



Thom and the three 'R' s

Musical Director and Conductor, **Thom Meredith**, sends his thoughts about the Choir and the year we've just had ...

Dear Men,

Apologies that I can't attend the AGM tonight: it's Youth Orchestra night and, unlike adult choirs, youth groups and ensembles are allowed to meet and rehearse together - following the usual safety guidelines of course!



What a strange year it has been... I could leave it at that because that pretty much sums up the entirety of this year!

However, Jenny wouldn't let me get away with just one sentence so here are three Rs which will hopefully provide a socially distanced pat on the back for all of us:



Resourcefulness

Prior to March 2020, who would have thought that we would have had the skills or inclination to link up with other choir members over the net and rehearse, record and perform using phones, computers and tablets!

If necessity is the mother of invention, she's been working pretty hard over the last year as we all try to reinvent our work and social lives to avoid physical proximity!

Resilience

For one brief moment on Monday 17th May, in groups of 20, we had a glimpse of normality and a reminder of the tremendous feeling of satisfaction and positivity that singing together can bring.

Then Oliver Dowden changed his mind and decided that singing was still a dangerous weapon, only safe in the hands of professionals (and football fans of course!!!).

But were we downhearted? Well, yes, for a few days until we pulled our collective socks up and got on with the well-tuned art of 'coping' – it'll take more than a pandemic to get us down.

Reliance

It has struck me how much I rely on music and especially singing as an expression of feelings and emotions. The power of music to move us, to allow us to say things we can't find the words for and to give us a sense of hope and community is well known but it is difficult to fully appreciate until it is taken away from you.

The outpouring of musical offerings on YouTube, Facebook, Tiktok (and other forms of social media I've never heard of!) demonstrates our need as human beings to be creative and to feel connected through the arts. I hope that this is a message long remembered when COVID-19 no longer rules the news and our thoughts.

To bring us back to the here and now, this leads me to thank everyone who has engaged with Zoom or with the website to access the materials we have been creating. Knowing that our membership is still out there and just waiting to return to face-to-face rehearsals has been a source of comfort for me and for many.

Thanks also to our committees and section leaders, who have continued to support everyone, plan for a brighter tomorrow and apply successfully for grants to keep us going while our ability to make income has been put on hold.



I also owe a huge thank you to **Chris Pulleyn** who has moved seamlessly from accompanist to chief technician and music editor, allowing us to both rehearse effectively and produce two excellent concerts.

Let's hope that he and all of us can soon return to the sort of live rehearsals and events that we are all missing so much. We will sing together again soon!!!

Thom Meredith

England beat Germany



For the first time in 55 years of international tournament football, England's footballers managed to get the better of our 'nemesis' team, finally overcoming a long history of defeat against our arch rivals, Germany.

Next task is ensuring victory against the Ukrainians on Saturday evening.

Is it coming home?

Best of luck, England

And just for the fun of it here's some upbeat street drumming



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Pq8vOVbvzs>

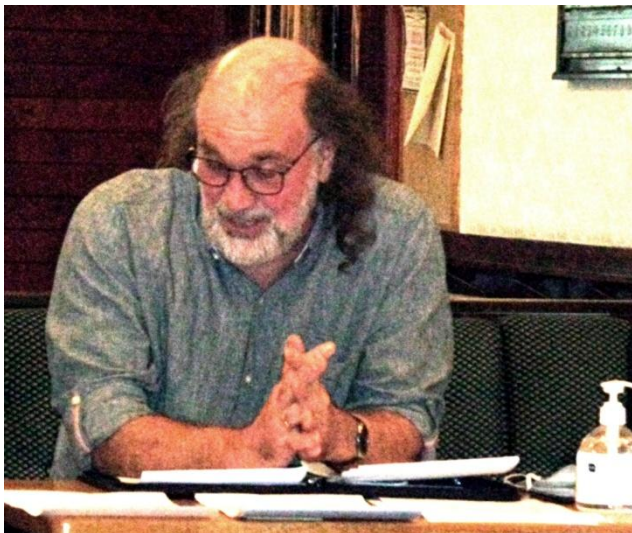
Some more AGM highlights!

This year's Annual General Meeting limped along amicably in both virtual and physically distanced formats.



Secretary Jenny reported that she was amazed how well the Choir has kept together but added, *'I hate Zoom. Just remind me in the winter rain, hail and snow on a Monday night coming into rehearsal how lucky I am.'*

Raymond, head in hands, is sick of Zoom, too.



Simon, the Treasurer, explained that our accounts aren't in bad shape, considering. **John Garner** reported that zoom rehearsals were consistently well supported, considering and **David Hirst** reckoned we hadn't done too badly, and that despite the cut-down Zoom experience we have kept some old songs fresh and have been learning **eight** new pieces.



