



## Pitmen's chorus



Last year the call went out for singers to join a '**Pitmen's Chorus**'.

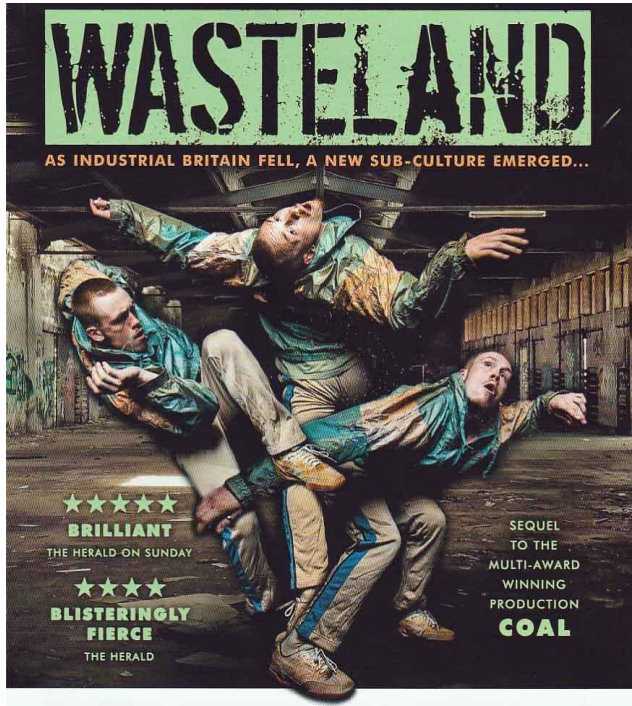
One of those who responded was second tenor, **Neil Frankland**.

Neil ended up onstage at the **Lawrence Batley Theatre** performing in '**Wasteland**', **Gary Clarke's** trenchant play about the aftermath of coal closures on Northern Communities.

<https://youtu.be/2tUxK7pDq7I>







Well, the choir has been called back into action, during these times of isolation and lockdown.

Working from their own bedrooms and living rooms, they have produced a fine version - both poignant and defiant - of the old anthem, **Gresford**, by **Robert Saint** - sometimes called, 'The Miners' Hymn'.

Members of **Carleton Main Frickley Colliery Band** accompany the men.

Well done chaps and well done Neil. The video is an example of what male voice choirs might do even in times when we still can't get together to sing.



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## Robert Saint and 'the miners' hymn'

Born in November 1905, Saint came from a family of miners, including his father, whom he joined working in an accident-prone mine at **Hebburn, Tyne and Wear**, at the age of 14 after leaving school.

While working there, he campaigned for lower hours and better treatment of pit ponies; the small horses used in mines at that time. Saint was employed as a "putter", working the carts around the mine until its closure in 1932.

This left him unemployed in the era of the Great Depression though Saint also earned money by giving music lessons and performing in a dance orchestra. He also formed his own band, the Kensington Dance Orchestra, which he led on saxophone.



When Saint learned of the Gresford mining disaster in 1934 it had a lasting impression on him. In response, he composed "**Gresford**", which his biographer, Robert Colls, described as a tune "giving mining communities something to say at the end".

The next year, he joined the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers as an army bandsman, playing the trombone. Saint's composition for the Gresford disaster was first performed publicly in 1938, during the Durham Miners Gala. All of the royalties he gained from "Gresford" were donated to the National Union of Mineworkers.

Saint was discharged from service for medical reasons in 1939, and took up a brief job as a labourer in a shipyard. In 1940, he met a representative for a charity known as The National Equine (and Smaller Animals) Defence League.

Relating his own experiences campaigning for pit ponies, Saint became an inspector for the League and drove an animal ambulance by 1946. He eventually became a regional organizer for the group.

After his initial recruitment, the League gave Saint an animal refuge, which was simply a shed in his backyard with kennels and veterinary equipment. Saint became known to locals as "the poor people's vet", and would humanely euthanize sick and dying pets upon request, free of charge.



