



Interviews with the youth wing: this week, Kieran Chadha

Editor: As editor of VotV, I'm aware that the last couple of editions have featured two eighty-odd year olds who have just died, a guy just approaching eighty, doing a solo spot, a guy well into his seventies, talking about the 200 Club, a bloke in his mid-eighties praising the 'Give as You Live' scheme and another chap, celebrating having been in the Choir for 60 years. (He joined when he was 17, mind – and he was the youngest member for quite a while.)



That's fine, that's us



Kieran: I think I know where you are going with this. It's true I'm one of the few in his thirties.....

Editor: That's right. And it's just about a year since you joined the baritones, so I thought I would try and get your thoughts and impressions about being part of CVMVC.

Kieran: It's true, it's a group of people I wouldn't normally socialise with - but that's one of the things I like about it. Different people, from different walks of life - brought together with a common purpose. But there's no doubt, it was a bit intimidating, too, in some ways. All the guys have been warm and friendly but plucking up the courage to try out that first rehearsal was a challenge.

Even a year in, you're kept on your toes. For one thing we get through quite a lot of repertoire and quite quickly. That's OK. I quite like that. But, it's easier for people who have seen the music, five, ten or twenty years ago. For them it's coming round again, for me it's brand new. And it means, if you miss a couple of weeks, you're in trouble.

And being here every Monday can be difficult. I work in a media/communications business, and I'm lucky that my position affords me some flexibility. But I need to travel down to London quite a bit, and lots of our clients are in the States, so being available for meetings in the evenings is important - even if they fall on a Monday night. Working habits have changed; I think more and more people have jobs with responsibilities outside the ordinary '9 till 5', or travel further to get to and from work. So fitting in rehearsals can be difficult, no matter how much you enjoy them. I guess that would be true for lots of younger people thinking about joining the Choir: it could create work or business difficulties.

And talking about the repertoire..... I love the old stuff - the male voice choir repertoire from a hundred years ago - but maybe there's more scope for the lighter, newer material.

I wonder maybe if we could do some more joint stuff with the Colne Valley Boys. They're an important part of the Choir's future - helping connect us with new audiences and hopefully new singers. They seem to find good songs from this century. ([Editors' note: that's the 21st.](#)) And I think there's scope to link the generations a bit in age and song. Again - singing together with a common purpose.

Kieran: I also sing with Holme Valley Singers - a mixed voice choir in Holmfirth - it's very different, and I like the contrast between the two. We get such a lot from Thom in terms of singing tuition and I really appreciate that. He has a real knack for encouraging us to focus on the breathing, phrasing and technical aspects of singing, without letting it get in the way of the spirit of the performance. Rehearsals are hard work but rewarding. My other choir is a little less formal, less structured. We sing a lighter repertoire, and I think that influences the atmosphere of the rehearsals - people come because they love to sing.

I do think there's a tendency for long-established choirs to look back rather than look forward. Embracing new repertoire and new styles is a big part of attracting new singers and audiences - which are both vital for our Choir's future. But, I guess, saying that and getting people on board with it are two different things. The Choir seems to take some convincing with anything written in the last 50 years!

It would be great to see new, more modern pieces like 'Don't rain on my parade' met with enthusiasm in rehearsals, rather than the customary groans! ([Editor's note: the piece was actually written in 1964 but we get the point.](#))

Kieran: I don't know, maybe it's just an awkward time for male voice choirs. The older generations have been brought up to sing. They come from a time when boys sang in schools, in churches and so on. That's particularly true of the Colne Valley. I was brought up here and joined a choir at high school. But habits are changing; traditions are dying out. It's quite uncommon for people to sing and for young men, it's rarer still. It's a pity as it's such good fun.



Editor: Thank you, Kieran - this will be meat and drink to **Joe Stones** and **Rob Rosborough**.

Vice Chair, Joe, and Chairman, Rob, have set it as their key task to revitalise the Choir, keeping all that's best about our traditions but looking for renewal and modernisation with a new push to recruit more and younger members.



Editor: Voice of the Valley would like to hear from members and friends on this topic.

A view from outside:

Peterborough's William Prideaux adds to the debate....

Dear Editor,

I very much enjoy reading your newsletter each month: it's always great to read about what you've been up to.

I have been meaning to write something to offer for inclusion for some time, and a long train journey this morning gave me an ideal opportunity.

