



## 2022 Schools Tour report

'We had an amazing visit from Colne Valley Male Voice Choir this morning.' said Marsden Junior's Twitter feed. This put up this video as evidence.



And truly, the whole schools' tour - six primary schools in the Colne Valley on one action-packed school day was a resounding success and a source of considerable pleasure for the Choir as well as the schools we visited. Check out this link to sample our Marsden performance: <https://youtu.be/NdkK1M4d Drs>

At **Nields** the Choir did their performance outside. Pianist Chris Pulleyn was tickled when the school staff shoved the piano out through the door and into the playground.





# A great occasion - Keith's Concert

Sunday March 27<sup>th</sup> saw the '**Concert in Tribute to Keith Swallow**' taking place - about two years later than planned because of the Pandemic - at St John's Church in Golcar.



And it was a joyful occasion, an all-ticket event of friends of Keith, gathered to hear him and the Choir he accompanied for 60 odd years so skilfully.



Long-time colleague of Keith's - operatic bass, **Paul Hudson** - was present, too, as special guest to lend his rich, deep tones, performing dramatic arias, taking the solo part in the Choir's version of '**The Holy City**' and entertaining with his famous drinking song '**In Cellar Cool**'.





The Choir performed well, with a range of pieces, some new but many going back over several years when Keith played for us. This time it was, new boy, **Christopher Pulleyn**, who played.

**Raymond Ellis** our compère introduced most of the items and retold some of our favourite jokes. I don't know how many times I've heard his 'budgerigar' story but Raymond tells it so skilfully it's funny every time.



Keith preferred to introduce his own solo pieces. As a pianist he's lost none of his mastery - simply superb.

[https://youtu.be/Yzvo\\_-mKJC8](https://youtu.be/Yzvo_-mKJC8)

Especially pleasing was when Keith and Chris played duets.

<https://youtu.be/JVHjMbmQLDk>

And for the finale an initially reluctant Keith was encouraged back to join Chris and improvise a duet part to the Choir and Paul Hudson singing Stuart Baxter's arrangement of 'You'll Never Walk Alone'.

<https://youtu.be/m1gzclWWAdo>.

(Thanks to Chris's mother, Jenny and to Cate Clark for most of the photos and videos. Thanks to the folk at St John's.

Afterwards Chairman, **Joe Stones**, made a speech of thanks to Keith. Keith, typically self-effacing, said thank you but declined to make a speech in response.



It was a lovely afternoon and a fitting thank you to the Maestro.





# Raymond reports: on Colne Valley action for Ukraine

Pretty well everybody is appalled by what's happening in Ukraine and that includes the people of the Colne Valley.

So it comes as no surprise that those stalwarts of the Colne Valley Museum are seeking to do their bit. What was more of a surprise to VotV was how creative they are being in finding a way to help. The Golcar-based Museum team have once again teamed up with their associates at Slaithwaite-based bespoke shirt-makers, **McNair**, to get a fund-raising initiative off the ground, using the museum's ancient hand-loom weaving machines.



With his fellow museum volunteers, CVMVC baritone, **Raymond Ellis** is using the historic textile manufacturing equipment to craft a special fabric in the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag.



It will be used by McNair to furnish the collars and cuffs of limited-edition McNair merino shirts, which will be raffled / auctioned (hopefully for lots of money).



It is hoped they will raise substantial funds that will go to help ease the suffering of the Ukrainians as their struggle to defend their nation.

Every single penny raised will go to the [Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain](#).

The auction and lottery will be run as part of [#toukrainewithlove](#).

