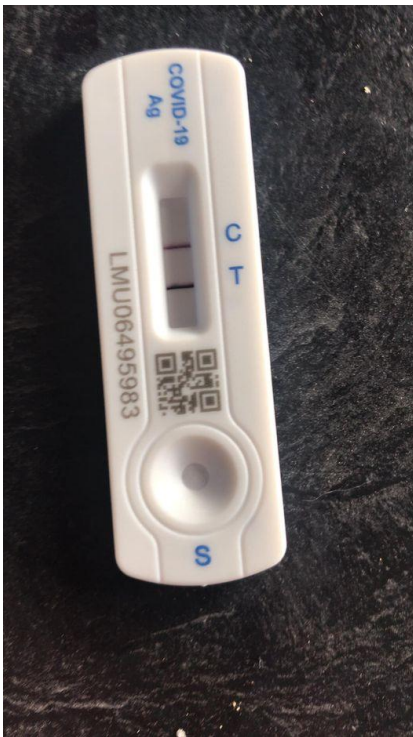




Covid strikes....

Just about two years on from the start of the Pandemic, Covid has finally struck Colne Valley Male Voice Choir. Of course there have been individual cases before but this is a sad first for the Choir as a whole.



Evidently, it was as an unwanted side-effect of our participation in this year's **Mrs Sunderland Music Festival** that the virus came to so many of our Choir members. In all likelihood, as we prepared to sing our hearts out in competition at the Town Hall on Saturday February 27th we were also re-circulating virus-laden aerosol round our rehearsal room.

Choir Secretary, **Jenny Baxter**, emailed the following Wednesday that several Choir members were getting in touch to report positive tests and by the end of that day VotV knew of at least 13 singers who had gone down with it - including your Editor (who along with several others had also donated it to their partners.)

Amongst those reporting was baritone, **Simon Durrans**, who put up his Lateral Flow Test on Facebook. He'd missed the competition but reckons he picked up the bug at the rehearsal the Monday after.



Shortly after, Baritone stalwart, **David Hirst**, revealed that he's another one with the virus, though he did add that for him it was not much more than "just a runny nose, a bit of a cold and feeling off it." Let's hope it stays that way, David!



Meanwhile poor, **Michael Parkinson** - another baritone - told VotV, "I feel like a zombie - one of the walking dead - except that I can hardly walk. It took me 37 minutes to get up and out of bed the other morning and half of the rest of the day to get over the effort." Our thoughts are with you, Michael!



Chris Pulleyn and Thom both got it and Chris describes his case as 'quite rough'.

Your Editor, who also spread the virus to his partner, Cate, says our experience of the illness has been closer to Michael's than to David's. It's been horrible but we do expect to survive. Cate remains defiant that life will go on for us after Covid. I expect she's right.



And on that front, it does seem there is a real evidence that she probably is right. Yet another baritone, **Raymond Ellis**, told Votv the other day, "It hasn't been so bad for me or Linda - it's just been like flu. And, this morning," he added. "I've just done my second negative test so, arguably, we're in the clear, now. I felt so energised I've just jet-washed the patio."

Well done Raymond. Let's hope all the rest of us pick up quite soon.

The plan, Jenny revealed, was that rehearsal on Monday 7th March was to be cancelled but, with luck, the Covid wave would have passed through in time to return to rehearsal on March 14th. And so it turned out!

We are to put in an extra rehearsal to replace the cancelled one. That will be on Friday March 25th. This will allow us to get back on track ready for our special concert in tribute to Maestro, **Keith Swallow**.

This, readers will recall, is the special concert we planned to mark Keith's stepping down; the one which Coronavirus Lockdown blew apart almost exactly two years ago.



It's back on but the venue has changed from Saint Paul's Hall in Huddersfield.

It will now take place at St John the Evangelist's in Golcar.

The time is shifted by two years - it's to be held on the afternoon of Sunday March 27th 2022.

We expect all singers will be recovered or will rise from their sickbeds anyway - assuming they are no longer shedding a virus load - to take part in this very special event. It's an all-ticket event but there might be a few left - ring Roger on 01484 846263 to get yours. We're especially keen that Raymond stays fit. He's to be the concert's compère.

Mrs Sunderland 2022

What a great pleasure it was - after so many months without opportunities to perform – to get back on stage for the Mrs Sunderland Music Festival and Competitions.

