've found over the years that we [the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir] have been able to fill a gap in Hong Kong's musical needs by providing informal, and the very best of formal, singing," said Berwyn Evans, president and founder conductor of the Hong Kong choir. "Cor Traeth is a very accomplished choir and it's great to have it perform in Hong Kong."

Sponsorship for the choir's visit was initially difficult to find, but was eventually offered by three Japanese companies — Toyota, Sharp-Roxy and Hoya Lens — all of whom have investments in North Wales, where Cor Traeth is based.

The choir will perform at lunchtime on November 23 at St John's Cathedral and November 25 at The Landmark. Evening concerts will take place on November 25 at the China Fleet Club, and on November 26 at City Hall.

A Choral Calling.

Singers return home from visit to a colony of 'incredible contrasts'

Members of the choir visit a Buddhist temple in the heart of Chinese Hong Kong.

Members of Cor Traeth and members of the Hong Kong Male Voice Choir after concert at the City Hall.

Hong Kong visit

By Dyfed Estmards

COR TRAEATH returned last week from Hong Kong where they had a most welcome visit to a temple where they performed.

"Because they are very busy, they have been unable to visit the temple for some time," said Berwyn Evans, president and founder conductor of the choir.

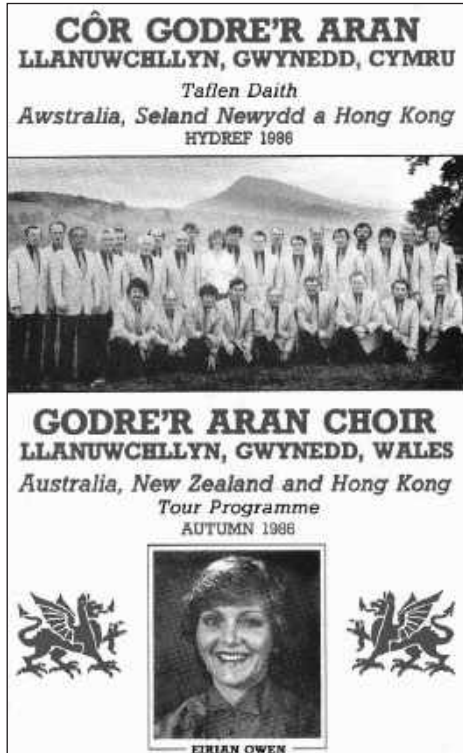
"They didn't know what it was going to be like, but it was a most enjoyable visit."

COR TRAEATH were invited to Hong Kong by the St David's Society of Hong Kong and the territory's own 40-strong Welsh Male Voice Choir.

"The choir was invited to Hong Kong by the St David's Society of Hong Kong and the territory's own 40-strong Welsh Male Voice Choir."

They will perform at lunchtime on November 23 at St John's Cathedral and November 25 at The Landmark. Evening concerts will take place on November 25 at the China Fleet Club, and on November 26 at City Hall.

Cor y Traeth visit Hong Kong and sing with HKWMVC at the City Hall.



Godre'r Aran.



*Eirian Owen, Musical Director and accompanist, Tom Evans, baritone soloist,
attend the HKWMVC Ball 1990.*



Tom Evans and Eirian Owen.



The Welsh girls at the St David's Ball.



The Choir sing with Joe Loss and his band.



Singing for Lord Chris Patten and Lady Lavender Patten at Government House in 1997.



Choir Concerts at the Ambassador Hotel Bangkok.



Choir at the airport to go to Bangkok.

The Montgomeryshire Man



Paying respects at the cemetery in Bangkok.



Bridge over the River Kwai.



Dinner with Sir David Putnam in Bangkok.



The Oak Hall at the Cathedral where the Choir Rehearse

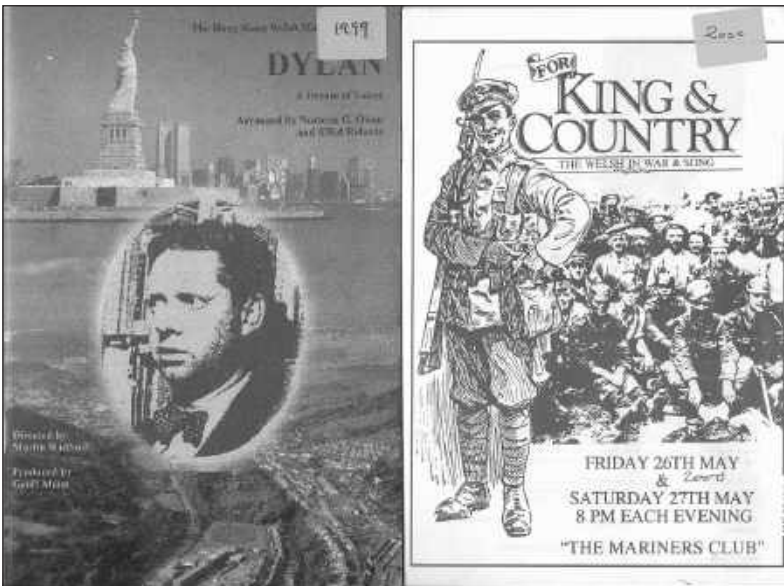


Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir Poster. Singing Weekly compiled by Mike Benson.

HONG KONG WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR PUB & PULPIT. 1988



The cast for the Show.



Programmes for the Shows.



Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir Sing at the Albert Hall.



Choir come to the Llangollen Eisteddfod The 40th Year of the HKWMVC (sing at Gresford Church)

CHAPTER 8

Hong Kong Choir reunions - 1995 onwards

*“There are friends, there is family,
and then there are friends that become family”
(unknown quote)*



On their return to the UK, Berwyn and Margaret were made aware that others had continued their friendships with a recently formed Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir, ‘Exiles Reunion’.

These friendships, forged in Hong Kong in the early years have prevailed through times of joy and sadness, laughter and tears. The annual reunions cement these relationships and continue today. The years have taken some, and there are others not so well. Berwyn saw the Hong Kong friends as family and made every effort to keep in touch; just the mention of a name would bring back so many memories of all that connected them.

Bill and Sylvia Evans with Irvine and Averill Rogers had the inspiration to begin the weekend reunions. They were joined by Bryn and Margaret Roberts, Ted and Pat Wiggins, Derek and Vera Thomas and others from their days with the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir. Berwyn and Margaret went to the second of these reunions when several couples and choir members, numbering about 30, were gathered. It was held in The Feathers Hotel in Ledbury and The Feathers Hotel Ludlow, with a year in Bath, and now for several years at the Royal Hotel, Ross-on-Wye.

Grahame and Cherie Dawson arrange the Ross-on-Wye reunions. Following these weekends there has been the invitation to the lovely home of Tudor and Coleen nearby for coffee and more chat!

Berwyn always took to the reunions his vast collection of choir archives for people to look back over concerts and shows in which they had taken part. The weekend often coincided with a Welsh rugby game and the sense of fun and family on these occasions cannot be over emphasised.

At a celebratory dinner in the evening there is fun entertainment. One early year the choir, who had neither forgiven nor forgotten Berwyn's inability to play the saw, were prepared to give him one more chance! Sylvia came armed with 'saw and bow' and presented him the challenge. Berwyn, being neither conciliatory nor retiring, was only too happy to foist himself upon them. Then, with remembered humorous script, and to the delight of all, he managed an occasional few notes to make a tune! He was presented with a certificate signed by all present. Another delightful entertainment was the jester's hat which would be passed around and was a compulsory accessory for anyone who wanted to hold the floor. There continues to be no lack of talent and story-telling on these occasions.

At the end of the evening the men come together to sing, often with Jan at the piano who had been one of their Hong Kong pianists. They make an acceptable rendition of most of the songs and hymns practised over the years.

One year there was a dear friend struggling with terminal ill health and so enjoying the camaraderie and encouragement. Over the years the choir has sadly lost several choristers and so they have become occasions of honouring good friendships and continued support. Bryn Roberts who was an admirable raconteur on these occasions once quoted,

“I no doubt deserved my enemies, but I don’t believe I deserved my friendships” by Walt Whitman, the American poet, essayist and journalist of the 18th century.

It is poignant that many years later, in spite of his failing health, Berwyn insisted that he must make the journey to attend Bryn’s funeral.

It is above all a tribute to the ethos of the choir that not only have they taken the sound of Wales to the Far East, but they have become a community of sincere friendship and cooperation that lasts a lifetime.

The reunions continue to be a valuable lifeline with the choir in Hong Kong. The faithful HKWMVC secretary makes an effort to be with them at the annual reunions.

Several of the wives have lost their partners of many years and are thankful for these occasions that enable them to still be part of something that meant so much to their husbands. One wife, in the early years of the choir, when back in the UK wrote the following at the passing of her husband,

“I wish I could express how the children and I felt when Berwyn phoned to tell us about the song for Cliff in Hong Kong during the Rugby 7s and the most touching letter and generous cheque for St. Margaret’s Somerset Hospice in Cliff’s name from you all. Not only were we touched by your kindness, but parents, brother and family and members of the Taunton Deane Male voice Choir were all very moved and proud. When Cliff could talk, he often spoke of the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice choir and it is a wonder the CD is not worn out. It was played so much before he died and

so much since he died. It is very, very special to us all and will always be special.”

This story can be repeated and shows how the joy of singing such beautiful compositions, whether songs or hymns, affects the soul. Attending the funeral services of choristers, there is always reference to the part the choir has played in their lives, and to support that memory, a favourite choir hymn is sung. On the occasion of one chorister’s service the choir tie was draped over the lectern.



Outside The Feathers Hotel at the HKWMC Reunion.



Playing the saw.



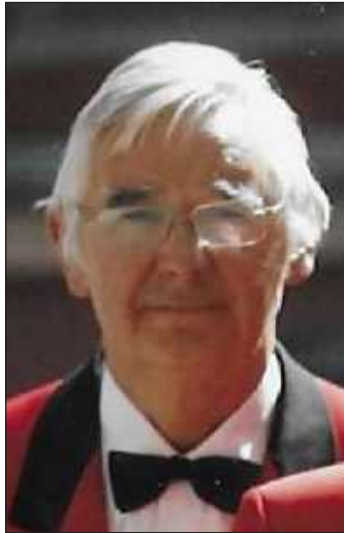
Certificate for playing the saw.

CHAPTER 9

London Welsh Male Voice Choir Berwyn the Compère.

*“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,
as good stewards of God’s varied grace:”*

1 Peter 4:10



This is the continuing story of the God-given gifts nurtured through the generations as Berwyn compères for the London Welsh Male Voice Choir for almost 20 years.

It is evident the love of Welsh male voice harmony and Berwyn's ability to conduct was inherited largely from his paternal grandfather, in the village of Penybontfawr and realised in the founding of the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir. In the London Welsh Male Voice Choir he had more opportunity to use his gift of public speaking and ability to hold an audience. This would be an inheritance from his maternal grandfather, the Revd John Parry of Llangollen, Meifod and Sarnau. It was said of Revd John Parry, *'he had a sharp sense of humour which he reigned in so as not to bring dishonour to the pulpit.'*

Although Berwyn felt no calling to the ministry, he certainly had inherited an engaging sense of humour, that would delight the listeners and make him a very favoured compère.

Berwyn's return to the UK with Aoki to work on the Jubilee Line brought the family to the suburb of Orpington when he would find his choral home with the London Welsh Male Voice Choir. He officially became a member in August 1995 under the Musical Director Dr Haydn James. The LWMVC was founded in 1902 and with just a few broken years through WW1 and WW2 the choir was fast approaching its centenary year. Berwyn for the next 25 years took his place in the bottom bass section to share in its exciting and impressive concerts and concert tours. The choir numbers about 120 choristers and generally around 80 upwards on stage. It is a convivial community that has many social occasions and tours within the UK and abroad that include invitations to wives and families.

Berwyn felt at home among them in London to enjoy the camaraderie of fellow countrymen and others and to be able to speak some Welsh.

It gave him great pleasure when he was invited to compère the concerts, with the opportunity to share his knowledge and

love of all that is best in Welsh music, hymns and verse. Often, with a twinkle in his eye, he would allude to the finest of all being found only in Montgomeryshire! Always a muffled jeer from the assembled choristers!

Whatever the occasion or audience, Berwyn's energy and approach remained the same. He had his own relaxed inimitable style, being pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the performance, and he always spent many hours in preparation. On arrival at the venue he diligently researched the area and aimed to meet those involved in the concert in order to represent them well. This would include the promoters of the concert, soloists and representatives of charities. Almost all LWMVC concerts are done for charitable causes and Berwyn felt the privilege of empathising with them. Over the years he met the most interesting people and was richly rewarded introducing the audience to the musical and poetic culture of the country he loved.

It would be impossible to record all the concerts Berwyn attended and those he had opportunity to compère but ones that have particular interest are included to give an overall picture of his involvement the 25 years.

It was said of Eric Liddell (Chariots of Fire), the devout Scottish Christian of Missionary parents and British Olympic gold medallist in 1924, that his sister chastised him for spending too much time on the track and not the mission field. Eric responded, "God made me run and he made me fast and I feel His pleasure when I run!" The rest is history, although he did finally die in China where he was imprisoned for the crime of practising his Christian faith. Berwyn seemingly came alive when compèring and the words would flow as fast as Eric Liddell could run! It seems evident from this account that all who use their God-given gifts feel the pleasure of the Creator.

It is interesting Berwyn sat with the producer of 'Chariots of Fire', David Puttnam, on one of the HKW MVC visits to Bangkok some years ago.

THE LONDON WELSH MALE VOICE CHOIR JOURNEY BEGINS

An early invitation was to the 'Tour de France' when the choir was invited to make up a UK choir to sing at the new stadium, Stade de Paris, built for the inaugural Five Nations England v France. Interestingly again, the choir were asked to do a concert at the Scottish Kirk, just off the Champs Elyse where Eric Liddell preached his famous sermon on the 1924 Olympic Games! The church was being threatened with closure unless they could raise £500,000. It had welcomed David Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson on the same day during peace negotiations in World War 1 and hosted Her Majesty the Queen when she laid the new foundation stone in 1957. It was the site of the planning of the escape routes by "The Tartan Pimpernel" during the Second World War.

Dr Haydn James, the Musical Director, and Berwyn as Compère soon developed a pleasurable working rapport. In an early encounter at a concert in a church in Maidenhead, with Berwyn as Compère, the smart charismatic Haydn James was subjected to his humour! He and the guest artist, standing in the front and back to the audience, showed some considerable loss of hair! Berwyn quipped, "*guess which one uses the Toni!*" (a hair perming product). Haydn, never to take offence, often good naturedly admonished Berwyn and following some extended introduction would say; "*well thank you Berwyn for shortening the winter!*"

It was never Berwyn's intention to intrude on the programme but to take again the analogy of Eric Liddell, he would sometimes be so in his stride that he overran the finishing line. No one minded, they were happily entertained, the race already won and the concerts always a success – often a standing ovation!

