

This year the Choir's AGM happened in a way that would have dumbfounded its original members. They had gathered at the Liberal Club in **Slaithwaite on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1922** to formally create the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.

Now it's 2020 and the Choir's formal decision making body - the membership at an Annual General meeting - met up once again to review the past year and to set the course for the next.

But this time - and for the first time ever - we did it without leaving home, seeing each other on computer screens and laptops. In 1922 many a member would not have had electric lights; the television screen was unheard of and 'smart phones' might not even have been the stuff of Science Fiction. A decade ago the technology for 'video-conferencing' was not available to ordinary people without technicians on hand and Zoom didn't exist at all. Indeed, it only became a UK fixture when the pandemic struck.

So what happened?....

## AGM: the key events of the past year



**Jenny Baxter**, highly esteemed but camera-shy Choir Secretary - the one who makes things happen behind the scenes - gave her report.

*some extracts...*

*'Here is my eighth report as secretary for the Choir.*

*The biggest change to the life of the Choir was the appointment of **Chris Pulleyn** as Principal Accompanist when **Keith Swallow** decided to take a step back and be Accompanist Emeritus. We welcome Chris to his new position within the Choir and hope he enjoys many years with us. The proposed concert to celebrate Keith's enormous contribution to the Choir will be re-arranged as soon as circumstances allow.*

*During this year we have sadly lost **Arthur Quarmby** who was a long serving member of the choir singing with the First Tenors. He was Section Leader for a considerable number of years and was appointed a Vice-President as a mark of the high regard in which he was held.*

*During the year several members left – mostly due to health issues. however, we have welcomed to the Second Tenors **Geoff Bedford** and to the Baritones **Matthew Dennis** (who passed his test after the last rehearsal before lockdown!) We were also pleased to welcome back **Sam Blagbrough** and **John Radcliffe** to the Baritone Section. We hope they will all enjoy singing with the Choir for many years.'*

*(Our singing strength now stands – added **John Garner** – at 62, so recruitment work should remain a priority, virus or no virus)*

*'We are currently unsure when we shall be able to resume "normal" rehearsals, but we are grateful for all the hard work being done by **Thom & Chris** to keep up the musical momentum on line and via Zoom. The committee will work hard to rearrange concerts as soon as it is safe to do so, and in the meantime we must keep up our spirits and find ways through the uncertainty.*

*I'm still very proud to be secretary of such a fine "Band of Brothers"'.*

## AGM: Financial Matters

Treasurer, **Simon Durrans** presented the accounts. His report included.....

Over the course of the year ending 31st March 2020, the Choir had a reasonably successful year financially, making a small surplus for the year of £977 (compared with a loss for the previous year of £2,717), despite covering the large expense of £6,031, from travelling to Cornwall for the Male Voice Choir Festival in May last year.

The 200 club is an important source of income for the choir and there are currently around 36 vacant numbers in the 200 club draw. I would encourage members to fill these vacancies by taking an additional number, or inviting friends and family to join.



## AGM: Music Director, Thom Meredith, gives his review (extracts)



*'Unprecedented, weird, strange... However you choose to describe the last few months, we have all been learning how to cope with life in very different ways and with a variety of outcomes.*



Thinking back to a brilliant **Christmas Concert** in a packed **Huddersfield Town Hall** (before anyone had heard of 'social distancing') and a **Mrs Sunderland Festival** where we sang so well, who would have thought that we would be logging on to a computer screen on Monday nights for our weekly dose of singing?!

It's been a steep learning curve for everyone. **James Cooke** has done an excellent job at keeping the website up to date with our latest uploads. It's great that our singers have stayed in touch and rallied round to help ensure that most of our happy faces appear on screen on Monday evenings.

When I look back on this period in years to come, I hope it will be things other than the virus that stand out. **Keith Swallow** standing down as our official accompanist after close on 63 years is quite momentous in the Choir's history. Keith has been a tower of strength for the Choir and a most amazing musician to work with. I hope that we soon get the opportunity to mark his incredible contribution with the celebratory concert.



It has also been an 'unprecedented' baptism for our new accompanist! **Chris** just joined us and then lockdown happened! Chris has been worth his weight in gold and his technical abilities whilst managing the ZOOM rehearsals have matched his musical ones in putting together piano backing tracks and vocal parts for some of our rehearsal pieces. It is great working with Chris and I'm sure the choir's future with him will be a very fruitful one.

**We will be back together again in the future and I look forward eagerly to that time. Until then, keep singing, keep practising and we will all be surprised at what we have achieved when we are able to reunite our voices in the future.**

**I remain very proud to be the Musical Director of this fine choir.**

## AGM: Music Committee's, David Hirst, reports: the highlights

'The Pandemic has already resulted in the postponement or cancellation of eight concerts. Worse, there is the likelihood that the rest of the Choir's 2020 concert programme will be affected.