Please find attached some musings on values, recruitment and younger men, by way of a guest contribution from 'down South'.

Best wishes,

Will.

*William Prideaux
Director, Peterborough Male Voice Choir*



What do we value most?

For those of us involved in the men's choir sector it is often tempting to consider the late nineteenth century as the 'golden age'. An era before the many modern distractions, when every school day started with hymns, when everyone went to chapel and sang heartily, and when fathers and sons by the dozen joined male voice choirs: when singing was a young man's game.

Unfortunately, 'things ain't what they used to be', and it seems enormously hard work just to maintain what we have, let alone make any meaningful progress in recruiting younger men.



Peter Davies's research back in 2012 revealed that 80% of male choir members are in the 56-85 age range. Is this a problem? At the 2011 Cornwall Festival, symposium guest speaker, vocal specialist Stuart Barr, was asked at what age men's voices were in their prime – the answer caused the audience to groan!

If our beloved institutions are to be passed on to future generations in fine form the responsibility lies with all of us to do what we can to help younger men discover the joys of singing in a male voice choir. Not much is going to happen if we just sit around and wait for younger men to beat a path to our doors. Thankfully many choirs across the country are now making solid progress and best-practice recruitment models are emerging: it would seem that given some graft it is possible to get younger men through the door. The next challenge is harder: how to make them stay!

I reckon this is where every choir member can do their bit. Perhaps take a moment to consider how a newbie might feel when joining: what kind of welcome will they get? We've looked into this in a little more depth at Peterborough and considered what we value most. Our findings have shaped how we communicate our priorities. For example, we've had to find ways to celebrate long service without making newcomers feel like you've not really arrived till your second (or third) decade with the choir. The shift in emphasis has been subtle but has made a great deal of difference, and now, whilst we obviously respect long service and value contribution to the administrative side of things, what we prize most highly are tuning, support, tone, clean vowel sounds.

It seemed odd at first, but this focus on musical aspects of choir activity has really helped in the retention of younger men - I guess it's a kind of meritocracy - and certainly an approach I can highly recommend.



Christmas Concerts

Yes, we are getting our Christmas Presents ready for you and this year's this year's are going to be a bit special.

First up, we're unwrapping a great Festival onstage with Champions, **Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band** again and with our very own **Colne Valley Boys** as our other guests. That's at the **Huddersfield Town Hall** on **December 10th** at **7:15**. We don't expect more than handful of empty seats in the hall, so book your places without delay. Available via Kirklees - online or by phone on 01484 225755

<https://tickets.kirklees.gov.uk/en-GB/shows/colne%20valley%20mvc%20christmas%20concert%202017/events>



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Colne Valley M.V.C. Christmas Concert 2017
 Christmas music with the choir and Brighouse and Rastrick Band

Dec 2017

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**Town Halls
Box Office**

01484 225755



.... and the next Christmas concert will be a cracker, too.

That's the delightfully relaxed and joyous event where the Choir are guests of the fabulous **Marsden Silver Prize Band** at the Parish Church.

That's Saturday December 16th. You won't want to miss it.

Retired Singers keep in touch

Three 'old guard' second tenors have been in touch. Basil doubts he could manage the steps up to our rehearsal room now, Graham reckons trips are a bit complicated these days and Roy Bennett says his health isn't the best, either. **They say, they'll all keep up to date via VoTV.**

As Basil said - and he could be speaking for all three of our retirees; *"I thank you all for the fun and the fellowship over the years and wish you all happy health and 'Hallelujahs' for the future"*



Graham Turner (front)



Basil Hirst



Roy Bennet (centre)

Brighouse Triumph



Our guest Band at Huddersfield Town Hall this Christmas and our long-term friends and collaborators, the very wonderful **Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band**, has just been victorious in that most prestigious contest, the **National British Brass Band Championships of Great Britain** at the **Royal Albert Hall** on October 14th.