**SOME OF THE CONCERT VENUES BERWYN WOULD
SING AND COMPÈRE.**

Berwyn appreciated every opportunity to sing and compère with the choir, but the bi-annual Festival of Male Choirs at the Albert Hall excited him most. He was evangelistic in planning who he could invite to enjoy this experience, which he considered would touch Heaven! It invariably did! Many friends have shared a box in the beautiful concert hall and felt the ‘tingle down the spine’ of such a glorious sound.

Berwyn’s first time was in 1996 when the concert was named, ‘Beautiful the Song’. Dr Haydn James was the conductor and Rosalind Jones the pianist with Cliff Morgan as the compère. They were joined by the Band of the Welsh Guards and Aberhodda and District Male Voice Choir, Cor Meibion Caron, GKN Sankey Male Voice Choir, Huntingdon MVC, Melyncryddan Male Voice Choir, Cor Meibion éMynydd Mawr MVC, Llanelli MVC, Barry MVC, Huntington MVC, Snowdon Colliery MVC, Rushmore Oddfellows, Laudenbach MVC, Sheffield MVC and Rhayader and District MVC.

Another early concert was The Mencap Jubilee Concert 1996 held at Cardiff Castle, when the choir sang with other male voice choirs and a rhythm band. This concert was recorded for ‘Songs of Praise’.

When Berwyn compèred at Holy Trinity Church Cookham in 1996 a thank you note applauded the evening and added *‘if the LWMVC ever return it could only be with you as Compère.’* It seems Berwyn duly obliged and compèred a concert for Holy Trinity Church Choir, ‘Pipe Dream’, of light music for a summer evening to raise funds for their organ.

St James’s Piccadilly, designed and built by Sir Christopher Wren, Central London, was an interesting venue at which Berwyn compèred for a concert given in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust.

Another in Grimsby at Central when the LWMVC were the guests of Orpheus Male Voice Choir in 1997 and they would return to Grimsby for another concert when Berwyn had opportunity to compère.

A 'Gala Concert' 1998 was held in the Elizabeth Hall at the Royal Festival Hall in the presence of HRH Princess Dina of Jordan in aid of 'The Peace and Prosperity Trust'. This organisation aims to raise funds for the relief of poverty in that part of the world. The concert was compèred by Cliff Morgan, the rugby legend.

Berwyn compered at the Hawth Theatre, Carwley, 1999, and on other occasions. On one of these occasions it was his wife Margaret's birthday and he encouraged the full auditorium to sing Happy Birthday. Berwyn would enjoy to connect with the audience and celebrate their particular special occasions.

The City Temple, Holborn via Duct 2000 was the venue for a concert 'London Voices' when the London Welsh Chorale, Gwalia choir and the London Welsh Male Voice Choir came together, bringing their own sound and repertoire. Berwyn was the compère.

He also compèred the concert at the Royal Chapel, Windsor Great Park arranged by a chorister who had a position there. The choir soloists were Geraint Lewis (tenor) and Iorwerth Pritchard (bass).

A few years later the LWMVC sang at the Royal Albert Hall 2002 in a 'Bryn Terfel Concert' featuring Catrin Finch, Rhys Meirion, Sinfonia Cymru with Gareth Jones the Welsh conductor of orchestral and choral music. This was an electrifying concert and feast of the best of Welsh artists.

St John's Smith Square, which is described as a masterpiece of Baroque architecture and one of London's finest concert halls, was the venue for a concert in aid of 'The Teenage Cancer Trust'. The soloists were the tenor Wynne Evans and soprano Susanna Tudor-Thomas, who had some years earlier won the Young Singer of the year competition at the Welsh Trust. Cliff Morgan was the

Compère and Berwyn, in his term as Chairman of the choir, made introductions. He received a note of thanks from the organisers saying, *“may I congratulate you and thank you for delighting the audience so magnificently once again at St Johns Smith Square....”*

Another great London venue Berwyn has compèred is St. Clements Danes Central Church on The Strand, the Church of the Royal Air force. The concert was in aid of The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund presented by 1475 (Dulwich) Squadron Air Training Corps.

At a concert held at The Birmingham Symphony Hall one Christmas, when Berwyn as compère he made his usual diligent research and discovered that the Town Hall Memorial Stone was made of ‘Anglesey Marble’. It was quarried in North Wales and shipped 80 miles by sea, then 100 miles by canal to Birmingham! This, he said, added to his assumption that all Birmingham people were 90% Welsh because their water comes from Wales!

He compèred a concert Cadogan Hall (2005) with guest artist Emily Rowley Jones, another finalist in the London Welsh Young Singer of the Year competition held at the Welsh Trust. Another concert at Cadogan Hall included the three Welsh choirs, the LWMVC, London Welsh Chorale and Gwalia, in aid of the London Welsh School in its Jubilee Year and The London Welsh Trust. Guto Harri was the Compère for the evening.

The guest artist at the concert at Ferneham Hall, Fareham 2007 was Sian James the Welsh folk singer. Sian was accomplished on the harp, piano and violin and had a determination to resurrect traditional Welsh folk music. She comes from a small village in Powys and was raised in a Welsh-speaking family steeped in the tradition of music and poetry. She was a student at Llanfair Caereinion High School just over the hill from Llanfyllin High school of Berwyn’s youth, with whom they are fierce competitors!

A concert at the Snape Malting’s Theatre in Suffolk in 2008 gave Berwyn opportunity to maximise on a Welsh rugby win that day!

In his words: -

“There is power but controlled power.

There is movement, restrained when needed but potent,

Quiet passages but with deliberate precision

Finals with singing which ignites the passion of all!

Yes! The Welsh Rugby slam was quite a day!

It may well be that our programme this evening will reflect the memory, dreams, victory even! But with our best endeavours in this magnificent place. In succession we take you to Wales”

The Chinese Information Centre celebrated their 25th Anniversary at the Shaw Theatre 2008 with Berwyn as compère. He learned some phrases in Mandarin and had done similarly for the Comrades Choir tour to China a few years previously.

A very special occasion was in 2010 at the St. Bartholomew and All Saints Church, Royal Wootton Bassett. This occasion was arranged as ‘A Gift to Wootton Bassett Concert’, as a thank you to the people of the town for the tributes they have shown to service men and women who had lost their lives in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. They would line the street as the corteges passed through the town from RAF Lyncham to the John Radcliffe Hospital to be received by their families. The concert brought particular praise with Musical Director Edward Rhys Harry, Annabel Thwaite on piano, Matthew Jones the violin and Michael (Mitch) Jones, a fellow chorister on the trumpet. Mitch had served in the Welsh Guards for 23 years. Berwyn as compère was commended for *“bringing the whole show together”* He pointed out particularly the words of the hymn ‘Mansions of the Lord’, taken from John Chapter 14, Verse 2.

“To fallen soldiers let us sing.

Where no rockets fly nor bullets wing.

Our broken brothers let us bring

To the mansions of the Lord.”

Berwyn also referred to the words of the beautiful song, ‘Y Tangnefeddwyr’ translated ‘The Peacemakers’ and the verse in

Matthew's gospel, Chapter 5 Verse 9, 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God'. This was written by a Welsh poet and avowed pacifist born in Pembrokeshire. Some of the words are: Gwyn eu byd tu hwnt i glyw Tangnefeddwyr plant i Dduw (they are blessed beyond hearing, peacemakers, children of God).

A concert was held at the Alexandra Palace 2011 to raise funds for the restoration of the grand organ. The LWMVC were joined by the 'Kaos Signing Choir', part of a Youth Arts Charity for the young with special needs. Their joyful performance included some who were deaf and their musical response to the rhythm only felt through movement around them.

In 2012 in support of Celtic studies at Jesus College, Oxford the choir held a concert in the Town Hall.

At Kings College Taunton the guest artists with the LWMVC were Llinos Mai and Nerys Richards, on cello and piano. Llinos and Nerys would appear later as guest artists with the choir at St David's Cathedral with Berwyn again as compère. He always took a keen interest and appreciation of young Welsh talent and enjoyed their involvement.

Berwyn opened a Concert at Oundle School Chapel with: -

"Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the Concert.

Last week I visited Woburn Abbey and noticed the portrait of the 3rd Earl Russell, the Welsh Philosopher and Mathematician Bertrand Russell. Of his many challenging quotes he said, "Much of what is greatest in human achievement involves some element of intoxication, some sweeping away of prudence and passion." We are pleased to bring you, without a trace of intoxication, a programme which has an element of prudence to delight and the latent passion possibly to excite!"

Another example of Berwyn's efforts to engage the audience was at St Lawrence Parish Church Ludlow, celebrating the Ludlow Festival's 50th Season with Rhys Meirion as soloist. He opened with: -

“Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen welcome to this choral evening in the golden year of the Ludlow Festival. We are honoured to share with you the 12th century setting with its church and castle. It was for the benefit of this place the Festival was first witnessed in 1953. This is a border church in a border place and once said possibly, ‘Welsh in spirit but English in language.’ The Comrades Rugby Choir had performed there some years earlier for Ludlow Rugby Club.

He compèred the Concert at High Street Methodist Church in Harpenden 2014 which he recognised as ‘the home of the fly half factory,’ Owen Farrell and his father Andy Farrell of English rugby fame! He went on to introduce the hymn ‘Gwinllan a roddwyd i’*m gofal*’ with: -

“The words here have Wales compared to a vineyard that deserves to be protected for the sake of the generation. A very sound concept by the poet Saunders Lewis, most prominent in Welsh English literature 1893, and calls on his countrymen to stand in the breach and defend Wales from the materialism that is destroying the country.”

That very day was the birth of his last grandchild, Tobias Berwyn Clive, who could conceivably grow to play for England, his father being a supporter, but whatever else, to seek the values instilled in his Welsh heritage!

A ‘Carnival of Music held at Westminster Hall’ 2012, celebrated the Diamond Celebrations of Her Majesty the Queen. It staged with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. The LWMVC, Côr Meibion and Gwalia represented the Welsh community in London along with Commonwealth artists and the support of Lord Roberts of Llandudno, Huw Edwards, Terry Waite and Baroness Floella.

A very major concert for the LWMVC was ‘Wales Choir of the World’ 2012 held at The Royal Festival Hall. This was a massed male voice concert drawn from five continents to perform a new work, ‘Heroes Journey’, commissioned from the famous Welsh

composer Karl Jenkins, with words written by Grahame Davies (a prominent Welsh author). It represented the coming together of the Nations in competitive friendship for the Olympic Games. Also sung was the recent composition, “Can You Hear Me”, written by the LWMVC Musical Director Edward Rhys Harry, to commemorate the United Nations Truce Resolution. This dates to ancient Greece when warring city nations agreed a truce for safe passage before and during the Games. Interestingly, Karl Jenkins and Edward Rhys Harry both come from Penclawd in South Wales.

The choir were delighted to be invited to sing the Olympic Hymn at the closing ceremony at the Olympic Stadium. They had a good view of the ceremony and of the presentation, ‘A Symphony of British Music’, but also their largest audience of over a billion people worldwide!

Berwyn felt the privilege of singing with the LWMVC at The Cenotaph for Remembrance Sunday, with the Military Bands. He was mindful of the sacrifices in both World Wars and his father’s experience in the First World War.

He always enjoyed an opportunity to compère concerts for ‘The Wooden Spoon Society’. This is a charitable organisation started in 1983, following a rugby weekend in Dublin, after England were defeated and a wooden spoon presented to a group of English Fans. He compèred their 25th Anniversary Concert in Cardiff, delighting the audience with his lively introductions and knowledge of the game. His faith in the Welsh team never wavered and he would defend whatever their performance. Following yet another defeat he would respond, “*Well, of course Wales taught the world rugby!*”

Berwyn was especially at home when concerts were performed in Wales and the chance to be bilingual. He and the choir would know to give of their absolute best being in the home of such excellence through competition at Eisteddfodau etc. A St David’s Day Concert was hosted by Shrewsbury Welsh Society with John Peleg Williams conductor, the Beaumaris brass band and Berwyn as Compère.

This concert was on the border with the area of Berwyn's home in Llansantffraid and brought old friends from memorable times. He referred to the English poet A.E Houseman who wrote, 'The Shropshire Lad' and presented his own version of a Welsh Love Poem which he enjoyed adapting for the audience and venue!

“Were all the hills of Shropshire
In one huge mountain PILED
Black Hill, Hopton, Titterstone, Clee, LongMynd, Wenlock
Edge
and even Wrekin in the distance
I'd climb them all to reach you...
Oh, how I love you.
Were all the rivers of Shropshire joined,
The Tene, the Corve, Luce, Clun, the Rea
And (from Montgomeryshire) the Vyrnwy, tributary of the
Severn in flood
I'd swim them all to reach you...
Oh, how I love you.
Were all the forts of Shropshire in one great fortress linked
Stokestey, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Whittington and of course,
the mighty Ludlow Castle, all in one
Great Fortress built, and all in flames
I'd fight the flames; I'd jump them all to reach you.
Oh, how I love you!
See you on Saturday at Castle Square
.....IF IT'S NOT RAINING!”

Letters were received from local friends saying how much they had enjoyed the Concert and him as Compère.

Berwyn compèred a concert at the North Wales Theatre in Llandudno with guest artists Elinor Bennet, Eleri Owen and Aled

Jones. There was a letter of appreciation saying, "*the programme was truly thrilling and the wonderful atmosphere created is the 'talk of the town' here in North Wales.*" Accolades were given to individuals and Berwyn described as the "*incomparable compère!*" which was a title awarded him by many!

At the London Welsh Trust in London, it was a thrill to meet again with 'Côr Gode'r Aran' and Eirian Owen, the musical director and pianist, and Tom Evans baritone, who came out to Hong Kong in earlier years as guests of the St David's Ball. Reading in the programme the concert venues of Côr Gode'r Aran it mentions they performed from the prestigious, like Perth Concert hall New Zealand, to Llansantffraid Village Hall! Not very different to Berwyn's experience of involvements in events in the mill-house in Llansantffraid to then perform years later in several countries including at 'The Sydney Opera House'!

The London Welsh Trust held a St David's Day celebration in 2005 with the LWMVC and the popular men's group, 'Only Men Aloud' with musical director Timothy Rhys Evans. Berwyn was the compère for a really memorable evening.

