



Côr Meibion Pontarddulais



Pontarddulais Male Choir

*Hanes, straeon
& canu ar
draws y byd*

*History, stories
& singing all
around the world*

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Côr Meibion Pontarddulais: Hanes, straeon & canu ar draws y byd / Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir: History, stories & singing all around the world

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Y côr meibion mwya' llwyddiannus sy'n cystadlu yng Nghymru yw Côr Meibion Pontarddulais, ac maen nhw'n glodfawr ledled y byd. Yma mae Gareth Wyn Jones sy'n aelod o'r côr yn sôn wrthon ni am hanes y côr, am y cystadlaethau, ac am y profiadau o ganu o flaen torf yn Stadiwm y Mileniwm pan fydd yn llawn dop. Wedyn, mae'n cyflwyno un o gyfansoddwr emynau mwya' enwog Cymru: sef, William Williams, Pantycelyn.

Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir are the most successful competitive male voice choir in Wales and are internationally renowned. Here Gareth Wyn Jones who is a member of the choir talks us through the history of the choir, the competitions, and experiences of singing to a capacity Millennium Stadium crowd. He then introduces one of Wales' most famous hymn writers: William Williams, Pantycelyn.

Côr Meibion Pontarddulais / The Pontarddulais Male Choir

Roedd y cynnydd mewn traddodiad corawl yng Nghymru yn adlewyrchu'n rhannol yr hyn oedd yn digwydd mewn sawl rhan o'r Brydain ddiwydiannol. Roedd ymuno â chôr yn rhyddhad i lawer o weithwyr o'r straen corfforol o weithio yn y diwydiannau glo, dur a thunplat. Yng Nghymru yr hyn a wahaniaethodd y tueddiad hwn o ardaloedd eraill o Brydain oedd ei sail, nid yn unig yng ngweithgaredbau'r eglwys neu'r capel, ond hefyd yr Eisteddfod. Roedd yr âyl ddiwylliannol hon yn cynnig fforwm i unigolion a grwpiau gystadlu ym maes cerddoriaeth, barddoniaeth, rhyddiaith, adrodd a cheffyl ac mae'n draddodiad unigryw i Gymru.

Mae'r hanesydd diwylliannol yr Athro Gareth Williams yn ei lyfr "[Ydych chi'n clywed y bobl yn canu](#)", (Gomer 2015) yn rhoi disgrifiad diddorol a manwl o wreiddiau a thwf y traddodiad corawl yng Nghymru o'r 19^{eg} ganrif hyd heddiw. Mae'n canolbwytio'n gryf ar dwf corau meibion, gan ddisgrifio sut y cafodd eu henw da am ragoriaeth ei ffurio gan eu cystadleuaeth ffyrnig ar lwyfan yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol lle byddent yn cystadlu o flaen tyrrfa o hyd at 20,000.

"Roedd corau meibion yn wreiddiol yn ddatblygiad o'r corau cymysg mawr a allai fod rhwng 150 a 200," meddai'r Athro Williams.

"Ond wrth i'r anghydbywysedd rhyw gychwyn, daethant yn fwyfwy annibynnol, yn sefydliadau hunan sefydlog a gysylltir yn aml â'r gweithle, y lofa, y chwarel, y rheilffordd, y gweithfeydd, y dociau."

Heddiw, mae ymhell dros 300 o gorau yng Nghymru, ac o'r rhain, mae dros 100 yn gorau meibion. Mae [Côr Meibion Pontarddulais](#), yn un o'r rhain, ac yn ffynhonnell o bleser mawr.

Mae Pontarddulais yn dref fawr sydd wedi'i lleoli i'r gogledd-orllewin o Abertawe. Yn ystod y 19^{ed} ganrif arweiniodd y mwynghoddio o lo glo caled yn Nyffryn Aman gerllaw a thwf y diwydiant tunplat yn y dref, at dwf trefol cyflym. Erbyn heddiw mae'r diwydiannau hyn wedi hen wedi gostwng a dirywio a diwydiannau ysgafn diwydianau gwasanaethol yw'r prif gyflwynwyr nawr.