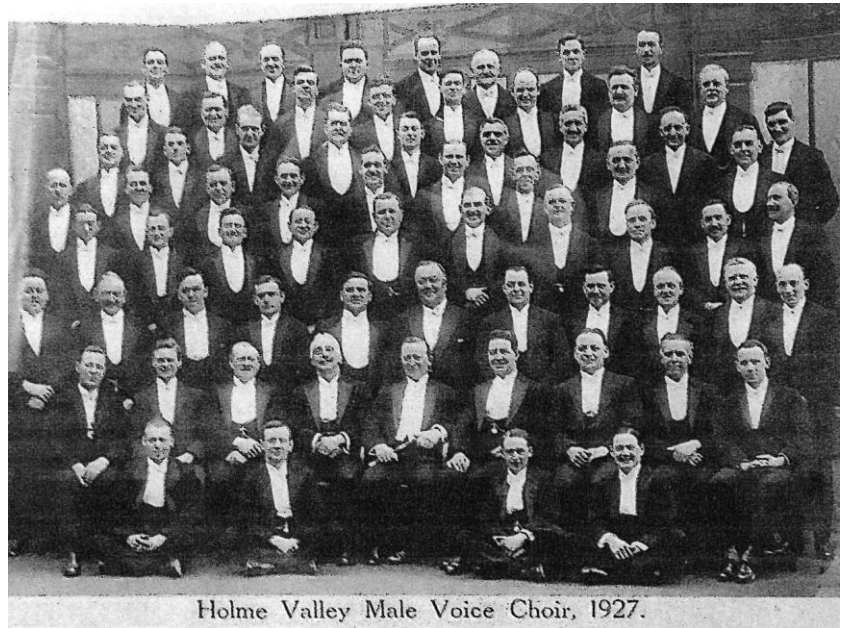
**Well done to everyone involved and well done to Raymond**

# 'One of Britain's Greatest Male Voice Choirs'

1910 to 1950:

## Holme Valley Male Voice Choir

Honley Male Voice Choir's, **Norman Mellor**, writes interestingly about the history of this long-gone choir. Here are some excerpts from his history of a choir formed well before our own great choir - and now no more.



Holme Valley Male Voice Choir, 1927.



Hon. Conductor:  
IRVING SILVERWOOD.

'Holme Valley MVC was founded in July 1910, the founding musical director being a local man by the name of **Irving Silverwood**. The members were asked to pay one shilling (five pence) to join and one old penny per week and to buy their own music.

At the outset, the choir numbered around 24, but had increased to around 30 after a few months.

In October 1911 the choir, after some keen rehearsals, entered the Blackpool Music Festival and came first to great delight that, after only 18 months of its formation the choir had won 1st prize in the leading musical competition in the north of England. The prize included 'The Sharples Challenge Shield' and 10 guineas.

1913, and the choir was to win the Mrs Sunderland for the first time of many.

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The Sheffield and Blackpool Festivals were entered for in 1935. This time next-door neighbours **Colne Valley MVC** were victors on both occasions.

It must be said that Holme Valley did nothing wrong but, like in all competitions the adjudicator is the sole arbiter and he chose Colne Valley. It would seem Mr. Silverwood did not agree with the judgment and had words with the adjudicator.

This was to be the way of things when the two giants clashed. The Huddersfield Examiner said of the Blackpool Festival, 'the Holme Valley have had a long run, they were still a great choir in 1935, but the Colne Valley was a younger ensemble and wonderfully endowed with tenors'. The report



goes on, 'On the four performances two choirs stood out in a class of their own, the Colne Valley and Holme Valley, who Mr. Howells the adjudicator said, these two choirs really moved him'.

It would seem the Colne Valley tenors won the day for them. Mr. George Stead was now in charge of the winners. (How wonderful to have two of the greatest choirs in Britain within three miles of one another).

These setbacks did nothing to prevent the Holme Valley from functioning as before. With several concerts ahead of them Mr. Silverwood continued to rehearse the choir in his usual thorough way.

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The choir continued during the War. In 1943 the choir broadcast a twenty minute concert from the B.B.C.'s Leeds studio.

Although many concerts had been given for war charities, several members had been approached to take part in concerts of a smaller kind, sponsored by village Churches and other organizations. The members concerned approached Mr. Silverwood on this point and were reminded that no one could serve two masters and do justice to both at the same time. The members had no wish to break up the choir and commenced to fulfil their obligations.

Eventually eighteen members left the choir, some became members of the West Riding Singers and others joined smaller male voice groups. This was the beginning of the end for the choir.

However, it kept functioning and regular rehearsals were held, although it was noticed that Mr. Silverwood was failing in health. From 1943 to 1950 there would seem to have been no minutes kept. On the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1950, the last meeting was held and the choir finally disbanded. It is a pity that the choir could not survive the retirement of its conductor.'

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But - paradoxically - it was from the breakup of Home Valley MVC that the current **Honley Male Voice Choir** was born.

Good work, Norman



# Fires blaze again

Two lines of moorland fires, each a mile long spread across dry moorland above the Colne Valley in the Cupwith area on Wednesday night. These fires, once rare, now seem to be a frequent and terribly destructive feature of our Colne Valley countryside. This was the view opposite your Editor's house. (Photo: Elisabeth Baker)



Fortunately the Fire service seems to have got on top of it overnight. They are 'damping down' fearful of re-ignition.

