

# CÔR MEIBION Y FFLINT FLINT MALE VOICE CHOIR

Everything you need to know and how  
to find out more



Côr Meibion Y Fflint / Flint Male Voice Choir is governed by a Constitution and Rules and is managed by a committee elected annually

# Membership Handbook

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## 2020 Choir Committee & Leadership.

<b>Choir role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Choir section</b>
Music Director	Huw Dunley	In front
Pianist	Christopher Enston	At the piano
Chairman	Gwyn Lloyd-Hughes	Tenor 1
Mentor/Welfare	Mike Stenhouse	Tenor 2
Treasurer	Graham Osborne	Bass 1
Secretary	Rick Hirons	Tenor 2
Concert secretary	Eric Lambert	Tenor 1
Ticket secretary	Dennis Wyn Jones	Bass 1
Recruitment officer	Leslie Lloyd	Tenor 2
Transport	Gareth Dunn	Tenor 1
Registrar	Ken Salter	Tenor 1
Stage Manger	Darren Grief	Bass 1
Wardrobe	Tony Wynne	Tenor 1
Sec Young Musicians Fund	Tony Wynne	Tenor 1
Health/Safety	Mark Williams	Bass 1
Librarian	John O'Brien	Bass 2
Section Leader	Tony Wynn	Tenor 1
Section Leader	Dave Weedall	Tenor 2
Section Leader	Dennis Wyn Jones	Bass 1
Section Leader	John O'Brien	Bass 2

# The people you should know

There are around seventy people in the choir if you include the music team. It will take a while to get know them all so concentrate on the list below.

Our musical director is - Huw Dunley - [Huw took over as MD in 2006 until 2016. We are delighted to be able to welcome Huw back as our full time MD taking us forward once again. Huw stands in front conducting the choir. You will meet him early in your choir career when he facilitates your voice range test. You can find out more about Huw on the choirs' music team website.](#)

The recruitment officer - Leslie Lloyd - [will look after you from the moment you first arrive. He may be in a different section to yours but he will keep in touch with you to see how you are getting on.](#)

Choir secretary - Richard Hirons - [is responsible for the general running of the choir through taking and the circulating minutes of meetings etc.](#)

Your Section Leader [is the most important member of the choir during your early months. He is a member of your section and will spend time helping you and monitoring your progress.](#)

Your Section mentor [is an experienced member of your section. He may be the Section Leader himself but, either way, your mentor's job is to look after you and help sort out any problems.](#)

The Choir's Mentor - Mike Stenhouse - [is an experienced member of the choir who gives up his personal time to help members, especially new members, on a 1-2-1 basis in 2hr sessions, get to grips with the current repertoire.](#)

The Treasurer - Graham Osborne - [will quickly make contact to arrange your music deposit. If he is in another section, you may not have much more to do with him until other payments are due.](#)

The Stage Manager - Darren Grief - [will have little contact with you, especially if he is in another section, until you are ready for staging.](#)

Our Rehearsal Accompanist is Christopher Enston. [Christopher plays at the piano for each rehearsal and in concerts. If you need to check some of the notes in a piece or gain a clearer understanding of your Welsh pronunciation, you can usually ask Chris at break time. You can find out more information about Christopher on the choirs' music team website.](#)

First Aiders - [The choir has a number of trained first aiders whose job it is to be on hand to assist in the event of any illness with a member or emergency that may arise until professional help can be sought. At rehearsals, the name of the first aider will be displayed for all to see. The designated choir members carry a first aid bag and a defibrillator to every rehearsal and concert. A new member will be requested to give the first aiders certain information of any medical condition appertaining to them by filling in a short form. It must be emphasised that a choir member has a responsibility for their own health and safety and should let his section leader or stage manager know if he is not physically fit to be staged, particularly for a concert.](#)

## Probation

If you are reading this, then it is most likely that you have decided to 'give the choir a try' and you are now in your Three-month probationary period.

You now have three months to experience what goes on in the choir without any commitment.

