

“It Had It’s Moments”
or
Madrigal Tour of Scotland 1972

By J. Mike Leggett

THE CAST WAS AS FOLLOWS:

Delyth Ace.....	Not a Cardi?
John Blanchfield	The Brief Case Kid
Peter Boszko.....	"If you're born big, your born big"
Alwena Evans.....	A laugh every thirty seconds
Byron Evans	The most patient man on earth
Robert Girrdler.....	Abusive Organist??
Ann Havard.....	Must be tracker action
Royston Havard.....	"I'd like to teach the world to sing"
Michael Leggett	
Mary Livingston	Olga the Volga
Anne Loveluck.....	The Manhunter of Maesteg
Jane Morris.....	Schh. you know who (or, "My Fair Lady)
Linda Pattendon.....	Hail Morley, full of
Helen Pritchard.....	The Daimler Kid
Barbara Sandiford.....	The Unquotable
David Wormersley (Alias Jo 90).....	"When you got to go, you got to go"

Any similarities between the characters in this farce and real life characters, are purely fictional

Sunday 25th June.

A decree was sent out, that the Madrigal singers should set off early on the morning of June 25 from the Extra Mural Department. Sure enough, the usual punctuality was observed, and nobody turned up save for Byron and his trusty servant that big (white) elephant. It was truly a "morning after the night before", when beverages of many colours and creeds were consumed, and packages, parcels and wet -suits were secretly stored at 9 Marine Terrace. The idea was to pack the bus early with the least possible hindrance from helpers.

When the first singer appeared, (clutching the key in my intoxicated little hand) Byron had already been waiting for an hour. So, without further delay, we proceeded to pack the boot with the few odd cases we had. Yet another quarter of an hour elapsed, and still nobody turned up. Thus the search began, from Aber to Clarach and back numerous times with luggage and heaving' bodies, then to that sacred temple Pantycelyn where still further delights awaited the honorary packer. Having toured several miles, found the missing link to Delyths car, and deposited other such conveyances to their rightful places, we were all set to go only two hours behind schedule destination, Scotland.

We had been travelling for all of five minutes when the first quote was uttered by one Mrs. Havard, who expressed that she was "ready for it", which was followed up quickly by, Anne Lovelucks "you won't get it though", (It should perhaps be explained at this juncture in the proceedings that these remarks, and any such subsequent remarks referred to the tour we had embarked on, and have/had no derisory interpretations). After a very long two hours travelling, we searched the Citadel of Welshpool for a breakfast house. Having found such an oasis, we wined and dined each according to custom.

No sooner had we sat down when Dai Hopkins appeared strolling down the street. This incident had an adverse affect on Jo, who consumed no less than five glasses of squash. Later, having resumed our journey, there was talk from the back of the bus about a chemical toilet, which it was thought should be installed to aid those who have this early morning drinking habit.

Finally we arrived at Birkenhead, where we were to give a concert at the Birkenhead Art Gallery. Need I say that we arrived only just in time to change and walk on to the stage for our first tour concert. It appeared that the audience much appreciated our efforts to enchant them with our music, despite the singular lack of good acoustic in the building. It goes perhaps without saying, that the concert was said to have "had it's moments", but this was a phrase that we were all to hear many, many times after concerts. It was of course a genuine lapse of memory by our illustrious conductor, who was delayed after the concert had ended, and accidentally walked into the girls changing room (behind the stage) whilst the young ladies were in the process of changing. Perhaps naturally

enough, there were squeals heard from the girls, and mad rushings to cover themselves. "I promise to shut my eyes", said the intruder, to which came the reply, "spoil sport". (I wonder who said that?) Having been ushered with hands over eyes to the opposite door, a wry little voice from the corner retorted, "what some people will do for a thrill". (Could this have been Barbara's only quote?)

Meanwhile, back at the coach, Cwmcynfelins sleeping beauty, (Anne H.) had been catching up on her beauty sleep, which was less dangerous, than her strange pastime while we rehearsed at the church for the concert that night, for when we returned to our home from home, (the coach) Anne announced that she had been "standing on her head". Byron refused to comment on this apparently nocturnal habit, and who can blame him. So to an excellent tea provided by Mrs. Blanchfield. A short rest and an unrushed change into our "gear" for the concert. At this point in time, yours truly was severely rebuked by Schhh you know who, because I deigned to change my trousers whilst a young lady was present. Well, what the we all see Y fronts on the T.V.?

