

North American Welsh Choir Tour of ‘Atlantic Canada’



Côr Cymry Gogledd America share a concert of thanks at Gander Airport International Arrivals Lounge on July 9th – the place where thousands of stranded travelers and crew were welcomed on 9/11.

32 Choristers; 13 supporters; 5 Concerts in 4 Canadian Provinces & in France!

by Teleri Roberts

Back in July, I had the pleasure of crossing the Pond from Mid Wales to join the North American Welsh Choir (NAWC) as Tour Manager during its tour of Atlantic Canada. It proved to be a most memorable and hugely enjoyable two weeks as we travelled together across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and the French territory of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon – having begun the tour at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The North American Welsh Choir-Côr Cymry Gogledd America was established in 1998 by Dr Mari Morgan (Pennsylvania, originally from Llanelli) and currently comprises 80 plus choristers from across 18 States and three Canadian provinces. They rehearse regularly via Zoom and in-person regional gatherings, perform across North America and tour extensively – including New Zealand, Argentina, and Wales. A lively and very friendly group, they clearly enjoy each other’s company, have great fun together and share a genuine love of singing. Many are of Welsh heritage, fiercely protective of their Welsh roots and Wales’ strong choral tradition; others proudly consider themselves ‘honorary or adopted Welsh’ - attracted by the choir’s reputation and ethos which is to bring together a community of like-minded people who delight in making and sharing their music.

The Tour’s focus was, understandably, the five concerts and this is where Mari’s undoubted creativity as Artistic Director comes to the fore. The Choir performs both classical and popular – often anthemic – Welsh repertoire, occasionally with strong Royal connections. It also commissions work from contemporary Welsh composers, creating a programme designed to reflect the Tour’s destination. One of this year’s new works for example included ‘Splitting The Rocks’ by Swansea-based composer Mal Pope – particularly apt for our visit to Newfoundland. The Choir is joined by exceptionally talented soloists and accompanists, often drawn from within

its ranks and also by guest soloists – further enhancing the choral experience.

This year, in what represented a first, the Choir was joined by local choirs at most of its concerts, all of which took place in quite remarkable settings. The audience at Charlottetown’s Anglican Church with the Prince Edward Island Legion Choir, were in tears. And not least my aunt, originally from mid Wales but now residing in Antigonish, NS; she also was thrilled to reminisce with Hefina Phillips on their time at the Welsh Chapel in Toronto! Equally moving was the performance at the Canadian Immigration Museum in downtown Halifax of another specially commissioned piece ‘Lle mae llais yn cyffwrdd lleisiau/Where Voices meet’ - written by the current Archdruid, Mererid Hopwood. The concert with the local Basque choir (Bankuen Korua) on Saint-Pierre Island was a particular highlight, illustrating beautifully how music transcends any language barriers. Then there was the awe-inspiring venue of the Anglican Cathedral at St Johns, Newfoundland - performing alongside the St John’s Choir. The final concert, with Gander Community Choir, took place at

province’s famous Initiation Ceremony, known as ‘Screech In’ (If this is new to you, then do look up Jimmy Kimmel’s Late Night Talk Show on ABC!). We discovered some interesting connections between Wales and Canada and explored North America’s most easterly point, at Cape Spear. What a magical experience - staring across the Atlantic towards Ireland, and Wales! We celebrated Canada Day with - what else - a Lobster and Steak Dinner on PEI; and July 4th on Saint-Pierre. And in yet another new development, the Choir was treated at the end of the Tour to a special performance at Gander’s Arts Centre of ‘COME FROM AWAY’ - the award-winning and Broadway hit musical based on the town’s experience as it hosted those international passengers.

What an enjoyable and highly varied two weeks, with such interesting people – all from a range of backgrounds and with fascinating careers, which resulted in stimulating conversations. It all made for wonderful memories that will remain for years to come.

But above all, as I sat listening to their concerts, I was increasingly struck by how much this Choir does, under



Wanda Woodford, Mari Morgan & Dottie Minear at “Come from Away” in Gander, NL.

Gander Airport’s International Arrivals Lounge, Newfoundland – at the very site where over 7000 stranded and diverted international passengers and crew were welcomed following 9/11.

