Whilst home, visiting relatives, ex-chorister Bill Davies paid a surprise visit to rehearsal. Bill has a long and distinguished association with Cambrian, and we were delighted to see him. To show he had lost none of his enthusiasm, he sat in with the Bass section during the evening. A highlight of the rehearsal occurred, when Bill read a poem he had written, about his childhood memories. He has very kindly agreed for us to copy the poem below. It is entitled "The ghost train".

The following lines are dedicated to those men and boys who spent many years of their lives underground at the Cambrian Colliery. Some were relatives, some went with me to school. Many went down the pit but were not able to walk out.

## The ghost train

One warm and sunny summer's day
I wandered through the streets of Clydach Vale
I found a spot along my way
Where I could rest and overlook the Dale
I sat at the spot from where the colliers crossed a bridge
And walked towards the coal field's ridge
I gazed at the lakes and the friendly paths
Where once the coal trucks used to pass
They took the coal down through the vallies
To Cardiff and to the world beyond on coal ferries.

My thoughts were suddenly broken by the sound of song And before my eyes stood a train full of colliers Some with blacked faces, a happy looking throng The sound of Cwm Rhondda filled the air I saw faces I had known since I was a boy All smiling and waving in the summer air The bridge was suddenly there again And one by one they crossed the span Over to the place where once they worked And as they passed me they called my name Hello Will you are here again Dai Jones, Tom Morgan, Ron Davies passed me bye Arthur who auditioned me when I joined the choir I was then a young teenager and Arthur put me next to an experient chorister Many faces I knew from school Later we played football together in Cambrian Welfare Park Lost more games than we did win But we enjoyed the togetherness of friends They did not all go down the pit But they were here in this colliers' train David and John Williams, stars of our team Mel, George and Trevor waved and smiled And once again the sound of song did fill the air We'll keep a welcome, myfanwy, calon lan Mae hen wlad fy Nhadau, sang by a heavenly choir.

Then one by one they got back into the train still singing, smiling and waving at me I could no longer hold back my tears So many friends of long ago came back to see me And then I heard another voice Uncle Bill, Uncle Bill, I felt a hand upon my arm My nephew stood before me and smiled Mama said it's time for tea.

The next day I found myself at that spot again
And soon the sound of children voices filled the air
Led on by Mister Wilcox our teacher at Cwmclydach School
When I looked closer I could see the boys I knew so long ago
David Williams, Reg Roberts, Donald Rees to name a few
One grubby boy with dirty knees who looked a lot like me
With stockings down around his boots
Black hands and face from playing in the coal
A common sight in our days
They smiled and laughed as they passed me bye
And disappeared up the vale.

And then another crowd appeared The Cambrian Choir from nineteenseventyfour Led by Paul their conductor at the time On their first visit to Simmern in Hunsrück land Bert was the secretary at the time Still going strong I'm pleased to say There's Gordon, Em and Viv Al Davies gave me a book with photos of old Rhondda Together we drove along the Moselle Enjoyed a taste of Moselle Wine Sang at an American Air Base Two days later I was told a flag was missing And on my next visit to Tonypandy Lo and behold there hung the flag Amongst other souvenirs from the trip to Hunsrück land The friendship with Simmern lasted thirty years.

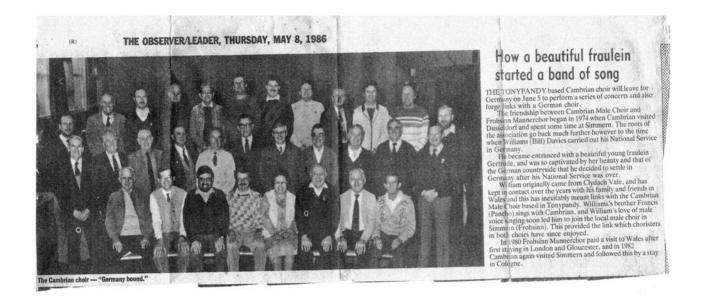
The children returned from their walk
And joined the men for a little talk
And then to my surprise the train was also there
And once again singing filled the air
Black faced colliers, white faced workers
Little children singing with all their might
And slowly disappeared out of sight
I could no longer hold back my tears
I must have been a sorry sight
to those who passed me bye that night
They probably said to themselves
He's just an old man lost in the past.

I was now awake but singing still filled my ears I'll never forget those long lost years
Amongst my friends that I have lost
But many are still with us today
May they be here for long I pray

WD

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Here is a Rhondda Leader article which features Bill and the choir on their way to Germany in 1986. The article describes Bill's love affair with the country and a certain fraulein.



Many thanks to Bill for visiting us at rehearsal, and we look forward to seeing him again in the near future.