

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 by  
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 by 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

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.

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THE OBSERVER/LEADER, THURSDAY, MAY 8, 1986



The Cambrian choir — "Germany bound."

## How a beautiful fraulein started a band of song

THE TONYPANDY based Cambrian choir will leave for Germany on June 5 to perform a series of concerts and also forge links with a German choir.

The friendship between Cambrian Male Choir and Frohsinn Mannerchor began in 1974 when Cambrian visited Dusseldorf and spent some time at Simmern. The roots of the association go back much further however to the time when Williams (Bill) Davies carried out his National Service in Germany.

He became entranced with a beautiful young fraulein Gertrude, and was so captivated by her beauty and that of the German countryside that he decided to settle in Germany after his National Service was over.

William originally came from Clydach Vale, and has kept in contact over the years with his family and friends in Wales and this has inevitably meant links with the Cambrian Male Choir based in Tonypany. Williams's brother Francis (Panco) sings with Cambrian, and William's love of male voice singing soon led him to join the local male choir in Simmern (Frohsinn). This provided the link which choristers in both choirs have since enjoyed.

In 1980 Frohsinn Mannerchor paid a visit to Wales after first staying in London and Gloucester, and in 1982 Cambrian again visited Simmern and followed this by a stay in Cologne.

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

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