During this time, you will need your own set of music for which a £60 refundable\*\* deposit is required (payable to the Treasurer)

*\*\*If you leave within the three months' probation period the Treasurer will give you back your £60 deposit. After the three months, it becomes a payment towards your annual subscriptions (£60 in 2020).*

***Please note that in the event of leaving the choir you must return all the pieces of music. If you are a staged member you are also required to return the choir uniform (blazer and trousers), evening suit (jacket and trousers), waistcoats, ties (dickie bows), coats and blouson and any polo shirts.***

You need to attend as many rehearsals as you can and work as much as you can in your own time to learn the choir's repertoire. Before you know it, you will be ready to stage in your first concert.

It is worth all the effort, we have all been through it and will help you as much as we can.

## Rehearsals

### **Where:**

We always rehearse in the schoolroom of the Emaus Methodist Church, Holywell Road, Flint

### **When:**

19:15 to 21:15 on Wednesdays and Sundays.

### **Exceptions:**

The exception is every bank holiday weekend when there is no Sunday rehearsal and we have a short break over Christmas and New Year.

There is **ample parking** on the opposite side of the road in front of the Richard Heights' flats. You can also park along the road, which runs along the railway wall leading to the town hall square. Parking in the Ship car park should be avoided, particularly as their management are keen to charge!

**We try to start on time.** Try to arrive shortly after 7pm to be in your seat and ready to start singing at 7:15

There may be occasions when you arrive late, please be mindful of the rehearsal in progress and await a suitable break before taking your seat.

## Rehearsal Attendance

It is important that you **try to come to as many rehearsals as you can** because you will learn faster. You will also gain first hand from the Musical Director's help and expertise which you cannot get at home. Learning how to improve your singing is as important as learning the notes and words.

If you cannot come, please pass on your apologies to a member of your section or the Registrar or your Section Leader.

**The Registrar - Ken Salter - keeps a record of attendance.** This is required to ensure that staged members have attended sufficient rehearsals to remain on stage. If you fall below the required minimum – maybe for illness or extended holidays – you will need to recover the ratio before being on stage again.

## Rehearsal Room Layout

The choirs' seating arrangement is **in sections** of four rows, as choristers normally appear on stage.

From left to right (facing the choir) the choir sections are as follows:

- **The second tenors.** Are at the left hand side of the choir, they usually have a difficult part to sing because their notes are often close to the first tenors' notes.
- **The first tenors.** Come next they sing the highest notes; usually their line is the melody line.
- **The first bass or baritones.** They have the normal range for a typical man's voice. Like the second tenors, the first bass notes are usually to make up a nice chord to support the melody line sung by the first tenors.
- **The second bass** are at the right hand end of the choir, they sing the deepest notes.

The **Music Director** (aka 'conductor') stands in front of the choir and conducts the choir with the piano and **Accompanist** to his left (in front of the first tenors).

# Rehearsal Format

At the start of a rehearsal, the Music Director will often spend perhaps fifteen minutes on **voice production exercises**. He will sometimes use a special set of exercises. Every choir member has his own copy of these exercises and your Section Leader will make sure you have one. They are important and help us all to improve our voices. Improvement is very gradual but in time, you will notice a difference.

**In a normal rehearsal**, the Music Director may spend time going through the notes of a brand new piece, and then we are all in the same boat. When we try to sing the new notes, we will make mistakes but it does not matter, gradually we get it right and this is when you can join in most easily.

The choir also re-learns pieces, which have been **out of the repertoire for a while**. This is not so easy for a new member because many of the choristers will soon familiarise themselves with such a piece, but you might not be alone as there might be other members who were not in the choir when we last sang it. The best solution is to use choir practice recordings at home.

The Music Director might also **spend time on pieces that the choir has already learned**. In this case, he will spend most time on how the choir sings a piece rather than the notes but he may also correct any faulty notes that he might hear. Again, the best option for you is to use choir practice music at home.

In addition to notes, the Music Director will also **clarify the pronunciation of words**, we sing in several languages but primarily Welsh and English. The county of Flintshire and the choir is predominantly English speaking. A Welsh speaker is usually available to help us with pronunciation when required.

**A concert rehearsal** usually takes place in the week before a concert is due. This is the best chance for you to hear pieces that the choir does not rehearse very often because the choristers know them very well. You will have to learn these pieces mostly in your own time but the choir's practice recordings will really help.