The evening concert at the Blanchfield's parish church most certainly had it's moments, and in some of the motets, the small choir (13) showed what it was made of. Unfortunately the changing facilities in the church were even worse than those previously at the art gallery. Our very own David (the ninety) announced, "I thought I saw a pussy cat". Alwena, who was of course talking about something "completely different" commented, "that's not what I thought I saw".

The frivolities over, we retired to the nearest local, (an occurrence that was to feature regularly throughout the tour, as it did during term time). After all, the Mads brochure did used to say... relaxation from the course of normal studies... During this period of relaxation, two of our number made the goon show look sad rather than funny, by creating uncontrollable laughter throughout the ranks of the choir. (Even Alwena laughed). Yes, it was that old Indian magic, the spell of which was never to be broken, and which created illusions of elephants, numerous cousins and Memsahib's (eeses). Anne and Mary were the two we had to thank for this innovation. The rot had set in, and it became habitual to talk in an Indian accent. Old habits die hard, well so do new ones and so for the rest of the tour, we were all "casted" according to our ability to "put it on". From pub to bed, and so we departed to stay the night with different families.

Monday 26 June.

The next day, we were due to travel to Aberdeen, but the first thing that had to be done was to collect both baggage and bodies from their respective places. As it happened, most of the girls had been collected first, and the bus came to rest in a rather wide street next to a flowery hedgerow. Our two most illustrious cousins decided to collect the rare flowers (dandelions). It was the ancient ritual flower dance performed by cousin Mary which drew the crowds... a Panda car together with it's

inmates. Byron prepared an apologetic speech whilst cowardly cousin Loveluck took refuge behind the back seat. The remainder of the travellers watched in anguish as the sombre figures approached. All those worried little eyes lit up when he smiled and said he was from the Cardigan area, and had just come off duty. Needless to say, when the off-duty was mentioned, the eyelids began to flutter, and the back seat became vacant again. I have since been informed that he was awarded 99.99% and elected (olde Chinese word) Mr Met-On-Madrigal Tour. Oh well, "a policeman's job...."

At last Roy and Anne were collected, and had evidently spent an enjoyable night at the Vicarage. They were greeted at the door by our cousins, who presented gifts of rare Eastern Dandelions. It transpired later, when Roy announced, "I have been sitting on it, and it's all compressed" that he had in fact squashed it, the flower that is.

The trip to Aberdeen did not prove as arduous as had been expected, and there was a continuous comedy show, which was provided mainly by the Loveluck - Livingston duo. Also, an interesting discussion arose on the merits of the organ, and Roy, who was recruiting for next years organ lessons???, was amused by Anne Lovelucks remark, "the organ is an instrument you take up later", and Alwena's follow up, "Bob will have a great big one next year". (What a give away that was).

After a halt for a Scottish Chinky, and a quarter hours search for the men's loo and obviously Jo, we resumed our journey to Aberdeen. Needless to say, before the bewitching hour of ten o'clock arrived we stopped off for a "wee dram or two, and finally met John Hearne, who had come to meet us in "that" car. As he approached the bus amid singing, Loveluck's eyes lit up, and she proudly announced that this was the man she had been waiting for, and tentatively enquired how long it would take to get back to Gretna Green. From here we were escorted to the Aberdeen College of Further Education, where we were to spend the next few nights, in what was sheer luxury compared to the accommodation that was to come. As we supped coffee, John told us of the extensive programme he had in store for us, and so finally to bed.

Tuesday 27th June

During the morning, a rather futile attempt was made to make a tape recording which we were going to submit to the BBC for Aberdeen local radio, but we finally gave up in despair. Next, it was time to go and shop for lunch, which involved only minor language, difficulties.

In the afternoon, we visited the B.B.C. radio studios, where we sang Fair Phyllis and another Madrigal. A most informative interview followed immediately, and so Roy put on his best BBC accent, and stuttered his way through admirably. (Even if it did take them two days to edit it).

Our evening, concert was held in Kings College Chapel, and apparently had more "moments" than, usual. It was a source of delight to some, that the audience, though not large, was composed mainly of Aberdeen / Welsh (not to be confused with Aberdeen Angus?). At the buffet afterwards, some chatted with the members of the audience, whilst cousin Lovelock decided to take on the heirs and graces of the gentle sex, which amused Schh you know who and her side kick. Pete, although unruffled, was also secretly amused.

