

# Voice *of the* Valley

**Colne Valley Male Voice Choir Newsletter**

**Thom Meredith Special – August 2014**

## 25 years on....

Choir Chaplain and long-standing member, John Radcliffe, presents Thom Meredith with a medal to mark twenty-five years of service as Musical Director and Conductor of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.



“It seems incredible to me,” says Choir Chairman, Roger Fielding, “that a quarter of a century has gone by since that fresh-faced youth took a rehearsal that so impressed us that we gave him the job. And what a good decision that was! And how fortunate are we that we’ve managed to hold on to him! He gives us the same good vocal advice almost every week and still manages to stay patient when we forget to follow it. We all know we wouldn’t have been able to perform to the standards of excellence we sometimes

reach, had Thom not been around to show us the way; help us reach our best.

So, with these words and to Thom’s apparent confusion, Roger hands over a small package.



“This comes from all the members of the Choir.” he says. “They’ve all contributed with enthusiasm. We’re all so grateful to you. And then he explains what’s in the package. “We’ve been in secret discussions with your Mrs and we’re sending you and Lynn for a weekend in London, all expenses paid, and with tickets for the hit musical you been wanting to see, Miss Saigon. We hope you have a wonderful time.



The penny drops: Thom now understands what certain odd conversations with Lynn were really about!

He's surprised and clearly pleased.



# A Conspiracy is Hatched

"Maybe we better keep this out of the minutes." said Choir Chairman, Roger, to Jenny Baxter, Choir Secretary, with a conspiratorial glance at the assembled members of the Committee. "It's like this. Unbelievably our Musical Director will have been with us for 25 years in August. We've been so lucky to have had him all this time. We can't let this anniversary slip past unnoticed. So we need to get our thinking caps on"

Several meetings later, with a variety of ideas having been mooted with less than whole-hearted support, we were stuck.



Then in early July, Peter Denby spoke up. "I've got a notion - but it hinges on whether we can recruit Thom's wife, Lynn into the conspiracy. What say we send Thom and Lynn, first-class to London, put them up in a 4-star hotel, get them tickets to a show that Thom would love and throw in some 'walking around' money so they can have a nice dinner or something?"

We all knew immediately that this was a brilliant idea. Another element to the plot soon surfaced. The Management Committee could underwrite the plan from Choir funds, it was proposed, but far better, give all members of the Choir a chance to contribute.

So it was that Jenny undertook clandestine discussions with Lynn. Everything looked good. Then out came an email to Members, marked 'Top Secret' inviting people to chip in. All the funds were raised easily – and discretely – and all was in place for the presentation on August 4<sup>th</sup> 2014 – 25 years on from Thom's first rehearsal as conductor.

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## Undercover Agent 'L' Reports in ...



J had approached me at a social event in Golcar in early July. It would have appeared innocent enough to the casual onlooker. Pick a weekend, select a show: then the catch - TM must know nothing of this. Not the most challenging assignment I'd ever undertaken but not without potential for slipups. J knows I'm a master of deception especially when it plays to my advantage. She'd chosen well.

### Stage 1

(L)           'Don't forget we're going to the Lakes for a weekend in August.'  
(TM)        'Oh, right.'  
That makes him think I've told him before.

### Stage 2    A week later

(L)                       'What's the date we're going to see Rigoletto?'  
(TM)                    'September 20<sup>th</sup>.'  
Pause to let him forget what we're talking about.  
(L)                       'Anything else you'd really like to see anytime?'  
Don't mention the bucket list as it upsets him.

Longer pause as TM thinks.

(TM)

(L silently)

(TM)

(L silently and sarcastically)

(TM)

(L)

TM proceeds to sing highlights from the show interspersed with commentary. Hooked!

Now to reel him in slowly.

'Erm ... Wicked again ... possibly.'

'Oh, please, no!'

'Les Mis I suppose.'

'Oh, great!'

'No, Miss Saigon.'

I'd love to see that.'

'Don't know it, do I?'

### Stage 3 At a concert in Clifton

(L inscrutably)

(J with a slight twitch of the eyebrow)

(L)

'The eagle has landed.'