About ten past eight, **we have a break**. If you are a smoker, you can join the other lads outside the front of the building. Toilet facilities are located at the end of the rehearsal room by the second tenor section.

Every Wednesday there is a raffle the aim of which is to raise money and increase the funds of the choir, please try to support the raffle by buying one ticket for a pound or three tickets for two pound. The prize is usually a litre bottle of whisky, the winner of which is announced during the half period.

After the ten-minute break, the choristers resume their seats and the choir Chairman will usually spend a couple of minutes giving members **important information and news**. When a concert is due, the Stage Manager will speak to the choir after the Chairman has finished and will take a roll call of who is available for the concert.

**The second half of the rehearsal** is similar to the first and usually ends within a minute or two of 21:15. When the Music Director calls an end to the rehearsal, the last job is to stack the chairs against the back wall. Then it is time to go home.

## Progression

Once you have completed the **first three months** you are through your probation period. You now must learn enough music to be able to sing in a concert without using any copies. How long this takes is down to the commitment you can put in to learn the pieces. This period is your **preparation for 'staging'**.

## Conducting

**Singing without copies**, (music in hand) is a strong tradition in male voice choirs and means that every one is looking at the conductor. He can then control the choir and its performance to give the best results.

You have to get used to following the conductor. He will beat the time, show you when to start singing and when to stop. Sometimes a note has what is called a "conductor's pause". This means that he can hold it for as long as he likes. You need to be watching him to avoid coming off (from singing the note) too early or too late.

The conductor also conveys when he wants you to sing quieter or louder. He controls the performance to get the best out of the choir. It sounds complicated but, as long as you come to plenty of rehearsals, you will soon pick it up.

## Section Leaders

It is your Sections Leader's job to **help you learn the music and to monitor your** progress. He will introduce you to the Treasurer and once you have paid your deposit, he will get you a set of music from the choir librarian. He will also get you a set of the voice production exercise books.

Sometimes your Section Leader will look after you in rehearsals until you are able to go on stage but usually he will **assign you a mentor from within the section**. You will sit by your mentor and he will help you to follow what is going on, give you advice and generally will help you make progress.

## Mentoring and learning Aids

The choir website has a '**members only**' section (ask the Recruitment Officer for the current password) which is packed full of learning aids from how to 'role your r's' to how to pronounce Welsh words as well as vocal and music reading help, information about forthcoming concerts and other need to know info.

If you are retired and/or can fit in **two-hour mentoring sessions** your Section Leader will introduce you to the choir mentor who will give you 'one to one' help with learning your music.

The choir has a full set of **section recordings** for the whole choir repertoire. Each Section Leader has a set for his own section. The recording tracks have the piano and all the other parts but the section's own line is much louder. The Section Leader will arrange for you to have a set of recordings for you. The best way of using the recordings is for you to listen to just one piece and use its music copy to try to sing your line. **Keep going over the**



**piece until it starts to stick.** If you have an iPod or other MP3 player, you could use your computer to copy the recordings onto it or your Section Leader will do it for you.

If you have difficulty **pronouncing Welsh words**, ask the Section Leader for help. He will arrange some one-to-one tuition for you. It is best to try to learn the Welsh alphabet rather than using phonetic spellings of the Welsh words. It pays most dividends in the end. Most rehearsals also cover Welsh pronunciation.

## Staging

The Section Leader will produce a **list of the pieces** that you should spend your own time learning and with your mentor, he will use this list to monitor your progress. Once you can sing these pieces without copies he will recommend to the Music Director that you are ready for staging in a nominated concert.

It usually takes between six months and a year to reach this position and it depends on how much work you can put in at home. A good idea is to make your own CDs and play them in your car as you drive. You will start to learn the notes for some pieces without realising it.

When **your staging date is agreed**, the choir's Recruitment Officer will notify the Stage Manager and will tell the choir's Wardrobe Manager who will arrange a set of uniforms for you.

The Wardrobe Manager will try to fit you out with uniforms from the choir's stock; otherwise he will have to order uniforms from our suppliers. You will have to pay the Treasurer a standard **uniform levy** that covers part of the cost (£100 in 2020)

Even when you are a staged member of the choir your **learning and improvement**, as for the rest of us, will carry on, in fact it **will never stop**.