However I'm sure the biggest disappointment for all of us has to be the very late dropping of the planned Celebration Concert for Keith Swallow marking his 63 years with the Choir and conclusion as the Choir's Official Accompanist. This should have taken place on March 29th at St Paul's Hall. It was speedily decided that this should only be a postponement, but due to the present nebulous situation, no possible new date can yet be foreseen.

Looking back, I can inform you that 32 different items were performed in 2019 and included four newly obtained items. These new items being:- '**And Can It Be, Let The River Run, Crazy Little Thing Called Love and Till I Hear You Sing**'.

'**How Great Thou Art**' which was purchased in 2018 by Choir member, Leslie Stones was the item most performed in 2019, with nine public performances both in Concert and Competition.

New items featured in the Zoom Rehearsals have been, '**And So It Goes**', '**Find the Cost Of Freedom**' and '**Some Enchanted Evening**'. The hard copies of these items are to be circulated soon – one of many tasks for which we owe great thanks to Choir Librarian, **Keith Holland**.'



## AGM: Dear Fellow Members...



Chairman, **Joe Stones** gives his review and leads us through the evening's business

This year, CVMVC is facing unprecedented challenges created by the coronavirus. Like other musical organisations, we have had to suspend our usual rehearsal and performance activities in order to ensure the ongoing safety of all our members, music professionals and audiences. Whilst this was initially a setback for us, the Committee, along with Thom and Chris, have been very active. They've worked hard on future planning, in developing online practice resources and on holding online rehearsals.

I am delighted to say; nearly everyone has been involved, highlighting the true spirit of all the people integral to Colne Valley MVC.

## Let's get to business.

Joe, Jenny and Simon took the meeting through various items:

Subscription rates were approved - they are to stay the same as last year.

Choir personnel and officers were appointed and reappointed. Two new members were chosen to join the Committee: welcome to **Geoff Bedford** and **Brian Fairclough**.





## So here's how you can help the Choir's finances, Says Simon



Members - **pay your subs** – at the same cheap rate - promptly and preferably online.

200 Club - **buy the spare numbers** - you can join just for the one year. You don't need to make a permanent commitment.

Think about a **donation**.

You can do these by BACs. We're at Lloyds Bank: Account Number: 02489140 and sort code 30-94-43. Please label your payment. If you wish to '**Gift Aid**' a donation, (makes £100 pounds become £120 with the taxman paying the extra £20) email Simon, first. [simon.durrans@dmlifa.com](mailto:simon.durrans@dmlifa.com)

## AGM: conclusion Joe sums up....

So our business tonight is concluded.

I would like to thank Thom and Chris for all their work, enabling the Choir to continue to rehearse and James for his expertise and help with IT aspects. And I would like to thank Jenny and all the committee for their hard work and resolve to see Colne Valley MVC through to better times.

I hope you will feel confident that as a Colne Valley MVC team, we are totally committed to seeing this pandemic through and moving on to better times ahead and that in the meantime we are completely committed to continue rehearsing and even performing, albeit in a different way!

I would like to thank all of you for being such excellent, dedicated members as displayed through your commitment and involvement with the new ways of rehearsing and learning.



# Hallelujah, AGM done! - Now the treat!

Hallelujah chorus on handbells



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o\\_Q-YkwJ8TM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_Q-YkwJ8TM)

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## RIP Ronald Bell



Ronald Bell (centre, on sax) performing with **Kool & the Gang** in New York, 2017.

Ronald died suddenly a couple of days ago aged just 68. Perhaps the best of his many hits is 'Celebration' the 1980 song that still gets played every week, everywhere.

Click on the link to get the original video - it's been viewed 195 Million times.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GwjfUFyY6M>



# Christmas is cancelled

Well of course it isn't - but there is some bad news

The Management Committee reluctantly agreed on Tuesday that the highlight of the Choir's performing year - the Christmas Festival at the Huddersfield Town Hall can't happen this year.