The Choir had rehearsed in some basement room at the Town Hall (incidentally spreading Coronavirus to each other) and we sounded great. So it was with high hopes that we gathered backstage ready to take our places in the Hall for the Male Voice Choir Competition.



And we sang really well! Starting with the rousing fanfare: 'Let All Men Sing' and continuing with the very moving anthem, 'And Can It Be?'

The adjudicator, David Beer, agreed but nonetheless gave first prize to our colleagues and rivals - the 24 selected members of Peterborough Male Voice Choir.

Once again - and somewhat deflated - the Colne Valley men returned to our rehearsal room and regrouped for the next competition. Once again we took to the stage and performed with great flair. This time our adjudicator couldn't separate us from the men of Peterborough. We lost out to the fabulous 'Peterborough Voices' a women's choir under the guidance of Will Prideau.

We took this to be evidence of progress. We won the 'booby-prize' 'Best Local Choir' but more importantly we had impressed sufficiently to be invited to participate in the Evening Gala Concert and to compete in the 'Choir of Choir's' Contest.

We were definitely on an upward trajectory. This time, despite being bested by two women's choirs we secured a good third place seeing off our Peterborough rivals. In all likelihood this wise adjudicator gave us credit for our change of repertoire. Instead of singing the same material again, Colne Valley chose to end their impressive, entertaining and diverse set with the magnificent Dan Forrest version of 'How Great Thou Art' - a showstopper piece that really demonstrates the power and the subtlety of the Choir's performance.

So... a day of mixed fortunes. Many congratulations to the women of Peterborough Voices. As for Colne Valley we can take some pride in having performed well and - best of all - to have contributed once again to this most fine of music Festivals.



Photo: Alan Stopher



'Men & Music' and The Vale Singers

In the last issue VotV gave coverage to a recently rediscovered early gramophone recording of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir singing in Slaithwaite and the Huddersfield Town Hall some 50 odd years ago. The two excerpted pieces from 'Men & Music', despite the poor recording quality nonetheless demonstrate what a fine Choir CVMVC was under the direction of George Stead.

The excerpts proved quite popular with VotV readers and elicited this note from CV fan, Jayne Preston in Meltham. She writes:-

"Thank you for the old recording on today's VOTV. I thought I had heard them all, but those tracks are completely new to me."



My Dad (Jack Bamford) sang with the choir for over 60 years and was a Vice President. I believe the choir had only been formed about a year when he joined as a young man. He was also George Stead's first pupil for singing lessons.

What a lovely trip down memory lane, listening to the tracks has been. The richness of the bass voices, an unrivalled tenor section, all there for many years to come. I had always thought that the LP made in 1968 was the first recording that the choir had made and I still consider that to have some of the best male voice choir singing I have ever heard.

Jayne is shown above with the Mrs Sunderland Rose Bowl. Both she and her Father Jack each won one for their individual vocal talents in past competitions at the Music Festival.

*My dad, along with **Norman Dearnley, George Lockwood, Tommy Oakes, Clement France, Percy Fairbank, Hubert Taylor and Clifford Chesters**, formed a double quartet called "**The Vale Singers**" from within the choir.*

They entertained at many venues in the area. They rehearsed at each other's houses, pitching their notes with a tuning fork when at ours. (Our piano was no good after the war) I spent many happy hours growing up, sat in the stairsteps secretly listening to them. They pooled any fees they earned and once a year took their wives away for a social weekend away.

Happy memories of a very fine choir.

Thank you for VOTV, I always enjoy reading it."



Similar memories came forward from Joyce, widow of the late **Norman Dearnley** who-like Jayne's father, Jack, was a stalwart of the Choir for many years and another member of the Vale Singers'.

Joyce writes:-

"I would like to say what a pleasure it was to hear the recording of my late husband Norman Dearnley singing the solo.

It prompted me to look through some of his recordings. I have one of him and tenor Peter Clegg singing a duet at a concert in Swansea, "The Watchman". The quality isn't brilliant and I wondered if you or any of the Choir members could put these onto a CD for me, so that I have a more permanent record of his voice."



This photo shows some of the 'Vale Singers' including new boy Norman performing at an evening soirée.