## The choir's repertoire and music copies

The choir has **over three hundred pieces of music** in its repertoire. Many of them have English words but a number of them are in Welsh. There are also Latin, French, German, and Italian pieces and a small number in other languages like Russian and Czech. Do not worry. Most of us do not speak these languages either but we all manage to learn to sing them.

The choir **has many styles of music**, which range from well-known Welsh hymns to motets that are hundreds of years old. We have modern pop songs, songs from the shows, Victorian ballads and powerful heroic pieces. There is music to suit everyone. Each one has a unique library number stamped on every copy.

There are only about fifty pieces in **the live repertoire** at one time and you need to bring all of them to every practice. Every eighteen months or so, the choir's music committee will change to a new live repertoire to make sure pieces do not become stale and lose their audience appeal. It also keeps up the interest for us choristers. Sometimes a change is good for recharging the batteries.

When you first join the choir **the librarian will give you music copies** for the full repertoire. He will also give you a list with the live pieces' names and numbers. It is best to put this with the copies in a folder of some sort to make it easier to find them during a rehearsal.

## Music Copy Layout

Our choir uses copies that are in **staff or old notation**. If you are not familiar with this your Section Leader will help explain it to you and will lend you a copy of the choir's stock of the "**How to read music**" book. This is excellent for learning the basics.

- a music copy is laid out in blocks or "systems
- first line of music notes is for the first tenors,
- second line of music notes is for the second tenors,
- third line of music notes is for the first bass
- fourth line of music notes is for the second bass
- fifth and sixth lines of music notes are for the piano

Sometimes the first and second tenors' notes are on the same line and the same applies to the basses. In this case, the first tenors' notes have their stems pointing upwards and the second tenors' notes point down. The same applies to the basses.

You can make notes on your copies but they **must** be in pencil. A good idea is to put a cross against your section's line of music all the way from the beginning to the end because it is easy to lose track in a copy when you are not used to it. Just follow the crosses and you will be OK.

## The costs associated with the choir

**The choir sets its subscriptions every year**, in 2020 it is £60. The year starts on April 1<sup>st</sup> and you should pay your subs to the Treasurer before the choir AGM at the end of April.

When you first join the choir, you will have to pay a **£60 deposit** on your music. If you leave within the first three months, the Treasurer will refund it to you. After three months, it becomes your subscription for the first year.

The good news is that only **pay from the month you joined**. For example, if you join the choir in October you only pay half the subscription. What remains goes towards your next year's subscription when it's due.

**Uniforms have a very high cost** and the choir pays most of it, however we do ask you to pay a standard levy towards it. In 2020, this levy is £100.

**Choir tours** may happen several times a year. Sometimes they are just a **long weekend** that involves one particular engagement. In some cases, (e.g. the ten-day Inter-Celtic Festival in Lorient, Brittany) the venue may pay all of the choir's costs and choristers can

go free. For other trips, a chorister may have to pay all or part of his own costs and the full cost for his wife or partner if she comes with him.

**Fund raising** is vital for the choir to survive. It also enables the choir to pay towards choristers' costs for some trips. The **choir raffles** a bottle of whisky or pack of beer at every Wednesday rehearsal. It is only a couple of pounds and we hope you will support these weekly fund-raising activities. Ask your Section Leader to show you what to do.

**Ticket sales (Ticket Secretary - Dennis Wyn Jones -)** are our most important way of raising money. We have tickets for all the concerts that we do for other people but, once a year we also put on our own fund-raising concert (currently paused). We need all **choir members to sell these tickets** to their wives, neighbours, friends, family, etc. The choir's ticket secretary will usually be selling them at the beginning of a rehearsal or at half time. He will probably call out to remind choristers and you will soon spot who he is.

Please note that you should make all cheques payable to "Flint Male Voice Choir"

## Who runs the choir?

The choir has three officers who are the stewards of the choir. They are

- **The Chairperson - Gwyn Lloyd-Hughes** - who chairs a monthly committee meeting and is the choir's representative when dealing with outside organisations. He also keeps the choir informed of current events and developments at each choir rehearsal.
- **The Secretary - Rick Hiron** - who looks after the choir's administration. He organises various meetings including the monthly committee meeting and the AGM, and writes up the meetings' minutes.
- **The Treasurer - Graham Osborne** - who keeps the choir's books, collects, and manages its money.

