



Major steps on the road to recovery

Back to the Rehearsal Room

The evening of Monday September 6th was a special one in the Choir's recent history. For the first time since March 9th 2020 - almost exactly 18 months ago - the Choir resumed full rehearsals back in our practice room above the Conservative Club in Britannia Road in Slaithwaite.

Well over 40 men made their jubilant return.

VotV would like to say it was 'back to normal' but that wasn't quite the case. Men arrived masked, removing face coverings only when in their singing positions, spread out as fully as the space permitted. Fortunately it was a warm evening as all the windows were wide open to maximise ventilation.

Even with these precautions, a good handful of extra men - for a variety of reasons - were reluctant to appear in person and so opted to join in via Zoom.

Your VotV Editor couldn't join in the fun. (He was isolating at home after a Covid positive contact.) But, by all reports, the members were delighted to be back with old friends and thrilled to be making music together once again. It was reckoned to be a major step towards recovery.

How it might have looked



Then back into performance

A choir is only truly functional when it is singing to an audience. Colne Valley has been aching to get back onstage, so it was another big step when a plan to do just that was announced.

The Choir, in collaboration with **Colne Valley Boys** will be performing in an informal concert at Saint James' Church in Slaithwaite next month in the afternoon of **Sunday October 3rd**.

This will be our first appearance before an audience since three brief competition spots in the Huddersfield Mrs Sunderland Music Festival in February 2020 last.

There'll be some old favourites but the bulk of our repertoire will be the new material we have so laboriously worked through during the long months, shut off from physical proximity, on Zoom.



We expect to be brilliant of course but the 'realists' may argue that - after getting on for two years without performing - we may just be a bit 'ring-rusty'. For that reason, the performance will be shortish - about an hour - without an interval and free. Though, there will be a 'bucket collection' for those who wish to make a monetary contribution as part of their appreciation of our efforts.

This first concert will mark another major step on our road to recovery.

And more: Ivan does 40

Another milestone in the choir's return to normality was also reached at that Monday rehearsal as we honoured one of our members, **Ivan Smith**, for his commitment to the Choir.



And what a commitment!

It's quite something to be involved with any organisation for 40 years but that is just what deep bass, **Ivan**, has managed to achieve.

Ivan's 40 years as part of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir was acknowledged at by a Choir proud of him and his 'stickability'.

Longest-serving member, **John Radcliffe** and chairman, **Joe Stones** praised his achievement and thanked him on behalf of the Choir for his great contribution through four decades.

Well done, Ivan

Goodbye Stuart

The Choir marked the passing of one of its long-serving members, **Stuart Iles**, on Thursday last, September 9th.

The men of the Colne Valley and the men of Saddleworth Male Voice choirs came out along with Stuart's family and his many friends to say goodbye at a service held at Saint John the Baptist Church in Lees, just 'over the hill' from the Colne Valley.

Stuart had been a member of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir since 1986. He and a few other Saddleworth men had been invited to join a CVMVC tour to Germany. From that point on Stuart had shared his loyalty between the two choirs becoming a stalwart and valued member of both.

Stuart kept up his membership until Christmas 2019, joining in the Choir's famous Huddersfield Town Hall Christmas Concert alongside Colne Valley Boys and the Brighouse & Rastrick Band and then revealing that after 34 years he'd decided that it was to be his last one.

As it turned out it was to be the last big concert for all of us as Corona virus then appeared and put paid to all performances. We hope to be back on the Town Hall stage this coming Christmas and members will surely feel his absence.

At the time Stuart told VotV that 'his health wasn't the best and that he was knocking on a bit'. "Like Keith Swallow (who also stepped down at the same time) we are both well into our eighties" he said. "And it's tough, these cold winter nights getting across from Saddleworth every Monday." Courageously, what he didn't want to reveal was that he knew his health issues were probably terminal.



Stuart was a very fine first tenor. In his time with Colne Valley he was a frequent soloist. A recording of him singing '**Morte Christe**' was played at the funeral.

<https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/morte-christe>

Equally emotional, perhaps, the two choirs sang '**Gwahoddiaid**' in his honour.

VotV reported in only its last edition on a folk group, '**The Saddlers**' who entertained audiences around the Pennine area. The group consisted of Stuart, together with two other CV choir members, Tony Ackroyd (now also deceased) and Peter Hatton.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfMUGVHRd3c>



Stuart is seen here in Cornwall, where singers had travelled for the 2007 Music Festival and Competition, with Peter, now the last of the Colne Valley trio. Peter was there at the service on Thursday, amongst many members of both choirs and Stuart's family and many friends; all deeply saddened by Stuart's passing.