Sefydlwyd Côr Meibion Pontarddulais yn 1960, ac esblygodd o gôr ieuengtid. Heddiw mae gan y côr dros 100 o aelodau sy'n cwrdd i ymarfer am ddwy awr ddwywaith yr wythnos drwy gydol y flwyddyn ysgol.

Mae'r llun isod o ymarfer a gynhaliwyd yn ystod canol y chwedegau yn dangos y diweddar Noel Davies MBE, arweinydd a sylfaenydd y cor a charfan o ddynion ifanc yn bennaf yn eu ugeiniau neu triddegau, a phob un wedi gwisgo'n ffuriol!

The rise of a choral tradition in Wales reflected in part what was happening in many parts of industrial Britain. Joining a choir was a relief for many workers from the physical stress of working in the coal, steel and tinplate industries. In Wales what differentiated this trend from other parts of Britain was its basis not only in church or chapel activities, but the Eisteddfod. This cultural festival provided a forum for individuals and groups to compete in music, poetry, prose, recitation and art and is a uniquely Welsh tradition.

Cultural historian Prof Gareth Williams in his book "[Do You Hear the People Sing](#)", (Gomer 2015) provides a fascinating and detailed account of the origins and growth of the choral tradition in Wales from the 19th century to the present day. He focuses strongly on the growth of male voice choirs, describing how their reputation for excellence was forged by their fierce rivalries on the stage of the National Eisteddfod where they would compete in front of crowds of up to 20,000.

"Male choirs were originally offshoots of the large mixed choirs which could number between 150 and 200," Professor Williams explains.

"But as the gender imbalance kicked in they became increasingly independent, self-standing organisations often linked to the workplace, the colliery, the quarry, the railway, the works, the docks."

Today, there are well over 300 choirs in Wales, and of these, over 100 are male voice choirs. The [Pontarddulais Male Choir](#) is one of these, and a source of great pleasure.

Pontarddulais is a large town located to the north-west of Swansea. During the 19th century the exploitation of anthracite coal in the nearby Amman valley and growth of the tinplate industry in the town led to rapid urban growth. By today these industries have declined with light and service industries as the main sources of employment.

Pontarddulais Male Choir was established in 1960, and evolved from a youth choir. Today the choir has over 100 members who meet for a two hour rehearsal twice a week throughout the school year.

The image below of a rehearsal held during the mid 1960s shows the late Noel Davies MBE, the founder conductor, and a cohort of young men mainly in their 20s and 30s, and all formally dressed!



Erbyn heddiw mae proffil oedran y côr ac arddull y dillad (!!) wedi newid yn sylweddol fel y gwelir o'r llun canlynol a gymerwyd ym Medi 2017. Erbyn hyn mae tua 60% o'r côr o oed ymddeol.

By today the age profile of the choir and clothing style (!!) has changed considerably as the following image taken in September 2017 where now approx 60% of the choir are of retirement age.



Mae'r rhan fwyaf o'r aelodau yn byw ym Mhontarddulais a'r ardaloedd cyfagos ond cafwyd aelodau sydd wedi teithio tua 80 o filltiroedd o Aberystwyth, i fynychur ymarfer y cor.

Most of the members live in Pontarddulais and its hinterland but there have been members who have travelled from as far as Aberystwyth, some 80 miles away, to attend choir rehearsals.

O gychwyn y cor, ar ddechrau'r chwedegau, un o brif nodweddion allweddol y côr, fel elusen gofrestredig, fu ei ymrwymiad i godi miloedd lawer o bunnau am achosion da ac i gystadlu mewn

From the outset in the early 1960s a key feature of the choir, as a registered charity, has been its commitment to raise many thousands of pounds for good causes and to compete in Eisteddfodau. This strong

eisteddfodau. Mae'r pwyslais cryf hwn ar gystadlu wedi arwain at lwyddiannau amlwg gan gynnwys ennill y brif wobr yn yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol un ar bymtheg o weithiau gyda'r olaf yn Llanelli yn 2014. Mae'r cor hefyd wedi ennill y brif wobr yn Eisteddfod Rhyngwladol Llangollen ddwywaith yn 2001 a 2004.