The choir has its **AGM** (annual general meeting) in late April. At the meeting the choir will elect 10 members to serve on a committee along with the officers. The Chair gives these committee members specific jobs to do. A **Vice Chairman** will also be chosen at the first meeting, his role is to act when the Chair of the choir is absent.

**The various committee responsibilities are detailed in the choir's Constitution and Rule Book.** This document also includes the choir rules and it is a good idea to read them up. Ask your mentor or Section Leader to get you a copy from the Choir Secretary.

**The choir's committee meets monthly** to administer the choir and to discuss issues and plans. After a meeting, each section has a copy of the minutes to circulate amongst its members. When you get a chance, read these minutes to keep yourself informed.

**If you have an idea or an observation** that you want the committee to discuss simply ask a committee member to raise it for you. Your Section Leader will point out who they are.

**If you have a suggested change to the choir**, you can formulate a proposal for discussion and choir vote at the AGM. The choir's Constitution and Rule Book tells you how to do this.

**Once you have completed your three-month probation**, you can vote at the AGM and put yourself up to become an elected officer or a member of the committee if you are interested.

## What does the choir do and how do I get involved?

The choir's main purpose is to perform in public concerts. When someone asks the choir's Concert Secretary if the choir will perform at their event, he first checks to see if there are vacancies in the choir's concert diary. The choir usually does just one concert in a month. If the diary is full then the choir usually has to turn them down. Where the diary has a vacancy, the choir's committee decides whether to accept the request or turn it down. It's usually "first come first served".

The following is a list of typical choir engagements.

- **Concerts organised by charity organisations.** There are about seven or eight of these a year and the charity groups organise them to raise money for their own funds. These are normally held on Saturday nights.
- **Concerts for private groups.** The private group engages the choir for a fee and they also organise everything.
- **Weddings.** The choir charges a fee and might do three or four of these a year. They are good for choir funds but they take place during the middle part of a Saturday. This can cause problems sometimes.
- **Competitions** such as the Cor Cymru competition run by S4C enable the choir to compete for prize money against other choirs. The choir has been very successful over the years and does one or two a year.
- **Concerts for the choir's own funds.** These are a very important source of income for the choir. We organise them and usually do one of these a year.
- **Tours within the UK and abroad** let the choir members relax and enjoy themselves. Choristers often take their wives and partners
- **The choir also records a CD** every few years. Sales to our audiences, friends, family, and via retail outlets all bring in revenue to the choir.

**Once you have staged, you can take part in all of the above events.** When one is due, the Stage Manager will take a register and he will call out your name along with the rest of the choir's staged members. If you can go to the engagement just say "yes".

**If the venue is away from our area**, the choir will arrange buses. You will need to put your name on a suitable bus list depending on where you want to catch the bus. You can of course still travel to the venue in your own car if you prefer.

In the case of tours, choristers usually have to pay the Treasurer **a deposit** of some sort. This **confirms that you are committed to going**. You will also have to make sure that your name is on any bus and rooming lists. They will normally be pinned to the choir notice board. If you are in doubt about anything, speak to the choir's concert secretary.

## How do I find out what is going on?

The most important sources of choir information are:

- **The Chairman's announcements at rehearsal half time.** They will give you information, and summarise choir developments, issues and plans.
- **The Stage Manager.** He will tell members, also at half time, which uniforms to wear and who is eligible for staging in a particular concert.
- **The Notice board.** It will give you information about bus and rooming lists, concert music programmes and other general information.
- **The Choirs Website and members only pages.** These are updated constantly.
- **The committee minutes.** They appear every month and will inform you about committee decisions and plans.
- **The choir Constitution and Rule Book.** This will tell you the choir rules.
- **The concert diary.** The Concert Secretary issues this to every member. It will tell you what concerts and engagements the choir has for the next twelve months. Sometimes the chair will announce changes to the concert diary and it is a good idea to try and keep your own copy up to date. **The choir website always holds the current diary** with as much information about the event as is known at the time.

End.