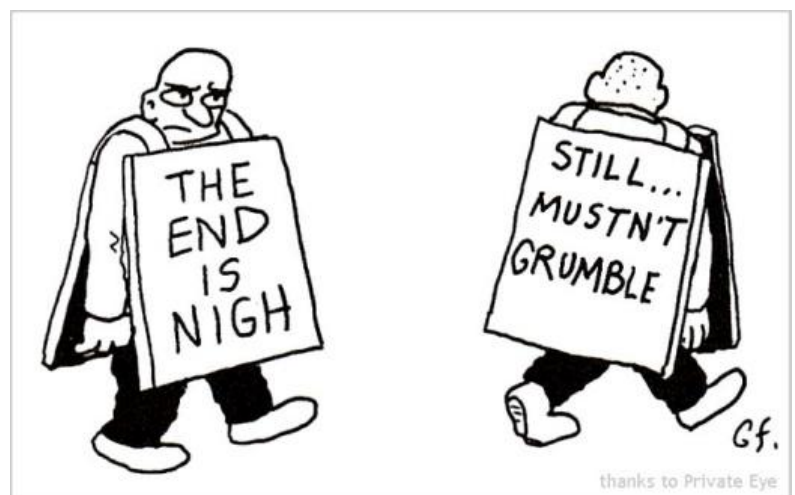
We had been optimistic that it might but at the last meeting we bowed to the inevitable.

Theoretically, the Town Hall might be available but the Pandemic regulations over social-distancing would effectively reduce the audience to 135. That's just not viable - we of course normally host close on a 1,000 concert goers.

Moreover, many of our singers and many of our audience might have extra reasons for isolating. And this week's new restrictions would have knocked it on the head anyway.

Of course we are all disappointed.

Well it made me smile...





# & Piano

“THREE exciting events now” writes **Chris Pulleyn**, talking about his increasingly famous **& Piano** Festival



In a little nod to his typical routine of three consecutive weekend performances, he's now putting on three events 15<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of September and hopes you'll be able to join him online for all of them.

They're all completely free to access and enjoy, on his Facebook page or his Youtube Channel!

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiU7VWVscKhOrGy8Hh2xyTw>

# Culture Cuppa



A chat about the state of the arts in the North  
Featuring a panel of arts professionals  
from around the region



**Tracy Brabin**  
MP for Bailey & Spennithorne  
Shadow Minister for Cultural Industries



**Ellie Sklarach**  
Freelance Conductor  
Founder of Kantos Chamber Choir



**Tom Leech**  
Conductor/Organist  
Director of Diocese of Leeds  
Schools Singing Programme



**Megan Nelson**  
Opera North Planning Administrator  
Huddersfield Choral Society Member



**Marc Dunleavy**  
Freelance Arts Producer &  
Project Manager



**Christopher Pulleyn**  
Freelance Collaborative Pianist  
Founder of &Piano Music Festival

# &Piano

Tuesday 15th September | 7:30 - 8:30pm  
[www.facebook.com/andpianofest](https://www.facebook.com/andpianofest)



# &Piano

Vocal

Saturday 26th September 2020 | 7:30pm

Music by Handel, Quilter,  
Mozart, Cole Porter & more

Neil Balfour (Bass-Baritone) | Christopher Pulleyn (Piano)

# &Piano

Instrumental

Friday 18th September 2020 | 7:30pm

Music by Beethoven, Zenobia Powell Perry,  
Shostakovich & Ryuichi Sakamoto

Tom Greed (Violin) | Polly Virr (Cello) | Christopher Pulleyn (Piano)

Well it made me smile again...



# News from the Colne Valley museum



Baritone stalwart and part-time handloom weaver, Raymond Ellis, has been in touch,

We're opening again on Saturday September 19th and because it's **'Heritage Open Days' Weekend**, it's **FREE** admission!

That's Saturdays and Sundays  
2.00 pm to 5.00pm

We are really looking forward to welcoming you back to the Museum on Saturday September 19<sup>th</sup> - providing the current restrictions are not changed (or worse).

We have worked extremely hard to make it as safe as possible so you can enjoy your visit with confidence. Sadly, our Tea Rooms will remain closed for now but we will have a selection of our home-made cakes on sale, for you to enjoy at home.



Do telephone or check our website: <https://www.colnevalleymuseum.org.uk/> before you set out for the latest update

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## 'Another Hallelujah', says John Lees



In the hottest gardening news this week, John **'Monty Don'** Lees tells VotV:-

Finally, the first few are about ready to crop. They're big, round, beautifully red and ever so tomatoey

Hallelujah.

Well done, John





Now that's a way to end a concert ...



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5Pd7eMTciEWe>

Male voice choir extraordinary, **'The Spooky Men'** sing **Leonard Cohen's** romantic ballad, **'Dance Me to the End of Love'** to finish one of their concerts - terrific.

Old Huddersfield picture



Circa 1904, Cross Church Street at the junction with King Street - note the steam engine and horse and cart deliveries.



# There's a crock of gold in Slaithwaite?



Photo: George Clark

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



At this time of continuing distancing and 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 - even if it's a bit 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)**