



## Simon says, 'keep calm and carry on'



Baritone, guitar-player, section leader, Choir Treasurer and all-round cool guy, Simon Durrans, offers *VotV* Readers this sage advice. 'Keep calm and carry on'

And so we shall.





# Thom gets the virus



Quarantined in the attic: how it probably doesn't look!

Thom writes....

*'Greetings everyone from the attic of our house, where I have been isolated for the last week or so!*

*I displayed all the symptoms of COVID-19 a week ago and therefore locked myself away to try to do the responsible thing - hoping not to pass it on to Lynn, who has been running a very efficient delivery service from downstairs!*

*So far, so good.*

*Chris and I have been in touch to discuss ways of supporting the Choir and giving everyone some online resources to help to pass the time until we can meet again in person.*

*As soon as I am out of 'quarantine' (and have stopped coughing...) we will put a plan of action together and start work on some suggestions for everyone.*

*In the mean-time I do hope that everyone is staying well and managing to keep supplied with the things you need.*

*It was heart-warming to hear that the committee's immediate response was to check up on everyone and to make sure a support network was put in place for all our singers.*

*Very best wishes to everyone.'*

*Thom*

Votv says, get well soon, Thom. Everybody else, take care.



# Spending the empty hours

Why not join in and sing along with this Italian video. It was sent to David Hirst, (baritone stalwart and chair of the Choir's music committee) by old Italian friend and work colleague **Stefano Rapezzi**. Stefano has for the last 3½ weeks been locked down and isolated in his **Bologna** home.

"Bologna was where I spent several lovely evenings with him, his wife and family when I was visiting and working there some 35 odd years ago.

We have kept in touch ever since and more so these last few weeks during the **Covid19** crisis.



Notwithstanding his confinement and the terrible news coming out of Italy, Stefano has managed to retain his lifelong humour and love for music, both of which have been reflected in his recent emails. This morning he sent me this email. This is how some of the top professional Italian musicians and singers are 'Spending the Empty hours'.



I thought members of the Choir and Voice of the Valley readers, too, would like to share with me this extraordinary rendering of '**Va Pensiero**' (Speed Your Journey) in the original Italian language."

Regards  
David H

*This fantastic work has just been completed by the International Opera Choir of Rome, by Project Manager, Raffaella Baioni and directed by Maestro, Giovanni Mirabile. Raffaella had each chorister record his or her own contribution on a base, prepared by a chorister who is also a sound technician, using his mobile phone. The files with the recordings were then assembled with an admirable editing work and here is the result!*

**Stefano** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTVXEGIS3LE&feature=youtu.be>





# New Boy, Geoff Bedford, introduces himself

*"I sung with **Linthwaite Church** choir, boy then man, singing treble then later tenor. But Saturday nights, 'on the Town' became more enticing than Sunday morning services. So I gradually let the choir slip.*

*While going to dances etc in Town I met my present wife, **Audrey**, and we have just passed our 56th year of marriage.*

*She has over the years put up with me playing rugby and working on contracts overseas; that is me not being around as much as I wanted to help to raise our family of three.*

*When I approached 40, there was no more rugby or working abroad. I became a senior manager responsible for up to 300 electricians and apprentices until the directors sold out to East Midlands Electricity. Over the following year I started my own company, along with a former apprentice. We dealt mainly with bespoke automated electrical control systems.*

*At 63, I dissolved my partnership, bought two properties in Andalusia, southern Spain, and 'retired' to the villa in the hills. Until in 2015 we moved back to our house in **Almondbury**. Now instead of living in a sunshine country, we now have lots of holidays in the sun. What could be better?*



*On our last cruise we sailed to the Canaries, and I joined the 'on-board choir'. This was made up of holiday makers and musically directed by two of the entertainment team.*

*I thoroughly enjoyed the practices, singing again after close on 60 years, and the public concert performed on the penultimate day was a sell-out (free and a captive audience, of course)*

***I had got the taste.***

*On our return I spoke to **Brian Hearne**, as I knew he sang with the Colne Valley, and on Monday October 7th I attended my first choir practice; just 2 days after my return from the cruise.*

*I made my first appearance in my 'best bib and tucker' with the second tenors at the Town Hall Concert in December.*

***So here I am, loving it."***

Geoff's recent return to the Canary Islands was more than he bargained for - see his report overleaf...

