



Drizzle doesn't dampen 'Concert on the Hill'

That annual highlight, the open-air concert at the **Salendine Nook Rugby Club** came round again on July 1st this year. The Editor, for one, would have put money on a cancellation after the grey days and rain we had had in the days beforehand. But the day dawned bright and, by the afternoon rehearsal, the sky was blue, the sun was warm and all looked well. Maybe that was why a good crowd gathered on the pitch, fingers crossed, ready for a good night. And their high hopes were met!



That very engaging old friend of the Choir, **Steven Roberts**, stood in for **Thom Meredith** this year, conducting both the Colne Valley men and his own choir, **Honley MVC**. Great thanks to Steven, seen here, during the afternoon run-through. He led us well in a good performance.

He's a nice chap and popular with Choir members – some of whom are seen enjoying the rehearsal.



Once again, **Lindley Band** provided the main brass-band sound and **Lindley Junior School Choir** won the hearts and the respect of the audience with their superb choral skills.



By the interval, there was the finest of drizzles and more than a little chill in the air.



But as we went towards the finale, the '**Abba Medley**', '**Rule Britannia**', '**Land of Hope and Glory** and the splendid **firework display**, the weather had cleared a little.

Then the enthusiastic crowd was up and dancing, waving their Union Jacks and singing along with gusto.

Everybody had a good time - but I expect that, next year, a few might think about '**Long-John's**' under their jeans and maybe a woolly hat in reserve.

Arduous but Magnificent

Colne Valley men went to Llangollen on July 3rd to help celebrate 70 years of the Llangollen Eisteddfod.

It was a long, hard day but to be part of it was absolutely wonderful.



Way back in 1947, Colne Valley was the very first male voice choir on stage in the first competition and we have an unrivalled record of successes there. We had heard that the Llangollen people were planning a special 70th Anniversary Celebration Concert but it was a great and delightful surprise when we were asked to participate: a request that we accepted with alacrity. Why would we not? - Colne Valley with three great Welsh choirs in a powerful ensemble of male voices, performing with Wales's premier brass band, **the 'Cory'** and all under the leadership of Maestro **Owain Arwel Hughes** in the opening event of the 2017 Festival - What an honour? What a prospect.



'You have to suffer for your art', they say and we did! The coach from the Colne Valley left about midday and we weren't back 'til one in the morning. And at the venue, lots of standing around; hours of it, waiting to be brought in, waiting to be marshalled into rows, the different choirs recombined into rows of the different voice parts, waiting while the auditorium was readied and the Band set up. And then at last we were led onstage for a rehearsal - and there were no seats for the singers. It was a hot afternoon. We stood for the sound balance, the band arrangements, the mic checks, pre-performance arrangements of all sorts and of course to go through our pieces. We even stood while the bands rehearsed. It seemed interminable. One of the Welsh singers collapsed and the paramedics were onstage too - but still we stood. Even when we got backstage there not enough chairs. We got water for the faint-hearted and stood around some more.

But for all that, we knew it was going to be great. And finally we heard the Cory playing their overture piece and were led onstage to 1,500 people, the cameras, the TV monitors and the bright lights. And boy was it worth it!

A tour de force of the greatest anthems in the male voice choir repertoire - a huge sound - lots of 'Amens', all conducted with great verve by Owain. The audience was cheering before the final notes of these well-known and well-loved songs had been struck. And, with the band, what a magnificent sound - well worth the aching legs and feet.

If it was arduous for the singers, it was equally arduous, indeed bitter-sweet, for our wonderful conductor, Owain. We realised he was emotional in rehearsal and in the first half. Backstage, during the interval, he turned up to talk to us. "Well done, Boys." he said. "Magnificent! Tonight has been one of the best nights for me and one of the worst. You know what I mean." Well, some of us did but it was a while before we learned that Owain's daughter had died just a couple of days before. Maybe the hymns and the 'amens' had a specially poignant meaning after that.



We finished, singing - in Welsh, of course - the great Welsh hymn, '**Tydi a Roddaist**' with special vigour and emotional intensity. (<https://youtu.be/CX0btBKb8QM>) The crowd were on their feet in a huge ovation for band, choirs and conductor. What a fabulous night for all who were there!



TV Crew interview's Colne Valley stalwarts

Backstage, at the **Llangollen Arena**, there was plenty going on as we waited to go on.

Not least Welsh TV station, **S4C**, which was present to capture the drama of the event.

Here we see Colne valley men, with **David Hirst**, as chief spokesman, recounting to interviewer, **Connie Fisher**, how it comes about that Colne Valley has had close links with Llangollen since it started in 1947.

Father and Son....

