



... and I'm feeling good.

Around 17,000,000 UK citizens have been vaccinated so far. And in the 70+ age range it seems that around 95% have taken up the offer.



Statistically that would mean that roughly 80% of the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir has had at least their first dose - and likely, too, the majority of our audiences. In a few weeks they'll have had their second and should be protected both against serious illness and, just as importantly, they'll be much less likely to transmit the infection to others

Are we as a Choir and as a nation heading towards a return to normality?

Almost a year on from first beginning to realise we were in trouble, do we now see a way out?

Is there a hint of spring in the air?



Your Editor can't say for sure (and isn't to be relied on for virus information, in any case) but, like **Nina Simone** he's feeling good!

Nina is feeling good

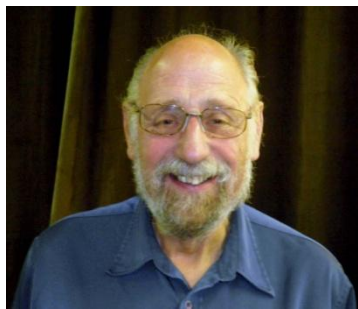
This is her original sound track from the 1965 recording.

'Feeling Good' is a song written by English composers Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse for the musical, 'The Roar of the Greasepaint - the Smell of the Crowd'.

Nina made it her own when she recorded it on the album, 'I Put a Spell on You' <https://youtu.be/oCGvVPkaiTk>



Down on Brian's farm



Brian Hibbert, bass and long-time Choir member says that - on a farm - life goes on even if everything else is shut down. He reckons it might be presumptuous of him to think that 'Voice of the Valley' readers will be interested in what he's getting up to in lockdown but your Editor thinks you'll be pleased hear from him.....

'Now what's all this witterin' I hear about people being bored at home?'

Chance would be a fine thing, here on the farm. Although we are only on a part-time basis now, it's still seven days a week.

Our son Mark and his girlfriend claim to do most of the heavy work these days - and they do - although I still seem to hear these expressions quite regularly:-

*Dad, can you hold this for me?
Dad, can you help me?
Dad, how do I do this?*

Mark and I have been doing jobs that have needed to be done for "quite a while" shall we say.

Mark has a day job. He's been lucky that while his hours were reduced initially, he hasn't been laid off. But his good fortune definitely upped our retirement workload! And he did pick up Covid in early January, (He's OK now. Sue and I had to be tested, of course, but we were negative.) He'd come in some days when he could manage.

But it's been tough on us. What takes him an hour to do takes Sue and me about three hours and then two days to recover! Our other son pops in to help when he can.

I'm ready for a rest. I wish someone would put me on furlough!

We were at the end of calving last year at the beginning of lockdown and here we are calving again and still in lockdown.



This fine cow, known, unsentimentally, as '15-74', is looking after her new calf this February. She's the same one looking at her calf in the picture, above, that was taken last March, before the Pandemic really got going around Yorkshire.

The hardest thing I'm looking at for the future will be going out in the evenings again. I'm so used to being at home now and recovering from the day's chores, that getting ready and going out to rehearsals or anything else is going to take a lot of effort. It will be a case of "Come on lad. Pull yourself together."

But hey ho, life goes on!

I splashed out on a diary for 2021. I had my first vaccination about a month ago.

*So all things considered, there **is** a future, look forward to it.*

Take care, stay safe.'

Brian

200 Club winners

Former £1,000 winner, Brian, still supports the **200 Club**. Here he is at the last pre-lockdown 200 Club Dinner.

He'd be the first to tell you that the **200 Club** draw is a great scheme; would urge you to buy a number for just £50.00, adding that even if your number doesn't come up, it's still a good purchase. Why? Because, half the 200 Club income stays with the Choir to support its running costs.



Bass, **Brian Fairclough** would certainly echo those sentiments. He was the lucky winner of £185 in the latest large monthly draw.