Wednesday 28th June.

To be known from here on as "schools day", and it was a very hard day, with lots to do and a great deal of singing to get through. In the morning, we sang at a local comprehensive school and in fairness to the audience, we were received warmly, and listened to patiently. In the afternoon, we were taken to another rather impressive comprehensive school which seemed to be well equipped, and put the music department in Aber to shame. The audience, here were a little restless and we did get rather more than the correct notes from one kid in the front.

Later in the afternoon, we went to the Rudolf Steiner School just outside Aberdeen itself. None of us really new what to expect, and I think that a certain amount of anxiety was evident as we arrived at the school which was laid out in the form of a small village community, composed of three quite sizeable houses, a schoolhouse and an architecturally curious hall, which played a dual role as a theatre and a church. The grounds were quite extensive, and the whole place was in a rather lovely setting, and did in fact remind me rather of the previous years tour in Scandinavia. The school had register of about two hundred, most of whom were mentally handicapped or disturbed, and some were also physically handicapped. As soon as we stopped, the bus was flooded with kids, whose curiosity surpassed our own. Byron really had his hands full as virtually every kid in turn sat at the driving wheel, and "drove" the bus away.

We were shown round the school, and the daily routine was explained to us, together with the ultimate aims of the system. Merely from the descriptions, it sounded a wonderful idea, and we found over the next couple of days that it was a very happy little community. The children themselves were forthright and friendly, even if one or two of them did not know their own strength, as Loveluck was soon to find out, in the form of a delightful little chap called Steven. Having had tea and chatted for some time, we rehearsed in the hall, which was acoustically very fine as was the building itself.

The Concert we gave in the evening was one of the most rewarding we have ever given as a choir. The music definitely had more "moments" than usual, and it was really quite touching to have the children sing to us first, as a formal welcome. At the end of the concert, it was wonderful to hear a spontaneous cry of "thank you" from the children, which meant far more than the polite comments of

more "learned audiences".

Thursday 29th June

We rehearsed briefly in the art gallery in Aberdeen in the morning, and then went to a coach park from which we were to partake of lunch. Unfortunately, some of the natives were present together with a copious supply of the dreaded alcohol, vast quantities of which must already have been consumed. They proved a little more than hostile, and had the narrowest of vocabularies. Finally, we decided it would be prudent to move to a near by golf course to eat our delicious lunch (even if there was enough salt in the sandwiches for an army).

The afternoon was spent either wondering around Aberdeen, or sleeping on the coach, which had by now been moved down to the docks area, which believe it or not was less hostile than the coach park, despite the dubious employment of one or two "young ladies" who apparently thought that some of the girls (asleep on the coach) were "on their patch".

Late in the afternoon, we rendezvoused with John in the Lombarda Café for tea / supper. Once sat at the table, Linda announced, "If I had known, I would have had it". Never mind Linda. Our art Gallery performance proved yet another success, and all agreed that it had "many moments", and even the newspaper agreed the following day.

A brief celebration was held in a local pub after the concert, and so to our various sleeping places, which had been altered because of the rather hefty cost of the hostel we had been staying in. On the journey back to the Rudolf Steiner School, Mary provided us with yet another cabaret and introduced us to "Olga". The greater majority remained at the school for the night, sleeping on beds, mattresses, lilos etc., in the school house whilst Anne, Roy, Helen and Jane travelled on another twenty miles or so to John's cottage out in the wilds. I am led to believe that it was on this night that Anne, Helen and Jane took up their new signature tune, "there were three in the bed and the little one said...."

Friday 30th June,

A very pleasant day was spent touring round the area of Deeside. We picnicked for lunch near a woodland and most went for a short walk to take the air and collect heather. (Pete and I couldn't find her?) Later on, some of us ventured to walk through the grounds of Balmoral Castle which proved pleasant if not tiring. (No bloody Corgis though!)

Some gems of information were heard on the coach throughout the day which started with Jo's 'shut the door, my fingers are cold, and it's not fair on the lady'. Everyone tried hard to think who the lady was. Roy was then heard to say to his lady wife, "I'm not pulling it I'm only holding it". He was of

course talking about her nose. Later, he started on about organs again (tut, tut) "what do you need thumbs for, you only need thumbs for hymns". (Takes all sorts..)