# Zoom rehearsals started

And now, Colne Valley Male Voice Choir has started on rehearsals via Zoom. Up to now Thom and Chris have been providing vocal exercises via training videos on the 'Members Only' section of the Choir's website.

**But now there are opportunities to sing with fellow members via Zoom.**

An introductory session was held last week and sectional rehearsal will take place - at the usual Choir rehearsal time - on Monday Nights.

Choir secretary, **Jenny** will keep members abreast of joining instructions.

Thom writes.....

*Dear Men,*

*Firstly, and most importantly, I hope you are all well and that you and your loved ones have not been affected by the terrible consequences that the CoronaVirus has brought to so many families across the world.*

*Secondly, I hope that the musical offerings that Chris and I have been producing (now all on the members area of the CVMVC website thanks to James Cooke) have enabled you to keep enjoying your singing - despite the fact that it is in isolation rather than with the full choir.*

*The reason for this message is to let you know that we would like to trial some 'online rehearsals'. These have been experimented with by many choirs over recent weeks and, while they will never replace 'the real thing', they have been valued by choristers as a means of maintaining their choral progress and preparing for a time in the hopefully not too distant future, when everyone can meet together again.*



*If you haven't used ZOOM before, you will need to download the App (available from the ZOOM website <https://zoom.us/download> ) and ensure that the device you are using has a camera and a microphone - if you haven't got these, you can purchase a webcam with a microphone and fix that to the top of your screen - it works just as well.*

## Here are the times: a reminder to Choir members

Monday 29th June, 7.30 - 8.00pm - **FIRST TENORS** rehearsal (then rehearse at the same time at two week intervals)

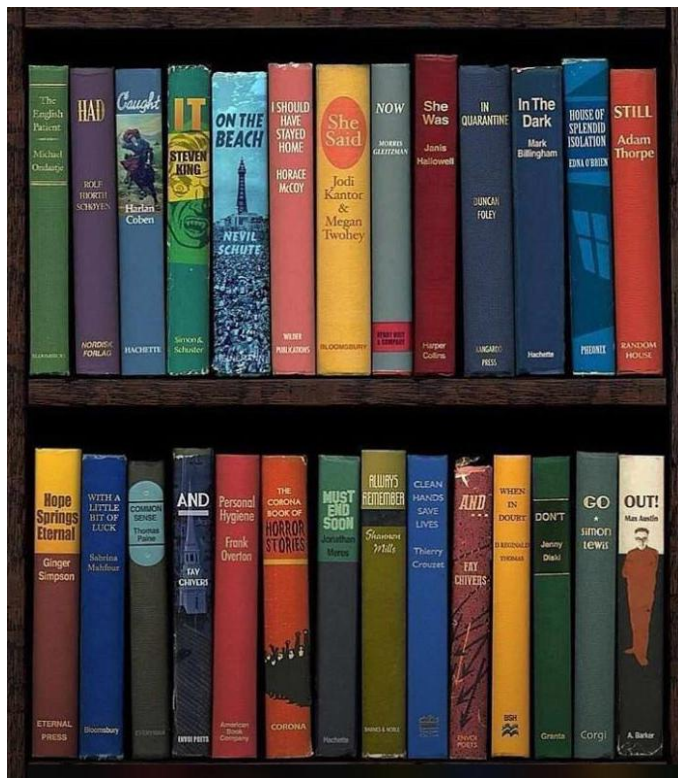
Monday 29th June, 8.15 - 8.45pm - **BARITONES** rehearsal (then rehearse at two week intervals)

Monday 6th July, 7.30 - 8.00pm - **SECOND TENORS** rehearsal (then rehearse at two week intervals)

Monday 6th July 8.15 - 8.45pm - **BASSES** rehearsal (then rehearse at two week intervals)

Best wishes and I look forward to seeing you on Mondays!