The 'Welsh Singer of the Year' competition is held at The Welsh Trust when Geraint Lewis, member of the choir would scour the Eisteddfodau for possible contestants. Several have gone to greater heights and sung with the LWMVC. Berwyn had the honour of presenting an award to the winner in his year as President.

St David's Church in Neath in 2018 was one of the last concerts for Berwyn to sing. He and Margaret stayed with Margaret's cousin Tony and his wife Anne, the Staff Nurse who had introduced them over 50 years earlier and Margaret in turn had introduced Anne to Tony. Interestingly it is the church that Katherine Jenkins attended in her youth. A letter of appreciation from her was on the notice board, saying how she had benefited from being part of the church in her growing up years and how her faith is important to her today.

SINGING ON THE PITCH

Berwyn sang with the choir at Wembley Stadium and many more times at the Millennium Stadium. Dr Haydn James is the undisputed master of these events and has conducted several choirs over the years who have had the opportunity to appear. Berwyn was so thankful to Haydn arranging for son Peter and rugby enthusiast grandson John to be able to watch the choirs sing as the teams arrived at the stadium. This is now a precious memory of the wonderful times watching rugby together in Cardiff. A report in the Western Mail: -

“The All Blacks listened for half an hour to the sound of the masses led by The London Welsh Male Voice Choir. “Fantastic!” John Hart, the New Zealand coach enthused. “Listen to the singing. Those are rugby people. Its why a lot of you play the game.”

The Guardian. *“It was a marvellous occasion. The singing of the London Welsh Male Voice Choir and the roar of a capacity crowd brought goose bumps to 78,000 throats.”*

The Telegraph. *“The pre match atmosphere was sensational- Gareth Thomas confessed to being in tears in the changing room before the game listening to the singing. The grizzled veteran Zinzan Brooke admitted he was moved like never before. “It was awesome, something I’ll never forget.”*

CATHEDRALS

Berwyn especially enjoyed to compère in these magnificent venues and had opportunity at Guilford, St David’s, Peterborough, Ely, Gloucester, Hereford, Lincoln, Norwich, Rochester, Worcester, St Albans, Romsey Abbey, Southwark, Llandaff, Winchester, Romsey Abbey, Canterbury and more.

An interesting story following a concert at Hereford Cathedral, 2004 when he had his car boot broken into and the theft of the suitcase and choir jacket! This was distressing because of the loss

of personal items but most especially the jacket and his precious compère notes! It was some months later the jacket was returned by a very circuitous route. At the concert were a couple previously met in Grindelwald and on recognising Berwyn in chatting, gave him their telephone number. This was later found in his jacket, thrown over a hedge into some person's garden. They contacted the number and the couple directed them to Berwyn, and so the jacket found its way home! The lady who pursued the owner did so because she found a Bible amongst the contents and was encouraged to do the right thing!

Durham Cathedral was a special concert for Berwyn to compère on behalf of the charity Aquila Way for the homeless and organised by the daughter of a chorister. The charity's vision is to fulfil God's heart as expressed in Isaiah 61 v 4 "to rebuild the ancient ruins..." and Aquila Way to see broken communities restored. This selfless daughter was suffering with cancer and died soon after. Guest artist was Bradley Creswick, leader of the Northern Sinfonia, a brilliant violinist and fiddle player. The concert was described as an extraordinary success with a standing ovation and raised £10,000 for the charity.

At Canterbury Cathedral the Concert was reported in one newspaper as follows: - "*They stood in their red ranks before an enraptured audience, like mountain of men and filled Canterbury Cathedral with resounding 'hwyl'. the London Welsh Male Voice Choir was a few more than a hundred strong for their performance...and they proved once again that whatever the origin of the song it acquires a unique resonance which the Welsh bring. As if drawing inspiration from the magnificent setting, the power and the glory was evident from the first, as they concluded with an 'Amen; which rumbled like a coal train through the valleys.'*"

Berwyn was Compère and commended for his '*gentle humour and teasing anecdotes*'. Rhys Merion was the soloist on his first visit to Canterbury.

The last time for Berwyn to sing at Canterbury Cathedral was in 2019. Berwyn wasn't then compering but a group in the audience were eager to meet with him. They were from the Darvell Bruderhof Community in Robertsbridge. Berwyn had some years earlier arranged for the choir to perform a concert in Robertsbridge where they enjoyed their generous hospitality and tour of the grounds and factory where they make beautiful classroom and play equipment and garden table and chairs. Berwyn had compèred this concert with the words: -

“to remind you of the words of Johanne Sebastian Bach, ‘the object of all music is to glorify God and if it were not so music would not exist only noise and discord’. This is why we are here tonight to join you in harmony.....”

The choir joined with the Darvell Community choir to sing The Lord's Prayer.

CONCERT TOURS

Concert Tours were arranged by the Concert Tour Committee in the choir and were combined with enjoying the tourist attractions over the week away.

Barbados 1997

This first tour for Berwyn and Margaret was to Barbados in 1997 for a 'Celtic Festival.' Dr Haydn James was conductor, Rosalind Jones the pianist and Berwyn the compère. The guest artist was Rhys Meirion, the Welsh tenor, having just retired his Headship of Ysgol Pentrecelyn near Ruthin, to study opera at the 'Guildhall of Music and Drama' in London. There would be several more concerts over the years with Rhys Merion and his wonderful tenor voice. Concerts were held in St Patricks Cathedral, Frank Collymore Hall, Methodist Church and a Gamanfu Ganu and Celtic evening. Berwyn most notably endeared and entertained not only the audience but choir colleagues with his amusing and relatable humour.

Wales and the West 1998

This first tour gave plenty of opportunity to visit areas and places of interest such as Gwili Railway, a visit to Laugharne and the boathouse of Dylan Thomas. Berwyn compèred concerts in Tregaron, organised by Caron Male Voice Choir, and at Cardigan and Carmarthen.

A very kind note to Berwyn was received from the Choir Chairman Geraint Hopkins,

“A sterling performance throughout the week, whether in a concert or at a Dinner. Hong Kong’s loss is certainly our gain. Many congratulations and many thanks.”

Tour of Boston 1999

This successful tour joined with the Saengerfest Male Voice Choir at certain venues. One to remember was at Malden first Baptist Church in a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit and the choir in the red jackets having earlier been warned by Saengerfest that, *“we shoot red coats here!!”* They appeared in the second half in shirt sleeves for coolness and Berwyn responded, *“we’ve returned in camouflage to avoid being fired upon by unfriendly musketeers!”* The near 1,000-capacity audience enjoyed a marvellous occasion.

Then at Regis College of Fine Arts, people enjoyed Berwyn’s local humour, referring to the city and all the construction holes in the road, of which there were many, as the *wholly, holy, holey city!* A letter of appreciation came from the Saengerfest Chairman saying, *“on listening to you on a CD in the car I was laughing so much I had to pullover for fear of being arrested for drunken driving!”* Berwyn enjoyed nothing more than lifting the audience with his humour.

He also received commendation from the Choir Chairman for contributing to making the tour an outstanding success! *“I must thank and congratulate you on you on a fine effort indeed The Saengerfest concert chorus and the concert audience enjoyed your work and humour.*

All Bostonians (except the die-hard revolutionaries with musket) were fortunate to hear your Welsh lit”.

Tour of Munster 2000

Berwyn compèred on this tour when the choir sang at Limerick, Cork and other areas with opportunity to visit Waterford, Aran and the islands of Moher, Bunratty Castle and to kiss the blarney stone! A story of this time was of Berwyn buying a poster of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt as Margaret was leading a bible study on the subject. They had it steam framed and gave it to the church Coffee Lounge. Years later on a Baltic cruise, they visited the Hermitage Museum at St Petersburg. They were about to leave when picking up a brochure discovered this amazing painting was there to see and the meaningful connection with it.

Berwyn immersed himself in the choral, social and administrative life of the choir and was appointed Choir Chairman in 2001 which he held for three years and included the tour to Hungary and Italy in the Centenary year.

Tour of Hungary 2001

Hungary was a particularly interesting tour considering its troubled past with the Revolution in 1956 and the beautiful city of Budapest; Buda one side of the river and Pest the other. There were three main concerts, at Mathias Church, Hungary’s most famous and important church in Budapest; the Gardonyl Theatre in the University and Baroque City of Egar; and the beautiful Concert Hall in Budapest with the Pest Symphony orchestra and the Local Movendo Mixed Choir. This was a very successful tour with Berwyn again compèring and Dr Haydn James conducting. These tours offer opportunity for fun and memorable is the time the choir tried their skill at synchronised swimming in the hotel pool!!

Italy 2002

The choir stayed in Genoa for the centenary concerts and performed in Genoa, Albissola and St. Margherita. They visited the vineyard and village Stefano Belbo, home of poet Cesare Pavese. Here was a re-enactment of the situation between the two brothers on either side of the civil war, which destroyed the family. At the restaurant for lunch they delighted the restaurateurs by singing “Va Pensiero.”

The choir celebrated their 100 years with a ‘Dinner and Dance’ in the hotel where they were staying. Cliff Morgan, as the choir President, gave his usual fine speech and Berwyn as Chairman gave his report.

Margaret spoke for the ladies of the choir. She focused her thanks to the men for including them in the tours, which is not the case with all male voice choirs. Then in the Centenary Year to thank them for other occasions they have had the pleasure at concerts over the years. She paid tribute to the role of the choir in bringing so much joy to people, so that anyone arriving at a concert in gloomy mood left uplifted! This she saw as, ‘taking one stone from Satan’s wall’ which is a line from the gospel song they were singing, ‘Little Innocent Lamb’ by Marshall Bartholomew. Thereby, she said, contributing to that ‘truth that keeps marching on,’ expressed in the ‘American Trilogy’.

Another centenary concert was held at Aberystwyth University Arts Centre, Great Hall with Mark Burrows soloist, Côr Glannau Ystwyth and Dr Haydn James as conductor (Aberystwyth his alma mater) and Berwyn as compère.

Berwyn was reminded some years later, at the untimely passing of a dear friend and chorister Mike Salter, for whom he wrote a eulogy, of how Mike worked tirelessly for this tour with programming, transport, and accommodation. It included a concert at the opening of the re-built chapel, Capel Bethel Pont Rhyd y Groes and Berwyn writes, “*The whole village seemed to*

be there the following morning after the chapel opening; great for us all."

He says how Mike handed him a brass plaque, 'To the Chairman and Compare of The Centenary Concert.' At the following rehearsal Berwyn writes this note, "*sitting next to him I passed it across and said, is this how you spell compare Mike? He laughed and sent me another!*"

A significant occasion for Berwyn, in his time as Chairman, was the passing of Sir Harry Secombe, Patron of the HKWMC and President of the LWMVC. It was over 20 years previously Sir Harry attended the St David's Ball in Hong Kong and agreed to become the HKWMC Patron. The LWMVC were invited to lead the singing at his funeral at St Nicholas Church Cranleigh and performed solo "God Be in My Head". Cliff Morgan would pay tribute and it seems may have commented, "*Sing or play rugby to be famous in Wales!*" Well, he should know!

Cyprus 2011

On this tour the choir sang at Paphos Harbour and in Pissouri. A guest soloist was Judith Evans Davies living in Cyprus, who came from a small village in Wales, Trefglwys, and had sung in Eisteddfodau and the Welsh National Opera. She produced her own newspapers in Shropshire and was now founder and owner of the Pafos Post. It was a joy for her to meet Berwyn, coming from so close to her home. The tour also gave opportunity for Berwyn and Margaret to stay with a former Hong Kong colleague and personal friends then retired in Cyprus.

Berwyn compèred for concerts on other tours including in France at Basiliques Saint Seurin in Bordeaux and Eglise du Sacre Coeur in Angouleme. Also, in Germany at the Christmas markets with singing in the Square and in Strasburg and Keil Church.

This is in no way an exhaustive list of all the concerts and tours Berwyn had the pleasure to sing and many to compère. It is just

an overview of the journey he went on and the opportunities it gave to do what he most loved, singing in male voice harmony and sharing his love of Welsh culture with a fair measure of good-natured humour! Dr Haydn James was musical Director until Edward Rhys Harry took over and Judith Morgan, Rosalind Jones and Annabel Thwaite were successive pianists.

A very timely concert for Berwyn was in 2015 when he was invited to compère again at Canterbury Cathedral. He had not been well some months earlier but was eager to fulfil this engagement and, thanks to a good friend, Les Leslie, the organiser of the concert, who waited patiently and respectfully for him to recover, he was able to do so. It is interesting that on this occasion Berwyn would more notably invite the audience to embark not only on a musical but also a spiritual journey, with the words of the profound and beautiful Welsh hymns at which a Welsh Male Voice Choir excels. This would be his last major appearance as compère and was beautifully recorded, so the family are grateful to have this as a reminder of a job very well done, giving glory to where it is intended by the great hymn writers.

He was commended for his performance with a kind note from Steve Howe CBE on behalf of the Canterbury Forest of Blean Rotary Club.

“On behalf of the members of the Canterbury Forest of Blean Rotary Club may I thank you for the professional and entertaining way in which you compèred the concert held in Canterbury Cathedral on Saturday night. I appreciate how much preparation goes into fronting an event that lasts for over two hours and the fact that you also had to sing meant that you will have gained little respite - I am sure you slept well that night.

“The whole event was both memorable and a great success and yours was an essential contribution to that success – thank you.”

Berwyn did sleep well that night; he had given his all not only then but every concert in which he both sang and compèred.

FINISHING WELL

As the years went by and a new Musical Director, Dr Edward Rhys Harry, was appointed, the choir would progress rewardingly with new younger members. Berwyn could see the need for others and younger to be given opportunity and made this suggestion and was happy to share his experience and even mentor.

So, it became that the Canterbury Cathedral Concert was his last major compèring engagement and it was the Welsh hymns he so commended to others that evening that a few years later would encourage him in his decline in health and eventual passing into Glory.

Maybe he had inherited a little more of his Taid's desire to share the Gospel than one would at first recognise.

One chorister said of him, *“that it was difficult to see the face of God in some people but not in Berwyn he was brilliantly funny as a compère, and to a chorister of faith it was great to know that much of our music would have been especially meaningful to him.”*

As a younger woman in one audience commented:

‘I have fallen in love all over again, with the compère!’

But the compère had found his love in the creation of the profound and beautiful music and words sung in harmony in Welsh Male Voice choirs and by others. For surely it is the purpose of a choir concert to include the audience in the whole experience, and the role of the compère to help communicate this to them. Every person is of value and the whole purpose of divine gifting is not to glorify self or the choir but to bring the listener closer to the Creator.