Saturday 1st July

Today, we all went to John Hearn's cottage and many hours were spent relaxing. A number of the girls showed great interest in that rather nice Daimler, and the afore mentioned motor vehicle was driven round and round the garden, and indeed on more than one occasion; it was seen to be travelling round on it's own, which now I think about it, was probably safer. Having earlier in the day decided to cook our own food for evening meal, Bob and I "slaved over a hot stove", and after some hours produced an excellent, meal which was quite an accomplishment.

The girls having completed their half of the bargain, (the washing up) we all retired to the nearest local, which was only a mile or so down the road. After some forty minutes, when we finally arrived at the "local", Byron having accomplished some miraculous three point turns, we got to the business in hand and fought our way through the crowds to the bar. Certain of the locals were interested in our singing, (or was it our women) and so the concert (impromptu of course) continued outside the pub for some time. So finally to our respective abodes.

Sunday 2nd July

For most of us who were staying at the 'Rudolf Steiner School, after a quick breakfast came the Sunday service in the schools theatre / church. This was a memorable occasion, for the service was certainly unique, and one which the children seemed to understand, despite their severe handicap. Christoph, (the schools director) conducted part of the service, whilst what must have been a Lutheran priestess conducted the main body of the service. Each child was asked in turn if he or she knew why they were there, and quite remarkably, most replied "yes". Christoph, an apparently dedicated man, played a piece of music on a lyre and it was extremely good, especially as we had disturbed him the night before at one am when he was composing it.

Finally, having bid farewell one and all at the school, we set off for Nairn which was to be our next stop. However, en rout we had many stops, and this time they were not organ stops. Indeed, every five miles or so, the coach pulled up, and one of the girls climbed into john's "super car".

Finally, we arrived at Nairn, Where we were to sing in a marquee in the grounds of a stately home owned by the Decker family. As we de-bussed, we were warmly welcomed by Mrs. Decker. Having been introduced to the rest of the family, we were served with tea on the lawn, and partook of added protein sandwiches.

The concert was a success, despite the not very helpful acoustics, and the meal which followed was

an even greater success. Those of us who kept our eyes open, were very quick to drain our glasses as the wine bottle entered, first from one door and then from another. In this way, we found much to our delight, that we could obtain at least twice as much wine as any one else (gluttons). The meal over, the wine drunk, we sang for some while, and then listened to a local soloist, who had a pleasant voice. John accompanied her and sang a little himself, accompanied by Roy. (A rare and treasured sight). By this time our very generous host was doing the rounds with a bottle of gin and what could only have been a bottle of vintage Glenfiddach. All good things come to an end, and so we retired gracefully from the scene.

Monday 3rd July

The next morning we observed our usual punctuality, and set off from the Decker's at 11.30am only about one and a half hours late. We picked up the rest of the choir at Nairn bus station and when all the moods had passed, we continued our "happy" way to Inverness. (Four and twenty....). We stopped at Culloden (the site of the battle) for lunch. Most of us had a walk around the main battle area and peeped into the tiny croft which had been preserved on the site. Later in the afternoon we reached Inverness, and had a brief rehearsal in the cathedral where we were to give a concert. After this, we were shown to our quarters for the next few days. Well, they could have been worse, and after all, it gave the choir its first real taste of communal living. Having all claimed our three square yards of floor space, and checked that it was insect free, we brought in all that was necessary for the night and set off to see the lights of the town, some the cinema lights, the others the pub lights, the latter seeing many more lights than the former.

Independence Day

Having finally got to sleep, Pete and I (and perhaps others) were awakened by a repeat but extended performance from Jo, who had his floor space as close to the loo as he possibly could without actually being in it! First came the nose drops or was it the aspirins. Then a leak, (which fortunately was in the right place) then more nose drops and so on. Not so very long after this, there was a knock at the door. Someone foolishly shouted a "come in". In a flash the door was opened and in came the Cathedrals organist. Having cautiously peered all round the room and realised that there were "members"! of both sexes sleeping in the same room, she looked again in disbelief, and again and again. After some two minutes when the shock had worn off, she began to relate the trouble with the organ, but still she could not believe her eyes.

