



Colne Valley hard men take a walk

“It’s like this.” said **Selwyn**, amiably, as a small party of Colne Valley singers met up in Holme Village. “We just stroll up to Holme Moss - you could probably see the mast in the distance if it wasn’t for the mist and the rain - and then we can start the walk, proper.”

Three tenors, **Joe Stones**, your editor, **John Clark** and the aptly named Selwyn **Hill** trudged up the endless climb. Selwyn clearly didn’t find it any problem; neither did the two women he’d brought along as companions. Joe struggled along in their wake, evidently feeling it and John, gasping for air, brought up the rear, muttering that he thought singing was supposed to be a good discipline for maintaining breathing control.



The weather varied between rainy, drizzly, wet and wetter. I believe the sun was spotted briefly on two occasions. And, no doubt, the walk around the hidden valley above Ramsden Clough would have offered spectacular views over lovely countryside, if only you could have seen it.



From the head of the valley Selwyn led us past 'Arthur's Cairn' an edifice erected some years ago by 'The Constable of the Graveship of Holme' - one **Arthur Quarmby** - long a stalwart of the First Tenors and now sadly deceased.

I think that as we wandered past his former home - the 'hobbit' house - on our way to finish the walk back in Holme village, it had started to brighten up a bit.

Such fun was had, that Joe immediately inaugurated the **Colne Valley MVC Mountaineering and Walking Club**, creating a logo and everything.

We've been around the higher hills of the Colne Valley since then; this time with yet another tenor, **Richard Prior**. He probably would have enjoyed the 9 mile circuit, starting and finishing at the Slaithwaite Con. Club, where the Choir rehearses, had he only remembered to bring his walking boots! The last 8.7 miles with wet feet must have been less joyful than he might have hoped.



Nonetheless, I gather that Colne Valley's intrepid hard men convened again last week for another muddy walk round the wet countryside. Talk to Selwyn or Joe if you fancy joining in with future jaunts. And Remember: **What doesn't kill you makes you stronger!**

Christmas is coming



We are definitely beginning to feel the Christmas spirit now as we get towards our last rehearsals.

There will be a good audience at the Town Hall this year as we come back after last year's. Our Guests as so often in this much-loved traditional concert will be the wonderful **Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band** and the **Colne Valley Boys**.





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=

At the moment the balcony is about sold out but there are still tickets to be had in the Gallery and the 'Area' - at very reasonable prices.

Book Online via this link

or phone Kirklees Booking Office on
01484 225755



But first, don't miss the warm up

Colne Valley Boys with guests **Musica Youth Brass** have done a Christmas concert for a few years now and they are always lovely occasions.

The 2021 version will be, too. It's on Sunday afternoon, December 5th. Many a Colne Valley Senior Choir member attends and there's generally a chance for them to join in at some point.

As secretary, Jenny says, "Christmas starts here. It's always such fun and a lovely atmosphere. You will really enjoy it."



Honley Ladies Choir and Remembrance Day

Lynnn Brooks, one of our fellow singers from the impressive **Honley Ladies Choir** (seen here celebrating the end of lockdown) writes to VotV:-

Hi Mr Editor,

We, at Honley Ladies Choir, enjoy seeing what CMVMC is up to when we receive your Voice of the Valley each month. Maybe you would like to share with your members our Remembrance Day video, only just completed.



*It is a choral setting of Poet Laureate, **Simon Armitage**'s poem, '**The Bed**,' about the creation of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey in 1920.*

*The music was composed by **Simeon Wood** and much of the video was filmed on **Castle Hill**. I have also attached more comprehensive background notes about how it came to be made.*

We hope your readers will be able to watch it and perhaps be moved, as we were in the recording.

*Regards,
Lynn*



Click on this link to hear them sing the poem: [Honley Ladies Choir | The Bed](#)

The Bed by Simon Armitage

The background

On 11 November 2020 **Simon Armitage**, Poet Laureate and local Marsden man, read his poem, 'The Bed,' at Westminster Abbey as part of a service to commemorate the interment of the Unknown Soldier exactly a hundred years ago. Simon has generously allowed Honley Ladies Choir to use his poem and the Choir commissioned **Simeon Wood**, well known local flautist and Choir friend, to set it to music. The result is hauntingly beautiful.

The story

In 1916, the Reverend David Railton, an army chaplain serving in Belgium, saw a dirt grave marked by a crude wooden cross, which bore the pencil-written legend 'An Unknown British Soldier.' This inspired him to write to the Dean of Westminster, Herbert Ryle, suggesting the burial of an unknown soldier in the Abbey to represent all those who could not be laid to rest by their families.

