

# SOUTH WALES GUARDIAN

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## OVER THE SEA TO ENTERTAIN IN WALES

Music lovers in the Ammanford and Llandybie areas enjoyed a feast of music during the three-day visit of Marienchor, the male voice choir from Eupen in East Belgium.

Accompanied by their wives the choir arrived after a 17-hour journey to a welcoming supper — provided by the ladies section of Llandybie Male Voice Choir whose guests they were. The warmth of this reception set the tone for their brief visit and was much appreciated by the guests from across the Channel.

Comperé of the concert next evening at Llandybie Memorial Hall was Mr. Howard Hampton, who is a native of Tirydail but has lived in Germany for 30 years. Mr. Hampton helped to organise the tour and also acted as interpreter at both formal and informal functions.

Much was expected of this internationally famous male voice choir and their eagerly awaited performances fully realised the high expectations. The choir, under their conductor Ferdinand Frings, with accompanist Christiane Deneffe, sang in eleven different languages and most of the items were unaccompanied. The audience appreciated the music, the quality of tone and wonderful discipline.

The individual soloists drawn from different sections of the choir performed with distinction.

During the intervals, the president for the evening, Councillor E. B. Davies, chairman of Llandybie Community Council, welcomed Marienchor and their wives to Wales. He reminded the audience of the choir's achievements during the last decade: these included regular broadcasts and television appearances and foreign European tours.

He thanked the audience for supporting the concert which was in aid of the John Mainwaring Fund — a young Llandybie man who received serious spinal injuries while playing rugby for Blaenau.

Mr. Dan Jones, chairman of Llandybie Male Choir thanked the Belgium ladies for their generous donation to the fund, and he presented Marienchor's President, Mr. Joseph Kockartz with a miner's lamp which he said was synonymous with the village of Llandybie and especially with the choir which was formed over three quarters of a century ago by the miners of Pencae Colliery.

Mr. Kockartz in turn presented each member of Llandybie choir and their musical director, Mr. Indeg Thomas, with a Eupen pottery mug.

Supper was prepared at the Llandybie Rugby Club after which both choirs harmonised relations by joining forces. The singing of La Vergine, with Ferdinand Frings singing the lead-in solo and Janice Davies-Rees the solo part was a wonderful climax to a memorable evening.

The following evening Marienchor gave a concert — organised by MENCAP — at the Amman Valley Comprehensive School and a buffet supper was prepared at Llandybie Social Club by the steward and stewardess, Mr. and Mrs. M. Wakeling.

Highlight of the tour was the civic reception and dinner, followed by dancing, given by the Dinefwr Borough Council. The Mayor, Councillor Bertie Phillips, welcomed the Belgium Choir and thanked them for giving so much pleasure to music lovers in the Llandybie and Ammanford area during their stay and wished them success in the future. Responses to the Mayor's toast were made by Mr. Joseph Kockartz and Mr. Dan Jones. Before the dance which followed, Marienchor thanked all present in song. The pieces chosen for their unexpected treat were introduced by Mr. H. Hampton.

#### **A LINK**

Another link has been forged between Cór Meibion Llandybie and a European Choir. The internationally famous male voice choir Marienchor from Eupen, Belgium will be guests of the Llandybie choir from May 30 to June 3. Under its present conductor, Ferdinand Frings, the Marienchor of 38 voices have attained the highest grade possible for men's choral societies in Belgium. To justify this high classification the choir has to undergo an examination by an international jury every four years.

During the last decade, they have travelled widely over Europe by arrangements with the Belgium Ministry of Education and have performed with soloists from some of the leading opera houses in Europe including Milan, Berlin, Salzburg and Budapest. They show a special interest in the music of Franz Schubert and they often give Schubert concerts as well as making regular broadcasts in their native Belgium.

During their brief first visit to Wales, they will give two performances — their repertoire having an international flavour. The first performance is at the Memorial Hall, Llandybie on Thursday, May 31, and the second at the comprehensive school, Ammanford on Friday June 1. The proceeds of the two concerts go towards the John Mainwaring Fund and Mencap respectively. John recently suffered serious spinal injuries playing rugby.

Climax of the visit is a civic reception at the Ammanford Civic Hall on Saturday, June 2.

Cór Meibion Llandybie will be paying a return visit to Eupen, Belgium next year.

#### **W.I.**

Preparations are well in hand for the Flower festival to be held at Llandybie Parish Church next week.

The dressing of the Church will begin on Tuesday at 9.00 a.m. and anyone with flowers in their garden are asked to bring them to the church in the morning.

A service will be held on Wednesday evening, 30 May, and everyone is welcome. The church will be open for viewing by the public during the rest of the week.

All proceeds of the Flower Festival will be donated to the Church Restoration Fund.

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