Chairman **Joe Stones**, took the view that we have got through the past year very well. He thanked pretty much everybody and added that we can't wait to get back together, to get back into performance and to make the very best of our upcoming centenary year.



VotV prediction wrong

In the last issue, your editor predicted that **Simon Durrans** would win the next 200 Club prize and be jubilant.

How wrong was that!

It turned out that winner in the next 200 Club draw was none other than your editor, **John Clark**.



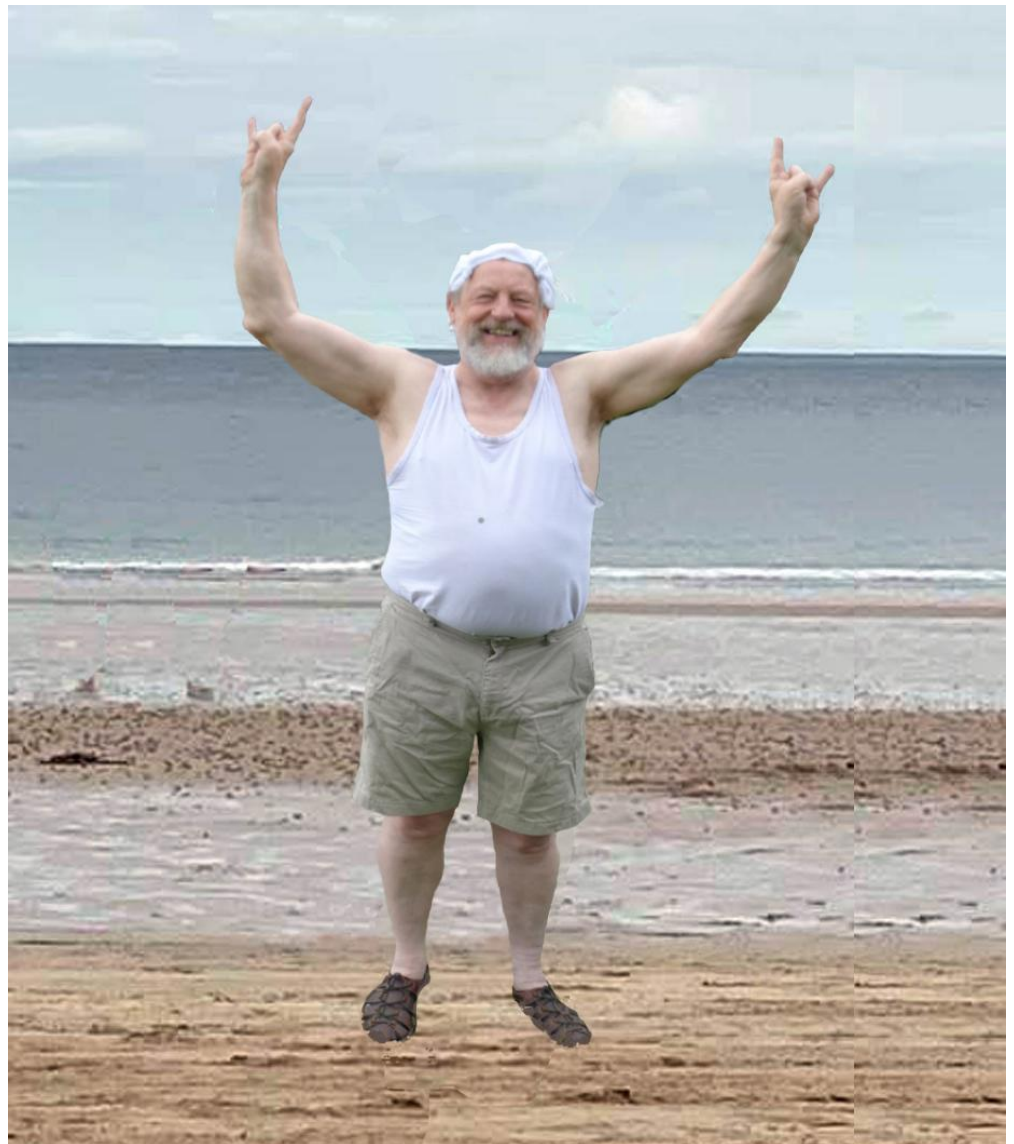
As you can see, it was my turn to be jubilant.

That's the beauty of the 200 Club. There's a winner every week.

And the one who will really be jubilant will be the late* **Trevor Sykes**, who on the 28th June scooped the big monthly prize of £185.00 - quite enough to pay for him and Carol to take a trip to the seaside, too. **VotV** looks forward to the photograph.

Well done Trevor.