Above all, our thoughts go out to Brenda, who supported Stuart and the Choirs' activities with great loyalty and good humour.



Brenda and Stuart marked 64 years of marriage together just a few weeks ago on July 13th. Here we see the couple at their Diamond Wedding anniversary. What an achievement!

R I P Stuart Iles

8/8/1935 to 25/8/2021

Chris is on the recruitment trail

"Colne Valley Boys" writes Choir Accompanist, Chris Pulleyn on various social media pages, "is a choir for boys aged 7-19, trying to encourage more boys to get into singing. It's been a while now since we've been able to rehearse properly together, and recruit more members to join us.

Now that we can, we're encouraging new members to come and give the choir a try. We have weekly Monday rehearsals during term time, and we sing loads of great, varied stuff - anything from folk to pop. We're always looking for new members, and the start of term is a great time to try. The choir is run by a fantastic music team - including Thom Meredith, Principal of Kirklees Musica.

Visit our Facebook page or email us for more details if you think your child might be interested!"



COLNE VALLEY BOYS

GET YOUR LAD SINGING!

Come and give our choir for boys aged 7-19 a try -

**A great opportunity to help them have fun making music,
build their confidence, be part of a team, and meet new friends.**

**Weekly rehearsals during term time on Mondays
(starting Sept 6th) at Slaithwaite Conservative Club.**

**Junior Choir rehearsal (7-12 years) 5:30 - 6:30pm
Senior Choir rehearsal (13-19 years) 6:00 - 7:00pm**

**New members always welcome -
and start of term is a great time to try!**

**For more info visit www.colnevalleyboys.com
find us on Facebook or email colnevalleyboys@gmail.com**



There's a great singing tradition round here

Second tenor, **Geoff Bedford**, has turned up more evidence that we know quite a bit about singing together in our part of West Yorkshire.

He's found a rare recording of beautiful songs that goes back almost 50 years to 1976. It's called 'The Morning of our Lives'.



The choir is from the **Moldgreen Junior School** - a perfectly ordinary inner-urban Huddersfield school - which saw a sudden flowering of musical talent that led to TV appearances and many acclaimed performances on the stage at the famous **Huddersfield Town Hall**.

The catalyst for the Moldgreen Junior Folk Choir was teacher, **Mary Kennedy**, under whose inspirational guidance the group blossomed into excellence, singing folk songs to their own guitar accompaniments. The girls and the boys sang with quality, enthusiasm and precision and it is their LP Record which has surfaced in Geoff's home in Almondbury.



Perhaps that's not so surprising as Geoff is the father of two of the singers in the group.

Geoff's daughter, **Tracy Dilkes** (nee Bedford) was one of those onstage in 1976. She's now, perhaps, more passionate about gardening and herbalism than singing.



She lives in Leicester, working in Special Needs Education in a secondary school.

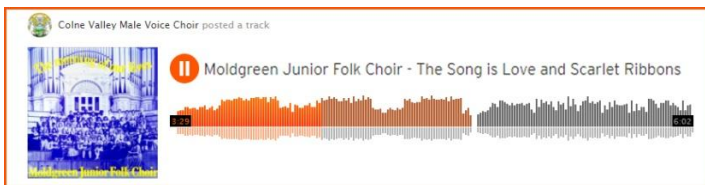


Geoff's son, **Stephen**, went on to join the Navy and later emigrated to Australia. He's now **Detective Brevet Sergeant Bedford**, specialising in child-abuse investigations with the Adelaide Police Force.



The Moldgreen Folk Choir's glory days tapered off when Mary Kennedy moved to another school but for several wonderful years in the seventies, it was very popular and, quite clearly, a formative experience in the lives of many children.

12 inch Long-Playing records on vinyl discs are an outdated format nowadays and Geoff has worked hard to convert the recording to a digital format. A couple of the tracks are now available to VotV readers to hear.



<https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/the-song-is-love-and-scarlet-ribbons>

If the rights-holders still exist we hope they won't mind us providing you with two samples of the fine music the choir produced: '**The Song is Love**' and '**Scarlet Ribbons**'. Enjoy!

And well done, Geoff, for bringing such an interesting tale to light.



Eric the Activist

Sharp-eyed fans of 'BBC Look North' might have fancied they had spotted **second tenor, Eric Cooper**, amongst those protesting a half-baked scheme to make road changes in Edgerton. The plan, seemingly will shave a couple of minutes off driving from Huddersfield town centre to the next traffic jam on the way to Halifax and the M62 - but the price is that the lovely trees down Halifax Road will be chopped down; apparently 126 trees in total.