Subsequently, on the evening of 7th November 1920, four British soldiers exhumed from different battlefields were brought to the chapel at St. Pol sur Ternoise. Each was placed in a plain coffin and covered with a Union Jack. Brigadier Wyatt, Commander of the British troops in France and Flanders, with closed eyes rested his hand on one of the caskets. It then remained in the chapel overnight whilst the other three were reburied at St. Pol.

The following day the chosen coffin was transferred with all due ceremony to the castle at Boulogne where a French Regimental company maintained an overnight vigil before it was placed inside a second coffin made from Hampton Court oak bound with metal from the battlefields. A Crusader's sword, personally selected from the Royal Collection by King George V, was fixed to the top together with an iron shield bearing the inscription ' A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and Country.

With full military honours the Unknown Warrior was then taken to London. On 11 November 1921, transported on a gun carriage drawn by six black horses, the hearse processed through immense silent crowds towards Westminster Abbey. At Whitehall there was a pause whilst the King laid a wreath on the coffin and also unveiled the new Cenotaph memorial.

A guard of honour of a hundred Victoria Medal recipients and a congregation of bereaved widows and mothers awaited the cortège at the Abbey. As the choir sang, the coffin was interred at the western end of the nave and the King sprinkled onto it a handful of battle field soil. The grave was filled using a hundred sandbags of earth from the trenches and servicemen kept vigil at each corner as thousands of mourners filed past. Later a slab of black Belgian marble capped the tomb, the letters of its inscription picked out using brass from melted down wartime ammunition. It is the only tombstone in the Abbey on which it is forbidden to walk.

On Armistice Day 1921 the Padre's Flag, David Railton's Union Flag, which had served as both altar cloth and shroud at the Front, and which had covered the Warrior's coffin at the funeral, was presented to be hung close by the grave.

When Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon married King George VI in 1923 she laid her wedding bouquet on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in memory of her brother, Fergus, killed at the Battle of Loos in 1915. It has since become a tradition for royal bridal bouquets to be similarly placed there the day after the wedding.



The Bed

*Sharp winds scissor and scythe those plains.
And because you are broken and sleeping rough
in a dirt grave, we exchange the crude wooden cross
for the hilt and blade of a proven sword;
to hack through the knotted dark of the next world,
yes, but to lean on as well at a stile or gate
looking out over fens or wealds or fells or wolds.
That sword, drawn from a king's sheath,
fits a commoner's hand, and is yours to keep.*

*And because frost plucks at the threads
of your nerves, and your bones stew in the rain,
bedclothes of zinc and oak are trimmed
and tailored to fit. Sandbags are drafted in,
for bolstering limbs and pillowing dreams,
and we throw in a fistful of battlefield soil:
an inch of the earth, your share of the spoils.*

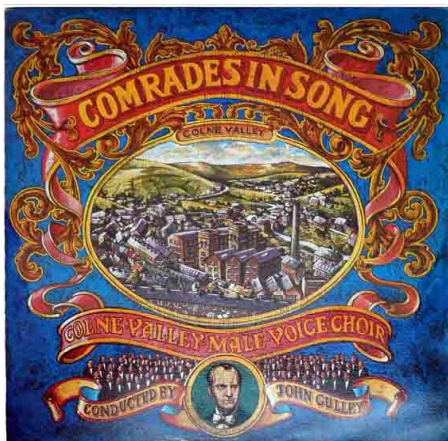
*The heavy sheet of stone is Belgian marble
buffed to a high black gloss, the blanket
a flag that served as an altar cloth. Darkness
files past, through until morning, its head bowed.
Molten bullets embroider incised words.
Among drowsing poets and dozing saints
the tall white candles are vigilant sentries
presenting arms with stiff yellow flames;
so nobody treads on the counterpane,
but tiptoeing royal brides in satin slippers
will dress and crown you with luminous flowers.*

*All this for a soul
without name or rank or age or home, because you
are the son we lost, and your rest is ours.*

Simon Armitage

The non-italicised words reference factual elements of the story that Simon has incorporated within the poem.

