

TRANSCRIBED FROM NOTES FOR A
1993 RECOLLECTION
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(1921 – 1996)

I first attended at the age of 14 the National at Fishguard in 1935 when the Orpheus entered their first Competition. Sadly, listening to nine choirs each singing three items was enough to last me a lifetime. That was my only visit to the National with them.

The successes of the Orpheus and, prior to these of the United, all well catalogued and I think you would be more interested in the lesser known aspects in uncle Ivor's life. Born in Jersey Road, Cwm, Bonymaen, he had an early initiation to the music world when he became a well known boy soprano. He competed successfully in many Eisteddfordau and was in demand as a soloist in local concerts, performing principally in Salem, Capel y Cwm, Bonymaen before the family moved to Glantawe Street, Morryston and ultimately to Pentrepoeth Road, Morryston.

Ivor started his choral work in Salonika with the Glamorgan Yeomanry during the First World War. It was a locally recruited regiment from here to Bridgend and included many from Morryston of his generation. One cannot imagine him on horseback. I have seen photographs of Ivor and friends in their khaki riding uniforms.

After the First World War my grandfather paid for him to be educated further at King's College, London. He continued his interest in music there and living in Dulwich he met his future wife, Greta Napier. Her father was in the piano business and this provided a mutual interest.

On his return to Morryston Ivor married around 1924. I can just remember him living with my grandparents prior to his marriage. He became assistant conductor to the Morryston United Choir and had many successes with it. During this time he was teaching in Waunarlwydd School. On moving to Morryston, his success at Pentrepoeth School is well known.

Modest to a degree Ivor kept his talents well hidden. I was with him one evening when, in between school and evening practice, he wrote the score for each instrument for Morgan Lloyd's orchestra for the evening rehearsal. Avoiding the limelight, he enjoyed a few beers with his friends in the Working Mens Club but before any competition, made certain that not a chorister had had a drink.

In becoming Head Master at Hafod School, he lined up all the boys and gave them individual tests with the aim of forming a school choir. This action was commented on by his friend Leo Dezulian, who I think was the last surviving founding member of the Orpheus. "Ivor, you have done wonderful things in your

life but you'll never train this lot". He died shortly afterwards so we will never know.

His death brought world wide tributes from the leading musicians of choral works and was a source of regret that they were not published. He also missed out by not being recognised by the Establishment for any official honour but his death was recorded in national newspapers. He was well recognised in the USA and treasured the gold medal presented to him by the Cleveland Orpheus Choir of Ohio after winning the 1948 National Eisteddfordd.