Other recent winners include:-

November 2nd **Peter Denby**

9th **Peter Stubbs**

16th **Richard Bowers**

23rd **Marjorie Beaumont** all £45

30th **Nancy Meadows** £185

December 7th **Michael Parkinson**

14th **Jan Bowers**

21st **Janine Fielding** all £45

28th **Joan Stones** £185

2021

January 4th **John Garner**

11th **Vera Cowgill**

18th **Simon Durrans** all £45

25th **Brian Fairclough** of the Bass Section £185

February 1st **Nara Hirst**, (Mum of Michael and sister-in-law of David, Baritones) £45

8th **Helen Armitage** (Daughter of Vice President and First Tenor John Lees) £45

The logo for the 200 Club, featuring the number '200' in large, white, 3D-style digits on a blue background, with the word 'CLUB' in white capital letters below it.

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**

Spring concert

Here's a date for your Diary - April 3rd 2021

That's when we'll be streaming our next online concert

Our Christmas concert was so much appreciated - watched upwards of 2,500 times and to great acclaim - that we have decided to do it again.

One day we'll be free of the virus but it won't come just yet. So we are doing another online concert, hoping to bring some of the joys of spring to our audiences - and let's be honest - to perk us singers up as well.

Details will follow shortly - but for now just note the date and look out for further announcements.

You'll be pleased to hear that our compère will be the incomparable **Raymond Ellis**.

Oh, and when you get chance, let your pals know that something special will be coming up.

Chris Pulleyn, who did such good work last time reiterates,

"That's Saturday 3rd April on Youtube, and we'll be premiering it at 8.00 pm as we did at Christmas (with pre-concert entertainment for 10 minutes beforehand.)"



10 reasons why singing is good for you

People often talk about the health and wellbeing benefits of singing in a group, but what difference can it really make? Well, **Opera North** has a view about it, which they've just published in a web piece on February 18th as promotion of their online singing programme '**From Couch to Chorus**'.
<https://www.operanorth.co.uk/whats-on/from-couch-to-chorus-sing-into-spring/>

Voice of the Valley reckons they are spot-on and is happy to share their views with our Readers.

Here are our Top 10 reasons why we think it's well worth giving your vocal cords a regular workout.

1. Singing makes you feel better



There's an increasing amount of evidence that singing releases endorphins, serotonin and dopamine - the 'happy' chemicals that boost your mood and make you feel good about yourself. Scientists believe that's one of the reasons why people report being on a high during choir sessions and continuing to feel positive, uplifted and motivated afterwards.

"It has been a beacon in these difficult times, to have an appointment to meet with other people and do something so uplifting." - participant, 'From Couch to Chorus'.

Singing also counts as an aerobic activity as it introduces more oxygen into the blood leading to better circulation - and a better mood.

2. Singing enhances lung function

We often take our lungs for granted, but most of us rarely use them to their full capacity. The way singing requires you to breathe makes you do just that, increasing your lung capacity as well as engaging the muscles around the ribcage.

"The controlled nature of breathing in singing increases lung capacity and can also help people on a road to recovery." - Jennifer Sterling, Choral Director.



That's why singing has been used to help rehabilitate people recovering from lung conditions and, more recently, to benefit people suffering from long Covid. It's good for your lungs as it makes you breathe more deeply.

3. Singing helps you beat stress and relax



As well as benefitting our lungs, breathing properly and with more awareness is good for releasing anxiety and helping us transition into a state of rest and relaxation.

“Simply by singing along to a favourite song or humming long notes can reduce stress levels and create a greater sense of internal balance.”- Marie Claire Breen, soprano and leader of Step into Singing.

If you’ve had a bad day, give singing a go. We promise its stress-busting properties will help you forget your worries and simply be in the moment.

4. Singing helps improve memory

Singing can help improve mental alertness, memory and concentration as it involves focusing on multiple things at once, engaging many areas of the brain in the process. Music is also increasingly becoming a feature of dementia care, in part because it has proved a powerful tool in sparking memories often long after other forms of communication have diminished.

“The visits from Opera North allowed our residents to really open up emotionally giving us insights into their pasts that they had never shared before. It was great to see the happy smiling faces of those with advanced dementia as they sang along and really engaged with the experience.” - Jo Bailey, Wellness Co-ordinator at Simon Marks Court.

