



A grand way to start the Christmas festivities..

.. begin at the Huddersfield Town Hall...

.... with Yorkshire's Finest , **Colne Valley Male Voice Choir**, with the charming **Colne Valley Boys** and with the utterly magnificent **Brighouse and Rastrick Band**.



It all started well. As the doors were closed and the stage lights brightened, there was more than a hint of excited anticipation amongst our audience members. They had turned out in their numbers despite the sub-zero temperatures - only a handful of empty seats in the main auditorium - and they were looking forward to a grand evening in the grand tradition of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir Christmas Concerts.

And they weren't to be disappointed. Early on the Boys and the men joined to sing '**Walking in the Air**' from '**The Snowman**'. That along with the Boys '**Muppet Christmas**' proved very popular.



The Band, as you might expect from the current '**British Open Champions**' under their new leader, **Ian MacElligot**, were superb.

Their early set included a late but very welcome change in the programme, when **Mike Eccles**, standing in for the unavailable Ellana Watkins came to the fore and gave a hauntingly lovely Flugelhorn version of '**Away in a Manger**'.



The first half concluded with another popular piece from all the performers - perhaps not 'christmas-y' but it contained the ideas of Freedom and Peace, already raised by the Boys with their singing of John & Yoko's Classic, '**Merry Christmas; War is over**' from 1972. This was, '**Requiem for a Soldier**' from '**Band of Brothers**' by **Michael Kamen**, arranged and conducted by our very own **Thom Meredith**.

After the interval the concert ramped up a gear in terms of musicality and impact. We started back with a very rousing version of '**Let All men Sing**'. This was preceded by a very short speech by Thom drawing the audience's attention to our forthcoming '**Let All Men Sing**' **Community Choir Initiative**. (See more information below).

As at the Coldstream Guards concert in October the item that 'brought the house down' was '**Bui Doi**' from 'Miss Saigon'. Band, Choir and spectacular soloists, Thom and Chris, left the audience enraptured - such a powerful performance from them, rising above Band and Choir at full volume - simply stunning!



Enjoyment was palpable as we cruised through to our usual Finale; **Gordon Langford's 'Christmas Fantasy'**.

Thom had the baton, leading us all through that wonderful medley of favourite carols, to bring another fine Christmas show to its jubilant conclusion.

What a grand night!

# Some men prepare to go onstage



John Kilner and Tom Law      Marshal Barry

New man, Steve Molinari at his first Town Hall Concert with fellow bass, Brian Hibbert



The soloists in 'Ave Maris Stella', James, Sam Blagbrough and Tom



**Chris Wilson** seen here with boyfriend, **David Clarke**, deserves a special mention for taking many of the photos of the concerts in this edition.

### Thanks Chris

Also worth a comment is Second Tenor, **Peter Hatton**. For the first time in donkey's years, Peter wasn't onstage at the Town Hal this year.

He's been getting over illness and missed too many pre-concert rehearsals.



Peter told *VotV* it was an uncanny experience listening to the Choir for the first time. "It sounded really good from in the auditorium," he said, "particularly in the second half."

### We missed you Peter

And here are three happy-looking chaps, contemplating the concert to come. These are librarians **Keith Holland** and **Peter Meadows**, with **Robert Dickinson** in the centre. Your *VotV* photographer just told them he had a special camera with him that would make them look good - it obviously worked.



# John Lees does 40 years

A brief presentation ceremony took place at our Slaithwaite rehearsal room the other night - brief but significant.

It was to mark a terrific achievement. However you add it up, First Tenor, John Lees has sung with the Choir for at least 40 years.

That's quite something. Presenting the Certificate, longest-serving singing member **David Hirst**, couldn't resist pointing out he's done nearer 60 years than forty - but he nonetheless praised John for his long-term commitment.



John Lees, for his part, reckoned 40 years was something of an understatement.

He did say how much he still enjoyed singing with us and that he hoped he would be able to carry on for many years yet.

The Choir gave him a warm round of applause.

Your Voice of the Valley Editor doesn't feel he would be speaking out of turn to say that the Choir values his long service and experience and hopes he'll be around making his contribution for a good long time to come.

Well done, John



# Colne Valley Boys and Musica Youth Strings

It might be more true to claim that Christmas Festivities actually started before the Town Hall Spectacular.

Those in the know went to see the Colne Valley Boys Concert in Slaithwaite the week before.



It's always a jovial event and this year, the Boys guests were Musica Youth Strings.

They not only brought the charm of youth but also great musical talent. They came fresh from an appearance in the Royal Albert Hall in the Youth Proms

Two soloists led the ensemble at some of their wonderful pieces - shown here is **Eleanor Turner**, (who you may recognise also played, most beautifully, the violin obligato in **'Walking in the Air'** at the Town Hall Concert. Behind her, far left, is another fine player, **Isobel Ward**. Together they played the showpiece, 'Por Una Cabeza'



The Boys, as usual sang well for what is after all quite a small ensemble. And the younger ones, in particular, brought a sense of fun to the occasion. Who can forget, 'Gandalf, the black-nosed Meerkat?'