When we were all up, it was decided we would spend the day touring round Loch Ness, so off we went. We first stopped at Urquhart Castle and had a look round. From this point on the weather deteriorated. On to Fort Augustus and then on to Fort William (this we discovered was the wrong way). Back to Fort Augustus and safely back on the road to Inverness. By this time, Jane had taken

rather ill in the back of the bus. Thus, as soon as we reached Inverness, we took her to a doctor, and for the third tour running to hospital, this time in an ambulance.

Wednesday 5th July

The morning broke with the news that there two more invalids had appeared during the night, with what appeared to be the same thing Jane had been suffering from. Thus, once again to the doctor and then the problem of finding accommodation for the girls for the night. In the afternoon the remainder of the choir had a practice in the Cathedral, which, all things considered, went fairly well. In the evening ("By the Moonlight") we gave a concert in the Cathedral with the smallest number of singers in recent history. Needless to say, the concert itself did not have any "moments" worth a mention. After this we went for a "Meal on Mads". The Deckers, who had entertained us so well in Nairn came to the concert, and so we invited them to come back to the "Hut" for coffee, and surprisingly Mrs. Decker accepted the offer on behalf of the family. Many thanks were given to John for arranging the tour, and he drove off to the sound of "Steal Away".

Thursday 6th July

After much deliberate delay (my doing) we went to the hospital in the hope of Jane being able to come with us to Edinburgh. After a tense moment or two, the sister said that the doctor was prepared to discharge her. Thus, we all set off for Edinburgh. When we finally arrived in Edinburgh, we had a quick look round the place until we were allowed to practice in the hall at the Read School of Music. That evening we gave a concert there, which on the whole was very good. From here we travelled outside Edinburgh to the home of the Munro family, makers of "Finest Scottish Cloth". Here we all stayed the night, the girls sharing mattresses whilst the men folk made do with makeshift beds in the drawing room, a habit that by now we were accustomed to.

Friday 7th July

Up at 10.15, a quick breakfast with tales of ghostly bag-pipe music during the night, and then into Edinburgh, where we all had a wonder round and sought nourishment of one kind or another. In the afternoon, we rehearsed in a rather quaint little church known as Duddington Kirk. That evening we gave a concert there, which was not by any means the worst of the tour. And so, having given our penultimate tour concert, we returned to Lamancha for a nights rest before travelling on to Lancaster the next day.

Saturday 8th July

Having taken breakfast, packed the coach and purchased some yards (or was it miles Roy?) of material, we bid farewell to the Munros and set off for Lancaster, collecting Delyth from the dentist in Edinburgh first. We arrived at Mary's "pad" in the late afternoon and set to work preparing a meal,

and sorting out the luggage. All this accomplished, we had the annual general meeting which involved the usual formalities of actually electing (that old Chinese word again) the personalities already chosen to serve the choir like slaves! Having extended the meeting for as long as possible (for reasons best known to a few) we ambled gently down to the local where we performed our usual pub games. Jollified, we returned to the house, and claimed our floor space, which in itself proved amusing, as did the comments and moans and grunts etc., which occurred through the night. That's the way to live. In the morning, we finally got on the move again, this time for Wellington, where we were to give the last real concert of the tour.

Sunday 9th July

Wellington our destination we set off for Birkenhead?? The purpose of this detour was to drop in on Mrs. Blanchfield for another excellent tea (though someone did mention a desire to collect her car from that abode). We bid farewell to the Blanchfields and to Helen, and set off for wellington once again. On arrival at the church in Wellington where we were to sing in the evening, we were all a little amused to see the look of sheer disgust on Roy's face when he was confronted with (dare I say it) an electric organ. Of course there would have been no problem if the programme had not already been printed with "Organ interlude by Royston Havard". Anyway, having soiled his hands on the keyboard, (a painful operation) he tried desperately to find a way out of it, bandaged hands, a headache, all were thought of. In the end, it was simple, we sang instead. The concert was good though not excellent, and the audience seemed to like it (the singing that is!) We retired to a pub as usual after the concert accompanied by Gren. Finally, having coaxed everyone out of the pub, we set off for Aber. At some unearthly hour in the early morning we arrived outside Plynlummon Hall and wearily unpacked every last item from the bus.

Tour had thus come to an end after another successful years singing, and despite the fact that we didn't go abroad, I am sure that we all carry pleasant memories of Scotland '72 and "It's Moments".