



## an extract from "In Tune"

### The Quarterly Newsletter from the Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir

#### *The Lakeland and Scottish Tour*

An early start marred only by some early morning traffic saw us away on a beautiful bright clear morning. Progress was without incident as we made our way northward, arriving at Kendal pretty well on time. The hotel overlooking the River Kent was promising and the accommodations fine, we were, however, still to find the food and service somewhat wanting. A major refurbishment at the hotel was obviously stretching the hotel management but after dinner that evening, there was the planned meeting with the Kendal Male Voice Choir fresh from another commitment. They arrived in force and the Afterglow was soon underway, each choir offering their own favourites soon to be taken up by the other choir to whom many were equally well known. It was refreshing to have pieces introduced which were less often included and the evening was a great success, our guests less anxious to leave, than the barman was to close the bar.



Next day, again bright and sunny, there was time to explore Kendal before our evening concert at Grasmere. As so often happens when one packs to travel, there were the usual items that had been forgotten. The time in Kendal provided the perfect opportunity to fill these gaps so a leg stretching expedition into the town was initiated. Now the odds and ends required should have been easily obtained but thinking 'One stop shopping', enquiries were made as to where was there a nearby supermarket? 'Oh yes' was the reply 'Turn left, turn first right and straight on. It's a little way'. Undaunted a start

was made. Left, first right and there we were right in the Station Yard! More enquiries for directions. 'Oh yes, down passed the station entrance under the railway bridge and straight on, It's a little way but you can't miss it'. Ah! A fork in the road ..... to the right or to the left? More enquiries for directions. Oh yes keep going on the right fork. It's on your left, a little way but you can't miss it.

By now the perennial country mile mark had been approached, no passed, it was perhaps an ominous sign that neat house fronts were giving way to open fields and dry stone walling. Thoughts very present at that moment were b----- the shopping, a retracing of steps seemed a very reasonable consideration. Last night, however, 'Walking members' had been planning a twenty-mile trundle over mountain and dale so perhaps one should not surrender too soon. The road ahead dipped over the brow and Halleluiah! there below, lay a cluster of buildings proudly displaying a Supermarket sign. The pace quickened, the shopping was rapidly completed and the ready position for the return was on. Suddenly the bags felt exceptionally heavy, the distance back enormous. 'Can you get a bus back into town from here?' 'Oh yes, over there by the arch. You've just missed one!'

Return to base was accomplished, success somewhat scathingly greeted by 'Where have you been all the afternoon?'

That evening we made our way to Grasmere for the Evening concert. Grasmere church proved to be in a delightful setting, if offering something of an acoustic challenge in regard to a rather unusual architectural form. A single pitched roof was suspended over a massive central wall running the length of the church pierced by arches connecting the two sides. Eyes were raised! but it was thought that rural as it was, the audience anticipated might well be accommodated on one side. How wrong they were, the church was packed and the overflow side, if one might call it that, was generously filled and they were greatly appreciative of the offerings by the choir, a delightful local soloist, a ladies group and a budding guitarist. Members of the Kendal Choir, with us on the previous evening were in the audience and joined us on stage for our final number. One cannot fail to mention the excellence of pianist accompanying us. No less a person than the Director of Music for the Kendal Choir, Not a spontaneous gesture but one arranged and accomplished by the close co-operation and camaraderie between our respective committees.



This was not the end of the evening's entertainment however. The coach to take us back to Kendal had to reach a spot in a country lane in darkness and was slightly delayed so our party assembled at the appointed pick up point and were saved from chanting 'Why are we waiting' by the arrival of the carrier of the 'CD Sales Dispenser'. This as you may or may not know is a wooden box filled with discs for after concert sales. If you are lucky or unlucky enough to have had the job of carting this back to the coach, it is both awkward and heavy to handle. On this occasion, however, the carrier treated us to an impromptu Tommy Cooper send up of the situation with the box as his imaginary friend and had everyone in stitches and high good humour until the coach arrived.