Berwyn would quote Johanne Sebastian Bach (1685-1750): - “The object of all music is to Glorify God. Were it not so, music would not exist, only noise and discord.”

A personal tribute from a past Chairman and respected long-time member of the choir endorsed these qualities in Berwyn.

Some extracts from this tribute:

“In paying tribute to Berwyn and his significant contribution to the LWMVC, I want to focus on three things: firstly, his persuasive and administrative skills, secondly, his caring personality and concern for others both within and outside the choir, reinforced by his Christian faith and thirdly, the energy and humour he put into compère at many choir concerts.

I am sure Berwyn joining the LWMVC also encouraged several other HKWMVC members to join the choir after returning to the UK they have had valuable administrative roles within the LWMVC as well as being dedicated choristers. In addition, Berwyn’s influence was probably important in the HKWMVC’s decision to sing in the London Welsh Festival of Male Voice Choirs at the Albert Hall.

Secondly there are many examples I can find of Berwyn’s caring personally and his concern for others Prior to the Choir’s Centenary Dinner held during our tour to Italy ..., he had gone to the trouble of finding out the year when each of the choristers on tour had joined the choir. Then after the dinner, choristers were called forward by name according to the year of joining (to loud applause) with the most recent being called first and then those who had been in the choir longest being called last and thus standing in front of others. I found this to be a very emotional experience which also helped to increase my sense of joy at belonging to the choir.

Thirdly I will refer to his considerable skills as an effective compère in choir concerts. Berwyntravelled widely in his role also deeply identified with the Welsh religious culture of his childhood in Penybontfawr and was a very keen supporter of the ‘gymanfa ganu’ and the National Eisteddfod. I believe growing up in this tradition helps explain his gift with words not only in conversation but also as a compère in the choir concerts. He carefully prepared the latter role and his humorous turn of phrase often delighted the concert audience.’

A LAST VISIT TO THE LONDON WELSH CENTRE GRAYS INN ROAD

Late October Berwyn and Margaret attended an evening to launch a book 'Legacy' compiled of the iconic photographs taken by fellow chorister and celebrated Fleet Street photographer John Downing. The choir were invited to sing along with the signing of his book.

Berwyn and John stood and sang together in the bass section for almost twenty years and had a mutual regard for one another. John would be seen to slip out and take a requested photograph of the choir in performance and Berwyn would rise to the podium to deliver the next section of the programme, each contributing in their gifted ways to the choir. John would capture the moment with his iconic photographs as seen with Margaret Thatcher at the time of the Brighton bombings and the emotive scenes of war and destruction in so many places. He said that if he succeeded in communicating this to others then his job was done.

And so it was with Berwyn when compèring in capturing that moment of engaging the audience in the bigger picture of the performance and the composer's vision for the composition. A chorister writes of an example of his humility and humour at a joint concert in Hereford Cathedral with the Hereford Police Male Voice Choir. On the programme front was the title was 'Capture the Moment'. The chorister writes of Berwyn saying: - *'he had recently experienced his own 'Capture the Moment' when he had been captured by a police speed camera!*

Berwyn and John would leave us on the same day, April 8th, 2020, both at 79 years of age, their job done and to their eternal rest.

THE GENERATIONS!

In retrospect it is poignant that in this booklet to honour the generations one should refer to Glenys May Downing who was a big contributor to the choir for therein were her three sons and grandson!

She was born raised and married in a village Cynwyl Elfed and thoroughly Welsh and in language.

Berwyn felt it a big honour in being asked to speak her eulogy in September 2010 when she died at 92 years of age.



*The London Welsh Centre, Grays Inn Road where the LWMVC rehearse
and many other activities with the London Welsh Community.*



Berwyn in the Bass Section of the London Welsh Male Voice Choir.



The Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir sing at the 1000 Voice Male Voice Choir' Concert at the Albert Hall.

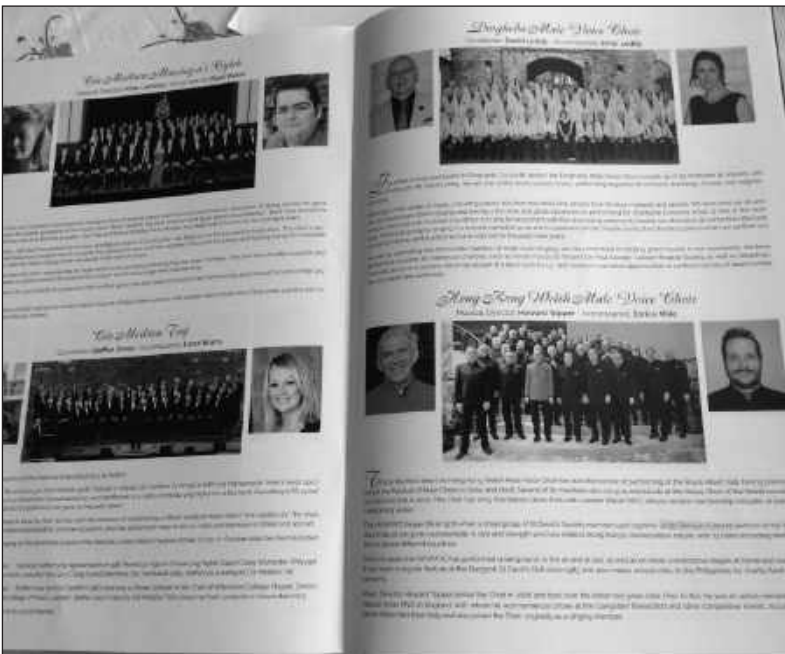


Conductor and compère, Dr Haydn James and Berwyn Evans.

The Montgomeryshire Man



Preparing for a Concert!



The Hong Kong Male Voice Choir singing at the Albert Hall 2004



Five London Welsh Male Voice Choir Presidents.



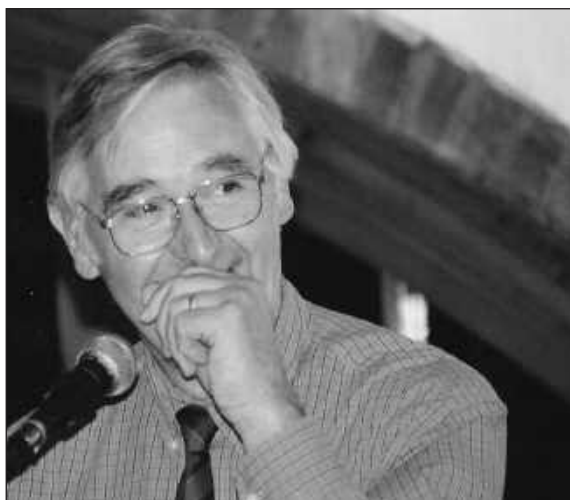
Four ex Hong Kong choristers in The LWMVC.



Centenary Dinner in Italy with choir President Cliff Morgan.



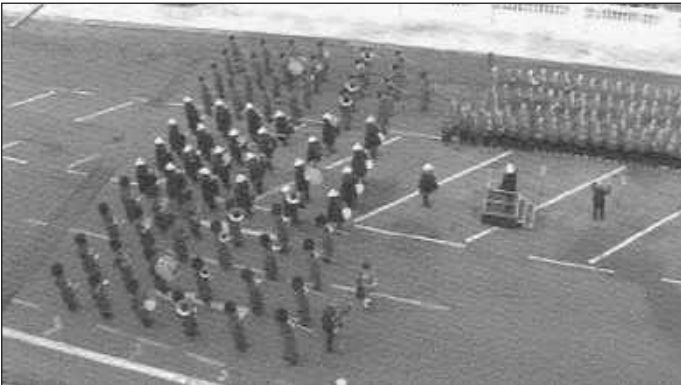
Cliff Morgan at the Centenary Dinner.



Berwyn making a Speech at the Centenary Dinner.



Another opportunity to Speak at the opening of a renovated disused chapel in Pont-rhyd-y-groes, West Wales, commissioned by choir colleague Mike Salter



The LWMVC sing at the Cenotaph.



The choir sing in Llandudno and Berwyn Compère. (described as the incomparable compère)



Just one of the many Cathedral Concerts Berwyn Compèred.



Berwyn enjoyed compèring for the Wooden Spoon events



Always a joy to compère with Rhys Meirion as guest soloist

ADDITIONAL COMPÈRES



Berwyn was invited as compère to join, ‘The Comrades in Arms Choir’ and the ‘British and Irish Lions Male Voice Choir,’ organised by Mark Stuart Burrows, the managing Director of Melody Music Company Ltd.

The ‘Comrades in Arms Choir’ is formed of choristers from choirs all over the UK and Ireland. The name is taken from the famous Welsh Male Voice Choir piece ‘Comrades in Arms’ written by Adolph Adams who also wrote the beautiful Christmas carol ‘O Holy Night’. There were about 20 choirs represented and on their first trip about 70 choristers, which increased to 130 on subsequent tours.

‘**The British and Irish Lions Choir**’ is also open to choristers from all over the UK and Ireland and formed to accompany the World Cup rugby tours.

Berwyn was invited to be compère for both these choirs on their tours.

British and Irish Lions Male Voice Choir to Australia, 2001

Berwyn writes: -

“The Lions Choir is to me the epitome of dreamland if you like singing and sport, particularly rugby! The choir open to choristers rises like a phoenix every four years to follow the British and Irish Lions tour. Being able to compère each concert a treat for me.”

Dr Haydn James was the conductor for concerts at the Sydney Town Hall with the Sydney Welsh Male Voice Choir, and various other venues including St Andrews Church Sydney and the Australian British Chamber of Commerce and then concerts in Brisbane and Melbourne.

The choir sang for two test matches on the pitch which Berwyn describes *‘fantastic!’* The Melbourne concert was held at the Welsh Chapel where the choir sang Eli Jenkins’s Prayer from Under Milk Wood. The recently arrived young Minister was from Wales and had been minister of a small group of chapels where Berwyn’s Taid, the Revd. John Parry had been minister. Interestingly, Berwyn would meet a couple that had emigrated to Australia in 1969, Anna May Jones from Llanfyllin and her husband from Penybontfawr, the towns of Berwyn’s birth and school days.

Comrades in Arms Choir to New York, 2003

This was a tour of the East Coast of America with Melody Music and conductor Dr Haydn James and Berwyn invited to compère. The choir of 60 men were predominately Welsh singers from the UK and drawn from 22 choirs. It was a tour Berwyn would not forget as it was with his brother Gareth, travelling with the Chester Male Voice Choir. Their love of Welsh male voice harmony learnt at their family home in Riverside, while using the cross saw to saw the logs had stayed with them both. Now to be singing together in New York with Berwyn in the bass and Gareth the tenor section – what a joy!

They performed in Washington at the Memorial Chapel, Fort Meyer Virginia appearing with United States Army Chorus, in New York at St Joseph's Church and in Greenwich Village where they were welcomed by the President of the St David's Society of New York. They sang at a concert in Boston supported by the Saengerfest Male Voice Choir at The Regis College of Fine Arts.

The choir completed their tour with a memorial concert at the site of the British Memorial Garden in Hanover Square New York. This garden was a gift from the British community and Anglo-American friends to the people of New York. The Lady Harris, representing Lord Thomas Harris, the British Consulate General for New York was in attendance to enjoy this musical tribute in glorious sunshine on this most poignant day of 9/11.

Their repertoire included Welsh hymns and choruses and especially notable Gwahoddiad written by a Welsh/American, Lewis Harscough, and Joseph Parry's Myfanwy, being also the centenary of his death. The choir also remembered Dylan Thomas who died in New York 50 years before, by singing Eli Jenkins's Prayer.

British and Irish Lions Male Voice Choir tour - New Zealand, 2005

A second opportunity to compère came from Mark Burrows when the choir joined the Lions Rugby Tour to New Zealand. The conductor was Dr Haydn James who arranged a Lions Anthem incorporating four well-known songs from the home nations: Swing Low Sweet Chariot, Flower of Scotland, Ireland's Call and Bread of Heaven. They were supporting various charities including the New Zealand Rugby Foundation and the "Wooden Spoon" UK, singing at venues in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. For these concerts they had learnt a Maori Trilogy, Po-Kare-Kare Hine-E-Hine and Po- AT- AR- AU and their own Lions Medley. On their return to the UK, they sang at 'The Sydney Opera House' where Berwyn enjoy compèring in this most prestigious venue.

Comrades in Arms Male Voice Choir to China, 2006

Berwyn was invited to compère this tour with conductor Alwyn Humphries and about 50 choristers from different choirs across the UK. One or two of the audiences were totally Chinese speaking and Berwyn worked hard at learning a few phrases of Mandarin before he went out. The tour went from Shanghai to Beijing and on to Xian. The first concert was in Shanghai University with a full house and then in Beijing at the University Theatre and at a university in Xian. The tour included visiting the amazing historical sites of China including Tianamen Square, the Forbidden City, The Great Wall and the Terracotta Soldiers in addition to silk, cloisonné factories and other interesting places.

On their return they called in at Hong Kong where they did a concert with the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir at St John's Cathedral. This would be especially rewarding for Berwyn singing along with the choir he had founded almost 30 years earlier and the place where the family worshipped.

A Gala Concert at The Sydney Opera House, 2007

Mark Burrows organised a concert for choristers and musicians all over the world to come together and perform at this event. Berwyn was invited to be Master of Ceremonies, for which he had his name on his dressing room! Dr Haydn James was again the Conductor with Rhodri Clarke on the piano and the concert included The Regimental Band and Drums of The Royal Welsh Regimental Band, and the University of New South Wales Regimental Band which was the last remaining brass band in the Australian Defence Force.

The choirs included The Australian Welsh Male Voice Choir, Australian Rugby Choir, The National Choir of New Zealand, Male Voice Choirs, the Wollongong Welsh Choir, The National Choir of New Zealand, The Metropolitan Male Voice Choir of South Australia, Sydney Male Voice Choir, Melbourne Welsh Male Voice Choir, The Melody Music Comrades Male Voice Choir and The Hong Kong

Welsh Male Voice Choir. This was another opportunity for Berwyn to sing and compère with the HKWMVC as their Life President.

Cliff Morgan who travelled with them said of the choir, *“it not only matched the very best for quality but also showed exemplary spirit.”*

The British and Lions Choir at St Laurence’s Church, Ludlow

The concert was arranged by Ludlow Rugby Club with Dr Haydn James as conductor, Mark Burrows and Geraint Lewis as soloists, David Last on the piano and Berwyn as compère. It was a special occasion for the Lions Choir to sing together again; it was described, *‘Haydn our Ober Fuhrer, David Last did a splendid job and Berwyn sparked!’*

Cardiff Arms Park Male Voice Choir presented, ‘An Evening of Musical Extravagance’ at Heol Llanishen Fach Primary School with the Wessex Male Voice Choir, Mark Burrows and other guest artists, with Berwyn invited to compère. This was an interesting venue as it was the very location of the family home in the early years.

