



COLNE VALLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2021 EDITION

A most generous gift

The Choir, this last week, heard that it has been granted a most generous gift from the estate of the late **Muriel Stead**. A firm of solicitors acting as her executors let us know that we are to receive a very substantial bequest when Muriel's will, now passed through probate, is distributed to her beneficiaries.



The news was broken to Choir members by Chairman, **Joe Stones** at rehearsal. As he stated to unanimous acclaim, *"The Choir is much heartened by Muriel's bequest. We are overwhelmed by her generosity and deeply honoured that she thought so well of us. Thank you. Muriel."*

It is a gift that will go far to ensuring the Choir's sustainability through our centenary year and well into the next 100 years."

Here's how it came about...

There are a handful of Choir members old enough and long-serving enough to have been singers under the direction of a great conductor, **Mr George E Stead**. George was with the choir almost



since its formation in 1922 and soon became its conductor.

He led the Choir for an astonishing 44 years to great musical glory and to recognition as one of the very best male voice choirs in the country.

'What the Sun caught in Slaithwaite Spa'
Probably the earliest photograph of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, circa 1922: the year it was founded.

George Stead as a young Choir member is seen front row third from left.





In 1964, George was awarded the MBE, travelling down to the Palace to receive his award; a great honour for him personally and to the choir on which he had so firmly set his stamp of excellence.

Sadly, not that long after in 1968, George suddenly passed away, leaving the family and the community in mourning and the Choir bereft. For some weeks, the Choir debated whether it could or should carry on. But indeed it did and under new conductors went on to fresh achievements and successes.

George had a daughter, **Muriel Stead**. Muriel was a life-long supporter of the Choir and always took an active interest in our progress. In 2007 Muriel visited the Choir and formally presented her father's MBE to us, explaining how important the Choir had been to him and how pleased she was (and how pleased he would have been) to see the medal join the Choir's substantial trophy cabinet.



The Choir was deeply appreciative and sang for her '**Psalm 126**', the wonderful anthem composed by George for the Choir that, to this day, regularly surfaces as a paradigm of the very best of traditional male voice choir repertoire.

Naturally, the Choir was saddened to hear of the death of Muriel in April 2020. Not only had she been a true friend to the Choir but she had also been a prominent supporter of the musical life of the community she had served so well, not least as primary school teacher in Slaithwaite for many years. It turns out that Muriel's generosity extended to several other musical organisations and churches in the district, which likewise are to receive bequests, though it is clear her fondness for the choir her father had shaped lay - after family bequests - most prominently in her thoughts.

Joe told Voice of the Valley...

"Muriel's superb gift will help secure the Choir's future. He went on, 'The Choir's Management Committees, over the years, have always been diligent about looking after the Choir's finances and it's a very good thing that they were. For, when Covid suddenly struck, out of the blue, early in 2020, the Choir was in pretty decent financial shape. Nonetheless it was a challenge. Our costs remained more or less unchanged while our income streams from performance plummeted as concerts and events were cancelled.

I'm proud to say that, through the efforts of our members and audiences, we have weathered this initial financial storm. Not that it's over yet." he added. "We anticipate it will be quite a while before our performance income returns to normal.