# Stuck on the Canary Islands

**Geoff** tells **VotV** how his holiday turned out to be quite different to what he expected

*"We had pondered on whether we should go ahead with our holiday, having read and listened to all the terrible reports coming in from China."*

**So we went!**



*Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March we flew from Manchester Airport with Jet2 to the Hotel Gloria Palace, Amadores, **Gran Canaria**.*

*Friday and Saturday were pretty much as one would expect for a holiday; after breakfast a short walk, then find a sun lounger, a little sun-bathing, then back to the room for a rest, then get ready for evening dinner.*

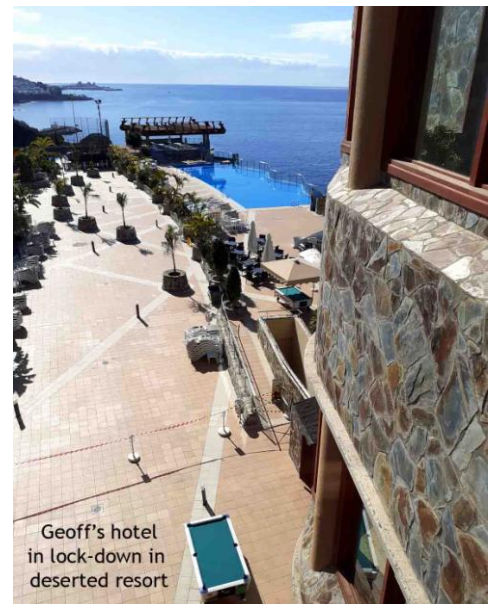
*But as we slept, a A4 sheet was pushed under the bedroom door:- an official notification that the **Spanish Government** had passed a Royal Decree 'As a preventive measure, you must remain inside the Hotel establishment. No access to the public roads, unless you need to go to the nearest supermarket, or the farmacia'*

## **LOCKDOWN**

*On the TV we heard that a number of planes had been turned around in mid flight, and all JET2 (and others) had now ceased all flights to many areas including Gran Canaria.*

*By Monday, the amenities of the hotel were closed; the pools and the loungers were out of bounds, too, the entertainment cancelled etc. The cliff edge walks were devoid of people, the water taxis to Port Mogan etc. had ceased, and the sea was now empty.*

*The area for the pool snack bar was now our only place to sit out, unless your balcony was sunny. The hotel changed the layout of the dining tables too to make sure we are at least 2 metres away from the next diners.*



*There was no angst from the guests. Everybody calmly selected a table and chairs, ordered a drink, through the waiter as we were not allowed to queue at the counter; this was sectioned off with standard red and white plastic tape.*





*We all went to see the JET2 rep. Again, no queues, no angst, no angry holiday makers.*