Mae repertoire amrywiol gan y côr sydd yn cynnwys emynau, caneuon gwerin, corysau opera, motets dadeni a chorysau megis "Cymrodorion yn arfau" a "Nidaros". Gellir clywed y mwyaf o'r rhain ar y mwy na dau ddeg pedwar o CDs a recordiwyd gan y côr. Cafodd y recordiad diweddaraf "Calonna a Lleisiau" ei ryddhau yn 2017 a'i gannol yn eang. Gyda repertoire mor eang. Mae'r côr wedi gallu perfformio mewn llawer o drefi a dinasoedd ar draws Prydain ac wedi cynnal teithiau tramor llwyddiannus i wledydd fel Sweden, yr Almaen, Canada, a'r UDA.

Mae'r llun canlynol yn dangos yr Arglwydd Hain, un o noddwyr y côr, gyda'r aelodau hynaf a'r ieuengaf mewn cyngerdd a drefnodd i ni yn 2007 yn Efrog Newydd.

focus on competing has resulted in an unequalled sixteen first place wins at the Royal National Eisteddfod, the latest of which was at Llanelli in 2014. Also, in 2001 and 2004 the Pontarddulais Male Choir achieved a first at the [Llangollen International Eisteddfod](#).

The choir repertoire is diverse including hymns, folk songs, opera choruses, renaissance motets and choruses such as "Comrades in Arms" and "Nidaros". Most of these can be heard on the more than 24 CDs recorded by the choir. The most recent recording "Hearts and Voices" was released in 2017 to wide acclaim. With such a broad repertoire the choir has been able to perform in many towns and cities across Britain and undertaken successful overseas tours to countries such as Sweden, Germany, Canada, and the USA.

The following image shows Lord Hain, a patron of the choir, with the oldest and youngest members in a concert he organised in New York for us in 2007.



Roedd yr un daith yn cynnwys ymweliadau â Philadelphia a Washington, isod.

The same tour included visits to Philadelphia and Washington, below.



Mae'r côr hefyd wedi perfformio gydag unawdwyr o fri rhyngwladol fel Syr Bryn Terfel a Catherine Jenkins. Y llynedd, yn dilyn llwyddiant tîm pêl-droed Cymru yn Euro 2016 dyfarnwyd i'r rheolwr Chris Coleman (a welir yma gyda Clive Phillips ein harweinydd presennol) ryddid Dinas Abertawe. Canodd y côr yn y dathliad yn dilyn ei inaugoriad.

The choir has also performed with internationally renowned soloists such as Sir Bryn Terfel and Catherine Jenkins. Last year, following the success of the Welsh football team in Euro 2016 the manager Chris Coleman (seen here with Clive Phillips, our current conductor) was awarded the Freedom of the City of Swansea. The choir sang in the celebration following his inauguration.



Yn yr un flwyddyn, ymwelodd Paul Merton (gweler isod) ag ymarfer y côr, fel rhan o'i gyfres deledu ar "Secret Stations", pan ymwelodd â Phontarddulais.

In the same year, Paul Merton (seen below) visited a choir rehearsal as part of his TV series on "Secret Stations" when he visited Pontarddulais.



I'r rhai sy'n ystyried ymuno â chôr, mae'r manteision yn niferus. Mae'r rhain yn cynnwys gwella'r ymdeimlad o les cymdeithasol, cynyddu disgwyliad oes (gobeithio) drwy wella capasiti'r ysgyfaint, a lleihau lefelau straen ac iselder. Yn fy achos i, mae'r cyfleoedd i deithio, cyfarfod a chymdeithasu â phobl o wledydd gwahanol ddiwylliannau a chefndiroedd wedi bod yn brofiadau bythgofiadwy.