As always, much praise must go Chris Pulleyn and Thom Meredith for leading the ensemble and to Matt and Linda Houston for pastoral support'.







## Keith calls it a day

Unsung hero, **Keith Martindale**, has played no small role in making Town Hall Concerts such special events. That is because he has been for many years the behind-the-scenes technical support in the production of the excellent Concert Programmes that have enriched the audience experience of the musical spectacle.

VotV has known for some months that the 2022 Christmas Programme would be his last.

Your Editor writes,

*“During the last decade or so of our collaboration in doing Concert Programmes, we found a new level of production; more lavish, more informative, high quality and in full colour - creating brochures that added lustre to top-class Town Hall performances and that audience members kept as souvenirs.*

*I have grown an immense respect for your knowledge of print, for your skills in graphics and layout and - perhaps most of all - for your benign tolerance of last-minute changes and the deadlines missed as we gathered information together. Often it wasn't my fault! You may have been 'tearing your hair out' in frustration but, frankly, it hardly ever showed.*

*I know, too, the many, many hours you spent getting content into shape - hours that your nominal fee scarcely began to touch - and the results were always professional and superb.*

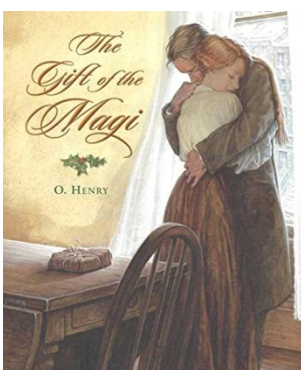
*I know I can speak on behalf of the Choir - and certainly it's also a personal view - when I thank you most warmly for your valuable contributions and support.”*

A handful of the programmes Keith has helped create.



## *“The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry*

In the days before television, when even radio was a rarity, people read stories. This particular Christmas Story is a little older than our Choir, which started up in 1922. There was evidently a ‘Cost of Living Crisis’ at that time, too. It was a very popular short story in America but it crossed over the Atlantic and became popular here, too. You never know, it might well have been read by the fireside in the parlour of many a Colne Valley Cottage: Enjoy.



*One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas. There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.*

*While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.*

*In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."*

*The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.*

*Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling - something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.*

*There was a pier glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art. Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.*

*Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy. So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.*

*On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street. Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."  
"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.*

*"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it." Down rippled the brown cascade.*

*"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand. "Give it to me quick," said Della.*



*Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present. She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation - as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value - the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.*

*When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends - a mammoth task. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically. "If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do - oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"*

*At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops. Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."*

*The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two - and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves. Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face. Della wriggled off the table and went for him.*

*"Jim, darling," she cried, "Don't look at me that way. I had my haircut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again - you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice - what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."*

*"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labour. "Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?" Jim looked about the room curiously. "You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy. "You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you - sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "But nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"*

*Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a*

year - what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The Magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table. "Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "About me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."



White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat. For there lay *The Combs* - the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoiseshell, with jewelled rims - just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone. But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!" Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit. "Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it." Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."



The Magi, as you know, were wise men - wonderfully wise men - who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest.

Everywhere they are wisest. They are the Magi.



# Last Minute Gifts - 200 Club



What better last minute gift for a friend, relative or partner than a number in the '200 Club'?

The lucky recipient will have a very good chance of winning in each weekly draw throughout the year. And better still, will have the satisfaction of knowing that he or she is supporting Yorkshire's Finest Choir.

This is **Vera Cowgill**, looking very pleased to be the winner of a very handy £185 prize in the latest draw.



Peter Kelly, our new '200 Club' Organiser says, "Just get in touch and I'll get you sorted straightaway. You'll be able to surprise your pal with a present that, in all likelihood, will give them cause to remember you fondly in 2023. You can ring me on 07802 544717 or email me at this link - [peter.kelly10@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.kelly10@btinternet.com)

## Or... sign your chap up for 'Let all Men Sing'.

It'll only cost you a tenner and it could change the life of your man for the better. At least the man (or boy) will have some fun.

**LET ALL MEN SING!**

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- ✓ All ages welcome
- ✓ Short-term commitment
- ✓ An ideal new year challenge
- ✓ Perfect for fathers & sons

A community choir project for men that sing and men who've always wanted to give it a try!

Eight weekly rehearsals 6:30pm to 8:00pm starting Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January at The Civic, Slaithwaite  
£10 one-off registration fee

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Everyone welcome!

To find out more, visit [www.letallmensing.co.uk](http://www.letallmensing.co.uk)  
or email [LAMS@colnevalleymvc.org.uk](mailto:LAMS@colnevalleymvc.org.uk)  
or contact Joe Stones on 01484 323431.

SCAN THIS CODE with your smartphone camera to find out more or sign up now!

A PROJECT SUPPORTED BY Colne Valley Male Voice Choir IN THEIR CENTENARY YEAR

Or if you are a bloke, who's maybe secretly always wondered whether he could be a singer, sign yourself up. It's a chance to explore singing for chaps who have maybe never tried it.