5. Singing builds a sense of community

Even with choirs going virtual, singing is still a fantastic communal activity. Singing with other people, whether in the flesh or on screen, can help build connections and feelings of togetherness. Recent research has also shown that the sense of self-other merging we experience by synchronizing our voices with others is a great way to fast-track social bonding.



There’s also the pleasure to be found in sharing an interest, ensuring you always have something to talk about before or after the session.

“The sense of community and belonging when singing in group settings, even over Zoom, can have a huge impact on stress reduction and can even synchronize your heartbeat and regulate your breath, so you’re all breathing as one huge lung - Marie Claire Breen.

6. Singing lets you express yourself



Singing is the perfect way to let go and express how you feel. “It’s about just enjoying yourself, enjoying the process of being with people, creating with people.” - Gordon Shaw, member of the Chorus of Opera North.

Of course, when you sing in a group, there’s the added fun of watching other people enjoying themselves too!

7. Singing can help with pain relief

By supporting wellbeing and giving participants a healthy dose of joy, singing can be beneficial for people who are living with persistent pain. **Dr Frances Cole**, (one time Slaithwaite GP and Merrrydale resident: Ed) said “Singing brings joy to people’s faces and lives. It helps them shift from yet another day ‘enduring pain’ to having joyful, fun times and feeling connected to others. We also find it helps with confidence, reconnecting people with themselves in positive, fruitful and compassionate ways.”

8. Singing boosts your confidence

Many people get nervous at the thought of performing in public, but singing in a group can boost your confidence and fire up your self-esteem - and the more you do it, the more confident you’ll feel. Good posture is also a key factor in hitting the high notes, so you’ll find you’re naturally standing taller. In fact, it works so well that singing is used by Opera North to build confidence and self-belief in workplace training sessions with corporate partners!



9. Singing is for everyone

The good news is, it doesn’t matter whether you think you can sing in tune or not: the health benefits will still be the same. “Everybody has a voice and everybody can sing. It’s a brilliant way of just giving yourself some time. Simply tune out the rest of the world and enjoy the physical sensation of breathing in and creating a note with your body.” - Oliver Rundell, Chorus Master, Opera North.

10. Music has it all

“Singing with others contributes to positive mood, is engaging, promotes relationships with others, is experienced as meaningful, and can afford a strong sense of accomplishment.” - Dr Freya Bailes, Course leader: Wellbeing Studies at Leeds University.

The Colne Valley Angle:-

Colne Valley Male Voice Choir is always keen to encourage everyone to sing and, in particular, to invite men to join our online singing sessions.

With many demonstrations, and the expert guidance of our Music Director, **Thom Meredith**, and vocal coach and pianist, **Chris Pulleyn** you get plenty of hints, tips and good-natured encouragement.

And singing in the comfort of your own home over **Zoom** means no-one can hear the sound you're making anyway, so you can simply let go. Have fun and experience for yourself the wellbeing singing brings.

Want to join in? Contact **Jenny** on 01484 645192; she'll send you an invite. You won't regret it!



So farewell then; supreme Mary Wilson



Mary Wilson, (above left) one of the original Supremes has died at the age of 76. The group was founded in Detroit as The Primettes in 1959, when Wilson was just 15 years old. She stuck with the group until it finally disbanded in the seventies. Mary passed away at home in Henderson, Nevada.

This is, arguably, their best single - 'Reflections' - a big hit from 1967.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acUP7riUnr4>

Do you still have the mind power to solve these puzzles?

Can you identify all these countries you're no longer allowed to visit?

Don't scroll down too far if you don't want to see the answers.



Carole has millions of friends

You would scarcely believe it but it's been 50 years since Carole King sang, 'You've got a Friend' on her much-loved LP, 'Tapestry'.

She wrote it during the 'Tapestry' recording sessions in Los Angeles (incidentally, in the place where The Muppets are now based); one of twelve super songs on an album that has remained in the popular imagination ever since it was released in that February half a century ago.



It counts in the top 100 best-selling albums with over 14,000,000 copies sold to date. And not long ago, Tapestry was ranked N° 25 on Rolling Stone's list of the 500 'Greatest Albums of All Time'.