In the programme it is written: -

“Tonight is a night for many of the choristers from both choirs to renew old acquaintances. Whilst in Australia, and recently at a reunion concert in Ludlow, Berwyn kept our audiences glued with his wit and charm. It was because we now consider him an ‘old friend’ that we really had to extend an invitation to him this evening. No doubt, once you have heard him, you will consider him in the same category.”

These over twenty years of compèring gave Berwyn enormous pleasure and opportunity to use the gift God gave him. If complimented on his performance, as often he was, he would respond, *“I’m only as good as my last concert!”* He knew, as with any gift, it was not of his own making and the glory was not his to claim. For many he was the ‘incomparable compère’, ‘brilliantly funny’ with his ‘gentle humour and teasing anecdotes’ and would even ‘sparkle’, ‘holding everything together’, but also well researched with an in-depth knowledge and empathy for the hymns and songs sung through the generations of Welsh composers and others.



On tour with the British Lions Choir.



*Outside the Sydney Opera House in 2005 where Berwyn compèred for
the British and Irish Lions Choir.*



Compèring in Times Square New York with the Comrades Choir.



Berwyn singing with his brother Gareth with the Comrades Choir in New York



Berwyn and Gareth in New York



Compèring with the Comrades Choir in China with Conductor Alwyn Humphreys.



An item at the Noson Lawen with fellow HKWMVC Choristers



Presenting the prize for Welsh Singer of the Year at the London Welsh Centre.



Singing on the Pitch at Cardiff arms park and later the Millennium Stadium.

CHAPTER 10

Berwyn's Professional Career

"Whatever you do work at it with all your heart....."

Colossians 3:23



Berwyn's journey in Civil Engineering progressed from Graduate Training Scheme with I.C.E and Cheshire County and moving, to site positions with Freeman Fox and Partners on Motorways and Elevated Structure Works. He joined the contractors Sir Lindsay Parkinson on the Midland Link Elevated motorway in Birmingham and then joined with M.J. Gleeson and significantly Cubitt's Civil Engineering as Project Manager. Projects included roads, structures, urban interchanges, river and sewage treatment works.

Cubitt's secured the consultancy contract with the international Japanese contractor Aoki Corporation in Hong Kong and taking up this position required a wide area of expertise and involvement with the rapidly expanding construction companies in the Colony. As director of the company his responsibilities were to set up and manage contracts in the region, including marketing and operational and commercial activities with the turnover expanding to over £500 million.

Projects included: -

- Extensive public and private sector work with many and varied joint ventures.
- Mass Transit Railway - Phase 1,2,3.
- Tunnelling and compressed air, soft ground, T.B.M. (Tunnelling Boring Machine) works, stations.
- Sewage and water treatment, rock tunnels, hospitals and schools, residential- executive-high rise, reclamation, heavy excavation- power stations, hotel and golf developments, turnkey, new airport contracts, roadworks, viaducts.
- Joint venture agreements with companies which included: -
 - Tobishima
 - Billfinger Burger
 - Hazama
 - Cubiertas + Entrecanales
 - Dumez
 - Dragages
 - Soletanche
 - Bachy
 - Tarmac
 - Costain
 - Christiani

- Bovis
- Leighton Franki
- LKN (Singapore)
- Manong Construction (Malaysia)China National Aero-Technology Co
- Guandong Construction Company
- Dredging International
- Jan De Nul

S.E Asian Regional responsibilities included initiation and support works in: -

- Singapore- New Office set up for Mass Transit Contracts in J.V. with L.K.N

Office and Residential Contracts

- Commercial (Claims) Work
- Brunei - New Office
- Benutan (Earth) Dam with Manong Construction
- Taiwan- Mass Transit contract, contractual advice
- Malaysia - Earth Dam
- Indonesia - Westin Hotel development
- China - tendering for container port - Canton

Berwyn had a full and exciting professional life in Hong Kong, enjoying every aspect including travel and working with so many different companies and people.

An interesting contract was the building of the Macau Golf and Country Club. The family enjoyed some happy time with the children's introduction to golf on this most scenic course overlooking the South China seas. Berwyn had the privilege of meeting with the Portuguese President Mr Mario Soares and held negotiations with the Hong Kong billionaire businessman Sir Stanley Ho.

Berwyn himself writes,

“Aoki Corporation, having a Technical Agreement with my UK company showed enterprise in this addition to their management structure in that they recognised the change in contract style between a protected home market and the internationally competitive market that was Hong Kong. Both Government and private works in Hong Kong are based on UK style Conditions of Contract. This period of secondment, but finally exclusively for Aoki Corporation, coincided with a dramatic increase in the turnover of the Company during one of the most dynamic decades for construction in Hong Kong. This has given me a particular insight into the work ethic and management problems of international construction organisations. Many contracts in this period were contractor financed giving an added incentive towards successful operations.

Inevitably as a British Chartered Engineer in the front line of The Japanese construction team I have been fully exposed to the front management and negotiation side of construction to compliment the basic direct construction management gained in the field. I believe that in international construction an ability to be sympathetic to and communicate with other ‘creeds’ is all important. This is needed to secure work and get satisfactory and above all equitable payment.”

Berwyn during this time was also Chairman of the Civils Council, a body active in direct negotiation with Government bodies as to subjects varying from design and build contract formulation, conditions of contract, advisory roles on utilities etc. including the contractual strategy of the new airport works in Hong Kong, now long completed.

In addition, he was on the Advisory Committee of the Building and Civil Engineering department at the City Polytechnic.

Return to the UK

Berwyn returned to the UK to set up the London and UK office of Aoki Corporation in 1993 on the award of the Jubilee

Line contracts, (Bermondsey and Southwark sections, Tunnel and Station Works) for the London Underground Limited. The UK Office, originally set up in Cardiff in 1986, included housing and office development in Wales and the West Country and joint venture industrial development with the Welsh Development Agency.

As the UK representative of Aoki, responsibilities in addition to commercial and operational works on the Jubilee Line extension included marketing and tendering specifically for: -

P.F.I

Docklands Light Railway Project Aoki/Wimpey/Impegilo/
Mott Macdonald joint venture

C.T.R.L

Channel Rail Link

With finalisation of all contracts in January 2000, Aoki withdrew from the European market and Berwyn was retained as a consultant to Aoki Corporation.

Berwyn writes: -

“Tunnelling has that exciting element of danger and mystery. Few people outside the industry ever get to see what happens underground

A nation is made great: -

Not by its fruitful acres- but by the men who cultivate them.

Not by its mines – but by the men who work them.

Not by its railways- but by the men who build and run them.”

During the time of Aoki working in joint venture with Bachy Soletanche there was an enjoyable visit to France in the company of Mr John and Chiako Aoki. This included a visit to the Rothschilds vineyard. John Aoki was about to celebrate a special birthday, flying in his private jet to Lourdes as part of his celebrations. He invited Berwyn and Margaret to join them in visiting this special place. They were flown back into Biggin Hill airport, just 10 minutes from where they live, and then after a quick change whisked to a restaurant in Mayfair to enjoy John Aoki's birthday

celebration with his staff. Such a memorable time, proving Civil Engineering isn't all toil and mud! On presenting the birthday cake with candles burning for Mr Aoki to blow out, it was just one that remained lit! Margaret had the temerity to call out, "it's eternal", and in response this hugely respected man looked up with serious face and then broke into a smile! It was not many years later John Aoki suffered illness and passed away. It would not only be Berwyn but the family who would show immense gratitude for benefiting from this family company, Aoki Corporation, that had so blessed their lives.

Berwyn gave a speech at an Engineers Dinner in Hong Kong not long before he returned to the UK:

'Good Evening Engineers and I quote "all eminently practical people, pragmatists who shoulder the mundane problems of civilisation and solve them".'

'I feel honoured to be invited to your Services Dinner and particularly so at the aftermath of the Gulf War. At a time when the Senior Chinese Representative in HK Mr Li Peng is also an Engineer. We have here I believe also representatives of the three services supported by the Band of the Royal Regiment of Wales, an Engineering support group par excellence and one which makes me feel at home! So, I thank Lieutenant Commander Ferry for this invitation, which I suspect was made through the good offices of one of the staff here who is also a member of the Welsh Male Voice Choir in Hong Kong.'

I speak as the Founder and Conductor for many years of the HK Welsh Male Voice Choir and now honoured to be its President. This labour of love often seemed to be my main occupation, but in my spare time I am, in fact, a fellow Engineer, a Civil Engineer; and a Welsh one, so many from a nation of Preachers and Teachers!

There is in simple terms quite a link between choral, particularly male voice music and engineering where both take nature in its natural collective and sometimes primitive form, and control or

engineer its forces to the pleasure and good of man, using ingenuity and a little cunning in the process! With the choir we bring together men of different moods even nationalities into harmony. I thought also of the analogy of parts moving and acting together – the mechanical Engineer appreciating the efficiency and quiet stroke of the Piston Engine, whilst the conductor of his choir will glow with the warmth of Male Voices in Harmony! In each case getting the better performance, the more oiled the machine is, of course!

And so, I thought I could enlighten you this evening with some views on engineering a Male Voice Choir in Hong Kong, starting from the basics as Engineers often have to!

This seems quite relevant to this gathering as some years ago when we sang at the City Hall with Sir Harry Secombe (who is our Patron), there were 18 Engineers out of a total of 36 on stage, quite an engine room to have in a group of singers!'

Berwyn enjoyed connecting his professional life with his most favourite recreation of singing in choirs. It usually entertained even if mis-informed!



Discussing a contract with a colleague



Senior Staff Discussion,



Tunnelling in Hong Kong for the Mass Transit Railway.



Berwyn speaking at a ceremony in Hong Kong.



*Meeting with Mario Soares (the President of Portugal) and
Sir Stanley Ho at the Macau Golf Club.*



The Office Team celebrating Berwyn's birthday with a cake.



Visit to the Rothschild Vineyard with John and Cibeko Aoki.



Opening of the Power Station in Hong Kong in the company of the President John and Chieko Aoki.



Company President John Aoki's Birthday Celebration.



Office team in Jamaica Road, Bermondsey, London.



Tunnelling for the Jubilee Line London.

CHAPTER 11

THE MONTGOMERYSHIRE SOCIETY Cymdeithas Maldwyn

*“And God looked upon all that He had made,
and indeed, it was very good.”*

Genesis 1:31

“Mwynder Maldwyn”



Photo taken by Berwyn from Penybontfawr.

The London-based society with links to the county of Montgomeryshire has been active for over 90 years. Members come from a variety of professions and ranks in and around London and find within the Society a precious link with their county of origin. This is a summary of the years in the Montgomeryshire Society

that were the most enriching and enjoyable of the time in London. Never did Berwyn appear more at home than at these functions. He would meet friends from his area and school days who knew his family and could discourse in ways no others could. Margaret also enjoyed this relaxed atmosphere of togetherness in appreciation of their county and heritage.



Berwyn as President of the Montgomeryshire Society, 2012

Each year a new President is elected and he or she, with the committee, will arrange a programme of events for that year which will include the Annual Society Dinner along with cultural and social meetings. There are also the occasional weekends away to a locality or events of interest in Montgomeryshire.

During the first years of attending, the annual meetings were held in St Katherine's 200-year-old neo-gothic Danish Church, Regents Park. A most hospitable venue to gather for supper in

the library and view the delightful adjoining chapel. Later years' meetings were held in the Garden Room of Grosvenor Chapel, Mayfair. Also a most hospitable venue and historical chapel from 1730. They were such enjoyable times of relaxed and generous hospitality in the most delightful company. Berwyn would have the honour of being President of the Society in 2011-2012.

One of the earlier events was a walking tour, the 'Welsh Trail', devised to introduce visitors to the Welsh heritage of London. It went from Clerkenwell Green, home of the first charity school to River Head near Sadler's Wells, where Sir Hugh Middleton 1560, the Welsh entrepreneur brought water into the city from Amwell in Hertfordshire. Also the Lloyds Dairy in Amwell Street which had now been recently opened to sell Welsh products.

In later years there was a fascinating visit to the formerly known Sutton Hospital, 'The Charterhouse', a former Carthusian monastery in London. It provides a home to support older people while sharing its heritage and preserving it for the future. A very beautiful building and the residents are called 'brothers' to acknowledge the monastic past.

On another occasion the Society Annual General Meeting was held at the North Lodge National Trust Runnymede. It included a walk along the historic Runnymede Trail, with the Air Force Memorial, John Kennedy Memorial and the Magna Carta Memorial. The trail also includes the Jurors art installation to mark the 800th Anniversary of the Magna Carta with the 12 jurors' bronze chairs. Each chair with carved images of the struggles for freedom and the rule of law and equal rights.

There was an enjoyable visit to the backstage of the 'Phantom of the Opera' with Mr Philip Griffiths from Caersws, who was a member of the cast for 16 years. He later entertained the Society to an afternoon of song at Borough Chapel that told his life story. It also included the customary generous hospitality with afternoon tea!

An early 'weekend away' was to Caersws and the gracious Maesmawr Hall Hotel. This was once the home of the grandparents of Andrew Lambert, that year's President of the Society. His cousin, Michael Ellis-Jones, has compiled a well-documented booklet on his growing years at Maesmawr Hall. The following day included a guided tour of Llanidloes and an evening concert at Greygynog Hall.

There was a visit to 'The Tabernacle', a former Wesleyan Chapel in Machynlleth, which Andrew had commissioned for renovation into a 'Centre for the Performing Arts.' At the end of his presidency of the Society, Andrew presented a trilingual 'Montgomeryshire Grace' set to an old Plygain carol tune which has become a permanent grace for the Society.

Another year was the invitation to visit Bodfach Hall in Llanfyllin, the home of the Society President, Simon Baines. The Society were generously entertained by Simon and his wife Maggie along with learning something of the history of the house and enjoying the beautiful gardens on a lovely sunny day.

There was a most interesting and invigorating weekend in the Welshpool area at the time of the Gregynog Festival. It included a guided tour of the village of Kerry with a local historian. Ralph Broonby, Berwyn's school friend, organised a three-mile guided hike on Llanymnech Hill close to Offa's Dyke, to note its historical and geographical features,

It was followed by an evening meal at the 'Royal Oak Hotel' when Berwyn met with Glenys Mair Lloyd, the celebrated writer of Welsh history, and friend from Llanfyllin School days. Interestingly, in Anglesey Glenys had a chance meeting with Mary Jones-Bewley, Berwyn's friend with whom he discussed the beginnings of the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir all those years ago! Mary lived on the edge of the area of piracy, the subject of Glenys' book *Piers Griffin, 'Pirate of Penrhyn'*. Sadly, Glenys and Mary have passed away in these last years, both having lived full and fruitful lives.

