



‘Back to rehearsals’ special edition

... and it was a special day for the Choir - July 19th 2021 - singing together again

On Monday evening, **the full choir** was able to meet and sing together for the first time since March 2020.

We had enjoyed a false dawn on May 17th **2021** when, under stringent conditions, two groups of twenty members had got together consecutively, in Slaithwaite to sing: a return in the direction of normality. That was cruelly crushed the very next day by a reinstatement of culture secretary, Oliver Dowden’s regulations.

Now on Monday 19th - two months later - we were back. Theoretically we could have returned to a fully normal reconvening but our musical leaders and the Management Committee had come to realise that if the government had been over-cautious in May, they were downplaying the persistence and destructiveness of the virus in July. So-called ‘Freedom Day’ we didn’t reckon could be real, when we know Kirklees (far from being the worst local authority) had seen around 1,600 new Covid cases in the past week and most experts are predicting a great wave of new infections to follow on from Monday’s removal of restrictions.

So what we decided on was a big step towards what we used to have but nonetheless quite a way from what we’ve known for the last 98 years.

This is what we planned.



We set out to consult all members beforehand. ‘If you want to come together and sing and feel safe with that then these are the criteria to follow. Equally if you feel it’s not safe, not right for you, that’s fine, too’ was the burden of **Chairman Joe’s** message to singers. The plan was to gather at the back entrance of our local Church, Saint James’s in Slaithwaite, promptly just before rehearsal at 7:30pm. The church had been most helpful in responding to the Choir’s request to help out on what we hope to be a temporary basis. It is a much bigger building than our nearby

rehearsal room with a much higher ceiling and much greater airspace for ventilation and air circulation. More significantly it offered plenty of space so that members could all congregate but keep properly distanced from each other.

And our precious professionals, particularly, young **Chris Pulleyn** and, not quite so young, **Thom Meredith** could also stay a sufficient distance apart. Most of our singers, of course, have been 'double-jabbed' for weeks but not all. For any who were concerned the 'Zoom' operation would continue.



By July 19th most of our singers opted to join the 'real-life' rehearsal.



Arriving singers were to be greeted at the church door by tenor, **Matt Houston**, who, with wife, Linda, has done such formidable work in keeping both our Boys' choir and the men's safe and functioning. Singers were to be 'temperature-tested', guided to hand sanitation, reminded about mask-wearing and directed to an allotted singing position at two metres distance from their fellow members.

The rehearsal was planned to run for 45 minutes, followed by a good break, outdoors, allowing any aerosol to be ventilated out before a second session of 45 minutes.

And how did it work out?

It was just terrific to be back again, making music together. Zoom is fine but it was clear what we'd been missing and longing for as soon as we started singing.

As rich chords, in four or more parts, rose into the resonant acoustic of the church all around us, we revelled in the harmony - not just the harmony of the sound but the harmony of common enterprise as, 'Comrades in Song', we once again began to realise our core purpose.



If truth be told there were quite a lot of feeble and inaccurate attempts - we've been away for 16 months - but in those moments when we confidently sent a perfectly-pitched combination of notes ringing through the roof space we were transported by the joy of singing.

Clearly Thom, behind his spatter screen was transported. We applaud his dedication in keeping us ticking over on Zoom. But for all of us it's been such a 'cut-down' experience.

For the first time Thom - and all of us - were able to hear each other realising the music we've been labouring through. He started us on '**Musica Dei**' and then '**Away From the Roll of the Sea**'. Both are pieces we have never sung in full choir and their beautiful harmonies were magnificent to hear filling the body of the church. **Magic!**



From our first warm-up exercises, we knew we were present at a special occasion. Here we see Second tenors, **David Morrison** and **Tom Law** with baritones behind. David writes, *“Great rehearsal last night - so uplifting and so rewarding. Really good to see everybody once again - although difficult to recognise one or two, hidden behind masks or sporting new beards”*.

This is **Adrian Calverly** arriving, still masked and - under Matt's supervision - following the hand-sanitisation protocol.



Our 'Music Professionals' - were already set up, ready for live rehearsal and ready to transmit on Zoom to those who for whatever reason couldn't be amongst the nearly 50 men physically present. .

And, don't they look professional!

It was a chance to renew contact with old chums who hadn't run into each other for months - often since march 2020. Veteran tenors, **Ken Farr** and **Les Stones** are pleased to catch up.



Basses and tenors prepare to begin rehearsing... James Blagborough looks relaxed.





Trevor Sykes, good-naturedly refuting the VotV slander of him as the '**Late Trevor Sykes**' in a recent issue, arrives in good time and makes sure it is noticed.

Well done Trevor.

And it's clear that **Brian Craven** is glad to be back.



Matt Houston reminds singers of the safety rules we are keeping in place for the time being.

This is bass, **Noel Clarke** at half-time as we gathered outdoors to give the hall a ventilation period between singing sessions. You can tell he's a happy man.

But maybe you don't realise how happy. If you could see behind the mask you would detect a broad grin: he's just heard that he's won 45 quid is this week's 200 Club small draw.

	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 this is tenor, **John Kilner**. Some members might not have recognised him initially.

It rather looks like he spent his lockdown in the Jungles of Borneo.

Looking Cool, Jonny.

Welcome Back!



FREEDOM DAY JOY



Well it made me smile ...

... with wry amusement

And this made David smile...

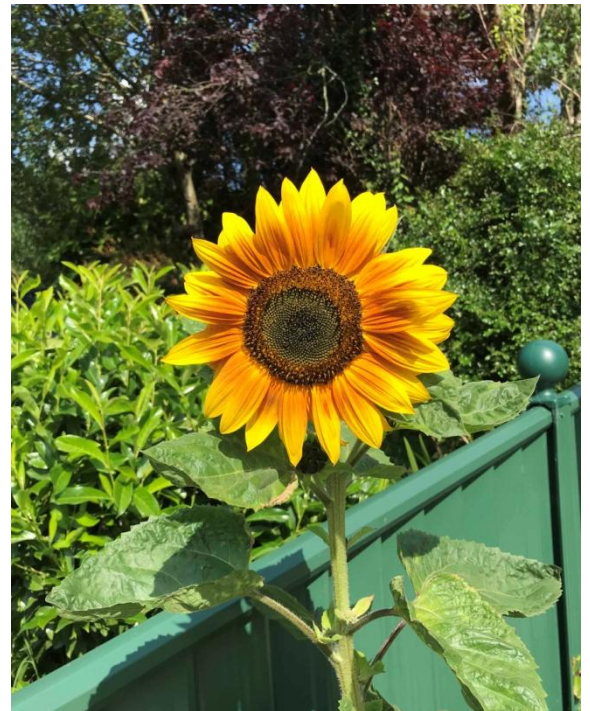
... with simple joy

something made **David Morrison** feel good about the world.

He tells *VotV*: *"I'm sure everyone loves Sunflowers. This is one of ours - will put a smile on anyone's face I'm sure!"*

We're sure you're right, says *VotV*. You are a fine horticulturalist.

Well done, David



Our website: colnevalleymvc.org.uk

Colne Valley



Male Voice Choir