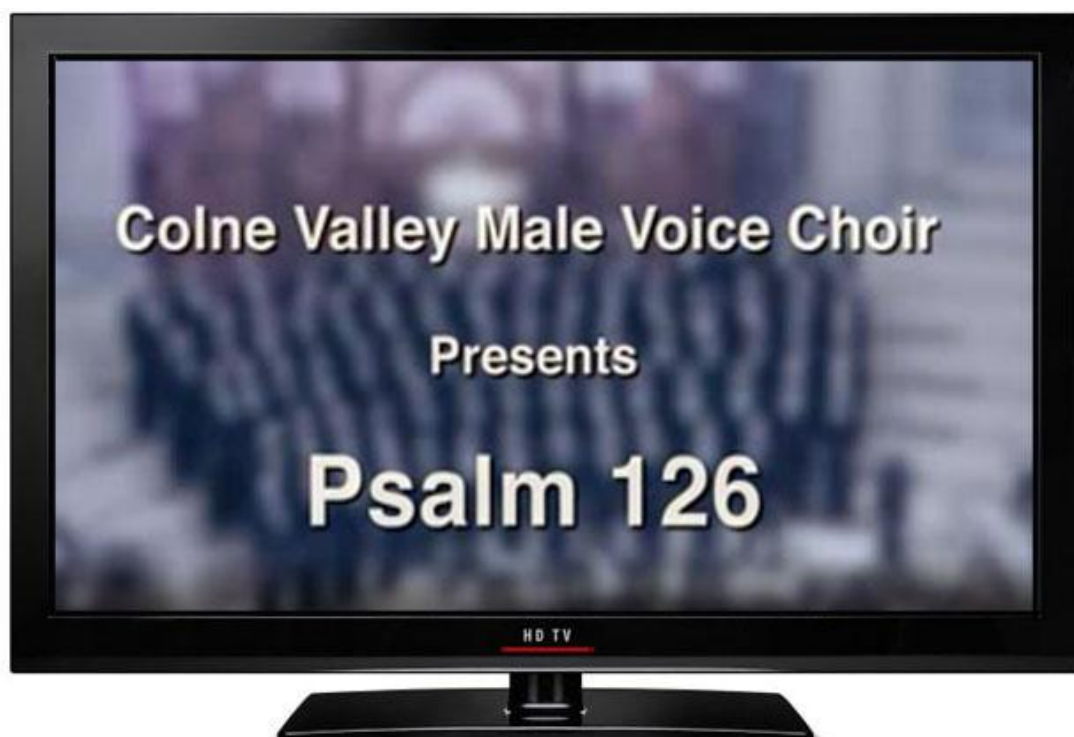
Clearly we will need to maintain our various fund-raising activities. But, this most generous bequest from Muriel Stead means that we should be able to move into the future with added confidence.

You will be aware that the Choir is to start its centenary year in May 2022 - just next spring. We have been making plans for many months now. Some of the plans have been 'knocked for six' by the sudden arrival of the Pandemic. Muriel's gift is hugely welcome and may possibly allow some of those centennial plans to be re-instated.

But we have an obligation to her generosity to make very careful use of her bequest, to ensure that we move into the next century, honouring the legacy of the hundred glorious years we have enjoyed so far."



*Watch again:
this historic
video
recording
from 2004*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c11Vo70yc0M&t=33s>

New man joins the basses: Peter Kelly.

"I'm Peter Kelly and really pleased to have been accepted as a member of this fantastic male voice choir."

*I saw the Choir perform in the last **Mrs Sunderland** competition and was bowled over, so I attended a few rehearsals before lockdown.*

I have lived in Golcar for the last 30 years but grew up in Hanging Heaton, Batley. Went to University of Hull and got a degree in Plant Biology. I'm semi-retired now from a career in organisational development in local authority and private sectors. I have worked for Kirklees, Wakefield, Wigan and Manchester.

I like to draw portraits and I also play lead guitar in a covers band doing 60s-70s songs mainly.

*The band is called '**Into Tomorrow**'. The front man is a big fan of Mr Weller. We've played pretty much all the local pubs. We have also played with **Simon Durran's** band, **HD7**.*

A big 'thank you' to all for making me so welcome. I look forward to many years singing with you."





Relive Paul Weller doing 'Into Tomorrow' via this link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq93q3eAW1I&list=RDEq93q3eAW1I&index=1>



Peter does 40

One of the Choir's excellent second tenors, **Peter Hatton**, was awarded a medal the other night. Peter has completed 40 years of membership.

Fellow veteran, **John Radcliffe** (centre) and Chairman, **Joe Stones** presented the lapel badge and thanked Peter for his many years of commitment and contribution.

Peter has a terrific voice and has sung - often a solo line - in all the major Choir events since the 1980's.

