

I find myself in some difficulty this time around, along with lots of other people in Australia. At time of writing this we could feel quite sorry for ourselves if it weren't for the dreadful lockdowns in Sydney, briefly Brisbane, and now Melbourne, not to mention the huge problems in Indonesia.



photo:-- Michelle Nguyen



Michelle Nguyen, our Principal Accompanist is touring with Opera Australia's *Carmen*, and was about to cross into Northern Territory at the end of July. She was feeling as though COVID was chasing her around the country. She reported that the Tasmanian leg of the tour was cancelled, and there have been other cancellations as well. Understandably, home seemed a long way away.

A later update saw Michelle arriving home after "conquering Northern Territory and Western Australia." There were some alterations to the

schedule to accommodate lockdowns, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Darwin were visited, with some minor lockdown worries, then Margaret River and Albany in the West. Quite an adventure!

For our overseas readers I should record that Australia's vaccination rate is extremely low – 15.4% are fully vaccinated as at 1<sup>st</sup> August. 31.6% by the 25<sup>th</sup>. It's been a busy month. Our Prime Minister famously declared that "this isn't a race" earlier in the year. It is one of those statements that politicians live to regret.

We staggered through a couple of masked rehearsals in July, and August opened with Tenors 1 and 2 rehearsing one week (one section at a time,) and baritones and basses on the alternate week. This makes any kind of harmonic balance difficult to achieve, and it doesn't help *esprit de corps* either. Currently, governments state and federal are lifting their sights to aim at 70 – 80% vaccinated before we can be confident in planning forward long term. Meanwhile, we are once again in full lockdown as I write this in the last week of August. Back to Zoom!

Happily, things appear to be moving in Tenby in Wales at last. Weekly rehearsals began on July 19<sup>th</sup>. Apparently, a Thursday rehearsal was customary as well, but has been held in abeyance for the moment. We are currently in the holiday season in UK, and Government has decided that no concerts/public performances should be undertaken this summer. As for our own choir, no concerts mean considerably reduced income.

More positively, the Tenby choir is now installed in its new clubroom at Augustus Place. Let's hope it's onward and upward from here for them.



It has been pointed out to me that this year the Royal Albert Hall in London celebrates 150 years of service to theatregoers. For Welsh choirs around the world this is of more than passing interest, since the Hall is the preferred venue for the massed choirs (1000 voices) extravaganzas that occur every few years



Albert Hall Photos: Google images

Here we all are in those happier times when overseas travel was a genuine option. At the moment we can't get to perform in Box Hill!



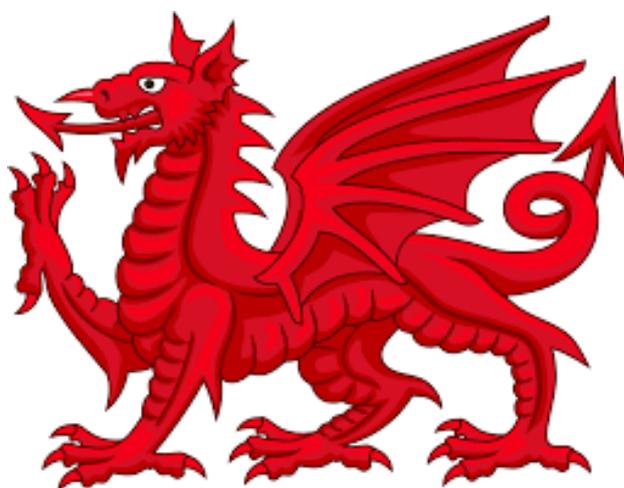
Ah, well! Maybe in a few year's time.

The Dragon has long been the distinctive emblem of Wales. One legend recalls Romano-British soldiers carrying the red dragon (Draco) to Rome on their banners in the fourth-century, but it could be even older than that.

It is considered that the Welsh kings of Aberffraw first adopted the dragon in the early fifth century in order to symbolise their power and authority after the Romans withdrew from Britain. Later, around

the seventh century, it became known as the Red Dragon of Cadwaladr, King of Gwynedd from 655 to 682.

Owain Glyndwr, Shakespeare's villain, and prominent Welsh nationalist, famously raised a Golden Dragon Standard in 1401.



google image

It appears not only on the Welsh Flag itself, but features also on the flags of Welsh groups all over the world – the Patagonian settlements of the nineteenth century leap to mind as an instance.

Our ever-alert Secretary has unearthed the newly discovered Australian dragon, *Thapunngaka shawi*.



With a seven metre wingspan and forty teeth this was a formidable creature. Australia must have had its moments 105 million years ago. The remains were unearthed in Queensland.

### Vale John Lansdowne



John Lansdowne joined the choir in 2010. He was a remarkably even-tempered man, who was a jovial companion with an acute sense of fun. He was a regular contributor to end of year concerts, generally in cahoots with the late John Blaxall. They labelled themselves “the two Johnnies.”

Travelers to UK will remember the attempt by tour organizers to billet the two together in the belief that they would encourage each other into punctuality. It was a belief that was totally erroneous.

On other tours John joined forces with Shane Hubner in policing imaginary transgressions that warranted fines, later donated to charities.

He was also a very patient procurer of choir badges, which choir members seem to delight in losing. He was a man whose personality and good humour will be missed. Our thoughts are with his family.

Lockdowns have dictated that John’s memorial service is yet to come. The choir has been asked to participate when the service is allowed to go ahead.

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

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The choir remains committed to singing at Kirks on the Esplanade in Mornington on the last Wednesday of every month. But lockdowns may render this impossible.

Similarly, we sing, when it is legal to do so, at the Charles Dickens Tavern in Collins Street.

There are also several concert dates on hold at the moment. We will send details to our followers as they become available

Stay safe and well till we meet again.



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**South Dandenong**

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

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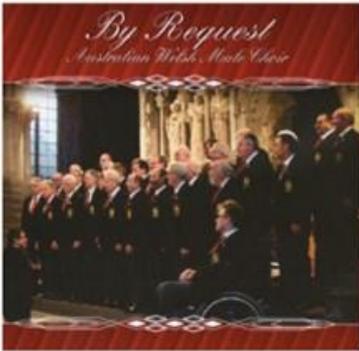
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