*She confirmed the halting of JET2 flights after the 21<sup>st</sup>.*

***Ours was for the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Now what?***



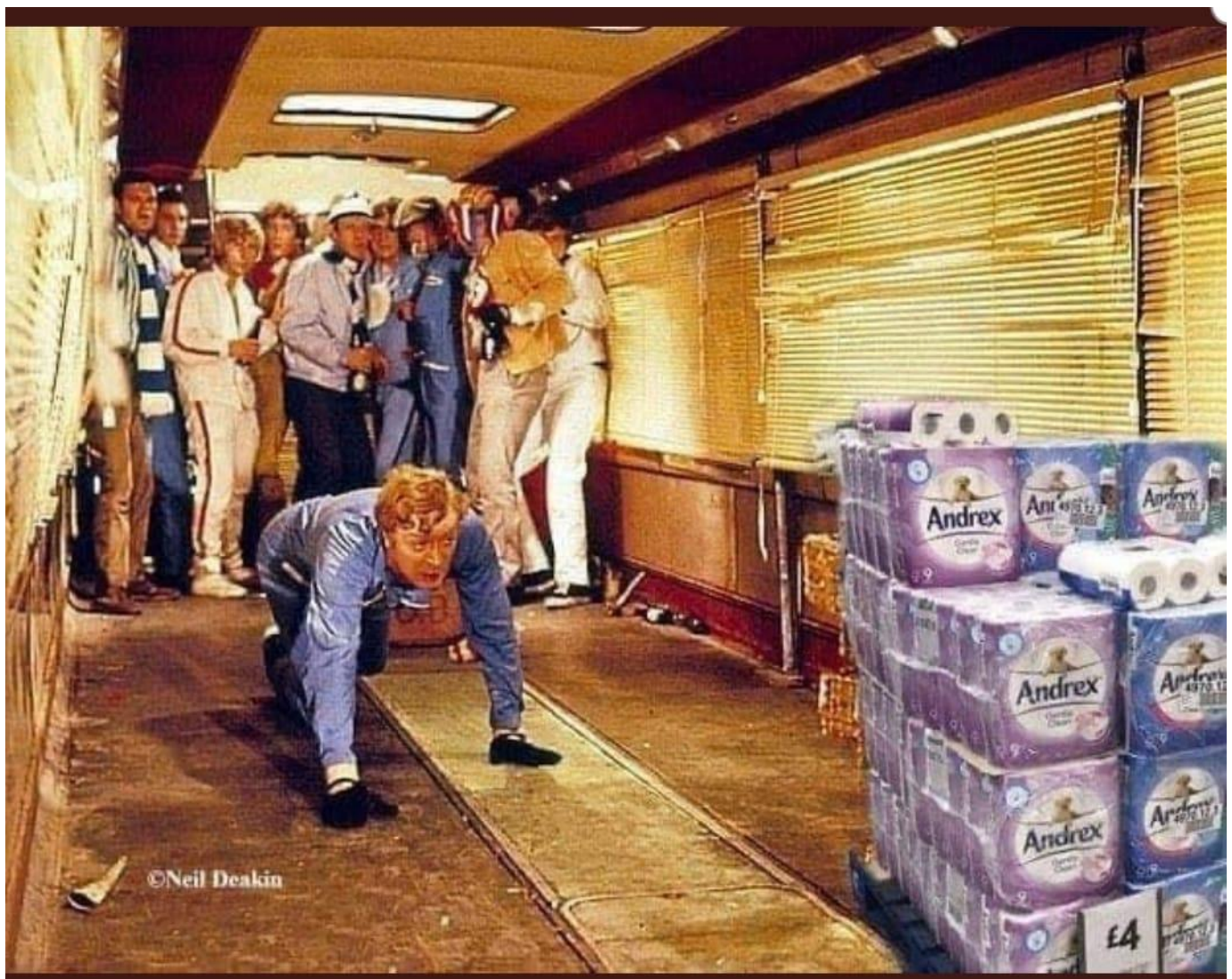
*The rep was confident we would be given a flight before then, so we kicked back and relaxed. We were losing some of our holiday but we should be able to get back home.*

*The flight was one of JET2's emergency repatriation flights, which had flown out to Gran Canaria empty.*

*The flight was uneventful and early. We tumbled into bed around midnight.*

*Woke up at home on Thursday morning to our present nightmare! And no Choir either!"*

*Geoff*



**The Italian Job**



# Lucky winner, Judith, celebrates £1,000 win

**Judith Hall** was at the recent 200 Club Dinner, when her 200 club number came up the six-monthly grand prize of £1,000.




She looks terrified in this picture. I'm told - and I'm sure it's not true - that it was the evil, calculating glint in her husband's eye as he spotted the whopping cheque. Husband, **Brian Hearne**, second tenor and wardrobe master, offered VotV no comment.

**Leslie Stones**, tells VotV that the 200 Club will continue to function during our virus shutdown and urges people to get in touch with him or secretary, Jenny, to buy another number. 'These are tough times,' says Les. 'Choir concerts are off so we're feeling the pinch. The 200 Club is a good way to support the Choir.'

Leslie provided VotV with a list of recent winners and promises to make sure that information about winners in the coming weeks will be circulated. Much-appreciated Choir Secretary, **Jenny Baxter**, has just reported that the winner for Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March was Miss Betty Peel of Meltham, who is, apparently a contact of Baritone, **John Radcliffe**.