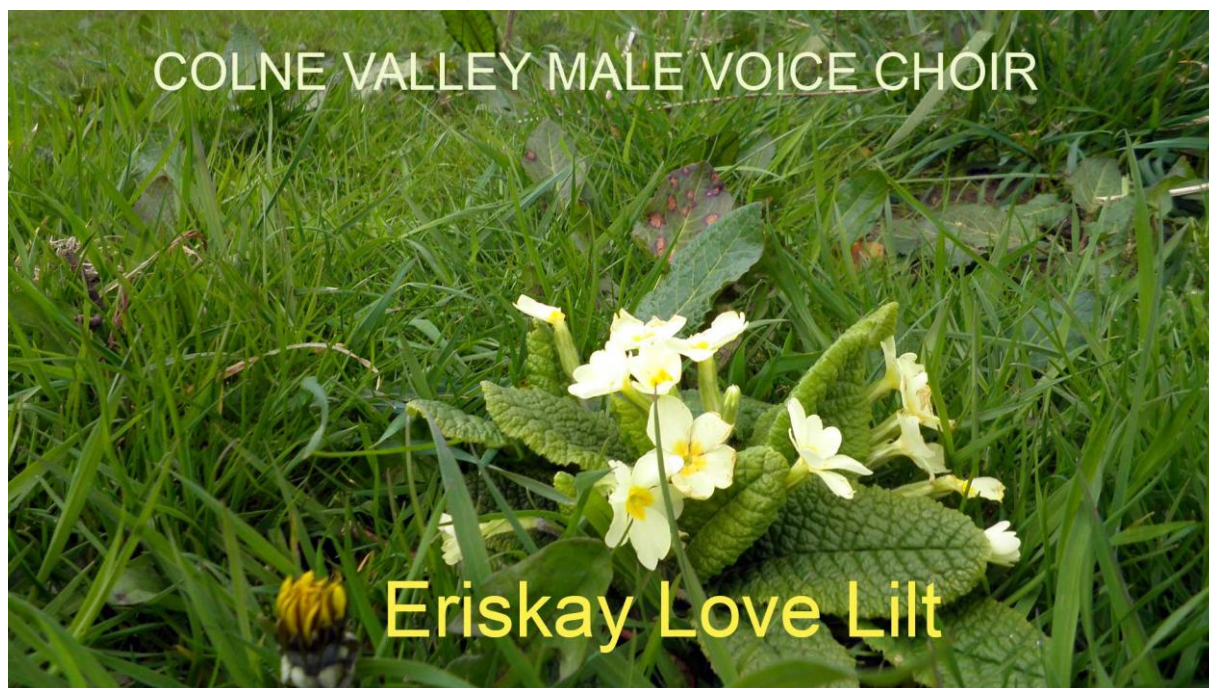
The environmental damage, sadly, to birds and wildlife and to our glorious upland countryside will take much longer to heal.



# Online Spring Concert remembered

A year has passed since we did it - and how great was it to keep up contact with our audiences - even if it could only be 'virtual'. Here's a reminder of one of the trailer songs before our online performances. Click here or on the image.

[https://youtu.be/IB0-vQ\\_4zJ0](https://youtu.be/IB0-vQ_4zJ0)



The main event was covered by the BBC's **Look North**. Their report accessible here - or just click on their logo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Um5EG8vs7sl&t=1s>



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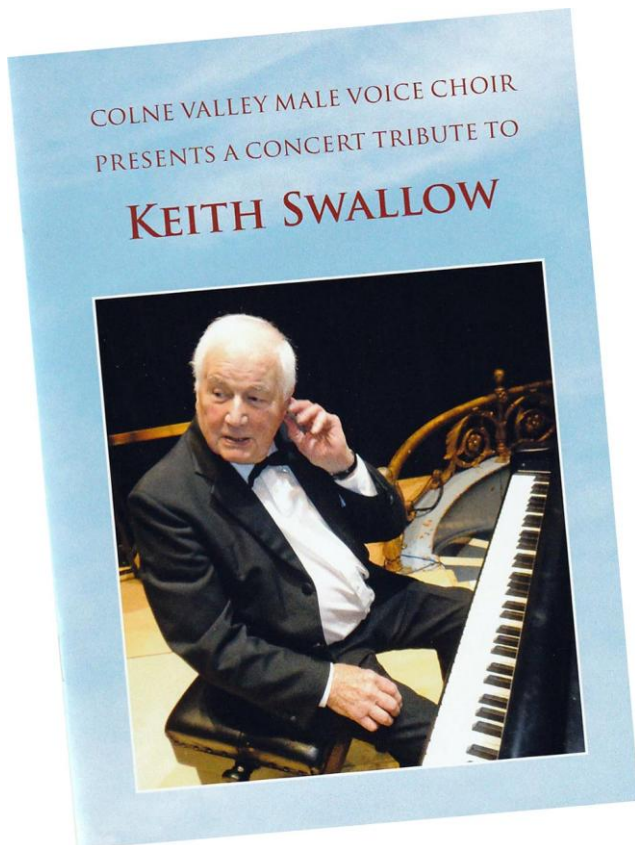
The whole event has been watched 2,500 times and is still available on this link:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i762LiLf9ms&t=16s>