(*late Trevor Sykes is not meant to suggest he's not in good health. Some wags in the Choir dub Trevor, the baritone stalwart, with this title because he reliably arrives at rehearsals about two minutes after we've started.)



And get yourself another 200 Club Number. As was pointed out at the recent AGM, Choir subscriptions are very modest, in part because the 200 Club supplements Choir funds. It's fun and your chances of being a jubilant winner are high - so do please contact Secretary **Jenny Baxter** and get yourself either a number or one more.

Jack's gardening



The Choir's oldest singing member, **John Smith**, moans that he's still all fingers and thumbs since he came out of hospital - but they must be '**green**' fingers and thumbs.

With a bit of help from family and pals, he's been able to create a super display of window box plants at his place in Honley.

"I've got good neighbours, too, who stop by to admire my blooms, have a little chat and offer a helping hand as well"

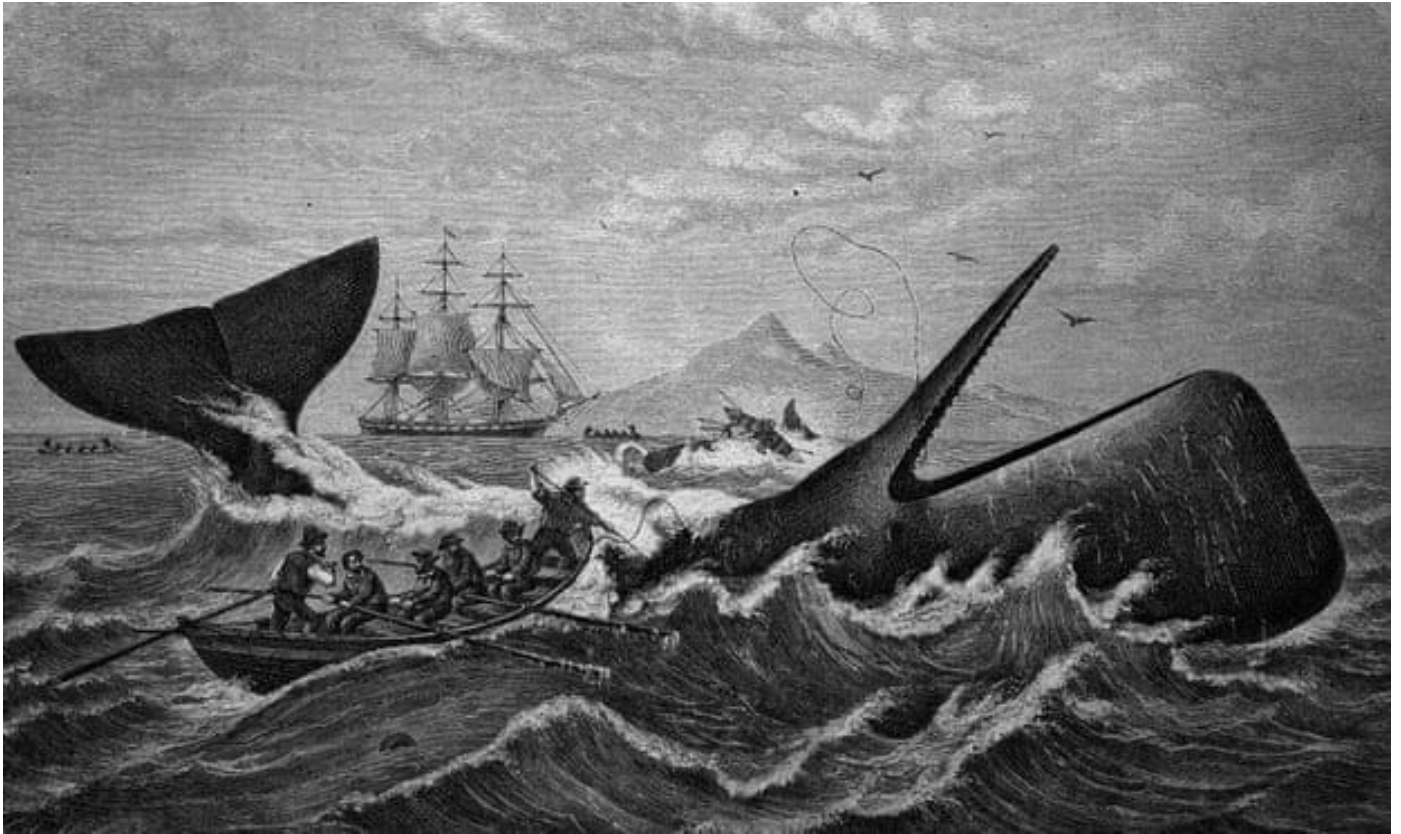
Well done, Jack, says **VotV**.