## Recent Winners



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**

Dec	30	136	Kevin Martin	£	185
Jan	6	185	Margaret Fearnley	£	45
	13	78	Brian Hearn	£	45
	20	163	Leslie Stones	£	45
	27	48	Brenda Iles	£	185
Feb	3	79	Richard Bowers	£	45
	10	45	Michael Parkinson	£	45
	17	142	Marillian Flowers	£	45
	24	87	Judith Hall	£	1,000
Mar	2	159	Doris Smith	£	45
	9	125	David Porter	£	45
	16	153	Pat Morrison	£	45

## Management Committee update

Chairman, **Joe Stones**, has been convening committee meetings by teleconferencing. On Monday night, it was decided that more engagements would have to go: The 'Lions' Concert and the Halifax Minster one are now postponed. 'Concert on the Hill' has been cancelled by the organisers. Keswick, 'Theatre by the Lake' looks increasingly unlikely. We are hoping we might be able to do the Scarborough Concert on August 22<sup>nd</sup> but that will be subject to review as weeks pass.



Meanwhile, Choir members are asked keep in touch with each other and offer moral and practical support as best we can.



# Geoff Crowther writes.....



Dear Jenny,

*It is with regret that I tender my resignation from the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir. I am 85 and am neither as healthy nor as not as agile as I was. After the two Christmas concerts I was totally drained.*

*I shall miss the choir, but there comes a time when you need to hand in the music.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Geoff Crowther, Baritone*



The VotV Editor knows he can speak for the Choir when he says, 'Thank you, Geoff, for the many years of support. We wish you a happy retirement. Stay safe in this time of virus. We look forward to seeing you in our audience when things return to normal.'

## Some of Geoff's happy memories



*Back in the 60's, visits to Llangollen made for a very long day, no motorways and the coaches were not as powerful. On the way through we used to stop at Chester for a coffee break, and after the competition we would return to Chester for an evening meal. This was followed by entertainment which always included George Stead's inimitable rendering of "Simon the Cellarer". We would get back to the Colne Valley at about 2.30 in the morning.*

*Male Voice classes at Llangollen in those days were restricted to 60 voices. I was a reserve in 1961 but I made the team in 1962 onwards.*

*The visit to Solingen in 1965 was memorable. The choir was split into two equal halves under the control of the conductor and the deputy conductor. We flew out in two separate aircraft and met up in the main square. If memory serves, Keith Swallow drove over in his sports car.*

*Between 1990 and 2020, after I had returned, there were contests at Llangollen, Newcastle, Northern Male Voice Championship and of course the 'Mrs Sunderland'.*

*We hosted the mixed choir from Jablonec in Czechoslovakia, the two choirs had a very good concert at St. Pauls. The Czechs stayed with Choir members, Sue and I were lucky enough to look after two young ladies! The following year, 1992, we visited Czechoslovakia - a totally different experience. We sang in Prague Cathedral, and on the way home in Cologne Cathedral.*



*A trip to France was very enjoyable, it took forever to get to the Channel Tunnel, we sang in Rouen and Chartres Cathedrals.*

*1994 and 1997 saw us take part in the 1000 Yorkshire Male Voices at the Royal Albert Hall, to raise funds for Yorkshire Cancer Research. That was a wonderful experience*

*Just a few memories from 35 years of enjoyable singing*



*Llangollen 2011 - Geoff is far left hand side on the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> row.*

## Arthur Quarmby RIP

Readers will recall that the last issue featured Arthur Quarmby stepping down from a singing role in the Choir after many years as a keen and committed member.

Sadly, Arthur passed away early this month. *VotV* Editor, John Clark, was in touch with Arthur's wife Jean as they were sponsors of the now postponed concert tribute to **Keith Swallow**.



The editor wrote, 'The Choir was saddened last night to hear of Arthur's death and sang George Stead's **'Four-fold Amen'** in his honour and memory. We are thinking of you and your family and particularly of Arthur whose fine singing voice and unstinting support for the Choir will be missed by his brothers in song.'