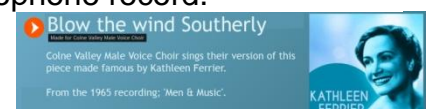


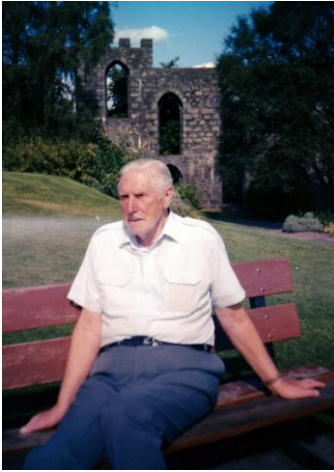
Here are two further songs from the Men & Music extended play gramophone record.

<https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/blow-the-wind-southerly>



<https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/the-pilgrims-chorus>





"Until his death Norman who was a Vice President had been a member of the choir some sixty eight years.

Singing and music were a big part of his life.

I'm looking forward to this year's forthcoming events, starting with the Mrs. Sunderland competition."

Joyce

Most of the members of the **Vale Singers** had been in the Choir for many years previously.

This photo shows most of them - probably in Blackpool for a Choir Competition in 1938.



SEEN AND HEARD

THE VALE SINGERS

Eight male singers who about two years ago formed a double quartet, to give themselves the pleasure of music-making for its own sake and incidentally to provide entertainment for people who had little opportunity of listening to such items, are the Vale Singers, and they have become so popular that their engagement list is becoming almost an embarrassment. They have now received an engagement to sing at the Huddersfield Municipal Concert in the Town Hall on Saturday, February 25th—an honour they little dreamed of when they started. These eight singers, all members of the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, are Messrs. P. L. Fairbank, Jack Bamford, T. B. Oakes, George Lockwood, C. Chesters, Norman Dearnley, Hubert Taylor and Clement France.

* * * * *

MODEST START

They started in a modest sort of way by singing at smoking concerts, and they have also done a great deal of voluntary work at hospitals, benefit concerts and at clubs organised for physically afflicted people. Their repertoire is in popular vein — tuneful part-songs, shanties and spirituals, although if the occasion calls for it they can sing much more involved part-songs. So what was started as a means of giving themselves pleasure has developed into giving tremendous satisfaction to an ever-increasing clientele — and incidentally cutting down their own leisure time considerably.

* * * * *

SEEN AND HEARD

THE VALE SINGERS

Eight male singers who about two years ago formed a double quartet to give themselves the pleasure of music-making for its own sake and incidentally to provide entertainment for people who had little opportunity of listening to such items, are the Vale Singers, and they have become so popular that their engagement list is becoming almost an embarrassment.

They have now received an engagement to sing at the Huddersfield Municipal Concert in the Town Hall on Saturday February 25th — an honour they little dreamed of when they started. These eight singers, all members of the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, are Messrs. P. L. Fairbank, Jack Bamford, T. B. Oakes, George Lockwood, C. Chesters, Norman Dearnley, Hubert Taylor and Clement France.

* * * * *

MODEST START

They started in a modest sort of way by singing at smoking concerts, and they have also done a great deal of voluntary work at hospitals, benefit concerts and at clubs organised for physically afflicted people. Their repertoire is in popular vein — tuneful part-songs, shanties, and spirituals, although if the occasion calls for it they can sing much more involved part-songs. So what was started as a means for giving themselves pleasure has developed into giving tremendous satisfaction to an ever-increasing clientele — and to incidentally cutting down their own leisure time considerably.

