

## Australia and Singapore Tour 2008

*Please check on this page for the latest photos and news from the choir on their summer tour 23rd July - 9th August - section in blue 'latest update news'*



*Choirs in front of Sydney Opera House*

### ***'An update from down under!'***

*Our journey was uneventful, the brief stop at Singapore a welcome break and to our surprise we felt neither travel stained nor travel weary after our 32 hour journey. Sydney was damp and chilly but the coaches that took us over the Harbour Bridge en route to meet our hosts were cosy and comfortable and there was a warm welcome waiting for us at Barker College. Friday morning we were back at the college by 7.30a.m. for a rehearsal followed by a conducted tour of their fabulous Music Centre. It was galling to learn of the warm, sunny weather being enjoyed in the U.K. for we were experiencing what was reputedly the coldest day in Sydney for over 2 years - and the rain came tumbling down - constantly!*

*However, Southend Choirs take such things in their stride and we had a pleasant train ride into Sydney City Centre where we had time to visit and be conducted round the Parliament Building before lunch and our concert at St. James's church. As you would expect, much is redolent in style of the Palace of Westminster but it was interesting to see part of the original tin shed that was covered in wood to become the first Parliament Building and round which the existing magnificent structure was created.*

*The concert at St. James's went well and we had some time in one of the shopping malls before returning to Barker College. This was the night for 'Barker Swings' and the choristers whose hosts were performing were invited to stay and watch. Dinner was provided and we had a fantastic evening of jazz with bands from all levels making their contribution and a degree of audience participation that made Barker not only swing but*

*also rock.*

*Today (Saturday 26th) was free time for the most part. Those of the choirs who were not going out and about with their hosts (or staying with them to catch up on sleep) went with the chaperones back into Sydney Centre and took the ferry over to Manley on a day of glorious sunshine. We watched the surfers on the beach, shopped, had lunch and returned to Barker College for the joint concert which is taking place as I write this.*

*Tomorrow we will see the city in panorama from the top of the Sydney Tower and then we have our concert with the Male Voice Choir in the Opera House we all took photographs of from the ferries today. We are being very well looked after and having a happy tour. Hope you are not missing us too much!*

*Sunday at the Sydney Opera House was a great success. We sang to a full house in the Utzon Room with Sydney Male Voice Choir. What a wonderful concert this was for everyone. The singers watched the boats in the harbour as they sang - such an experience. Prior to this we went up the Sydney Tower for a great view of the city. Now in Brisbane and staying with Queensland Youth Choir. We had a great concert last night with them and others. Today we are on the Gold Coast enjoying the sun, beaches and waves. This is the Life!!*

*Here we all are on Sunshine Coast on Thursday, about an hour's drive from Brisbane. What a wonderful beach just like yesterday. Lots of hardy souls braved the waves on the beaches yesterday and today. Yesterday we spent the day on the Gold Coast, where they could swim, play on the beach, shop or just chill out!*

*Tonight we sing in the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in a short foyer concert - we sang there 10 years ago with the Girls' Choir. Then tomorrow we move on to Cairns to stay with our last set of hosts. The host families here have been great - some actually taking 6 or 8 of our choir members together with their own family.*

*Our joint concert in the Old Museum Building on Tuesday night was a great experience. Our choirs + 3 other great choirs from Brisbane who all joined together for 2 joint numbers. Then we all had supper together.*



*Southend Choirs performing with Queensland Youth Choir*

*There is a picture above to show how many singers were squeezed onto that stage! The weather has been improving throughout the tour, wet in Sydney for the first day, then sunny but cold, but here on the beaches on the Sunshine Coast it is glorious, and this is their winter.*