Another enjoyable weekend away with the Society was to Beaumaris staying in the Bulkeley Hotel. It included a visit to Plas Cadnant's Hidden Gardens and Beaumaris Castle. The Society attended an evening performance at the Beaumaris Festival to hear Gary Griffiths, the fine Welsh baritone. There was also a most enjoyable guided geological walk to Din Llugwy Beach with details of the marine history.

There were other occasions but this gives a flavour of the rich heritage to be enjoyed in Montgomeryshire and often with connections to families in the London Society.

The June Gruffydd Memorial Lectures, often in conjunction with the Cymmrodorion Society.

These most interesting and convivial evenings are held in some of the finest Academic Institutions in London, to include The British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering, and more often The Medical Society of London.

The lectures focus on the contribution to society given by the many accomplished Welsh men and women through the generations. They cover a wide field of achievement, enterprise and philanthropic contribution.

A brief mention of these talks enjoyed over fifteen years gives an indication of the subjects that have enlightened and given pleasure:

Dr David Jenkins, entitled 'From Draintewion to Llandinam', on the creation of the Davies' family fortune and David Davies' great industrial interests and achievements during the 19th century referring also to the family's great philanthropic and cultural activities during the 20th century.

Dr Rhian Davies gave an illustrated lecture entitled 'Peter Warlock in Montgomeryshire'. It was a colourful insight into the composer with opportunity to listen to some of his compositions.

Dr Sioned Davies of Cardiff University speaking on Mair Richards Darowen (1787- 1877).

Richard Meredith on ‘The Mills Family of Llanidloes,’ with their extraordinary musical legacy which contributed widely to the cultural life of mid-Wales and beyond. Several hymn tunes are written by them.

Mr Timothy Hayes spoke on Church Buildings within the culture and landscape of Wales.

Musician Argon Gwilim - The Plygain carol tradition.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry - The future of Welsh devolution.

Mrs Sioned Webb on Meirion Williams, a Welsh composer and conductor mainly responsible for transforming Welsh classical song and a leading exponent on Welsh composition. It was of particular interest to the London Welsh community as he made a significant contribution to its cultural life during the 1950’s.

Mr Tom Lloyd, Wales Herald of Arms Extraordinary, on ‘The old Welsh land gentry and their world: does extinction beckon?’

Dr David Stephenson – Resident of Llanidloes, Honorary Research Fellow in Welsh history at Bangor University, speaking on, ‘Re-thinking 13th Powys.’

Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art at the Museum of Wales, on Richard Wilson, the first major British landscape artist, son of a vicar from Penegoes near Machynlleth, to mark the tercentenary of the artist’s birth.

Dr Rhian Davies on ‘Belgian Refugee Musicians in Wales During the First World War.’

Mr John Jones, Chairman of the Montgomeryshire Society speaking on, ‘What exactly is folksong?’

Annual Society Dinners

Each year the Montgomeryshire Society Dinner is held in a gracious London Venue arranged by the President of that year. They have included the ‘Reform Club,’ ‘University Women’s Club,’

‘Army and Navy Club’, ‘RAF Club’, ‘Lincoln’s Inn’, ‘House of Lords’, ‘Institute of Civil Engineers’, ‘Queensgate and the ‘Oxford and Cambridge Club’.

This is just a taste of the feast, not only of excellent meals but stimulating speakers who have affiliation with Wales.

At Queensgate Mr TAV Evans was guest Speaker. As the last Director of Education for Montgomeryshire he outlined the history of Education in the County from 1950 onwards. Many Montgomeryshire prominent figures played a part in shaping of post-war education and had connections with Society members. On this occasion Miss Alocs Peate played the harp and the tenor soloist was Mr Edfryn Williams.

The Old Hall Lincolns Inn by invitation of the Montgomeryshire Society President, Mr Michael Gibbon QC. The speaker was the Revd. Dr Leslie Griffiths, Lord Griffiths of Bury Port, Methodist Minister of Wesley’s Chapel in City Road and frequent contributor to Radio 4 religious affairs programmes.

The Oxford and Cambridge Club hosted several guest speakers:

Sir John Meurig Thomas who focused on four Montgomeryshire people who had enriched lives well beyond Wales; Robert Owen of Newtown, the great socialist; George Herbert renowned poet and hymn writer born in Montgomery castle; Ann Griffiths 18th-century lyrical hymn writer; the Davies sisters of Gregynog and their collection of impressionist paintings.

David Pryce-Jones to recount his family’s history, with extracts drawn from his book, ‘Fault Lines’. He is the great-grandson of the Victorian entrepreneur, Sir Pryce-Jones of the eminent banking families in Vienna.

Prof. Prys Morgan spoke on the coequality of the Societies’ activities. He drew attention to the tercentenary celebrations of the birth of the father of landscape paintings Mr Richard Wilson, born in a vicarage in Penegoes, and to Margaret Davies of Gregynog Hall who donated her collection of impressionist paintings to the

National Gallery in Cardiff just 50 years previously. He encouraged people to be proud of the Powysland Club, the oldest Welsh historical society which had recently produced its 150th Chronicle.

The Army and Navy Club welcomed Mr Timothy Hughes, Deputy Director of the International Bar Association. His work takes him round the world to maintain independence of judges and to fight infringement of human rights. Mr Hughes also spoke about significant Montgomeryshire churches and about major personalities such as Anne Griffiths and George Herbert. His special interest in church buildings within the culture and landscape of Wales is published in a book 'Wales' best 100 churches'.

An invitation to The House of Lords by the President Elinor Bennet, with her husband Lord Wigley the MP for Plaid Cymru as guest speaker. During his political career Lord Wigley has been dedicated to serving Welsh causes and matters pertaining to disability.

The last of these dinners attended by Berwyn and Margaret was at the Oxford and Cambridge Club with guest speaker, rugby star Gareth Davies, now Chairman of the Welsh Rugby Union. They had invited good friends to be with them, and to also be with his old school friends in the Society in this most convivial and gracious of company, is now a happy memory of these occasions.

Unveiling of Catrin Glyndwr Memorial

The Society attended this event along with members of the London Welsh Male Voice Choir, with whom Berwyn sang. The Memorial was presented by the Welsh Community in London and is situated on Cannon Street near the site of Catrin's recorded burial place at the old St Swithin's graveyard. Catrin Glyndwr was the daughter of Owen Glyndwr who was captured with her three children and imprisoned in the Tower of London where she died.

Berwyn was pleased to support the Welsh Chapel events in London. He would sometimes join the choir at Capel y Borough,

Southwark to boost the bass section. On occasion he sang with a small group at the annual Plygain service held at Jewin Chapel, Capeli Cymraeg.

Berwyn's Presidential Year and Speech 2012

Berwyn was pleased for this honour and in his own words: -

Diolch yn fawr Andrew a John am y geiriau caredig ac hefyd diolch i ti ac i'r pwyllgor am y flwyddyn mor llwyddianus y mae'r gymdeithas wedi cael yma yn Llundain ac hefyd wrth gurs yn y Sir.

I thank you for those kind words and also thanks to you and the committee for the very pleasurable and successful time we have enjoyed as the Society here in London and of course in the County.

Y rwy'n falch iawn i gael y gwahoddiad i fod yn llywydd am y flwyddyn, yn y flwyddyn Olympaidd hefyd. Dydw i ddim wedi clywed bod unrhywun o'r Maldwyn -yn cystadlu!

I am very proud at having the invitation to be your President for the year, one which also includes the Olympics....any one from the County competing!

I am really a borderline case in the physical sense, although born in Penybontfawr in the foot of the Berwyn's I was brought up in Llansantffraid Ym Mechain not far from Offers Dyke and the Shropshire border. An English village as opposed to the Welsh Penybontfawr. But what of Montgomeryshire, Mwynder Maldwyn, the gentleness of Maldwyn with its gentle undulating feel- nothing sudden just gradual pleasure in the winding rivers and roads; not a motorway in sight. Margaret and I enjoyed a weekend away in Maesmawr Hall this year and particularly the trip approaching from the South Llandridnod Wells area. Margaret said, "we must do this again, it is so peaceful and beautiful" and this through a rainswept wind screen! I really sensed her wonder.

I was reminded of the time in the summers of the early '60's, my student holiday job driving a Bedford ice cream van from Four Crosses creamery, just off the border. Each day a new day, a new

family to torment with my bell ringing, searching out the next village sorts day, the sheep dog trials, the WI fete and once a pony trekking event near Llagurig, the Duke of Edinburgh visited. But it was tough in the rain, on the Llanbrynmair Road on anything other than a wet day passing Llandidloes without!

My family story could be one of three rivers all born within the embrace of the Berwyn's. Dad, Richard Evans the youngest farmers son, volunteer for WW1 and later ran the village Post Office on the banks of River Tanat south of the mountain. My grandfather Edward Evans of Peniath Isaf was a Bard and also the Conductor for over 40 years of the village Male Voice Choir. My mother from Llangollen on the banks of the river Dee down the northern flank of the mountain. Myself the youngest of three children brought up on the banks of the river Vyrnwy in Llansantffraid, the river flowing through Meifod valley where my grandfather Rev John Meifod Parry was the Annibynwyr/Congregational Minister. This in Clement Davies' time.

Having spent many years, especially professional years, away from Montgomeryshire I find it never leaves you. Philip Griffiths, the Phantom of the Opera star said joining the Society here on our arrival to London brought this home to us. We have felt very welcomed here.

Montgomeryshire crops up and fuels the Hiraeth in the most distant and diverse places.

Welcoming Marilyn Baker, the Gospel singer and composer to our flat in Hong Kong, she said she lived in Machynlleth in the hills above the town, quietly spoken she said how when she was home, she feels the peace and the beauty of the hills ... Marilyn was blind from birth.

Our son Peter recently in Chicago phoned me. My name was in huge letters on the billboard, it said Berwyn Rising, and underneath "why Berwyn.com". Word had leaked out, John Jones' line hacked? Opposition to my imminent installation as President?

No this referred to an upmarket development in that city. But a reminder!

The LWMVC tour to Cyprus this year, the local soloists were a Scottish tenor and a Welsh Soprano. Judith Evans Davies from Trefglwys near Newtown, proprietor of the Pathos post and of the Revival Boutique and an accomplished worship leader.

At the Sydney Opera House two years ago as Master of Ceremonies for a Concert I welcomed from the rostrum, Lord Martin Thomas of Gresford, President of the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir.

Earlier in the year we shared a relaxing weekend in the Swiss Alps with two brothers, Clive and Malcolm Johnson, from the villages of Penybontfawr and Llansantffraid, there was much talk of the County. Malcolm a United Nations diplomat in Geneva in the telecommunications field perhaps quietly representing the best interests of us all. Clive retired from the education world and here with his wife Elizabeth tonight, educated like myself at Llanfyllin High School.

In conclusion, on the world stage I must mention my true story of one of Montgomeryshire's most illustrious children, the late Nansi Richards Telynores Maldwyn, the world famous harpist, Auntie Nansi. Such a character with a wide circle of friends including royalty. When on a Concert tour of the USA she met and became friendly with Mr William Kellogg, who had just invented his process for the manufacture of Cornflakes. He needed a suitable emblem for his new product. Auntie Nansi told him that in Welsh 'ceiliog' the word for cockerel sounded close to Kellogg and why not have a cockerel emblem? The rest, as they say, is history. I look for this in every breakfast world-wide. Could this have been the best marketing coup ever for Montgomeryshire?

And so, we may be a small County, but we can do and do penetrate to those corners even Heineken can't reach! Even now

your Committee have a varied programme which I commend and hope you will enjoy.

Unwaith eto diolch yn fawr Andrew am eich geiriau ac am flwyddyn mor llwyddiannus ac i'r pwyllgor am yr anrhydedd o fod yn llywydd am y flwyddyn nesaf.

Thank you, Andrew, for your words and for the successful year and to the committee for the honour for me to be your President for the year.

Berwyn and the committee arranged several events for the year: -

At the House of Commons, Portcullis House, the Rt Hon. Glyn Davies Montgomeryshire MP spoke on the subject, 'What's Going On' with 'Questions and Answers' addressing issues of local concern within the County and deep concern regarding economic issues and Wind Farming.

June Gruffydd Memorial Lecture with John Rickus, geologist on 'The Rocks beneath our Feet'. Berwyn considered John a friend and was delighted he would share his specialist knowledge with the Society.

The Annual Dinner was held at the RAF Club with Mr Ian Edwards, journalist and for 12 years as ITN'S News and Sports Correspondence as Guest Speaker. Ian also sang and compèred with Berwyn with the London Welsh Male Voice Choir. Lady Hooson joined the gathering, and a tribute was paid to Lord Hooson by Edward Owen of the Society. Lord Hooson was Liberal MP for Montgomery for seventeen years and died that year in Llandidloes. The Penybontfawr sang 'Llef' at his funeral.

Lady Hooson died in 2018 of whom it was said, 'Montgomeryshire has lost one of its greatest ever champions.'

Berwyn's response at the Annual Dinner as President of the Society

"Diolch yn fawr Ian am y geiriau mor caredig. Thank you ... it has been good to welcome you and for Pat to share something of Mwynder Maldwyn our gentle county and we think quite gentle quiet people also!

I say that as the year to date has been anything but gentle, with a happy expansive program for which I thank your committee. In a way it has broadened my knowledge of the county.

As Iwan Llwyd “Cymru Philadelphia” (the Welsh of Philadelphia) said,

*We Welsh don't call bold attention to ourselves
Like the sons of Sicily in Philis little Italy
Whose food wafts a welcome from afar
Or the boys of Dublin and Derry in New York bars
With loyalty as black and white as Guinness.
Quietly we come together
To embrace words, to reminisce
To exchange whispered dreams
Quietly we look to the future
When we may meet again
To mix words and create miracles.*

One of the most widely read publications (after the Financial Times) with a vast circulation and so far untainted by phone hacking in Montgomeryshire is the Tanat/Cain/Vyrnwy Valley Chronicle! The February edition had the headline, “goodbye Montgomeryshire”, our historical county to be destroyed by political changes. There may well have been a rush to the borders, I haven't checked with our MP Glyn Davies, but we are in changing times in Montgomeryshire.