*Music at St Oswalds Church*



On then, and over the border to foreign lands. A happy circumstance made our arrival at our hotel in Dumfries co-inside with the birthday of the sister of one of our members. He although fortunate in having a great Welsh given name has made no effort to surrender the Scots dialect with which he grew up. Here it cannot be understated how much his co-operation with the committee, and indeed the co-operation of his whole family did to make the Scottish end of the tour a great success. The concert venue was again well filled and our co-operation with the Dalgarno Singers was very well received. The proceeds for charity were excellent and the intention to use some of these to improve or help to maintain local mini bus services in a rural area where they are of such importance seems a great community idea.

Digressing for a moment, back to our arrival at the hotel and our mention of birthdays. As so often happens with group arrivals at hotels, the lobby of the hotel was for a short while the scene of hectic activity whilst people sorted out luggage and room numbers. Almost as soon as it happened however, the rush cleared away and one tail ender arriving at the desk to collect the key found there on the desk a neat pristine envelope sealed and addressed with only a single name. It was passed to the desk clerk with the query 'Is this yours?' 'Noo it's noo mine'.

Subsequent discussion as to how the intended recipient might be determined resulted in the envelope being jointly opened hopefully to proceed matters. It seems to have completely escaped both well intended individuals that, had they simply left it where it was, the sender or recipient would no doubt have turned up to collect it. Now as ladies sometimes do, the envelope, when opened, did not have the flap gently raised or the top neatly slit open. No, the matter was in the hands of a 'tearer' and the envelope was devastated beyond salvage and repair. Whoops what now! Once the sender had been determined the situation had to be retrieved, Dispensing with the savaged envelope now beyond the

help of cellotape or brown sticky tape. The nearest manila commercial size was produced by the clerk. As you can guess a non-standard greeting card size was not available, so the choice was.... fold the card? no! no! out of the question, or pop it into an envelope considerably oversized to be readdressed as before but in an unfamiliar hand. Suffice it to say that profuse apologies were made and accepted and the card reached its addressee with red-faced do gooders suitably chastened

But to return to the after concert arrangements; a truly enormous spread had been laid on in the local village hall, where another spectacular Afterglow was held and made all the more enjoyable by the participation of ladies of the Dalgarno Singers with some of their pieces and Scottish Airs. Thanks, thanks and thanks again for a great reception.

Our final stop at Penrith for our tour banquet was another winner and rather than repeat notes on our subsequent singing. The feature of the evening was a quite unexpected and highly amusing presentation by one member, who unknown to us all had been planted, as what is known as a *sleeper* by the Germans at the end of World War II. Dormant all these years but now activated by certain key words Herr Flick, brooking no interruptions explained his strange circumstances and in the process appraised a number of Choir personalities. Had there been any he would most certainly have had us rolling in the aisles.

Home again and one can reflect on a great trip, if you have not been on one of these jaunts, take note they are to be highly recommended.



### **The Scottish Tour Song**

Oh we went up to the lowlands of Scotland  
We drove there in Graham's red bus  
He calls it "Goldline" and he drives it real fine  
And so say the ladies and us.

The first day we landed in Kendal  
The home of mint cake and K-Shoes  
And sang with the latter's own choir  
So sweetly, you just couldn't choose.

#### *Chorus*

*Singing too ral ay, oo ral ay addy  
We drove there in Graham's red bus  
He calls it "Goldline" and he drives it real fine  
And so say the ladies and us.*

On Thursday some lads hit the mountains,  
And others the sights of Bowness  
In concert that night in Grasmere  
They loved it, the audience confessed

#### *Chorus*

On Friday we drove up to Dumfries,  
The home of dear old Rabbie Burns  
We sang in Thornhill and gave them a thrill  
In the church hall Delgarno took turns.

#### *Chorus*

As we came home via Shap Wells Hotel  
And stopped for a dinner that night.  
We sang in the bar about how we'd come far  
And the ladies just laughed and got tight!

Most of the blame goes to Lyn Davies, other bits by Phil Gibbs, with apologies to Max Boyce!

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