



OAK BAY NEWS

Singing group making sweet history

By Keith Vass - Oak Bay News

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Choristers brush up on their Welsh for U.K. tour

Hen wlad fy nhadau.

The Welsh words translate to the land of my fathers, and make up the title of Wales' traditional anthem.

For Julie Smith, Wales is, in fact, the land of her fathers and the director of the City of Gardens Chorus is planning quite a homecoming.

Forty-one members of the Greater Victoria-based, all-women's singing group are travelling to Wales in July to compete in the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod.

"For me, it's something I've always wanted to do – to take a group to compete on the stage there. It's quite a wonderful experience, it's such a global thing," said Smith.

Raised in Cardiff, Smith competed at the Eisteddfod three times as a schoolgirl.

The Eisteddfod, a gathering of musicians, dancers, writers and other artists, is a Welsh tradition dating back centuries. The Llangollen event attracts artists from more than 50 countries for six days of musical performance and competition.

The City of Gardens Chorus will be the first Canadian chapter of Sweet Adelines to compete there. And for their performance, Smith has taught them to sing 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' in Welsh.

"They did a great job of it," she said. "You'd never know they were Canadian. We've actually run the recording past real Welsh speakers and they're all super-impressed."

The Eisteddfod is just one highlight of what will be a two-week tour of the U.K. for the chorus. They'll start by singing 'O, Canada' in front of Canada House in Trafalgar Square on July 1.

For chorus member Daphne Bowles, it promises to be the trip of a lifetime.

"It's so exciting. I have to watch myself because I get way too exuberant about the whole thing," said Bowles, whose 43 years with the group make her its longest standing member.

"What more could you ask for? You're going on tour with all your friends and you're doing something that you love so much."

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Norma Ritchie, left, Barbara Denbow, Sue Rees and Susan Hatt with the City of Gardens Chorus pose in Pioneer Square. Their group is heading to Llangollen, Wales, as a part of a two-week U.K. tour this summer.

Photo by Milos Tosic

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