The boundary commission, by reducing constituencies looking for average numbers of voters talk of the new areas of Glyndwr and North Powys. Out go Newtown, Llanidloes, Montgomery to a distant area almost to Swansea. Those good folk of Welshpool, Llanfair Caereinion, will look north almost to Denbigh! What do we say to this?

Our member John Rickus (a geologist among his many attributes) recently enthralled us with his talk of rocks in Wales and Montgomeryshire even. The real study of Geology started

in the 18th century triggered by the development of the canal system. Apparently 90% of geological names are of Welsh origin, with the periods named after Welsh tribe. Including Ordovician, Silurian and of course Cambrian ... the Roman name for Wales. This is understood world-wide! As you travel internationally you might well meet some without a firm knowledge geography, who do not know where Montgomeryshire our County is! Yet if you occasionally meet a geologist in Russia or Iran as you do and dropped the name Ordovician they would not assume that to be your Christian name.... but they would know the link with Montgomeryshire. John also mentioned how our planet had moved, had turned over millions of years, such that Montgomeryshire was once a Middle East region ... Saudi Arabia! I remember the National Eisteddfod in Meifod, so hot and tropical, at one time I thought I was in the Middle East...I suppose it is the far east in Montgomeryshire terms!

So, you see the boundary commission cannot move us anywhere new...we've probably been there already!

We are an emerging County. There is a Forensic Linguistic Institute in Llanfair Caereinion.....

It is said that Wales produced so many Scientists due to the deep link between religion and science. Nonconformity being the creed of the people who challenged the accepted order. Why not still challenge and aim for alternatives!

I have a dream of Maldwyn developing into the maritime and avionic centre of the County with alternative energy sources with its water, science and technology ...what a dream as I visit the schools there!

I thank you for being with us and contributing to the thoughts and feeling of Mwynder Maldwyn. My thanks to the Committee and their planning and hard work. Diolch o galon i'r pwyllgo.

That same year the AGM was held at Jewin Chapel and in the evening, the 'London Choir of the World' was held at Alexandra Palace.

He enjoyed and supported other Welsh activities like the annual Plygain service in Jewin Chapel and on occasion contributed to a singing group. He also would support the choir in Capel y Borough Southwark which was directed by the Montgomeryshire Chairman John Jones.

The Members Party was an invitation to the home of Berwyn and Margaret at 'Lavender Cottage', which was a joy and privilege. Berwyn had prepared a quiz on aspects pertaining to Montgomeryshire, a sample of which: -

Who was Roberte Recorde? Who from Llanfychangel wrote 73 hymns?

Who was a Social reformist and philanthropist from Newtown and more!

This was much enjoyed by the guests.

It was a rewarding year with the opportunity to meet with Rt Hon. Glyn Davies MP at Portcullis House; the acceptance of John Rickus to speak at the June Gruffydd Lecture; Ian Edwards as Speaker at the Annual Dinner and the musical invitation to 'London Welsh Choir of the World' along with the privilege of the Society Member's Party in their own home. Berwyn so appreciated the honour of serving the Montgomeryshire Society in London.

**A Welsh Love Poem with a Montgomeryshire theme
written by Berwyn!**

Were all the hills of Maldwyn
In some massive mountain piled
Breidden, Plynlimon, Berwyn, Long Mynd the Keri Ridgway too,
I would climb them all, climb them all to reach you
Oh, how I love you.

Were all the rivers of Maldwyn in one mighty river joined,
Severn, Vyrnwy, Banwy, Cain and Able and Wye too

And all between us
I'd swim them, swim them all to reach you, oh how I love you.

Were all the forts of Maldwyn, in one great fortress linked
Powys and Montgomery, Forden Gaer, Hen Domen, Cefn
Bryntalch, and all in flames I'd jump them all, jump them all
to reach you.

Oh, how I love you...

See you Saturday outside Old Market Hall Llanidloes if it is
not raining!

Berwyn and Margaret enjoyed the happiest occasions in
'The Montgomeryshire Society,' when Berwyn met with friends
from his Llanfyllin school days and other connections with
the County.

It seemed that all he had achieved and enjoyed in life would find
its roots here, in the experiences of his home life in Montgomeryshire.

The family have been so appreciative of the kind words spoken
of him. It is difficult to include them all but appropriate to refer
to some.

*"I know Berwyn will be missed by many- he did a lot for the London
Welsh community- he was a leader."*

*"Berwyn will be so very much missed by us all - his warm smile,
gentle manner, endless supply of fascinating stories and deep love of
family, Wales and music. What a joyous and wonderful man...."*

*"Berwyn was a delightful man, and an excellent President of the
Montgomeryshire Society."*

*"His jovial and interesting presence will be missed by all. It was such
a pleasure to get to know him better during his year as President and I
was so impressed by the massive diversity of Berwyn's skills and interests."*

A huge thank you to the Montgomeryshire Society that
afforded Berwyn and Margaret the happiest and most enriching
of times in London.



*Receiving the Presidential Office from the previous President
Mr Andrew Lambert.*

<p><u>Unveiling of Catrin Glyndŵr Memorial</u> Cannon Street - City of London Sunday September 15th</p>		<p>Cafodd y gollod se chydunau gan Mr. Stradlyn Jones, ac fe'i chroffedl o garreg-las Gollgauer. Mae'r awyrlan ar fwrdd roboratodol, hyspwrdd, Mae'r llyfr, llyfr o wneidi y carreg y'r hyspwrdd yw awyrlan dau ffylar, mae'n gwasgordd at ymelydd. Mae'r cerbydau gwyrddolau ddeddfolau dnysoedd a phlyfr, mae'n rhyddid ac d mae hyspwrdd yw ddiolbyddolau mae'n Cymru. Richard Renshaw o Caerdydd Craywell a wnaithant y gollgauer.</p>	<p>This memorial was designed by Peterpridd as a relief and designer Mr. Stradlyn Jones and was carved from Gollgauer blue-stone. The design has a curving robotatolau form and a forewing line leading from the above base to a forested tip supporting two figures, a mother protecting her child. It represents the suffering of women and children in war whilst celebrating the archiving spirit of Wales. Richard Renshaw, based in Cornwall near Crickhowell has worked the Gollgauer stone.</p>
12.00 noon	<p>Opening Theme of the memorial, the suffering of women and children in war</p>	<p>Cyd-ffrwyd y protestant hyspwrdd Mervyn-Taylor 2000 yn hyspwrdd Mervyn-Taylor, Sgwyl hyspwrdd Prifodol mae'n awel i Gollgauer Glyndŵr 2000 o ddiolbyddolau, a ddiol yw awyrlan d dnysoeddau y llyfrdwydd. Mae'n hyspwrdd Owen Renshaw mae'n hyspwrdd Mervyn-Taylor, Sgwyl hyspwrdd.</p>	<p>The memorial project was co-ordinated by David Mervyn-Taylor, a descendant of the Harringtons of Herefordshire. One of Owen's daughters married into the Mervyn-Taylor family and reports suggest Owen Renshaw may be buried at Moxington Court in Herefordshire.</p>
12.10pm	<p>Dedication The Reverend Dafydd Owen</p>		
12.15pm	<p>Laying of Flowers At 'Hoehes' (sanctuary) Ysgol Anadolwy, Harloch</p>		
12.25pm	<p>Reading and Unveiling Sida Phillips</p>		
12.35pm	<p>Opening of 'Hoehes' - Public Access to Memorial</p>		
12.40pm	<p>Public Entertainment London Welsh Male Voice Choir</p>		
1.00pm	<p>Commemorative Lunch (Invitation only)</p>		
<p><i>As viewing access to the memorial sculpture is limited - guests to the reception (identified by wearing the enclosed ribbon) will be given priority.</i></p>		<p>Inscription Dedde hyspwrdd awel ac hyspwrdd Ac hyspwrdd yw hyspwrdd Ac hyspwrdd hyspwrdd Mervyn-Taylor</p>	

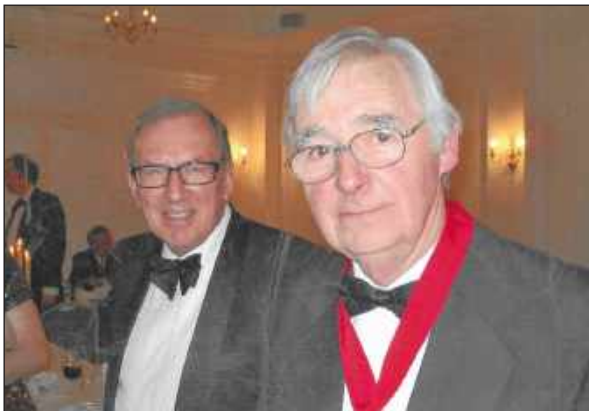
The Unveiling of the Catrin Glyndŵr Memorial in London.



A Speech of acceptance of the Presidency in the Danish Church.



One of the enjoyable Dinners attended with the Montgomeryshire Society at a gracious venue.



At the Annual Dinner with guest Speaker Mr Ian Edwards.

CINIO HAF

Noswaith o adloniant, cinio ac ocsiwn-er budd
Ysgol Gymraeg Llundain

7.00yh nos Wener, 8ed Fehefin 2018
The Inner Temple, Crown Office Row, London EC4Y 7HL
Llefarydd Gwadd: Y Fariwnes Tanni-Grey-Thompson



7.00pm, Friday, 8th June 2018
A summer's evening of Dinner, Auction and Entertainment
in support of The London Welsh School
The Inner Temple, Crown Office Row, London EC4Y 7HL
Guest Speaker: Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson

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£105 pp* (or £100pp for a table of 8-12).

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A Dinner in support of the London Welsh School.

DECIRAU
CANU
DECIRAU
CANMOL

Capel y Borough, Southwark,
Llundain
Nos Sul, 21 Hydref 2012
am 7 yr hwyr

*Berwyn enjoyed to support singing in the
Welsh Chapels in London.*



The annual dinner of the Montgomeryshire Society held at Gray's Inn, London, saw a reunion of forty pupils of Llanfyllin High School. Pictured are (from left) Mike Broomby, John Watkins, Berwyn Evans, Corina Cochran (nee Sigley), Ralph Broomby and Wynne Jones. They were all pupils at the school.

A Reunion of former Llanfyllin pupils in Gray's Inn Road London.

Montgomeryshire Society awards talented pupils

Members of the Montgomeryshire Society's Awards Committee have been presented to their pupils.

The award ceremony took place at the school on Monday, 11th July, and was attended by the pupils and their parents.

The pupils who were awarded were: John Watkins, Berwyn Evans, Corina Cochran (nee Sigley), Ralph Broomby and Wynne Jones.

The awards were presented by the President of the Montgomeryshire Society, Mr. John Watkins.

The awards were presented to the pupils at the school on Monday, 11th July.



Presenting awards as President of the Montgomeryshire Society to Schools in the area.



Presenting awards as President of the Montgomeryshire Society to Schools in the area.

‘THE MONTGOMERYSHIRE SOCIETY!’
and valued friendship.



Berwyn, Catherine, Clive, Liz and Malcolm on holiday at Champex

Life was full of fun with Berwyn and his humour would capture many an occasion. This initiated the forming of a subsidiary Montgomeryshire Society known as meetings of ‘THE Montgomeryshire Society!’

One of Berwyn’s first friendships would have been with Clive who is just a few months younger than Berwyn. Clive is the son of his mother’s good friend, when they were living in Llansantffraid, and the boys may have played together as toddlers. Clive’s family moved to Penybontfawr where his father was the village Constable, and his brother Malcolm was born. Their friendship would continue over the years.

Clive is now a retired teacher and lives in London. Malcolm, his younger brother and wife Catherine are living in Geneva. On Malcolm’s trips to the UK the three couples would meet at ‘The Club’ or a smart restaurant for time together, or more importantly, **‘THE Montgomery Society Meeting’!**

These were great fun as they created their own agenda with rules so ridiculous as to fall around with laughter!

For example, the instruction that the men should always be attired with an item of clothing showing loyalty to the County, i.e., sheep! The women suitably attired in knickers of modesty, preferably pantaloons with a large frill!

There was always the elected Chair and Hon. Sec. to take the minutes that must include news of pilgrimages to the Holy Land! This was sacred to them, but perhaps less so to the Cardiff Welsh, totally English and French wives, however they humoured their men! Seriously there was a great bond born in those early days and their shared love of Penybontfawr and the County.

It is also testament to the value of friendship that their mothers had sown the seeds for the lasting friendship they now enjoyed. Berwyn was very keen to visit Mr and Mrs Johnson, retired in Porthcawl, and show them his first-born child Alison. There were no happier times than these occasions and others together. Particularly remembered is a visit to Geneva and few days in Champex where Malcolm and Catherine have a chalet by the lake.

Another friendship that had continued through life was with Garonwy and his brother Hywel. Garonwy and Berwyn were small boys together in Llansantffraid and Garonwy remembers visiting Berwyn in Liverpool while he was in university there. Then, in their early professional years, they were both in Birmingham and shared a flat. This was the time of Berwyn meeting Margaret, the loss of his mother and later getting married from that flat. Berwyn also brought Garonwy to be first to see his new-born daughter in Birmingham maternity Hospital.

Years later Garonwy's two sons, working in London, joined for a time the LWMVC. This gave opportunity to meet again at an Albert Hall concert.

In the early years of marriage, Berwyn and Margaret moved to Cardiff and there they met with Garonwy's brother Hywel who was to be newly married and still lives in Cardiff.

Garonwy once said of Berwyn, "*there are two kinds of people in life, those that drain life from you and those who radiate life to others. Berwyn is a radiator!*"



*Berwyn, Malcom and Clive in their Youth
in Llansantffraid and Penybontfawr.*

*Mr and Mrs Johnson with Berwyn's mother
and father*

CHAPTER 12

Church Life and Tools with A Mission

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”

Hebrews 10:24-25



It was important to Berwyn and Margaret to attend a place of worship which had been St John’s Cathedral in Hong Kong and now in Orpington the local Baptist church.

Through this connection Berwyn was introduced to the ministry ‘Tools with a Mission’ (TWAM). This gave him special pleasure in collecting no longer required tools from people’s homes. It was

often a family member who had died, with all the history associated with the tools' use.

He then transported a load in his car with trailer to a huge depot in Ipswich where they are restored by volunteers and sent out to poor areas in Africa. Berwyn saw this not as a 'hand-out' but as a 'hand up' enabling people to make a living of their own. Practical Christianity was indwelt in Berwyn and he was always ready to help; possibly learnt in village life where people would live more naturally as one!

He would especially enjoy visiting Church and other groups to promote the ministry. On one or two occasions he worked on an entertaining script with a friend from the church playing his guitar. Music was never far from Berwyn's heart!

