

The Holman-Climax Male Voice Choir

The voice, so conventional wisdom goes, is the Cornish national instrument.

The instrument played in 1940, at the Climax Rock Drill and Engineering Works at Pool, between Camborne and Redruth in Cornwall. Two men on the Works roof saw the glow of fires in Plymouth caused by Luftwaffe bombs. To help victims of the blitz, they formed a small choir to raise funds.

How that choir has grown! In the 1960's, Holman was added to the name when Climax Engineering Works and the Holman Company joined together. Now, seventy members of the Holman-Climax Male Voice Choir demonstrate the power of the Cornish national instrument. Competitions throughout Britain have resulted in numerous awards, including international honors in the BBC's *Let the People Sing* where the Choir was judged the most outstanding entry from the British Isles.

The Choir has continued its policy of charitable work, helping hundreds of charities raise money through their performances. Tours of America and Europe have added recognition of their artistry and gratitude for their efforts.

In 2001, the Holman-Climax Choir completed a tour of Michigan, visiting areas with a concentration of descendants of Cornish immigrants. On this tour, their spontaneous performance at a tiny church on the Keweenaw Peninsula provided the inspiration for a five-day celebration of the immigrant experience.

Nearly a thousand 19th century Cornish immigrants called Central Mine home. A wooden church they built there in 1857 carried on their traditions. When the mine closed in 1898, the church stood vacant. But in 1907, former residents came back on the last Sunday in July, beginning a century-long tradition. The Holman-Climax Choir and spouses arrived at the church on a quiet August day. The old building shook with the power of their voices and the Cornish folk felt the spirits of those who were so far from home, all those years ago.

The 14th Gathering of Cornish Cousins will celebrate those spirits, part of what makes up the American tradition. Working with the Choir, they will continue the tradition of giving by devoting part of the proceeds toward the preservation of the little church at Central. The Cornish national instrument will help preserve a cherished part of American history.

What a wonderful way to create harmony!