Thom



## Corona Bookshelf follow up

The last edition featured this clever picture, where the titles of the books give you the story of corona virus.

Well VotV reader **Carole Shaw** got in touch straightaway.

Did I know that the anonymous artwork was actually the brainchild of her brother in law?



She writes, 'I had quite a shock when I saw your bookcase picture in Voice of the Valley. You see I recognised it straightaway. It's a limited edition print, made by **my brother in law, Phil Shaw**. He's from Huddersfield, but now lives in London'.

Carole is associated with Slaithwaite family firm, '**Shaw Bros Door and Window Systems**' who have specialised for the last four decades in the design and manufacture of commercial aluminium architectural façade systems.

'If you google **Phil Shaw artist**,' she tells VotV, 'You can see what he does. Phil posted it on his Instagram, it somehow ended up on Facebook and pretty much went viral!'

I'll tell Phil he's in the latest edition of **Voice of the Valley**.'





Replied VotV Editor: 'I wouldn't have used it - uncredited - had I known its origins. When you tell him, let him know it was inadvertent, would you, Carole?'

Since then, your editor - a 'comer-in' just 40 years in the Huddersfield area - has learnt a number of fascinating things about one of its prominent artists.'

**Phil Shaw** is a ground-breaking British digital-printmaker, author and former professor of printmaking at Middlesex University.



Raised in Huddersfield Phil went to **Rawthorpe High School** and the Art school at Huddersfield College before moving on to build his artistic skills in London's **Royal College of Art**.

He is best known - except of course to your editor - for his distinctive 'bookshelf' prints. Intrigued by the possibility that things may not be what they appear to be, Shaw's bookshelves depict books arranged in a way that lead you to make unexpected connections and new dynamics.

In 2012 he was chosen by the Prime Minister, David Cameron, to create a special print to be given to the various world-leaders who attended the G8 Summit in the UK. As a result, his work is held in the **Elysee Palace**, the **Whitehouse**, **Downing Street**, the **Kremlin**, as well as numerous public institutions and museums in the UK and USA.



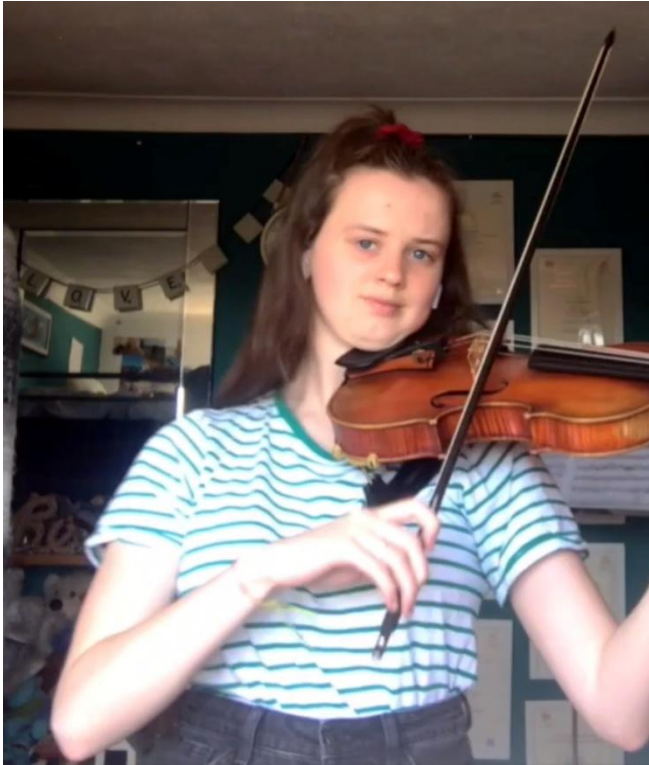
Phil Shaw with his children, Florence and Arthur in 2014. Carole must be their aunt. Photo:Huddersfield Examiner

To find out more about Phil, follow this link:

<https://www.rebeccahossack.com/artists/72-phil-shaw/overview/>

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## Music shut down



## - It ain't necessarily so

**Xiana Harron**, is yet another jewel who has teamed up with Colne Valley Male Voice Choir's accompanist **Chris Pulleyn**. Chris - undaunted by lockdown - has been keeping music alive locally with his **& Piano** productions. More power to his elbow! And more power, too, to the elbow - and the bow - of wonderfully talented Greenhead College student, Xiana, who joins Chris in this flamboyant arrangement of **George Gershwin's 'It Ain't Necessarily So'** from his opera, **Porgy & Bess**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT1KL9XkXI8>

Xiana currently studies A Levels at Greenhead College. She recently won the Rotary Young Musician of the Year in Halifax and hopes to go on to study Violin at a music conservatoire somewhere on mainland Europe!

## &Piano has just launched its new 'Friends Scheme - '88 Keys'



Says Chris... *"It's a way for followers of the Festival to support us even more, by sponsoring a key on our special '**&Piano**' piano! A traditional piano has 88 keys, and so we're offering them all to be sponsored for an annual donation from just £10.*

*We want to be a music festival for everyone, so we do not want to ask for large donations. However, a small contribution can go a really long way to helping us offer a wider range of accessible & innovative events, in our aims to encourage more people to enjoy & experience amazing live music."*

This link will take you to the & Piano 88 keys scheme.

<https://andpiano.co.uk/88-keys/>



# Another one of Brian's tall tales

Bass, **Brian Fairclough**, has been entertaining VotV readers with tales of his notorious Father in law, John Akers. Brian reckons this next tale is just as true. Like his last story it's food-based - clearly a topic quite close to Brian's heart.



## Meat 'n Potato Pie

*Let me set the scene of this tale. I worked at the time for **St Helens MBC**. There is a long Street which runs East/West through the centre of town, called **Hardshaw Street**.*

*It starts in the east in the middle of traditional brick built terraced properties with the odd shop, and then runs towards the Town Hall, across Victoria Square, and through the commercial, banking, leisure and shopping outlets as it dissects the town. I would guess, that from top to bottom it is maybe three quarters of a mile long.*

*One day as I went for my lunch in the Town Hall canteen, I saw my Mother in law scuttling down Hardshaw Street to the bank. She rarely got out, and I simply cannot remember when she last went out alone. She looked a little startled as I said "Hello" and told me she was nipping to the Bank (actually she was banking her turkey money!).*

*"So where is the big man?" I asked. "Oh he does not like driving right into town, because there is too much traffic. He is parked up at the top of Hardshaw Street" I bade her goodbye and left her on the run to the Bank.*

*My Father in Law had made my Mother in law walk all the way into town. So I thought I would walk up Hardshaw Street to say hello and to pull his leg.*

*As I got near to the top of the Street, I saw his Ford Escort parked outside a local small shop. Inside the car, quite oblivious to my arrival, I saw my father in law. He had a huge meat and potato pie in both hands and he was gobbling it down, as quickly as he could.*



*I banged my fist on the roof of his car. It caused pandemonium inside that little Ford Escort. The remnants of the pie crumbled in his big hands and flew all over the inside of the car, as panic took over from the enjoyment of a warm pie.*

*He spotted me laughing. "Keerrist! We'eer 'as thy cum from?" he said gathering the bits of scattered pie to remove any 'evidence' by the most expeditious means i.e. eating it.*

*"Why do you park so far out of town?" I asked. "Well, I tells the missus that I am feard of driving into town. But ah tell thi I allus parks here. Does't see that shop?" he said pointing to a bakery. "They make the best pies in town, so I sends t'missus to the Bank and while she is away I gets misell a bloody big pie. They are gorgeous. 'Er doesn't kno' tha knows. Hey don't tell 'er!"*

*"Why not? What's the big secret?"*

*"Well" he replied, "When ah get wom her'll get me lunch! Burriff she finds out about the pie ahll get nowt"*



# Plague hits Hepworth – again

Each year, on the last Monday in June, the village of Hepworth near Holmfirth hosts its annual Feast. The Feast marks the end of the **Great Plague in 1665**: the village is reputedly the most northerly place the disease reached, having been carried on cloth bought from London.