And he's still in good voice and very proud to be a member.

Back at last

*"We are back at last." writes John Garner. "The Choir performed to a public audience for the first time for more than eighty four weeks on Sunday, 3rd October when they were joined by the Colne Valley Boys to give a short programme to an audience at St James's Church, Slaithwaite. The last performance to a live audience had been the Mrs Sunderland Competition in **February, 2020**.*

Both the choirs and the audience are now back in business and looking forward to further events at Christmas".



Concert compère and key organiser of the Colne Valley Boys, **Matt Houston**, reports for VotV:-

"We decided our first concert should be short and sweet, no interval, no raffles etc just in case we had to cancel at the last minute due to further Covid restrictions. 'Let's just get together and sing!'

So, it was with a sense of trepidation and excitement that the men and boys arrived for their first live concert in 18 months. They needn't have worried; the reception from the audience was great, comprising of friends and family reuniting, made for a wonderful atmosphere.



The boys of the youth choir section of CVB started the concert and sang three pieces. They were **'Rule the World'** (Take That), **'The Best Day of My Life'** and **'Un Poco Loco'** which has a line in it which says, 'Where shall I put my shoes?' The response is 'Put them on your head.' So, of course, the boys wanted to perform this balancing act for the audience.



Next came the men, who sang **'Some Enchanted Evening'** (Rogers and Hammerstein) which, as you may recall, featured on one of our 'You Tube' concerts. Thom was quick to praise the men for their individual recordings of the piece which **Chris Pulleyn** then, during lockdown, edited all into one seamless sound.

Next they sang **'Crazy Little Thing called Love'** (Queen) this involved a small amount of choreography which the men handled very well.





Now it was the turn of the seniors of Colne Valley Boys. Their numbers had been severely reduced, due to colds and flu and being pinged to isolate. Fortunately, Thom introduced the most senior boy of the group, **Matt Houston**, who brought the average age up by about 50 years, to sing '**Fields of Gold**'.

They then joined with the men to sing '**Musica Dei**' (Mary Lynn Lightfoot). This is a very moving piece sung in both English and Latin.

Now back to the men, who sang '**And Can It Be?**' (Wesley) and the 'Yorkshire Medley' which covers '**The Grand Old Duke of York**', '**Scarborough Fair**', '**My Girl's a Yorkshire Girl**' and '**On Ilkley Moor baat 'at**'.

All the boys of CVB then sang '**When I Was a Boy**' (Jeff Lynne) and '**Counting Stars**' (Ryan Tedder arranged Meredith).

The men then finished their sets with the contrasting pieces '**Away from the Roll of the Sea**' and '**How Great Thou Art**'; the latter causing a great sense of emotion among the audience and choir and a huge whoop from one who happens to be my wife, **Linda Houston**.



The concert finale saw Thom playing a box type percussion instrument called a 'Cajon' and both choirs singing the '**Wellerman**' a New Zealand Shanty (arranged Meredith) which had some of the grandchildren dancing in the aisles.

As people were beginning to leave, **Norman Brown** stood up in the audience and said that as an ex member of the Choir and Vice President, he felt very emotional to have witnessed such a great concert after this long and harrowing pandemic. Lovely to see you and other retired members at the concert, Norman.

The audience showed their appreciation by donating to a collection for **Colne Valley Boys** and we are very grateful. The collection came in at just shy of £500.00. I'm the treasurer of the Boys and I can tell you that will do much to keep us in decent financial shape.



I would just like to add my personal thanks to Thom and Chris for the work they did in keeping both the men and boys choirs going during the pandemic and making this concert possible."

And VotV would like to thank Matt's daughter and John Garner's nephew for some fine photos.



"Looking forward to further events at Christmas", said John Garner.

And so we are - getting ready for the big Christmas Concert with the two choirs and our old friends, the wonderful Brighouse & Rastrick Band on Sunday evening December 12th.



Rehearsals of Christmas music are in full swing.