* * * * *

Gordon's Farewell Concert

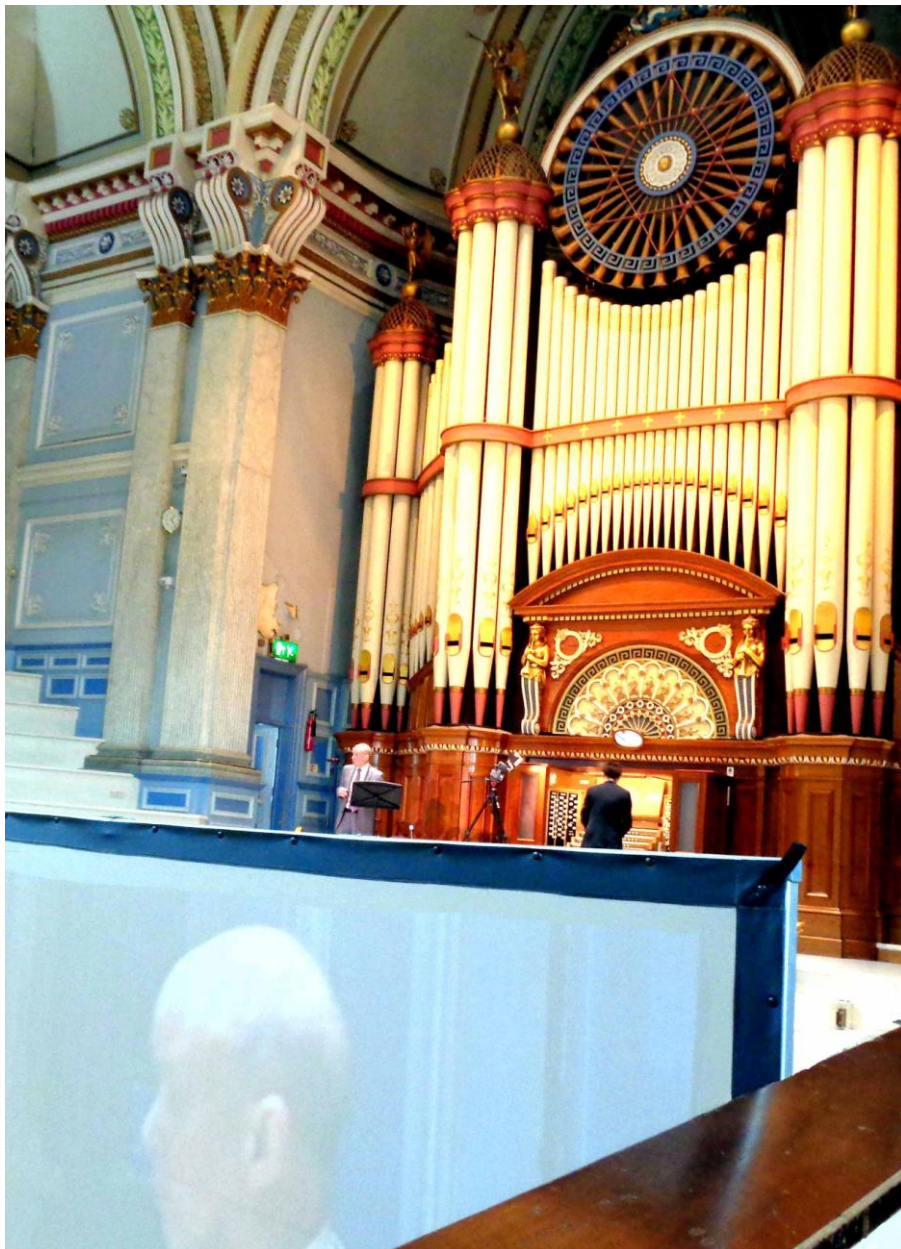
It was a super occasion.

This was the farewell concert that Gordon was to have held at the end of March 2020 - an event to mark Gordon's retirement as Borough Organist after close on 30 years in the job.

This concert was of course another Covid casualty, having had to be postponed because of the Virus.

Gordon was in spectacularly good form, playing tremendously and enriching his normal introductions with some good anecdotes about the many years of his tenure at the Town Hall.

The trumpet player, **Tom Osborne** was his guest.



Their duet version of the **Albinoni Adagio** was very special.