Comrades in Song' vinyl recording



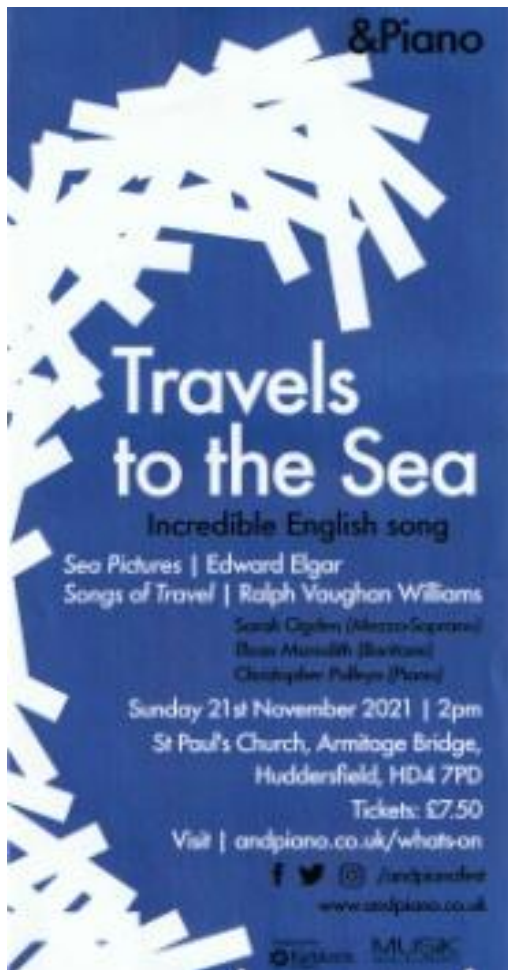
Another VotV Reader writes...

*Hi. Just a quick enquiry whether you would be interested the **Comrades In Song** album you did for Reader's Digest under John Gulley.*

Clearing out my Dad's old records I found a copy so before it is found a new home, if anyone wants it, I could drop it over when I pass by.

*Best wishes.
Martin J Westthorp*

If you are interested email the Editor.



Travels with Thom, Chris and Sarah

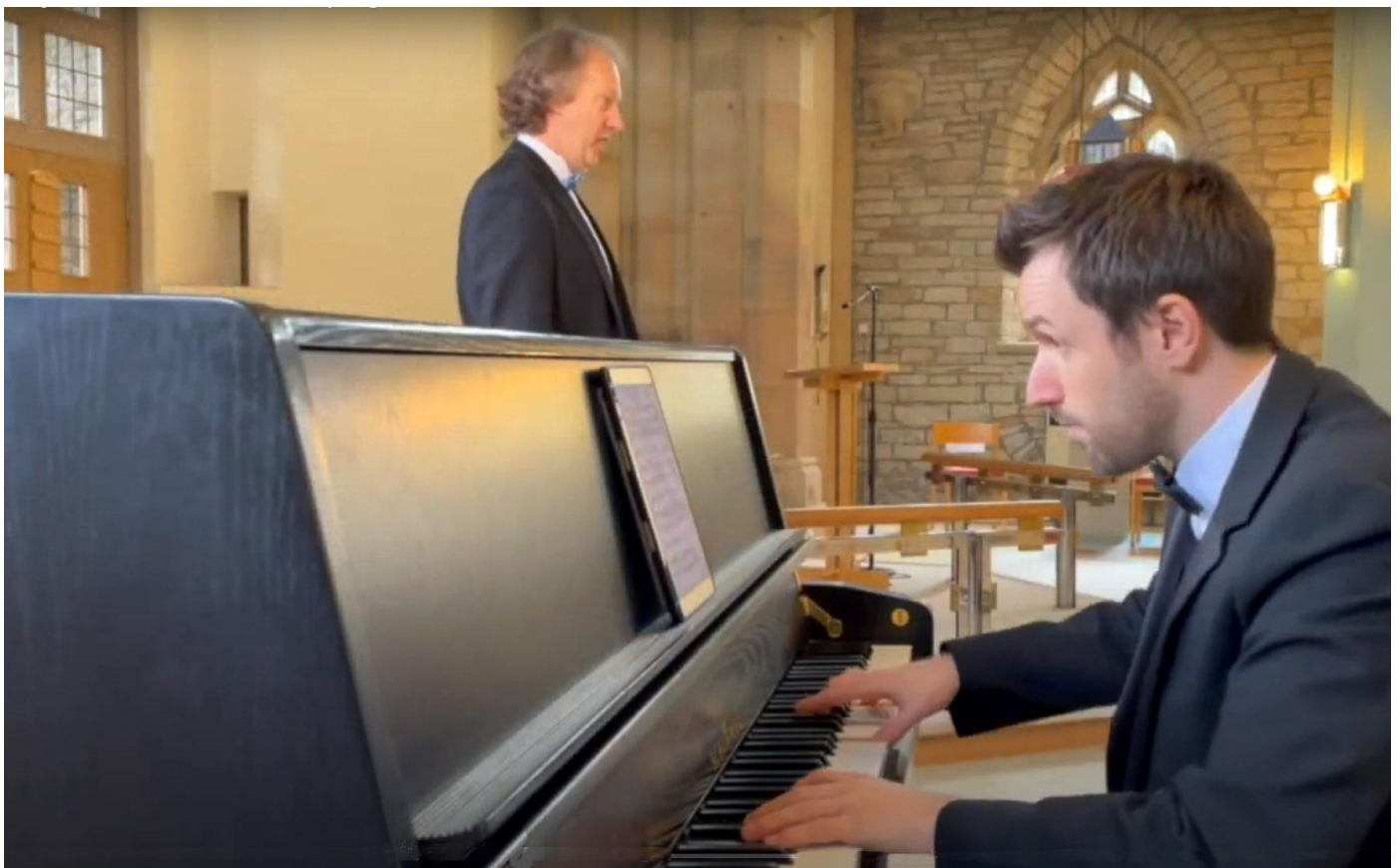
"It was lovely to be back on stage." said Thom after the event. "I was a bit nervous beforehand, to be honest - it's been so long since we last performed.