The Choir was pleased to see its turn-out augmented at Llangollen. **James Asquith**, son of 'birdman', **Edward Asquith**, joined the Choir in a unique one-off return to Colne Valley's first tenor ranks.

James, an avid reader of *VotV* is, these days, an engineer in the US state of Illinois.

He was planning a family visit to the UK and hearing about the 70th Anniversary Celebration thought it would be great to join in. He was most welcome.



James tells *VotV* he'd been practising the Welsh pieces assiduously and still knew some of the old favourites from his time in Slaithwaite. Here's James with proud father, Edward.

Thom has an excellent excuse!

July and 'Concert on the Hill' and no Thom? Could it be, as was speculated, that he had a 'more lucrative engagement'?

Well, no. Thom had the best possible reason for not being there – the wedding of son, **Harry** to the lovely, **Ellie**.



Many a choir member feels he has known Harry since he was a baby and they have followed his development as a musician with interest. They have watched with approval as he teamed up with 'Ellie Sax' to develop their music, entertainment and corporate hospitality enterprise.

And that Saturday, the corporate hospitality was provided by others as Harry and Ellie met to solemnise their marriage and to celebrate their union.

VotV learns that they still provided much of the music and entertainment at the reception.

We wish them many happy years together.

Scarborough Trip coming up ...

Time to get your bucket and spade ready - after the Widnes' 'private concert', we are off to the seaside - for the **Scarborough Music Festival** at Queen Street Methodist Chapel, close by the sea front. That's **August 19th** - it'll be a good do!



And another thing...Widnes Success



At Saturday's concert in **Widnes**, 12 years old **Thomas Brettell** was the star of the show. Thomas - great grandson to choir patron, Brenda - took one of the solo spots in an excellent choir concert to mark her imminent 90th birthday.

This was an especially busy night for maestro **Keith Swallow**, who himself do a solo spot - magnificently, of course - the first since breaking two fingers in April. Good to see him back in tip-top form.

This was the third concert we've done for **Brenda Kilby**, since she first hired us for her 80th birthday. It's a pleasure to sing for her and her friends and we wish her the very best.



Some of the Choir on a hot evening in Widnes

And one more thing...

Colne Valley Boys (www.colnevalleyboys.com) held an Open Rehearsal last Monday (17th). Sadly this edition of VotV could not be scheduled to publicise the event in advance.

'Mother of the Boys choir', **Linda Houston**, tells VotV they attracted a handful of new singers. But, she adds, she is always open to receive calls from the parents of potential recruits.

"We start rehearsing again on September 11th. That would be a good time to come down to Slaithwaite. It's 5:30 for the little ones and 6:00pm for the bigger boys. We'll be doing a performance at **Marsden Jazz Festival** in October and then **two** Christmas concerts towards the year end."





And yet another thing... Stuart & Brenda make it 60 years

Stuart Iles has been singing with Colne Valley's First Tenors for over 30 years and Brenda, almost as regularly, joins us on the coach to Choir concerts. So, we were very pleased - and not really surprised - to hear that that the couple have recently marked their diamond wedding anniversary. Congratulations

Brenda tells VotV: *We were married at St James' church in Oldham on the 13th of July 1957. It rained.*

Not long after, Stuart served two years National service after studying for his engineering qualification. Our elder daughter Vivienne arrived in 1959 (bad planning) and our younger daughter Gillian was born in 1962.

*Stuart joined Saddleworth MVC in 1969 and served nine years as secretary. Later, he became librarian and still holds that post. He joined **Colne Valley** in March 1986 and loves his singing.*

Our daughter Vivienne lives in our vicinity and keeps a close eye on us. Our other daughter, Gillian, sadly died in 2013, but she left us two lovely, grown up grand-daughters, Grace and Megan.

Stuart and me? - well, we're still together, even though back then we were much too young to get married and we did do it on the 13th.

And one last thing...

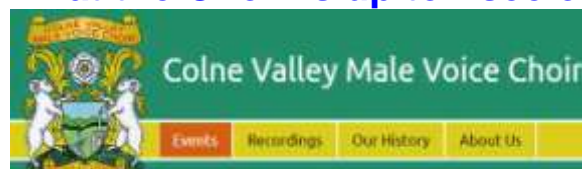


The Editor cringingly accepts that he spelled **Chris Pulleyn's** name wrong **yet again** in last month's issue.

Several Choir members were quick to point out my error, 'You got it wrong again, you ****.' they said, complete with anatomical references that could not be considered appropriate for quotation purposes in VotV.

Once again, Chris, sorry about that.

For the full picture of what the Choir is up to - see our website pages



<http://colnevalleymvc.org.uk/events/>