



AR HYD Y NOS

An Evening with the
Dublin Welsh Choir



A dank November night. The welcoming lights of a decent pub not a thousand miles from St. James's Gate. From somewhere upstairs, the sound of music. But not the usual, run-of-the-mill, pub musical fare. This is live music in a living tradition, created by the twenty-four members of the Dublin Welsh Male Voice Choir.

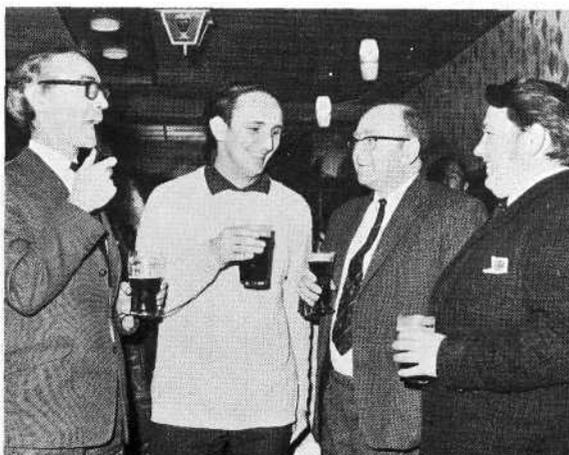
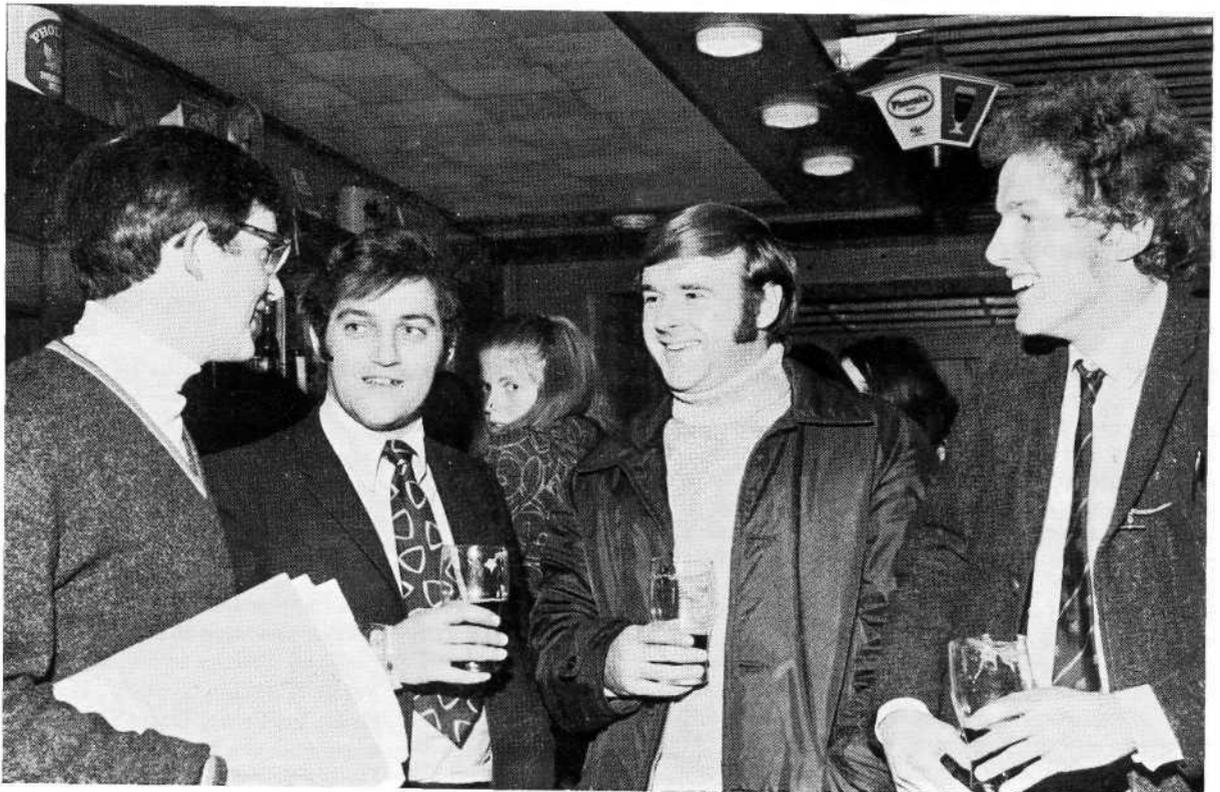
The first surprise is that there should be so many vocal Welshmen in Dublin—the second, that for all the strength of the Welsh tradition, this group should be so polished, so professional in its performance. The conductor is an Irishman, Albert Bradshaw, music master at Mountjoy School, and there are four Irish, a Scot and a solitary Sassenach mingling their voices in the otherwise entirely Cymric chorus. Brave men these, when you consider that they have to try to get their non-Welsh tongues round a little thing called 'Cyf'r Geifr', described disarmingly as 'a study in enunciation'. Have you ever tried singing Mozart in Welsh? Another thing that these men take in their stride. This particular item in their repertoire was specially translated by two of their number for the Inter-Celtic concert of the Oireachtas in October last. And just to complete the pan-Celtic picture, the attractive P.R.O. of the outfit is Nora Ni Dhomhnall of Comhdhail Nais-iunta na Gaeilge, and another promising Welshman called Pol O Duighir gives brush-up lessons in Welsh most nights before choir practice!

The choir grew out of the Dublin Welsh Society which was founded in 1964, and has been some five years in existence. The Secretary, Monty Dalton, says that a certain amount of tactful manoeuvring was required to produce a male voice choir out of a basically bisexual organisation, but tradition on this occasion evidently proved too strong for liberation, and the resultant four-part harmony amply compensates, musically at least, for the exclusion of the sopranos and altos. The first rehearsals took place in the Chapel of Trinity College, until someone hesitantly pointed out that the ambience, though uplifting, was somewhat deficient in essential lubrication. Since then the choir has inhabited several pubs, including the Toby Jug in South King Street, until coming to roost in the Central Bar in Aungier Street where, with the generous blessing of the boss, Mr. Quinn, it meets every Tuesday night, sits itself behind a semi-circle of tables well weighted with pints, and gives of its best under Mr. Bradshaw's stern but sensitive finger.

Quite apart from their music, these Welshmen are an interesting group. They number amongst them two university lecturers, a British Rail representative, a pilot, a couple of production managers,

an industrial archaeologist, an industrial insurance inspector, a data processing man from B+I, an inspector in the Department of Education, a construction engineer, a printer, an advertising copywriter, and a couple of seafaring men from An Bord Iascaigh Mhara. And their repertoire is as varied: a good step from the traditional 'Men of Harlech' and 'All Through the Night', though they sing the latter, in its original version, of course, as 'Ar Hyd y Nos', in a manner guaranteed to bring tears to the eyes of the most confirmed Celtophobe.

The choir's aim is a high one: to reach the standard of the Welsh National Eisteddfod, and they are hoping to enter the Glee Club Competition, for under 40 voices, this year and perhaps also the Llangollen International Eisteddfod. At the time we were talking to them they had their sights set on a spot in the 'Late Late Show'. Let us hope that by the time you read this you will already have had the pleasure of seeing, and hearing, them for yourself.



(opposite page) Mr. Joe Quinn, mine host at the Central Bar, who accommodates the Welsh Choir.

(above) Some of the members enjoy a chat before the serious singing work commences—(l. to r.) Messrs. A. Bradshaw, D. Holden, K. Waine and G. Bowie.

(left) Messrs. G. Evans (President), K. Young, B. Powell and Monty Dalton (Secretary).