The plague divided Hepworth in two. In the ultimate act of social distancing, those infected isolated in one half of the village, helping to keep the rest of the villagers safe. Thirteen people lost their lives.

This traditional local event is a popular local gathering, involving an afternoon procession accompanied by Hepworth Brass Band and an evening village centre celebration.

Almost four centuries later, Coronavirus has seen the return of a need to distance ourselves, and has led to the cancellation of this year's Feast.

Hepworth Brass Band don't want the occasion to pass by unmarked. It's been a big year for this Championship section band, formed back in 1882 and now one of the finest Brass Bands in the world. In their last outing they qualified to represent Yorkshire at the National Brass Band Championship finals, due to take place at the Royal Albert Hall in October this year. Since then, they haven't been able to play together due to social distancing guidelines.

On the 13th June six of the young, talented soloists from the band played their first notes together since qualification at the beginning of March.

However, this time they socially distanced!

They performed the bandsman's hymn, "**Deep Harmony**" live in the beautiful, historic setting of nearby **Wooldale Hall**, in a bid to give something back to their local community.



This is also an important fundraising opportunity. Money raised will be used to fund the broadcasting of a series of online concerts to the community as well as essential changes required to their bandroom to allow them to return to rehearsals.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogEsJOu3pJI&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogEsJOu3pJI&feature=emb_logo)

Colne Valley Men wish them all the best



**Colne Valley Male Voice Choir** have performed with this fine band on several occasions - and look forward to doing so again when these dreadful times are over.



The picture above from 2008 includes two happy-looking Colne Valley members in the background - the late and still much missed **Philip Baxter**, CVMVC Deputy Accompanist & Conductor and sometime CVMVC Chairman, **Peter Denby**

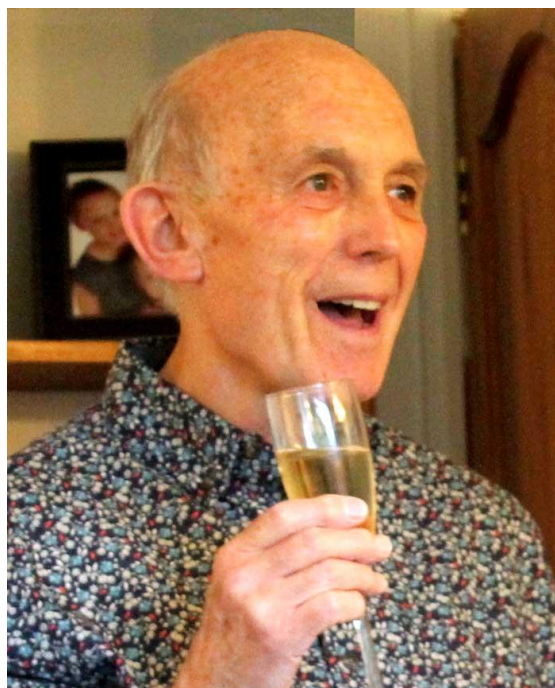
The other shows a happy crowd basking in the sunshine at an open-air concert at **Belton**.



# 200 Club winner

*"Hi everyone, writes Choir secretary, Jenny Baxter:-*

*The winner of the 200 Club draw this week is a member of the Second Tenors - **Peter Hatton.**"*



The Editor adds: 'Might be just 45 quid but Peter is celebrating.

Actually the photo shows Peter celebrating his Golden Wedding Anniversary - but it probably looked much like this, 'Chez Hatton', when the 200 Club news arrived.

I hope he did break out the champagne!

Do think about getting a 200 CLUB number. The scheme helps keep us afloat in these troubled times.'