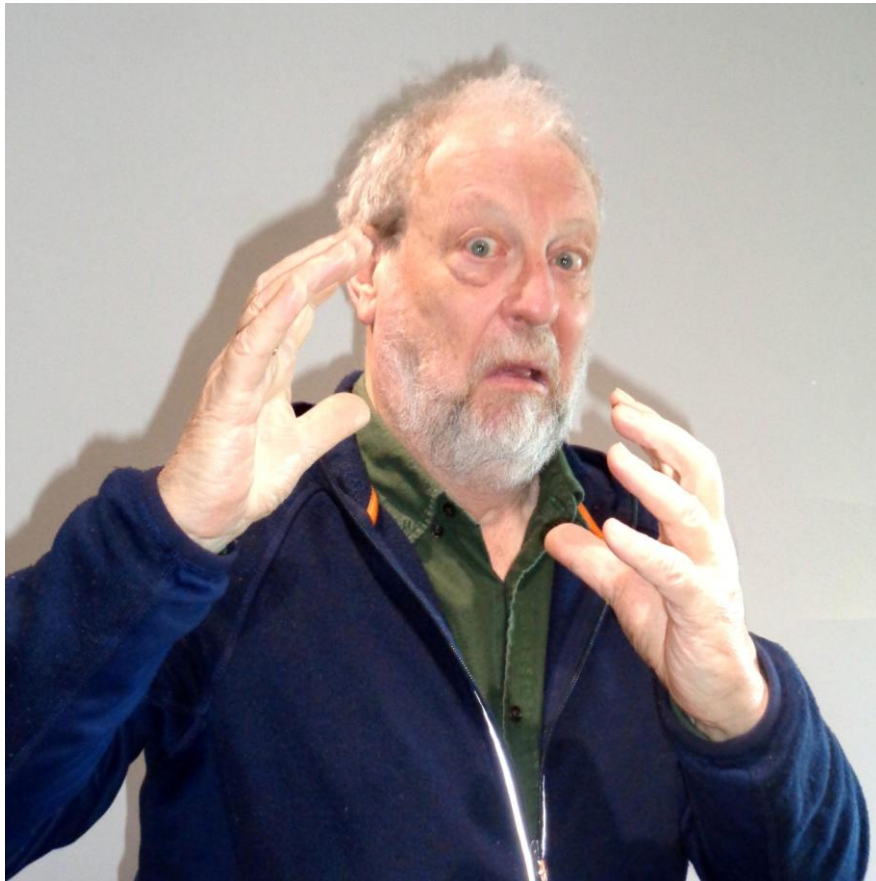
As was an organ piece by **Tom Cockcroft**, written specially to mark Gordon's retirement, called 'Valediction'.

Your editor, arriving just before start time, was unable to get a programme. They had long ago run out, explained an auditorium helper.

Kirklees obviously miscalculated how many admirers were going to turn out to wish Gordon well. There are usually 300 of so but today there must have been close to 600 in the audience.

Gordon told us he's still around and will be back for the occasional concert in future. His audience will miss his enthusiasm greatly - not to mention his stupendous skills on the Father Willis organ.

What a load of clap



It's not rocket science!.

For a verse towards the end of '**Crazy Little Thing Called Love**' the choir is required to clap on the off-beat, whilst singing .

50 odd men can do it without problem.

It's just your Editor who starts out OK then finds himself irresistibly drawn back to clapping on the first and third beats in the bar instead of the second and fourth.

So he finds himself to be the only one clapping out of time with the others to their critical response - and generally good natured ridicule - and the amusement of our conductor.

God know what it looks like onstage! He does get away with the knee-slapping bit, though.



Photo: Alan Stopher



He might be terrible at this simple rhythmical exercise but your Editor does still appreciate a drummers' 'tour de force'

This track is from Souad Massi's album.

Give it a few moments to really get going.

As Souad's vocal begins to fade away the percussion really gets into gear with fabulous results.

It's terrific.

Meanwhile he'll practise the clapping a bit more - ready for our upcoming performances.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34AZj4rld5c>

Well it made me smile....



Schools' Tour 2022



Friday March 18th 2022

Once again, those Choir members who can arrange the time off will be looking forward to the 2022 Schools' tour to entertain at various primary schools in the Valley and to seek some new recruits for our Colne Valley Boys Choir.

These tours are always fun for the kids - but most of all they are good fun for the men.

This year we start out at Marsden Juniors at 9 o'clock and will visit five other schools before the day is out.

It'll be a great day and we might bolster our number of boy singers too.

Ukraine Benefit

Last night at our rehearsal, **Honley Ladies Choir** decided to hold an immediate fund raising concert to contribute to helping the people of Ukraine. Full details (except pay on the door and buns included!) are on the attachment below.