# Souvenir programme

## Well-received

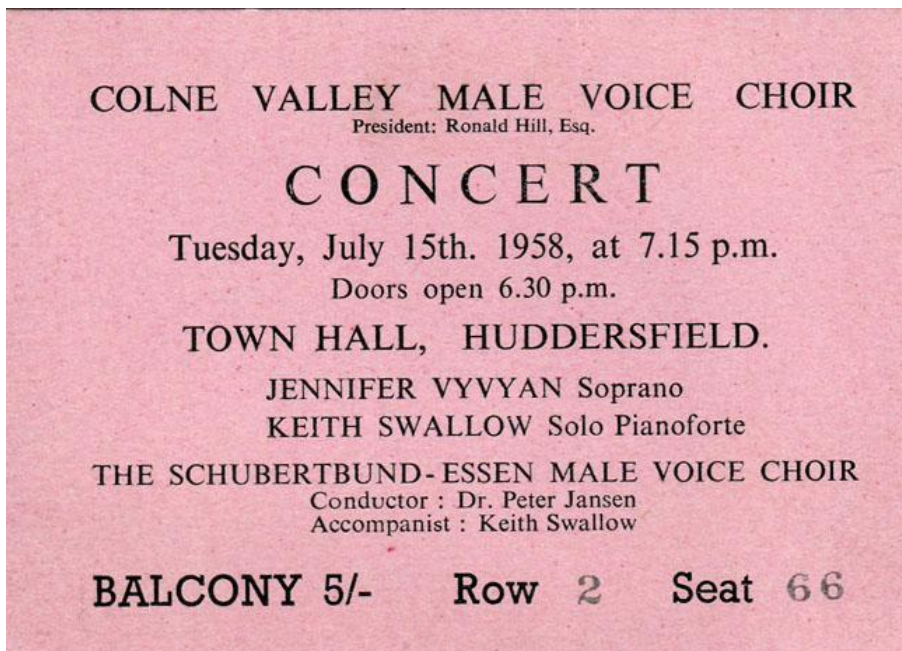


A special souvenir programme - sponsored by the late Arthur Quarmby and his wife, Jean - was issued to all who participated in the concert on Sunday - whether performers or audience members.

Many commented that they found it to be an interesting read, summing up Keith's long history with the Choir and indicating some of the many great musicians and singers he had accompanied in his illustrious career.

As chance would have it, it has come to the attention of your VotV editor that at least one renowned singer was not even mentioned - I reckon there would be loads more.

Here's a ticket for a Town Hall concert from 1958 – about a year after Keith started playing for us. On that occasion he accompanied **Jennifer Vyvyan**, played solo and accompanied two choirs – ours and our guests from Germany, The **Schubertbund** Male Voice Choir from Essen, who had hosted Colne Valley on the German tour that saw Keith's initial employment with us in 1957.



You'll notice a good balcony seat cost just five bob (25p)

Hear Jennifer sing a Mozart aria. Follow this link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yY2M576RS3Y>

## Jennifer Vyvyan





Well it made  
me smile ....



## Send me a picture, tell me a story

It's true that the time of isolation and social-distancing may be passing and that restrictions on meeting up are gone: let's hope it continues.

But it's also true that many of our readers still find Voice of the Valley an excellent way of keeping in touch with the Choir and what it's up to.

So do let your VotV Editor know if something happens to you, that might be of interest and has some - even if tenuous - connection with the Choir. Doesn't matter if you are not very confident writing, I'll help you put into publishable shape.



**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 to get the full story**

[colnevalleymvc.org.uk](http://colnevalleymvc.org.uk)



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