Click here for the original Carole King version on Tapestry:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRY0O7t_Bpc

Speaking of '**You've got a friend**', Carole said, "The song wrote itself. It was as close to pure inspiration as I've ever experienced. It was written by something outside myself, through me." When **James Taylor** made his version, it achieved even greater renown. King says she "didn't write it with James or anybody really specifically in mind. But when James heard it he really liked it and wanted to record it."

Taylor claims Carole told him the song was a response to a line in his earlier song 'Fire and Rain', when he sang, "I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend". Taylor's cover was released as a single and also became a big international hit, reaching Number 4 on the UK singles chart.

Every song on the album is brilliant, which is why, perhaps, there's so much news coverage of its 50th anniversary.

Carole, herself, is still going strong and just had her 79th birthday on February 9th.



Neil Jowett RIP

News of the recent death of bandmaster, Neil Jowett, has saddened many, many people. Surrounded by his family, Neil died peacefully at home after a short illness on January 26th.

Colne Valley Male Voice Choir members and the hundreds who enjoyed the open-air '**Concert on the Hill**' at Salendine Nook, every July, will be especially touched by his passing.



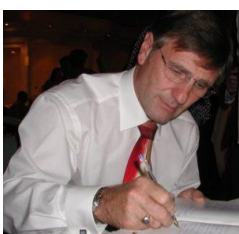
It was Neil who fronted the **Lindley Brass Band**, often leading the choirs, in 'Last Night of the Proms'-style entertainment at the Rugby Ground. He was always jovial, enthusiastic and, like no other, defined an event, which (pre-covid) attracted a good crowd of spectators, often 'chilled' in more than one sense of the word. He'd lead them to enjoy male voice choir performances, fine brass band standards, to jump up and down waving flags to 'Land of Hope and Glory' and to revel in a firework finale.



In more recent years, Neil stepped down from conducting the band but he was always around at the event, with '**Sundown Swing**' a 12 piece band that plays 'Big Band' pieces.



Neil was no mean musician. He was just 8 years old when he started playing cornet with **Slaithwaite Band**. He went on to play with world-class bands, such as **Black Dyke Mills** and **Brighouse & Rastrick**. He returned to Lindley Band, rescuing it at a low point and remained its leader for over 30 years, continuing to guide and support the band as 'President'.



One of this 3 children, **Adam**, is planning a long-distance run to raise funds for glioblastoma brain tumour research (the condition which triggered Neil's demise). Readers might consider contributing via this link:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/adam-jowett3>

Slaithwaite Moon-raking 2021 - 'Moonshine'



It takes a village to organise it - as it has done for at least 35 years - and this year the good folk of Slaithwaite found a way of celebrating their Moon-raking Festival even though the usual street parties and procession were ruled out.

People decorated their windows and villagers went on 'socially-distanced' walks to see the hundreds of illuminations on display.

Slaithwaite Moonraking Festival was started 30 years ago by Satellite Arts with Slaithwaite Community Association. The festival now takes place every two years (in the odd year) and has grown and developed into an exciting celebration of creativity, crafts and storytelling.

Now an independent, charitable organisation run by local people, the Slaithwaite Moonraking Festival has embraced a role in profiling the uniqueness of Slaithwaite as a place to live, work and visit.

February is a dark time of year, by the end of it we are all ready for a 'lift' and the Moonraking Festival provides a welcome diversion from the winter gloom. At its heart is a week of lantern making workshops, where people of all ages create wonderful willow lanterns of all shapes and sizes. This is interwoven with storytelling, music workshops and performances building to the finale day.

As we are unable to produce a full Festival programme in 2021 we are finding a new way to light up Slaithwaite that is COVID resilient.



Traditionally, the moon, having been 'raked out' of the canal, is paraded round the streets by a small party of gnomes. The one on the left looks a right weirdo. For more Moonraking 2021 decorated windows, see their website at <https://www.slaithwaitemoonraking.org.uk/>



Joe is having an 'ice time



Choir Chairman, **Joe Stones**, with his partner, Judith, are seen here above **Wessenden**, enjoying the recent spell of frost and snow. They were mightily impressed by the icicles, now all melted away. How quickly things change!



Finally abandoned in 1944, the canal in Slaithwaite was filled in the 1950's, dug out again in 1999 and fully restored in 2001. This was part of a total regeneration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal which included the record-breaking Standedge Tunnel under the Pennines. Many believe it restored the character of the village.