She replied, "Thank you for your kind words. So pleased you sang for Arthur at the rehearsal. Hopefully the concert will take place at a later date."

### QUARMBY ARTHUR

On 4th of March 2020  
Passed away at home  
aged 85 years.  
Devoted husband of  
Jean, dearly loved father  
of Jonathan and Rachel.  
Grandad of Poppy,  
Esme, Flynn and Anna  
and brother of Katharine.  
Private family funeral was  
held March 19th.

Theobald's Gazette 20.3.20



# Matthew: another new boy



New member, Matthew Dennis, talks to Voice of the Valley....

*"I don't really have a formal musical background but my background is roughly as follows:*

*I'm originally from Barnsley in South Yorkshire, but spent most of my adult life in Manchester, studying to become an ecologist then working as a lab technician and more recently a lecturer in Geography at the University of Manchester where I teach and carry out research on landscape ecology.*

*I lived in South Manchester with my young family until the end of 2017. Then I felt it was time to head back to God's Own County and the Colne Valley was just an obvious choice – drawn to the landscape, particularly the moors, as well as the heritage of the place, particularly the music. Clearly a big part of that is the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir and it feels good to be officially one of the 'Voices of the valley'.*

*I've always enjoyed singing in groups of one sort or another but, since moving back across the Pennines, I've been reduced to singing around the house. My wife is glad I now have an 'outlet'.*

*I'm not sure what else to add in terms of how I found the Choir - I knew as soon as I heard of it that I'd have to give it a go. **First came late last year and it just felt like home.** Took my test early in March and now I'm one of the baritones. Thanks everybody and all the best."*

Matthew sent this on 12<sup>th</sup> March - just 3 days later the Choir announced its virus shutdown. Stick around, Matthew, you are very welcome. And we'll be back!

# Mrs Sunderland - a great day of music-making



It seems such a long time ago already. So much has been going on. But Colne Valley Male Voice Choir had a terrific day of singing at the end of February at the **Mrs Sunderland Music Festival**.

'Personally', writes VotV Editor, John Clark, 'I might have been demoralised that we didn't win our 51<sup>st</sup> First Prize, after the two afternoon competitions, had we not been invited to take part in the Gala Concert on the Saturday evening. That meant we got to sing 3 times. Each appearance with different material - 7 songs in all - the widest range of repertoire of any choir in the festival. And we sang them all well - about as well as we could have done.

If the Adjudicator doesn't give better than a second prize - maybe it's just not your day. I did notice that he said, "Enormous choir, enormous sound. Tremendous power but you use it so skilfully. Utterly thrilling. You've put me in a real dilemma over placings."

Later of 'How Great Thou Art! "My god, it nearly knocked me out of my chair, that terrific beginning..."

"This is a wonderful festival." he added. "The fame of Huddersfield as a centre of choral excellence is well-earned. There's some remarkable work going on here. Not to mention, tremendous positivity and goodwill."

**Well, we didn't win but I was proud to be a participant.**

The honours for the day went to Peterborough Voices; a women's choir that placed first in the Women's Choirs class, Choir Programme class, and the Choir Prizewinners' Challenge, taking the top spot among 12 competing choirs to win the Jessie Jameson Centenary Baton and the Huddersfield Centenary Trophy as the choir singing the 'single best piece' in the festival. Well done Peterborough people.'





And another thing...

Well it made me smile.....



Cheer up - here's Ella Fitzgerald



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJsa0OfWcGA>

# And Spring's on its way, too



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Quote of the week: "We are social distancing, too. Graham hasn't noticed yet...."

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## Tell me a story, send me a picture

At this time of social isolation, VotV readers, whether singers or audience-members, can no longer meet each other. **But we can keep in touch.** Let the VotV Editor know if something happens to you, that might be of interest and has some - even if tenuous - connection with the Choir. Doesn't matter if you are not very confident writing, I'll help you put into publishable shape.



**Voice of the Valley Editor: John C Clark**

Ring Choir Secretary, Jenny, on 01484 645192  
to join us or join our Readers' List or for other queries

**And see our website to get the full story**

[colnevalleymvc.org.uk](http://colnevalleymvc.org.uk)