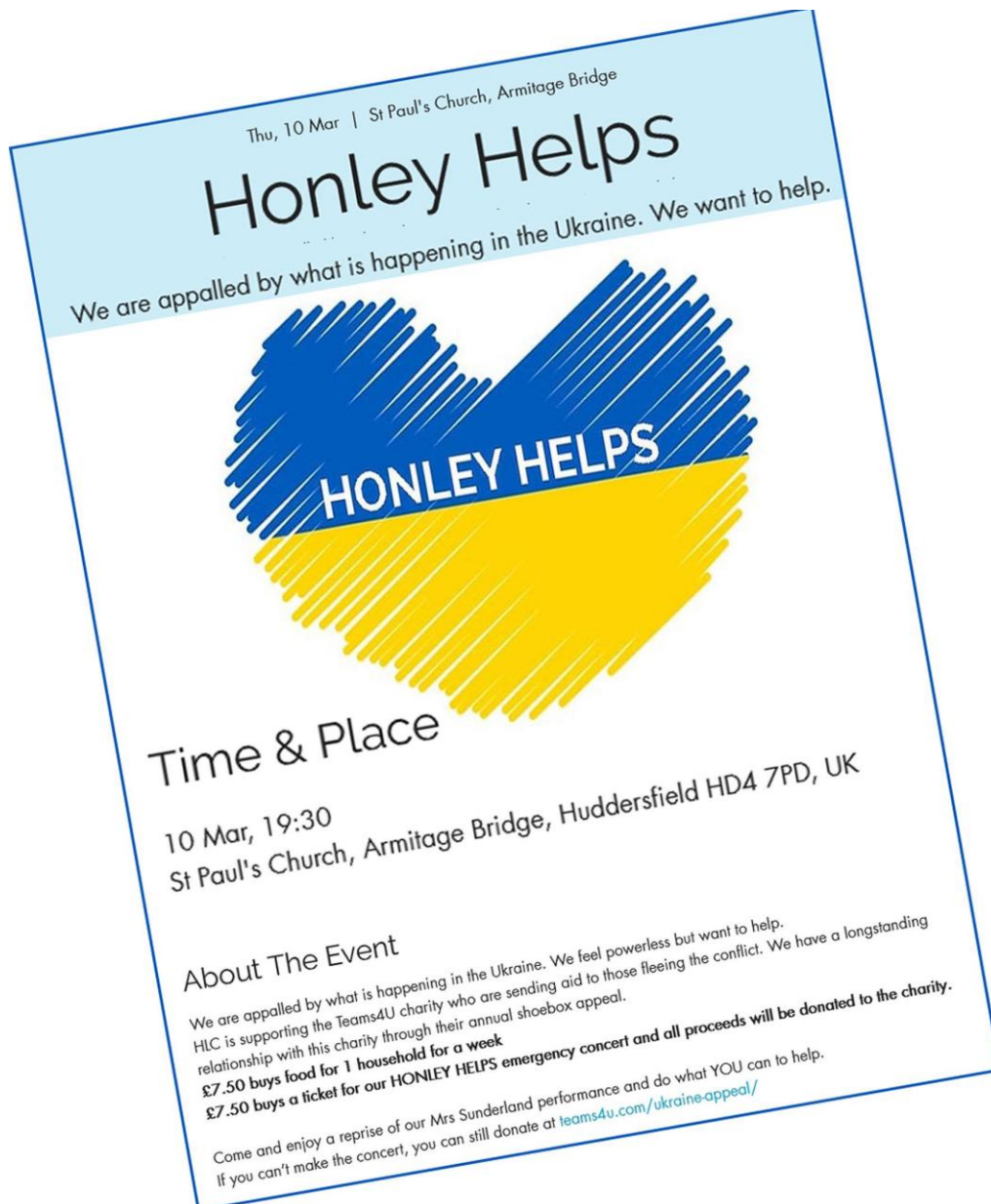
We would be very grateful if you could help to publicise our very short notice concert to the members of CVMVC and any other contacts you may have.

Regards,

Lynn Brooks

079285 33103 01484 605937 ab@aetospress.co.uk

P.S. We really enjoyed your performances at Mrs Sunderland last week. You make the hairs on the back of the neck stand up - and the clapping was great!



Well, it may too late to attend the concert but you can still donate to this great Honley effort.

Follow this link <https://teams4u.com/ukraine-appeal/>

'& Piano' is back

The very wonderful **Chris Pulleyn** is pleased to announce that the & Piano music festival is back. There will be a series of super events to look forward to. Chris will hold it all together at the piano but will be joined by some fabulously talented guests to dazzle and entertain you at Slaithwaite's very convivial concert space at the **Civic Hall**.



Chris starts with a musical theatre event on Sunday May 1st and that will be followed by a wonderful variety of concerts in the following two weeks.

Check out the programme at this link:-

<https://mailchi.mp/72b7a8bd3423/get-ready-for-our-young-musician-showcase-11342530?e=2d44e18d54>