'Go on.'

'Next month - 9<sup>th</sup> - Saigon.'

### Final stage

Plain sailing from here on in. Sidestep TM's query about where we're staying in the Lakes with a dismissive, 'Somewhere cheap. We're not made of money since you bought that car.' Watch 'Countryfile' together to check the weather for Cumbria, agree not to go up on the Friday and it's in the bag! Only 24 hours to go until the hit but that's not my problem. I know I've done my job. J will be pleased.

### Mission accomplished.

# L

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## You've heard from the Clandestine Operative. Now hear from the Target .....



There are some surprise gifts that aren't really surprises, but there are also true surprises that are completely unexpected: in the words of Donald Rumsfeld, the difference between the 'known unknowns and the unknown unknowns'. The surprise gift of a weekend away, announced at the rehearsal on Monday 4th August to mark a thoroughly enjoyable 25 years conducting CVMVC, was definitely an 'unknown unknown' and left me quite staggered and incredibly touched. Here's how we made the most of the wonderful generosity of the choir:

Still reeling from my wife's deceit (and wondering what else might be going on about which I have no knowledge!) we relaxed in **First Class luxury** on board the 9.15am Grand Central train direct from Brighouse to London, for the beginning of what was to be a very special weekend.



Arriving in glorious sunshine, we walked (with only minimal discussion about the directness of my chosen route) from Kings Cross to '**The Montague on the Gardens**' Hotel.

Our overnight bag was whisked away and we were given a quick tour of the luxurious hotel before relaxing in the outside bar area; engaging in touristic dialogue with fellow guests, and getting the seal of approval from hotel staff about the choice of show for our evening entertainment.



Eager to make the most of our visit, we set off by taxi for **the Tower of London** to see the display of ceramic poppies created to commemorate the 100 years since the beginning of WW1.



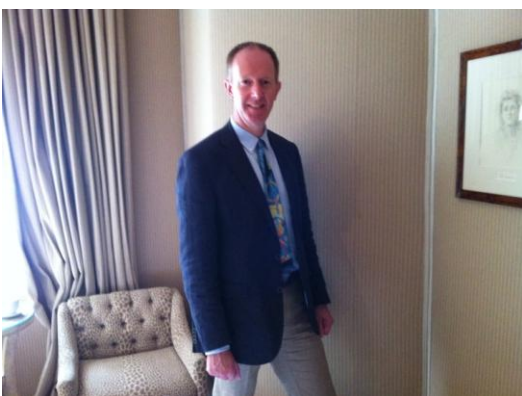
Half way there our cabby had to admit that he was going to be thwarted by cyclists. In true Tour de France spirit, the centre of London had been closed to traffic in order to allow for two days of cycling events from family rides to races.

This couldn't have worked out better for us as walking through the streets without having to dodge buses and cars made our walk even more enjoyable. The poppies were a very moving sight and one being enjoyed by thousands of others, but we didn't linger too long as a trip to **Covent Garden Market** had to be squeezed in before getting changed back at the hotel and heading off for a meal en route to the theatre.

## Miss Saigon was stunning



Miss Saigon was stunning - the new production was quite rightly being raved about by everyone we met. Amazing set, superb acting and singing and a packed house, who gave a well deserved standing ovation to the highly talented cast. What a treat!



We walked the short distance back to the hotel, soaking up the wonderful atmosphere being shared by so many other theatre goers.

The following day, even the aftermath of Hurricane Bertha couldn't dampen our spirits as we spent our last few hours in London wandering up and down **Oxford Street**. Lynn even managed to capitalise on the shopping opportunity by purchasing some new glasses frames - she assured me that this wasn't the real reason for the trip ...

So, on behalf of us both, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at CVMVC for their generosity and for arranging such an outstanding present. It is a treat we will always remember and for which we are very grateful. Unfortunately it may also be our downfall as we've been smitten by living the high life and have vowed to return when we've done a bit of saving up!

**Thank you all most sincerely,**

**Thom and Lynn**