Pan ofynnwyd am uchafbwyntiau cerddorol Mae'r rhan fwyaf o gantorian yn cyfeirio at yr adrenalin a'r her wrth gystadlu mewn eisteddfodau. Yn ogystal, yn fy achos i, mae dau brofiad gwahanol iawn yn sefyll allan. Roedd canu Salm 23 gan Max Bruch a theimlo dyfnder dwfn a harddwch esthetig pur ei gyfansoddiad yn syfrdanol, ac yn brofiad hynod o deimladwy. Mewn lleoliad holol gyferbyniol, roedd canu'r anthem genedlaethol Gymreig ar faes Stadium y Principality cyn i dim Cymru chwarae Lloegr yn brofiad annhygoel. Roedd swn emosional y dorf yn fyddarol ac yn gwneud i bob gwaliwr ar eich pen sefyll i fyny. Gallech ddeall pam y byddai unrhyw chwaraewr yn rhedeg drwy wal frics yn llythrennol ar ôl hynny! (gweler isod).

For those considering joining a choir the benefits are many. These include improving the feeling of social wellbeing, increasing life expectancy (I hope) through enhanced lung capacity, and reduced stress levels and depression. In my case the opportunities to travel, meet and socialise with people from different countries cultures and backgrounds has been life-enhancing.

When asked for musical highlights most choristers point to the adrenalin kick and challenge when competing in Eisteddfods. In addition, in my case, two very different experiences stand out. Singing Psalm 23 by Max Bruch and feeling the profound depth and pure aesthetic beauty of his composition was breathtaking, and a deeply moving experience. In a completely contrasting setting, singing the Welsh national anthem on the hallowed turf of the Principality Stadium before the Wales v England rugby international takes some beating. The volume of sound, the emotional rendition of the crowd, the reverberating cacophony of noise enhanced by the closed roof was incredible and made every hair on your head stand. You could see why any player would literally run through a brick wall after that! (see below).



Mae adroddiadau yn y wasg ac ar y teledu dros y blynnyddoedd diwethaf wedi sôn am argyfwng a dirywad yn y corau meibion yng Nghymru. Efallai nad yw'r math hwn o ganu mor ffasiynol a phoblogaidd ag yr oedd ar ddiwedd y 19^{ed} ganrif a dechrau'r 20^{ain} canrif, ac er bod proffil oedran nifer o gorau wedi cynyddu'n sylweddol, mae yna arwyddion cadarnhaol. Mae gan canu corawl y gallu o hyd i ysbrydoli, ennyn brwd frydedd a diddanu, a hyrwyddo cydlyniant a lles cymunedol. Mae "Cor Y Bont" yn dal i ffynnu ac mae rhaglen lawn o gyngherddau a digwyddiadau dros y flwyddyn i ddod ac mae croeso cynnes i aelodau newydd bob tro.

Am wybodaeth bellach am y côr, mae "[Brothers Sing On!](#)" gan Eric Jones (Y lolfa 2010) yn rhoi hanes manwl am gôr meibion Pontarddulais. Ceir gwefan a tudalen Facebook hefyd lle gall darllenwyr wrando ar ddetholiad o eitemau gan y côr.

Reports in the press and on TV over recent years have commented on a perceived crisis and decline in male voice choirs in Wales. Whilst this form of singing might not be as fashionable and popular as it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and whilst the age profile of many choristers has increased significantly, there are positive signs. It still has the capacity to inspire, enthuse and entertain, and promote community cohesion and well being. "Cor y Bont" is still thriving and has a full programme of concerts and events over the coming year and readily welcomes new members.

For further information on the choir, "[Brothers Sing On!](#)" by Eric Jones (Y Lolfa 2010) provides a detailed history of the Pontarddulais Male Choir. There is also a website and Facebook page where readers can listen to a selection of items by the choir.

pontarddulaismalechoir.wales [f BontChoir](https://www.facebook.com/BontChoir)

William Williams, Pantycelyn

"Canmolwch yr Arglwydd! Rydym yn genedl gerddorol" taranodd y Parchg Eli Jenkins yn "Dan Y Wenallt" gan Dylan Thomas, ond ymddangosodd y cysyniad hwn o 'genedl gerddorol' yn hir cyn amser Dylan Thomas.

"Praise the Lord! We are a musical nation" booms the Rev Eli Jenkins in Dylan Thomas' "Under Milk Wood," but this concept of a 'musical nation' appeared long before the time of Dylan Thomas.