	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 <b>01484 645192</b>

*'Hope you are all in good spirits' she continues, 'and looking forward to the Zoom meetings.*

*This is the next step in returning to some semblance of normality in choir rehearsals. Hope all goes well and you enjoy "meeting" your fellow choristers.*

*Kind regards'*

*Jenny*

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## Well it made me smile ....



*"The Asian hornet's easily identified by its yellow legs. Quite a painful sting apparently"*

Thanks to Private Eye

.... and smile again ....



Enjoy a boogiewoogie fest



Various stunningly good boogiewoogie players feature on this clip

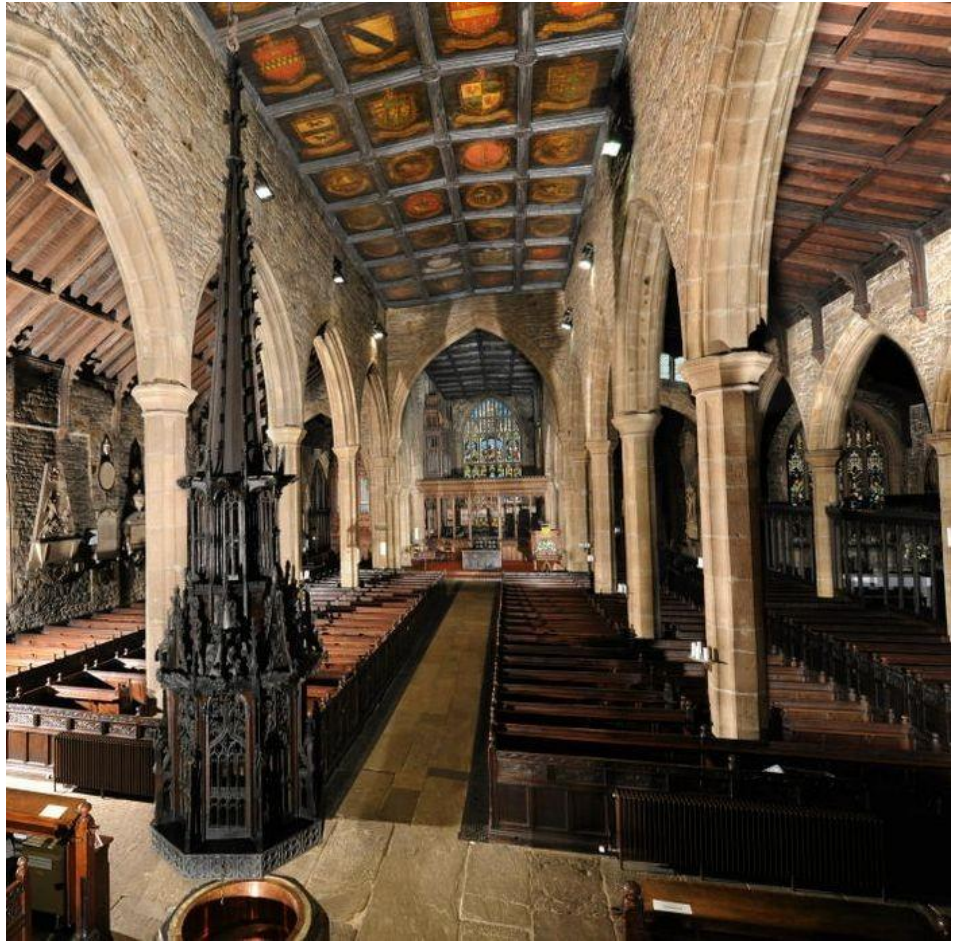
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Could have, should have....

We hoped ...

... we'd be singing at  
Halifax Minster last  
Saturday ....



.... and again on the Rugby Ground at Salendine Nook next Saturday.



Ah well, better days will come.



# Our home village still looking good ....



Picture: John Ellis

## Send me a picture, tell me your news....

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 - connection - however tenuous - to 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)