Eric thinks this is far too high a price for his neighbourhood to pay for such a marginal gain, especially in the context of the Climate Crisis we are just beginning to get to grips with. Trees should be being planted not being grubbed up, he reckons and your editor agrees.

Good for you Eric.



200

CLUB

Support us by joining our 200 Club.

Just £50 a year to get one of our 200 numbers. You get the chance every week to get most of your stake back.

Every month there's a £185 prize & then twice a year a whopping £1,000 draw.

Even if you don't win, you win!
Half the money goes as prizes but half stays to help the Choir cover its costs.

Norman wins the 200 Club draw

In a recent edition of *VotV* it was reported that Norman Brown had enjoyed a sizeable boost to his pension, winning £185 in the 200 club draw. It turns out it didn't boost his pension - he donated his winnings to Choir funds.

VotV isn't recommending 200 Club winners donate their prizes. On the contrary, enjoy your winnings. Contact Jenny Baxter on 01484 645192 to get a number and remember, **'You've got to be in it to win it'**

More departures



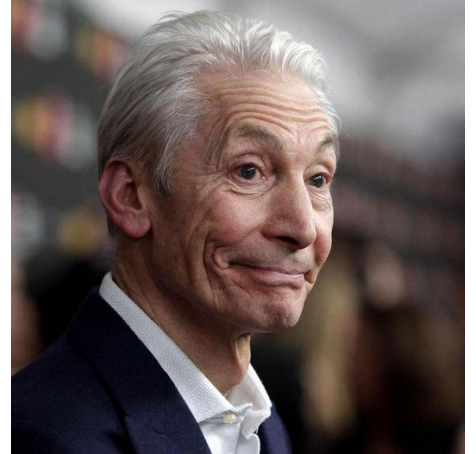
Don Everly deceased - half of the The Everly Brothers

Listen again to 'All I have to do is dream'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56cKIT62wrQ>

Charlie Watts deceased - 'the heartbeat of the Stones'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hggkGxZ1_8I



Jean Paul Belmondo deceased - the face of the 'Nouvelle Vague'

Omar Little - the best villain in two decades - realised by **Michael K Williams** deceased



Mikis Theodorakis, deceased, who wrote the music for **Zorba the Greek**. He famously crossed the 1967-1974 Greek 'Colonels' Junta, which imprisoned him and banned his songs

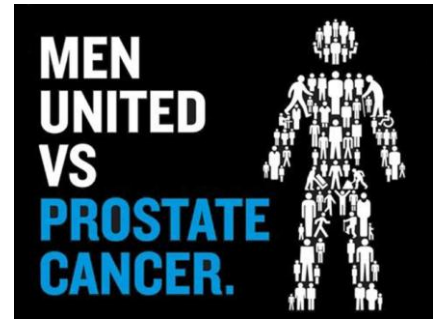
Click here to reprise his most famous piece.

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

Michael Parkinson writes to VotV

Hello Mr Editor,

Instead of something jokey or surprising I am offering this communication from the campaign which supports men with prostate cancer.



A shocking fact is that prostate cancer in men is now more prevalent than breast cancer in women. It is more likely to occur in older men, which mirrors the profile of our Choir.

I wondered if you thought it suitable to bring this awareness to our men.

Best wishes,

Michael

VotV is happy to oblige. It's a very pertinent story at this moment.

You can get information or donate in Stuart Iles's memory via this link: <https://prostatecanceruk.org/>

Well it made me smile



Flying Scotsman in Colne Valley

Flying Scotsman - arguably the world's most wonderful steam locomotive - was seen crossing the Slaithwaite viaduct the other day. This fine picture was posted by Jenny Hazelton. Thanks Jenny.



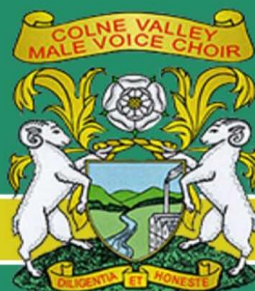
'Voice of the Valley' stays relevant and interesting if we have the stories. If there is an event, an experience or a thought that, even remotely, relates to our glorious Choir do let your VotV Editor, John Clark, know about it.

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

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. We hope it will be very soon now"

Or, ring Choir Secretary, Jenny, on 01484 645192 to join us or join our Readers' List or for other queries. See our website colnevalleymvc.org.uk to get the full story

Colne Valley



Male Voice Choir