‘Soon may the Wellerman come...’

That’s the first line of the chorus of a sea shanty Thom Meredith has arranged for the Choir. We just started learning it in our Zoom rehearsals.

It’s the story of men hunting whales; so you might think, like your Editor did, that ‘**Wellerman**’ is probably a linguistic variant on ‘**Whaler-man**’.



But you would be wrong - or so I learn from bass singer and Choir archivist, **David Clarke** (no relation) who was intrigued enough by this rollicking shanty to research its background and meaning.

He writes....



*Soon may the Wellerman come,
To bring us sugar and tea and rum'*

*“A **Wellerman** is a supply ship - or an employee - of the **Weller Shipping Company***

*The **Weller Shipping Company** was established in Sydney Australia by three brothers; Edward, George and Joseph Weller who came from England to Australia in 1820.*

*Originally they shipped supplies such as the ‘sugar and tea and rum’ mentioned in the song but in 1830 they also entered the whaling trade by setting up their own whaling station in New Zealand at a place called Olabatau (now Dunedin). Then the whalers in turn became ‘Wellermen’ but still dependent on the supplies the Weller ships brought in on their rare visits. (Incidentally, one of the Weller ships, the ‘Lucy Ann’, was crewed by **Herman Melville**, the author of ‘Moby Dick’.*

These tough Wellermen formed alliances with the local Māori peoples - the men joining in the whale hunts and many of the Māori women becoming wives and housekeepers.

When a whale was harpooned, caught and killed it was landed ashore and processed to generate whale oil - then a valuable lubricant - and baleen the nearest they had to plastic in those days.

A key part of the gory process was tonguing.

*‘One day when the tonguing is done,
We’ll take our leave and go’*

This involved slicing the blubber from the carcass in strips, which were then heated in big pots to render down the fatty flesh into whale oil for export.

It was a brilliant business to own (but dangerous and unpleasant for the seamen and other workers, no doubt)

At its height the Weller Brothers produced over 300 tons of blubber oil per year. This success led them to unwise speculation in land which became their downfall with the company going bankrupt in 1841”

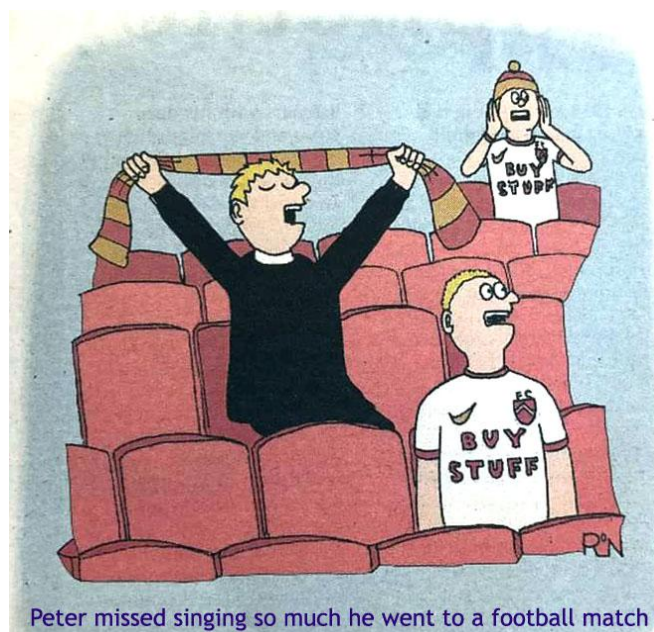
*‘Forty days or even more the line went slack
Then taut once more
All boats were lost there were only four
But still that whale did go’*

The sea shanty for some reason has gone ‘viral on social media’ during lockdown. Perhaps the most famous rendering is by a Scottish postman, **Nathan Evans**, but there are countless others. VotV expects our version will also be much enjoyed by Colne Valley Men and, in turn, by our prospective audiences when we are back in performance.



Meanwhile to enjoy the Nathan Evans video, click: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP-7GNoDJ5c>

Well it made David Morrison smile ...



Peter missed singing so much he went to a football match



'Voice of the Valley' has received some praise of late for its contribution to keeping the Choir together during this last year of isolation and lockdown. Your Editor thanks readers for their support and best wishes and adds a plea

"We can be relevant and interesting if we have the stories. If there is an event, an experience or a thought that, even remotely, relates to our glorious Choir do let your VotV editor know about it."

I'm aware that some potential contributors are shy of coming forward and that some aren't at ease putting their thoughts into print. But don't be put off. I can help you edit your story ready for inclusion."

I really want to hear from our readers. That's what will keep us together until we - audience and performers - can come together again in real life."

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 colnevalleymvc.org.uk to get the full story

Colne Valley



Male Voice Choir