We did Sea Pictures by Elgar and some Vaughn Williams songs on the travel theme. It worked out fine.

The Church at Armitage Bridge has a generous acoustic and the audience liked us, which counts for a lot. It included quite a few Colne Valley men and their partners.

All in all a good afternoon."

How it might have looked...



Sondheim dies

Stephen Sondheim, the very epitome of musical theatre in recent years; lyricist of **West Side Story** who went on to write music and lyrics for acclaimed works such as **Sweeney Todd** has passed away aged 91.



This is **Bryn Terfel** with **Emma Thompson** in the 2015 ENO Production about the 'the demon barber of Fleet Street', given by English National Opera in 2015.



Photograph: thanks to Tristram Kenton/The Guardian



For my money though, his very best work emerged from his collaboration with **Leonard Bernstein**, writing the words to **West Side Story**.

From way back in 1961 and more than a little dated now comes the duet, 'A boy like that' in which Anita badmouths Maria's boyfriend, before realising that Maria's love for him is genuine and deep.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrFkgYOOY30>

Peter does ~~40~~ 25



VotV reported in the October edition that brilliant second tenor, **Peter Hatton** was to be congratulated for having served 40 years, man and boy, with Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.

In fact, as Peter himself reported, it's 25 years of membership that is to be celebrated, not 40.

Oh Dear, editorial standards are slipping!

But it's 'Well done, Peter' anyway.

Barry likes trains....

.... and in the month which saw new trains being cancelled in the North he's not the only one who thinks railways were better in the age of steam.



The baritone stalwart writes, *"Hello Mr Editor,*

One of the ultimate and rarely seen end of 2021 season's charter highlights is this film of the '45596 Bahamas' double-headed with 'Mayflower'. The video show these magnificent locos colourful pass on the sea wall at Teignmouth.

This is before winter layup and maintenance at Keighley and Worth Valley Railway.

Fabulous".

For the video see: <https://youtu.be/WKz5J3kAkdg>

Younger members swell Choir numbers



It's not even remotely necessary to have a bad leg and be in your seventies to be a member of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.

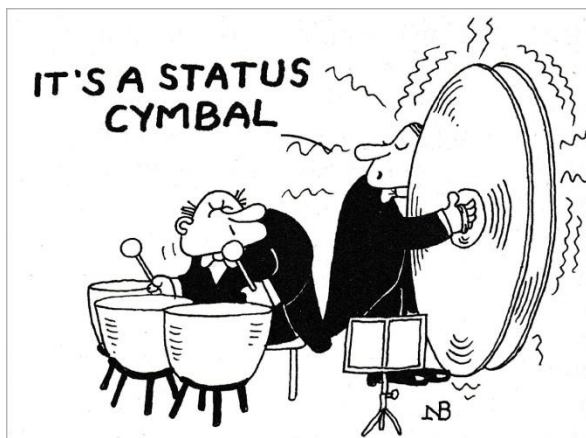
Indeed, the Choir has seen a recent influx of members, some of them young enough to be our grandchildren.



David Hirst, who joined the Choir in 1960 remarked, 'We are especially pleased, that a small handful brought into singing in our **Colne Valley Boys** choir, having finished university and the like, have recently come to sing amongst the Senior Choir.'

Our newest members include; **William Taylor** (First Tenor), **Benedict Stubbs** (Bass), **Nathaniel Stubbs** (Baritone) and **Matthew Potter** (Bass).

And very welcome they are!



....Well it made me smile...

... and so did this ...



Do keep in touch

'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. It's one of the things which will keep us together until things finally return to normal"



Or, ring Secretary, Jenny, on 01484 645192 to join us or join our Readers' List or for other queries.

Colne Valley



Male Voice Choir

See our website colnevalleymvc.org.uk to get the full story