And yes – there was time for fun when the Choir was off-duty! Whale-watching on a small-boat ocean cruise. Becoming an honorary Newfoundlander through the

Mari’s skilled leadership, to promote Wales, its language, its culture and its choral tradition. The genuine warmth, along with the shared mutual respect and appreciation emanating from the North American Welsh Choir deeply touched the local choirs and audiences alike.

Côr Cymry Gogledd America-North American Welsh Choir is always delighted to welcome new choristers and friends to its community. Those interested should reach out to Mari Morgan on corcymry20@gmail.com or at www.CorCymryGogleddAmerica.com



Côr Cymry Gogledd America in concert on July 2nd in Charlottetown, PE.

Harmony Across Borders: Our Travels with Côr Cymry Gogledd America

By Dr. Dorothy J. (Dottie) Minear

On May 22, 2025, I received an email from my friend, Sarah Beale. This note would change my summer in a dramatic way. Two years ago, Sarah’s college roommate and long-time friend, Anne Harris, had asked her if she would like to accompany the North American Welsh Choir (Côr Cymry Gogledd America) on their tour to Wales. Although a non-chorister, Sarah was always up for a travel adventure and learning more about her Welsh heritage. In May, when Sarah wrote there were two remaining guest spots available on this year’s tour to Atlantic Canada and beyond, we acted quickly. Another travel buddy, Wanda Woodford, and I decided we would like to go with the Choir. We could not have imagined how the experience would fill our senses and touch our hearts with such wonder and appreciation.

From the initial welcome we received from Dr. Mari Morgan (the accomplished and acclaimed Director of Côr Cymry) at the Halifax Airport, through the chorus of “Bore da” greetings each morning from our fellow travelers, to the final hugs and “Safe home” good-byes, we felt honored to accept Mari’s invitation to join the Welsh, not necessarily by birth, but through “adoption.” Between concert performances, we traveled through Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland & Labrador, along with the French territory of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon—always with an eye and ear open for Welsh connections among the people and historically, culturally, and musically. Our hearts lifted as we were welcomed graciously by the locals, took in the vast scenery, enjoyed the sights, and rested in the camaraderie of our travel companions.

And then there were the concerts! The songs the choristers had learned individually and in small groups across North America came together beautifully once the Choir convened in Canada. The musical Welsh language and the lyrical messages touched us deeply. The Choir’s focus was on peace, connection, and inclusivity (“where our voices find each

other”), as well as the celebration of Welsh tradition, language, culture, and values. Under Mari’s mesmerizing direction (a dance in itself), the choristers brought smiles to our faces and joy to our hearts. It was a privilege to be in the audience at each of the five concerts over eleven days. As Wanda said after one particularly moving performance, “That was magical. I could not have been more proud if they were my own.”

The tour and the performances were so thoughtfully planned and executed. Each concert had its own special flavor, as Côr Cymry joined with local choirs and included songs of special importance to each region. For instance, the Choir’s outstanding performance on Saint-Pierre with the Basque Choir, Bankuen Korua, was met with a standing ovation, synchronized clapping, and calls for multiple encores.

In between concerts, tour participants had the opportunity to celebrate both Canada Day and the 4th of July. We were able to see lighthouses, museums, lovely architecture, and monuments, as well as to search for (among other things) whales, puffins, Newfoundland dogs, the prettiest flowers, the perfect souvenirs, and the best lobster rolls and fish and chips around. Each day brought its own adventures. How delighted the crew and other passengers on St. John’s Capo de Espera were when some members of the Choir held an impromptu mini concert on their boat!

We found it especially poignant to attend the final concert at the Gander Airport International arrivals lounge, and later to see the musical theatre production of this small town’s 9/11 story, “Come From Away.” During those heart-breaking days in 2001, the folks of Gander welcomed and cared for so many people from so many places. As Côr Cymry choristers and friends left the theater, we were greeted by July’s full Buck Moon peering over the Newfoundland & Labrador treetops—a glorious ending to an awe-inspiring tour experience.

Diolch, Côr Cymry. Diolch, Ffrindiau.

(Thank you, Welsh Choir. Thank you, Friends.)



Some of the tour group enjoying free time on the waters around St. John’s, Newfoundland.



Basque choristers of Bankuen Korua listen to Côr Cymry