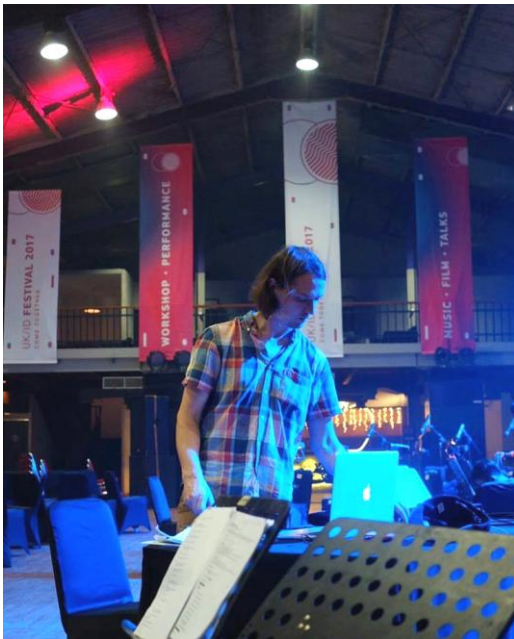
Three cheers for the new **National Champions**.



A Distant Echo set for First Yorkshire Screening

A Distant Echo recently got a live performance in Indonesia.

Quite how Jakarta musicians '**Hanyaterra**' reproduced the amazing vocalisations of **Colne Valley Male Voice Choir** from the original score is unknown - some sort of far-eastern flute, coupled with computer technology, I think.



Marsden-born film-maker, George, expressed himself thrilled with the collaboration.


His film now comes to Yorkshire....

14th November 2017 18:00

Hyde Park Picture House

Normal entrance fee £9.00 but free to Colne Valley Male Voice Choir members and spouses.

Leeds Film Festival describes the film: "Beautifully shot on 35mm film in locations ranging from the Mojave Desert to Leeds Library, *A Distant Echo* plays with movement and light in deserts across Southern California, exploring myth, identity, culture and the construction of history. The landscapes are layered with a dialogue between explorers, revealing the negotiations between an archaeologist from Cairo and members of a tribe who guard ancient tombs lost in the desert. *A Distant Echo* features an original choral soundtrack composed by Tom Challenger and performed by the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir."



LEEDS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

1 - 16 NOVEMBER 2017

Films screened in your local cinemas represent one important part of the extraordinary, fast-evolving and vital whole of global film making culture. Film festivals around the world are increasingly popular as they share films that audiences may never experience in their local cinemas otherwise.

Apologies:

In the last issue a photograph of **200 Club Supremo, Leslie Stones**, taken a few years ago, should have appeared. Unfortunately the picture inserted was apparently of 1940's heart-throb and Lothario, **Leslie Howard**.

Readers will easily see the similarity and understand how such an error could easily have occurred.



Les has been putting a brave face on it but has evidently been hurt. He was reported as complaining about the apparent slip-up, 'What a cheek. It's so obvious - I'm much better looking'.

He adds, *"The Choir thank all members and friends, together with those from farther afield, Nottingham, York, Stratford on Avon, Truro, Warwickshire amongst others, for their support through the 200 Club in the day-to-day running of our Choir and our visits – this year to Scarborough, Widnes and Poulton Le Fylde and Keswick."*

200
CLUB

Just one pound a week buys you one of the 200 Club numbers.

There's a good chance of winning:
£45 in prize money weekly,
£185 in the monthly draw and two
whopping £1,000 draws each year.

Even if you don't win, you win -
because half of the fund supports
Choir concerts and performances.

Contact Choir Secretary, Jenny,
on **01484 645192**

And a couple of other things....



Many readers wouldn't have believed it!

Huddersfield Town 2 - Manchester United 1

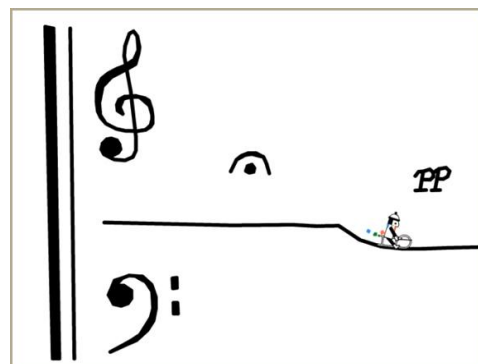
The dream continues....

This is fun

The Hall of the Mountain King with 'Line Rider'

Click on the link for a few moments of good music and visuals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIz3kIPET3o>



Yorkshire: atmospheric autumn day
in the Colne Valley impresses
Londoner.

So it should – it's champion!

Photo by Harriet



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

Est 1922

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And see the website to get the full story: colnevalleymvc.org.uk