We are holding 8 sessions, once a week on Thursday evenings, to just enjoy making music without judgement or reason to be apprehensive.

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# A lovely Concert at Marsden



Once again , the good folk of the Colne Valley turned out in force to enjoy a jovial and relaxed performance by two of the Valley's finest musical ensembles: The Marsden Silver Prize Band and of course, their guests the Colne Valley Male voice Choir.



Proceedings were guided by Marsden's genial conductor, **Andrew Lofthouse** – he and his band were in fine form - and the Choir, led as always by **Thom Meredith** and with **Chris Pulleyn** at the piano.

Thom and Chris give it some 'welly' in Bui Doi - it got the biggest round of applause, again.

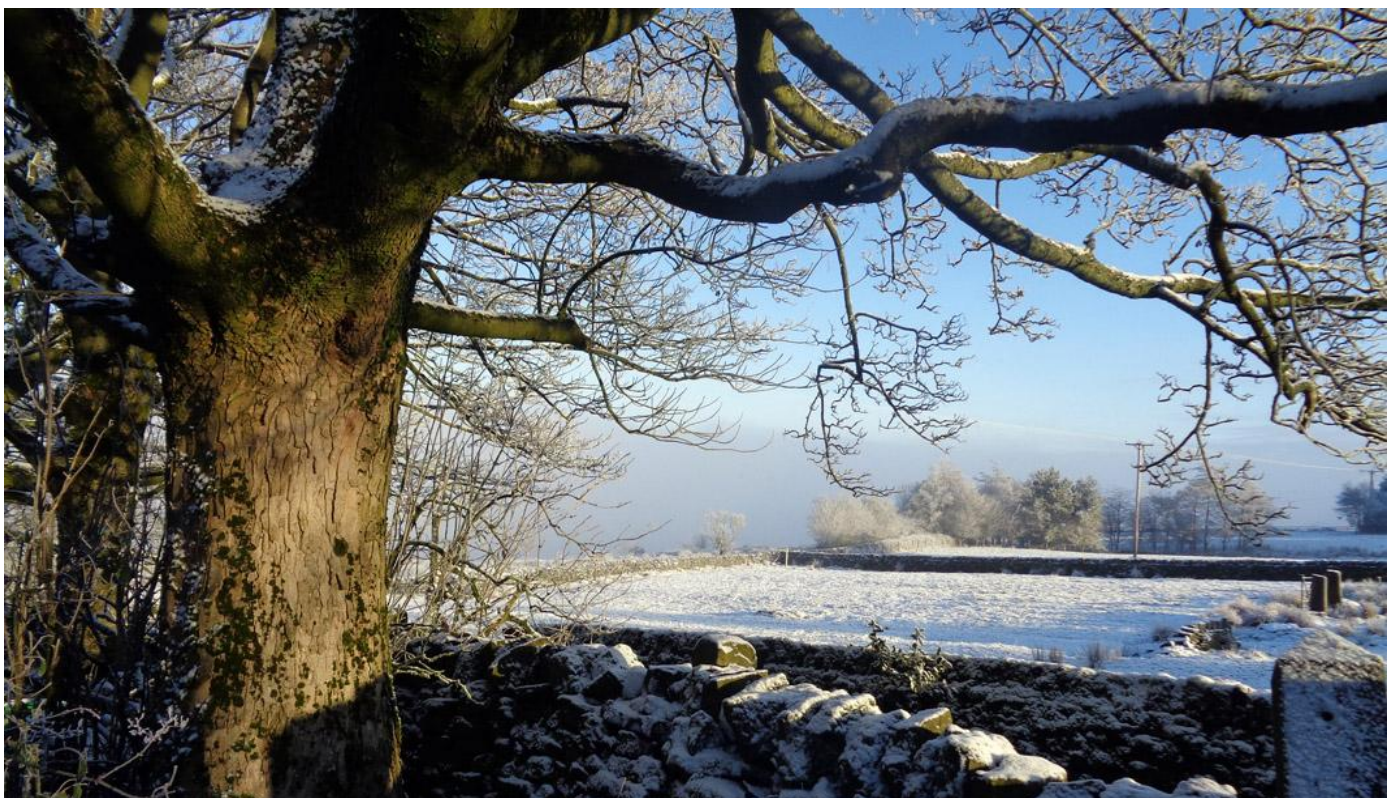
It was generally held to be a lovely concert.



## See Amid The winters Snow...

This is the Dan Forrest version that was we sang with such impact this year. This is an SATB version but very good.

<https://soundcloud.com/beckenhorst-press/7-see-amid-the-winters-snow>





## Interview with Thom



**Voice**  
*of the*  
**Valley**

*talks to*  
*Thom Meredith*

Click here or on the image to hear this fascinating interview with our Music Director

<https://youtu.be/6vfoKn3SfIY>



*..... and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year*  
*from Voice of the Valley*