Gwelir peth o'r dystiolaeth gynharaf yn ysgrifau Gerallt Gymro,

(Giraldus Cambrensis yn 1189) sydd yn pwyntio at draddodiad Cymreig cynnar o canu pedwar llais.

Some of the earliest evidence is seen in the writing of Gerallt Gymro, (Giraldus Cambrensis in 1189) which seems to point to an early Welsh tradition of part-singing.



"Pan maen nhw'n performio cerddoriaeth gyda'i gilydd, maen nhw'n canu eu caneuon nid mewn unison, fel y gwneir mewn mannau eraill, ond mewn elfennau rhannol ac mewn torf o gantorion ... byddech yn clywed cymaint o ganeuon a gwahanol ysbeidiau ag y gallech weld pennau; ac eto maent i gyd yn cydgordio...".

Cafodd dylanwad Gruffydd Jones a'i ysgolion cylchynol ddylnwad mawr ar agwedd pobl Cymru at addysg. Mewn oes pan nad oedd addysg orfodol, erbyn cyfnod ei farwolaeth yn 1761 'roedd bron i 200,000 o bobl wedi cael eu dysgu i ddarllen, ac yn bennaf drwy astudiaeth o'r Beibl.

Gwelir ef ymhellach fel rhagflaenydd i'r diwygiad Methodistaidd a fu yn fuan yn dylanwadu ar Gymru a'r holl Deyrnas Unedig. Yr adfywiad Methodistaidd, a'r cynnydd mewn anghydrifurfaeth yn y 18th ganrif, a ddarparodd y ffordd i ganu corawl dyfu ac i awduron emynau fel William Williams, Pantycelyn, (y pêr ganiedydd) i ffynnu.

Eleni yw tri chan mlwyddiant ei enedigaeth (11 Chwefror 1717 – 11 Ionawr 1791). Fe'i Cydnabyddir yn gyffredinol fel awdur emynau enwocaf Cymru, ac 'roedd yr un mor nodedig fel un o arweinwyr allweddol yr adfywiad Methodistaidd yn y 18th

Mae'n bosibl mai ei emyn mwyaf adnabyddus yw "Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anialwch" Mae hwn wedi cael ei addasu i'r emyn Saesneg: "Guide me, O thou Great Jehovah". Fel arfer mae'n cael ei chanu i'r dôn Cwm Rhondda gan John Hughes a ffefrynn o blith llawer o gorau. Mae'n cael ei ddefnyddio yn aml i gynhyrfur cefnogwyr Cymru yn Stadiwm y Mileniwm, yn enwedig pan fydd Cymru yn chwarae tîm rygbi Lloegr!

"When they make music together, they sing their songs not in unison, as is done elsewhere, but in parts....so that in a crowd of singers....you would hear as many songs and different intervals as you could see heads; yet they all accord...".

The influence of Gruffydd Jones and his Circulating Schools had a profound influence on the attitude of Welsh people to education. In an age when there was no compulsory education, by the time of his death in 1761 almost 200,000 people had been taught to read mainly through a study of the Bible.

He is furthermore seen as a forerunner to the Methodist revival that was soon to hit Wales and all of the United Kingdom. It was this Methodist revival and the rise of non-conformity in the 18th century which provided the catalyst for choral singing to grow and for hymn writers such as William Williams, Pantycelyn, (Y pêr ganiedydd /The Sweet Songster) to flourish.

This year is the 300th anniversary of his birth (11 February 1717 – 11 January 1791). He is generally acknowledged as Wales' most famous hymn writer and was equally distinguished as one of the key leaders of the 18th century Methodist revival. However few might know that as he travelled throughout Wales he is said to have partly supported his ministry by selling tea!

Possibly his best known hymn is "Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anialwch" . This has been adapted as the English-language hymn: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah". It is usually sung to the tune Cwm Rhondda, by John Hughes, and is a favourite of many choirs. More familiarly it is used to stir Welsh supporters in the Millennium Stadium, particularly when Wales take on the England rugby team!