And on the subjects of change and also of frost and snow, here's a picture of our Choir's home village in the early 1940's.

Shortly afterwards the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, as it ran through Slaithwaite, was filled in and didn't reopen again for 50 years.

In the process a nice row of flowering cherry trees, planted on the line of the old canal was lost. but most people reckon bringing the waterway back into use was a change for the better.

Well it made me smile....



Is there life on Mars?

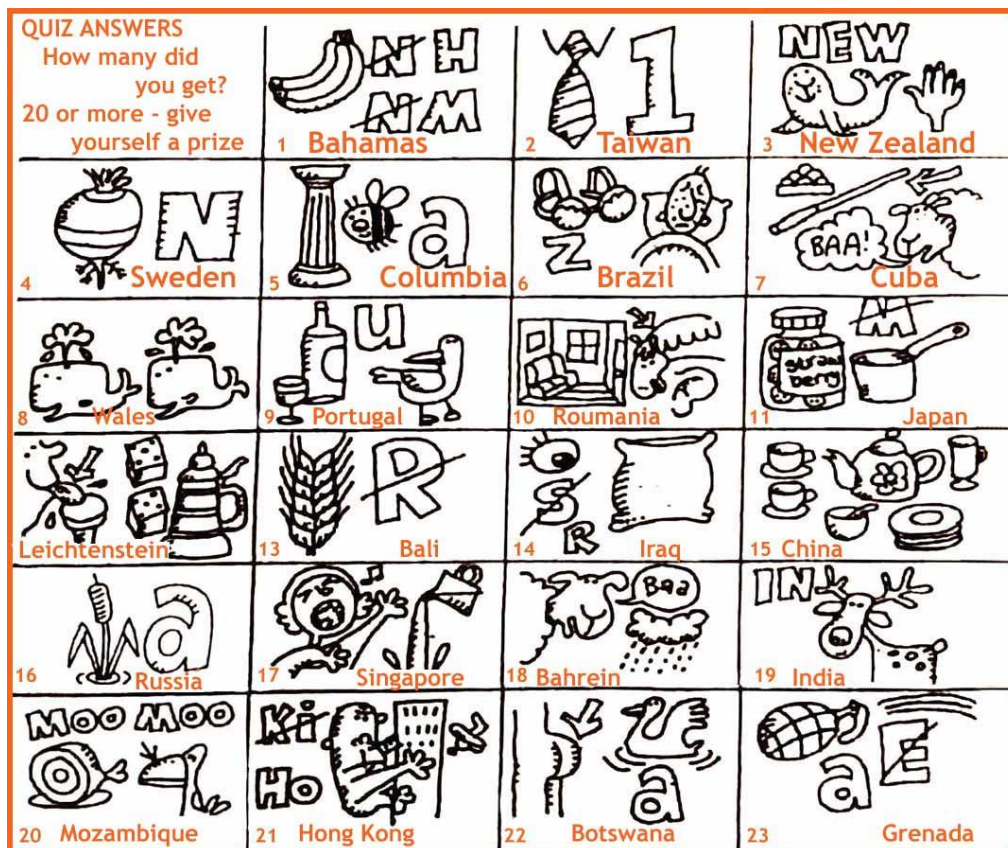
UPDATE (Feb. 18, 2021, 20:55 GMT): On Thursday, Perseverance successfully touched down on Mars, kicking off a two-year mission to roam its surface and search for signs of ancient microbial life.



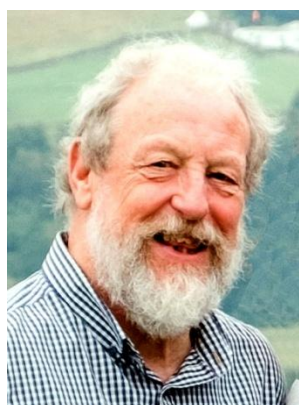
After a remarkable 300 million mile trip and a scary landing it looks like the NASA lander is safely down and largely intact.



If the Moon is made of cheese, it rather looks like Mars is a popadom



Well, how many did you get?



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 up.

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

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



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

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