*We are now in Cairns to glorious sunshine and a warm welcome from Cairns State High School, who, strangely enough, were in Brisbane while we were there, performing in the Performing Arts Centre on the same evening as us! We are preparing for our concert in the Civic Theatre which we are advised is sold out -over 600 seats, it should be a great afternoon there tomorrow. Today the kids are with their host families, and certainly some we have heard from are going on great trips, water skiing, swimming and one is scuba diving, and some are going to Kuranda Village rainforest and the famous scenic railway. The temperature here is in the mid to high 20s and the views over the ocean are spectacular.*

*Monday 4th August- yesterday was our last concert in Australia, when we performed with Cairns State High School in the Civic Theatre, Cairns. This was a great afternoon concert in the 600 seater theatre, which was almost full. The choirs joined together to perform Rutter's popular 'for the Beauty of the Earth', and the school orchestra and choir performed interspersed with the Southend Choirs. During the weekend the singers had spent time with their hosts- some in the rain forest, some at BBQs, some at the lagoon, which is a lovely open air community swimming pool and beach open to all.*

*Today, our last day in Australia, we all went by boat (Big Cat) to Green Island to visit the inner barrier reef. One of the seven wonders of the world, and it's easy to see why. Several went snorkeling, seeing some wonderful sights of fish and sealife, and then spent time on a glass bottom boat before enjoying a final hour of swimming and relaxing on the beautiful sandy beaches of the island.*

*Tomorrow we head off to the airport to fly to Singapore, yet another leg of this adventurous tour. The singers will have their final 2 nights in a hotel together, which they are all looking forward to. A final update from Singapore in due course.*

Greetings now from Singapore! We arrived yesterday after a smooth flight that touched down to give us a glimpse of Darwin. This morning the group split into those who wanted to swim in the pool at our very, very nice hotel and those who wanted to shop. Now we are with the Anglo-Chinese Junior College who have given us great hospitality. We have just had dinner and are about to perform, with their award-winning choir, what will be our last concert.

Thursday - After a wonderful reception from Anglo Chinese Junior College yesterday, today is our final day of the tour and we spent it sightseeing around the city. We visited China Town for some very cheap souvenirs and delicious local food in the locals' food court. Some of us visited the Chinese Temple there as well as soaking up the atmosphere.

Then on to Sentosa Island - an island with something for everyone. Lots of the choir spent time in the Underwater World watching a variety of fish including sharks, stingray, eels and much more swimming above us as we walked through the tunnel there. Some fed the rays whilst others watched with interest.

The rest of the group took advantage of their last visit to a beach, whilst the more energetic enjoyed a game of basket ball on the beach. A visit to the dolphin lagoon finished the island visit, before taking a boat around the harbour on the river to see some of the sights from the water. The city has developed greatly since our last trip here 10 years ago.

Our final stop was to Burgis Village, a fascinating area of markets, clothes stalls, food stalls, and a last chance to buy souvenirs. The end of a great tour.

Sadly now we are stuck at the airport with a 4 hour plus delay for our flight. Who ever said that touring was easy?? See you in the UK folks!

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**Comments so far**

'What a wonderfully gifted group of young people you have in the combined Boys' and Girls' Choir. I was part of the concert in which they performed at the Sydney Opera House this afternoon. They, along with the Sydney Male Voice Choir and the back drop of the Sydney harbour, made for a most enjoyable afternoon.'

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'I would like to say congratulations for encouraging young people to use their voices in such a beautiful way. They are very talented - the diction superb and the soloists wonderful.'

from Malcolm and Joan Power

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'My wife & I have just spent a fabulous Sunday afternoon being entertained by The Southend Boys & Girls Choirs, ably backed up by The Sydney Male Voice Choir.'

*I have to say that they did the Old Town proud. The voices were superb, they were very professional, & the organization was first class.*

*Congratulations to all concerned, especially the sponsors, parents, chaperones & most of all Roger, Rosemary & the kids themselves.*

*I hope it's not 10 years until the next visit ( or do I have to come back home again to see them? )'*

*All the best*

*Peter Wolfe ( Orig from Essex, last 34 years in OZ )*