Berwyn writes: -

"I have to say I get real pleasure when I see/receive a box of a collection of gifts. To meet the givers, to hear the stories, often quite moving. Stories often of family loss, of family hobbies, of business trials and tribulations but always a willing gift. That sense of the mission to help even in a small way.

We all remember the Biblical pictures of the Carpenter King. The dusty square with bench and skilled man with his plane/ rudimentary tools. On the Hastings Road approaching Bromley the Church displays a slogan which makes you think. I like the one, 'Carpenter looking for JOINERS'! There is a difference. I was a Civil Engineer by profession. On the Contractors side. The dirty wellies brigade! I always admired the carpenters. You could tell where the skill was. Some who in less economic days were trained in joinery...the precise millimetres against the fast track big boarded requirements. The 8+4 panels!

And what about the women. Is that space beneath the stairs really meant to house the visionary knitting catalogues and needles, the bolts of dress making materials, the dreams of yesteryear! The sewing machine manual or even electric! There isn't a Homebase

or Focus DIY in KITWE Zambia, there aren't any hand me down sewing machines let alone needles and cotton.....largely a subsistence existence."

Tools with a Mission also collect no longer wanted sewing materials and sewing machines that can be put to economic use in these poorer communities. To be part of this ministry gave Berwyn great joy.

He helped and supported Margaret, who works with an international organisation ministering to persecuted Christians across the world. This has involved trips to China and South Korea and numerous conferences and events.

As a colleague wrote: - *"I remember how he would help assemble the stands for exhibitions and the bamboo prison bars he built for you to illustrate your talks- always there to lend a hand!"*

Also, a great support was his natural gift for hospitality to missionaries associated with Release International. They entertained more than 12 different nationalities over the years. Margaret knew they would be given a 'Welsh welcome', and he would show a keen interest in everything about them. He was the most perfect host and all she needed to do was prepare the meals and make them comfortable! They were all regaled with the story of Auntie Nansi, Telynores Maldwyn, as they tucked into their Kelloggs at breakfast!

Another colleague wrote: -

It has been a privilege to know Berwyn through our shared interest in Release's ministry. I know many visiting speakers from overseas have been blessed by your hospitality and fellowship they have shared with you both in recent years, (not to mention the instruction in the rules of rugby they have received from Berwyn)

Berwyn always found talking about sport was something most people would engage with, whether it was football, golf and most sports, but especially rugby!

When talking of rugby he would refer to the great event in South Africa when his hero Nelson Mandela had the vision to unite the

country's black and white people through the 1995 Rugby World Cup and this inspired the film 'Invictus'.

He also enjoyed to join the church Monday-morning golfers and the after-game chats and birthday breakfasts when he missed no opportunity to good naturedly fly the Welsh flag!

A missionary from the Ukraine writes: -

"I am very sad to hear that brother Berwyn has passed away (our dear Welsh brother) and I have not hope to see him anymore before I will come to heaven. I was always invited by him to pray in their house. The last time it was totally different. He said, "dear brother, let us pray" and he started to pray. The next morning – the same again. It is correct to say, that I prayed together with him but in fact I was able to hear his responsible and wise prayers."



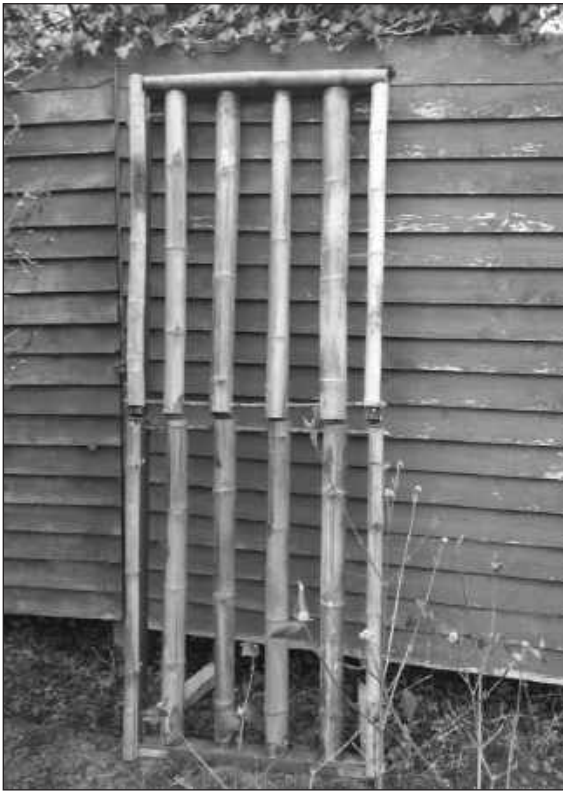
*Car and trailer loaded up at 'Lavender Cottage'
and ready for transport to Ipswich.*



Work room at the TWAM Depot in Ipswich.



Boxed up ready for the Containers at the TWAM Depot in Ipswich.



The bamboo prison bars Berwyn built for Margaret to use as a visual aid at talks and conferences with Release International.

CHAPTER 13

The Montgomeryshire Man

“Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

Matthew 25:21



Berwyn would quote Darwin as saying, *“If I could have my life again, I would make sure to listen to some music and read some poetry at least once a week.”*

Down House, the home of Charles Darwin, is not too far from Orpington and has been visited on several occasions.

It is recorded that Lady Hope, a British aristocrat, was with Darwin constantly before he died. He had become frail and bedridden and she said would assiduously study the Bible.

It could be said many base their unbelief on the writings of Darwin but he reportedly said, *“I was a young man with unformed*

ideas. I threw out queries, suggestions, wandering all the time over everything, and to my astonishment the ideas took like wildfire. People make a religion out of them."

Then he paused, and after a few more sentences on "*the holiness of God*" and "*the grandeur of the Book,*" looking at the Bible which he was holding tenderly at the time, he suddenly said, "*I have a summerhouse in the garden which holds about thirty people. It is over there,*" pointing through the open window. "*I want you very much to speak there. I know you read the Bible in villages. Tomorrow afternoon I would like the servants on the place, and a few of the neighbours to gather there. Will you speak to them?"*

"What shall I speak about?" she asked.

"Jesus Christ," he replied, "*and his salvation. Is not that the best theme? And I want you to sing some hymns with them. If you take the meeting at three o'clock this window will be open, and you will know that I am joining in with the singing."*

There is a summerhouse in the bottom of the garden at 'Lavender Cottage,' which looks oriental in style and a reminder of the years spent in the Far East. As Berwyn asked for, 'Mae D'eisiau di bob awr', to be played in his last days, he would surely be singing in harmony with his trusted friends in the Hong Kong and London Welsh Male Voice Choirs but most especially as the Montgomeryshire boy and man, singing in the Welsh chapels at home. The faith born and nurtured in him and so beautifully and profoundly expressed by the great hymn writers upheld him to the end.

Berwyn spoke these words at the Slough Welsh Society taken from a book written on Ffald-Y- Brenin, a Christian Retreat Centre Pembrokeshire: -

"The writer comments on talking with people about Wales and the revival, the presence of God and a specifically Welsh connectedness to the land...but it is said that this revival was stopped before it had run its course and that there is somewhere

a song to be sung that is buried. When is it released? We are the product of the land and the song is inspired within and for us.”

On another occasion he quoted the Welsh clergyman and politician, Revd Henry Richard, “*Not to forget the language of my country and the people and care of my country. And to neglect no opportunity of defending the character and promoting the interest of my country.*”

It could be said on that day when Berwyn discussed with Mary Bewley the disparaging remarks concerning the singing of the Welsh community at the St David’s Ball, and the initiative to form a Male Voice Choir to address the issue, was an effort to defend the honour of their rich heritage in Welsh culture.

Another respected Welsh person from Anglesey, Euren Scott, living in Hong Kong at that time, said of Berwyn, “*He is the best Ambassador for Wales Hong Kong has had.*”

As Berwyn became physically less able and quietly more reflective, with all that was required of him seemingly said and done, family would eclipse all he had achieved. As grateful as he was for every opportunity life had given him, he was mindful that he would live on in his children and grandchildren and they were his greatest joy and legacy. The Spirit that had enabled him to achieve so much remained strong and is a testament to all of his genuine faith.

He died on his eldest granddaughter’s 21st birthday. On the day she was born we were so excited for him to arrive and meet Miriam **Joy**. We now had to accept his departure on that very date. Being Easter time, our pastor was preaching on how the disciple’s ‘**sorrow turned to joy**’ on Easter day when they saw that Jesus was not dead but alive. We would in the evening celebrate Miriam Joy remembering that Jesus has overcome death.

What remains now is Berwyn’s love for the family he and Margaret have nurtured together, and for those values and gifts that he had honoured to continue still through the generations. Certainly, there is hospitality in their welcoming homes, music,

raconteurs and undivided support for the Welsh rugby team (with only a few exceptions when they play England!) Berwyn's last words to one of his sons-in-law, said with some feeling, were "***I might give you a red shirt Matt!***" The last family photograph taken just months before he left us, was watching Wales play Australia on a family weekend away in the Cotswolds.

At the time of Berwyn's service, it seemed so appropriate to have the Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir Presidential Badge attached to his casket.

This Montgomeryshire man had stayed true to his roots and to that which had been born and nurtured in him. The Hong Kong Male Voice Choir had stayed true to him, when over 70 men came together on Zoom to sing Gwahoddiad and play tribute.

Berwyn would say, "***Thank you Boys!***" and we the family say thank you Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir for honouring him.



The Summer House in the Garden.



*Berwyn Speaking at Slough Welsh Society at the St David's Day Dinner
when he mentions Ffaid-Y- Brenin.*



The family with Carlisle and Euren Scott taken in Portugal

CHAPTER 14

Conclusion

*“Lord you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.”*

Psalm 90:1-2



The Tanat Valley

The river Tanat flows from the foothills of the Berwyn mountains, from its source in Cwm Penant and Cwm Rhiwarth, two glacial valleys, before converging in Llangynog. It then meanders leisurely along the narrow valley, which is fairly flat, with green hills rising on either side. It crosses the border with England in Pen-bont-Llannerch Emrys before returning to Wales and finishes its journey when it joins up with the river Vyrnwy near Llansantffraid.

This could be a geographical description of Berwyn's life. Born at the foot of the Berwyn mountains in his much-loved Tanat valley and all his travels and the vicissitudes of life, each with its own experiences. Then his journey will end to rest in the burial ground at Llansantffraid, along with three generations of his family.

His mother, in his younger years as he left the house, would say, "*remember who you belong to!*" Berwyn was always mindful of his family and Welsh heritage.

In the words of the hymn, 'we shall meet again at Jesus' feet', the generations of Parry-Evans will be pleased to meet the 'Montgomeryshire Man', who has left his mark on the landscape he travelled.

So, it is my privilege as Berwyn's wife to write this tribute to his life. As I sit in his office chair I am reminded it is the same chair that he sat looking out of the window in his last days at home, and the same chair that he sat in during his last working days in London.

I consider the higher purpose of the Creator who was there before the mountains were formed and when a baby was born at the foot of the Berwyn mountains. He is the Creator of all we experience in life to use for the good of mankind. It was said by the Statesman Edmund Burke, (Irish political philosopher, 1750s): "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for the good men to do nothing." I remember seeing a large banner of this quote across a street in Antigua, the place of just one of our great holidays. Then another of his quotes, "People will never look forward to posterity, who never look back at their ancestors." Berwyn's appreciation not only of world history but of his own family history is testament to this.

In writing this tribute I feel that I have only touched the surface and ridden the waves beyond which is a great depth of ocean! This reminds me of the hymn we chose for Berwyn's service: -

“Here is love vast as the ocean,
Loving Kindness like a flood
When the King of love our ransom
Shed for us his precious blood.”

It is the ocean of God’s love that provides the waves of opportunities to live life to the full. Like a proficient surfer we have sometimes had to wait patiently to catch the waves of this vast ocean, but as we acknowledge the Creator, we see His hand. One of our biggest waves being the one that took us back to Hong Kong, but had I not caught the earlier wave to the Aelwyd in Birmingham all those years before, I would not be penning this!

In taking this analogy, there is pleasure in riding the waves. Berwyn found this when singing in male voice harmony and encouraging others, which resulted in founding of the successful Hong Kong Welsh Male Voice Choir. Also his pleasure in public speaking and compèring with the London Welsh Male Voice Choir.

This tribute would suggest every life tells a story that can be traced through the generations, and every life is equally unique and precious. It would be folly to think that one can assume another’s heritage and not live that of their own. Maybe we can trace through the generations the path that has guided us into the purposes for which we were created. There is the battle for good to prevail and is won by recognising that love is not a feeling but a way of life.

At his last major compèring engagement at Canterbury Cathedral, Berwyn encouraged the audience to go on a spiritual journey along with the words and music of the hymns and songs.

It was after this concert that it was suggested that he had been ‘too churchy’ despite being in one of the most recognised churches in the nation, singing the hymns and music inspired by the Creator.

Berwyn struggled to make sense of the comment. There was no answer but to draw strength from the God in whom he trusted and the same hymns that sustained him in his failing health which he faced with sacrificial love and fortitude.

In his last days, Berwyn asked me to bring some red wine. Taking a sip, he shared it with me saying, ***“You take some. He shed His blood for us; in fact, He poured out His blood”*** and then emphasised, ***“and we did it to Him!”***

This is the Gospel message: that we are all not without sin and we all need a Saviour. It is He who has gone before us and conquered death, opening the way to eternal life. It is written, “when the Son of Man comes will He find faith on Earth?” [Luke chapter 18 verse 8]. Wales, of all nations in the world has known some of the greatest movements of God and has a heritage that would be folly to ignore.

Berwyn was content that all he had lived and loved would live on and he is now resting in the love of God until the day we shall most surely meet again. He enriched the lives of many and none more so than my own and that of his devoted family.

Rest well my darling.

Gorffwys yn dda fy cariad.



The empty office chair where Berwyn spent his last career days and then to sit the last days looking out of the bedroom window at home and from which this Tribute is written.



Lavender Cottage in the Spring with the Japanese Cherry tree in full bloom



Family at Llansantffraid 2010



*Matthew, Alison, David, John and Miriam Joy Cakebread
taken at John's graduation (2019)*



*Nerys and Pete Edwards with son Toby Berwyn Clive
taken at Birdland, Bourton-on-the-Water (2016)*



*Peter, Christina, Isabella Cerys and Emilia Grace Evans
taken on a holiday in Hong Kong (2016)*



The perfect Taid!



One of the many lovely cruises with good friends Richard and Lesley



*Sun set over the Berwyn mountains. Ai am Fod Haul yn Macblud
And so the sun is now setting*



51st Wedding Anniversary. September 2019