Ticketing Supremo, **Roger Fielding** has been doing good business making tickets available. He tells VotV that by now tickets will mostly be on sale from Kirklees. But, Roger adds, if people phone him they might still be able to get tickets from him. You can contact him on 01484 846262.

Otherwise get down to **Kirklees Town Hall** or buy via telephone sales on **01484 225755**.



Many will prefer to scoop up their tickets online which you can do by following this link:-
https://tickets.kirklees.gov.uk/en-GB/events/colne%20valley%20mvc%20christmas%202021/2021-12-12_19.15/huddersfield%20town%20hall?area=7d381211-76fc-46a3-8749-9e164a7fe681&type=

Kirklees TOWN HALLS Box Office: 01484 225755
Kirklees COUNCIL

Colne Valley MVC Christmas 2021

Dec 12 Sun 19:15
Huddersfield Town Hall

The total price includes our 10% booking fee (up to a maximum of £2 per ticket), which helps us continue to put on high quality shows,

In Area Balcony
£22.00 £19.80 £18.70

Click to see more seating areas

Stage

For certain types of performances, full view of the stage and risers may not be possible from some side balcony and window balcony seats.

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Row H, Seat 15
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Total £18.70
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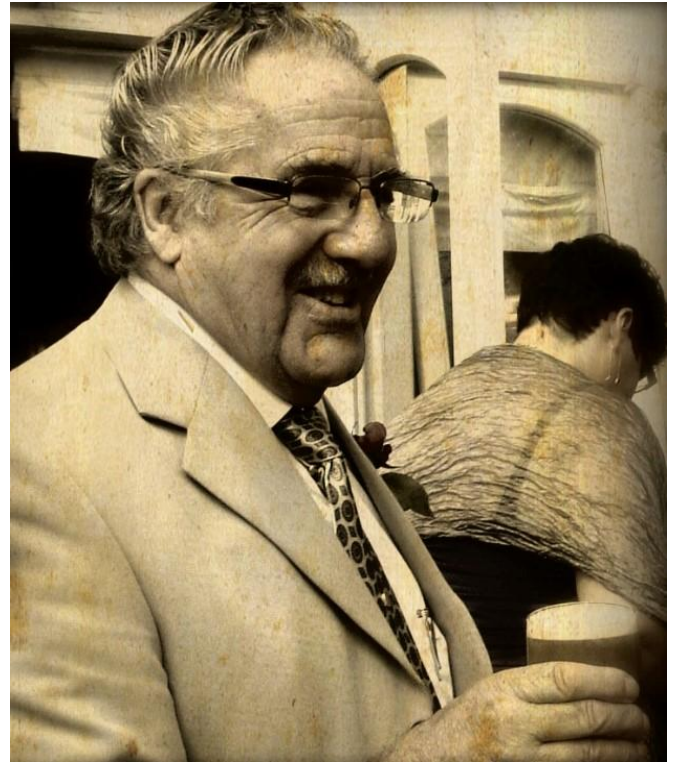


Wilf Hansom RIP

The family and friends of the recently deceased, **Wilf Hansom**, took part in the funeral service last month at Slaithwaite Methodist Church. Amongst those friends were many members of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.

Many other singers couldn't attend the service but were nonetheless very much saddened by Wilf's departure and VotV knows that lots of us will remember him fondly. People thought well of him.

At rehearsal, when news of his death was announced by **Jenny Baxter**, the Choir, led by Thom, sang **George Stead's** beautiful '**Four Fold Amen**' in his honour, followed by a few moments of silent remembrance of a valued and good-humoured colleague.



Even though it had been a while since he had last been able to sing with us, we remembered that he and his fine tenor had contributed so much to the Choir's joy of singing for well over 40 years.



Wilf Hansom sings with the Choir at Minack in Cornwall - the short chap in the second row. And see Wilf, too, in the 2004 'Psalm 126' video above.

Well they made me smile



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



Your VotV works best when contributions come in from our readers.

Do let the VotV Editor know if something happens, that might be of interest and has some connection - even if it's a bit tentative - to the Choir.

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

