



Let all men sing



A key element in Colne Valley's centennial planning was to boost the whole idea of getting more men singing in our 100th year.

We planned a new community initiative to get men who maybe only sing in their bathrooms to come and sing together as a group.

It's good for our mental and physical well-being.

The programme kicks off this Thursday and it's all looking good. Word is that 33 men have signed up already.

It's not too late for you to register and join in - the first session is on Thursday (19th) (unusually at Saint James' Church) but most of the eight meetings will be in Slaithwaite Civic Hall at half past six. 'Don't be put off, if you can't make the first session,' says an organiser, 'Just come to Session Two at the Civic. You'll be very welcome.'

When marimba rhythms start to play - sway



When it dawned on second tenor, **Ian Rex**, back in 2020, that one of his long-deceased parents would have been 100 years old and the other 95, his thoughts turned to how he might commemorate his beloved Mum and Dad. He soon thought of one of the songs, George and his younger wife, Margaret had most enjoyed; the gently rhythmical 'Sway' and thought it would be lovely to hear Colne Valley Male Voice Choir singing it in their 100th year.

The song, Ian tells VotV, has been recorded nearly 200 times since it was written in 1953. Originally *¿Quién será?* it's a bolero-mambo piece written by Mexican composers **Luis Demetrio** and **Pablo Beltrán Ruiz**. The gloomy Spanish lyrics were replaced by a chap called **Norman Gimbel**...

*'When marimba rhythms start to play
Dance with me, make me sway
Like a lazy ocean hugs the shore
Hold me close, sway me more'*



.....and then the song took off.

Of course the definitive version in the ear of your VotV Editor remains that crooned by a luxuriantly lazy **Dean Martin**, who made the song a big hit in 1954 - the year Margaret & George were married.

Click here or on the TV to enjoy it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2OMNgTo96Q>

Ian's idea was good but he soon found several obstacles in his way. Firstly he had to obtain permission from the copyright holders, which he eventually did, securing rights exclusively for CVMVC to perform the piece. Then he needed a male voice choir arrangement, which he commissioned, after a diligent search, from an arranger called **Tim Allen**, who lives near Barnsley who created the skilful arrangement.



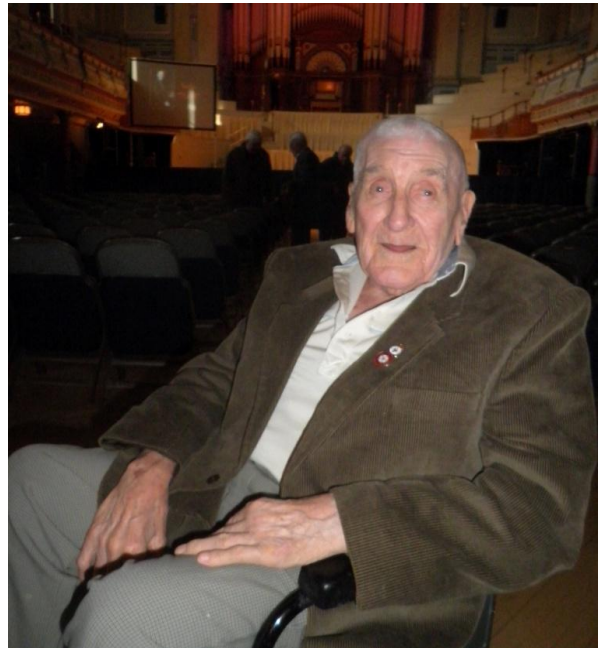
Finally the music was printed and Choir librarians handed out the copies in our last January rehearsal. Given that the temperature outside was minus 4° and the temperature in the rehearsal room was definitely on the chilly side, it was amazing how quickly we got into a laid-back, Latin-American mood as we tried the music for the first time.

Thank you, Ian. It'll be a fabulous piece for summer concerts and we are grateful to you and your dearly remembered parents for the opportunity.

Frank Littlewood

News came over Christmas that a popular former Choir member, **Frank Littlewood** had passed away peacefully in his Care Home in Dalton, close to where he had lived for many years - indeed close to where he was brought up in Huddersfield in the 1930's. He died after several years of declining health and mobility but he attained the grand old age of 93.

Frank, though, had travelled all over the world as a bandsman with one of the Guards Regiments - If I remember right, says *VotV* Editor, John Clark - he played the trombone and other brass instruments. Not that his role was all musical. He was posted to Malaysia, where the British Army was seeking to put down an uprising. He was also stationed in Singapore.



After retiring from military life he did all sorts of jobs and eventually returned to Huddersfield where, in later years, he mainly worked as a lorry driver making regular runs to South Wales.

It seems though that he never lost his interest in music.

So the story goes he found himself in the Town Hall listening to a Colne Valley Male Voice Choir concert. Suddenly, he thought he recognised one of the singers - a lad he'd grown up with, one of his best mates who he hadn't seen since National Service years back in 1948. 'I'm sure I know him', he told his wife. Excitedly he made his way backstage - and indeed it was true - the CVMVC singer was his old chum, **Melvyn Smith**. 'A great reunion took place, with a promise never to lose touch again' says a contemporary record.



Many older Choir members will remember Mel, now long-ago deceased, who was a Choir stalwart and librarian for many years - brother to **John Smith**, second tenor and now himself a retired member.

Needless to say, Mel recruited Frank into the Bass section in 1999, where Frank spent many happy years, singing before, in turn, his health prevented onstage performances. Nonetheless, Frank's enthusiasm didn't decline.



He was a regular attendee at Choir performances before covid curtailed excursions. He was a keen reader of *Voice of the Valley* and it was Frank who persuaded **David Clarke** to join up with the Choir as a fellow bass.

Frank's funeral was held at the end of December and several Colne Valley members attended. He was remembered by the whole Choir singing, as is traditional for deceased members, **George Stead's Fourfold Amen** when the Choir reconvened in early January,

Rest in Peace, Frank

New woman braves the Management Committee

Inestimable Choir Secretary, **Jenny Baxter**, has long learned to tolerate the rabbiting of old men on the Choir's Management Committee. And stand her ground, apparently letting some of the drivel flow past her unperturbed, just extracting the odd nugget of good sense. Last meeting she was joined by a newcomer, braving the mass of old codgers.

This was newly-selected Choir Treasurer, **Annabel Cooke**, arriving for the first time to present recent accounts. Annabel has taken on the role following the departure of **Simon Durrans**. Simon has relinquished the role and Management Committee members thanked him for his service.

As for Annabel; she tells VotV that she is a qualified Chartered Accountant (ACCA) with 18 years of experience. She works in the motor trade, not-for-profit sectors and transport companies.

So, keeping our financial records in order should be a doddle as long as she can put up with us wittering on. I'm sure I saw her eyes glaze over at one point during the last exhaustive meeting.

Annabel knows the Choir well, being married to second tenor James Cooke.

Welcome Annabel



Trevor as Freddie?

Veteran second tenor, **Trevor Bowers** was spotted, channelling **Freddie Mercury** at a Blackpool hotel on New Year's Eve.

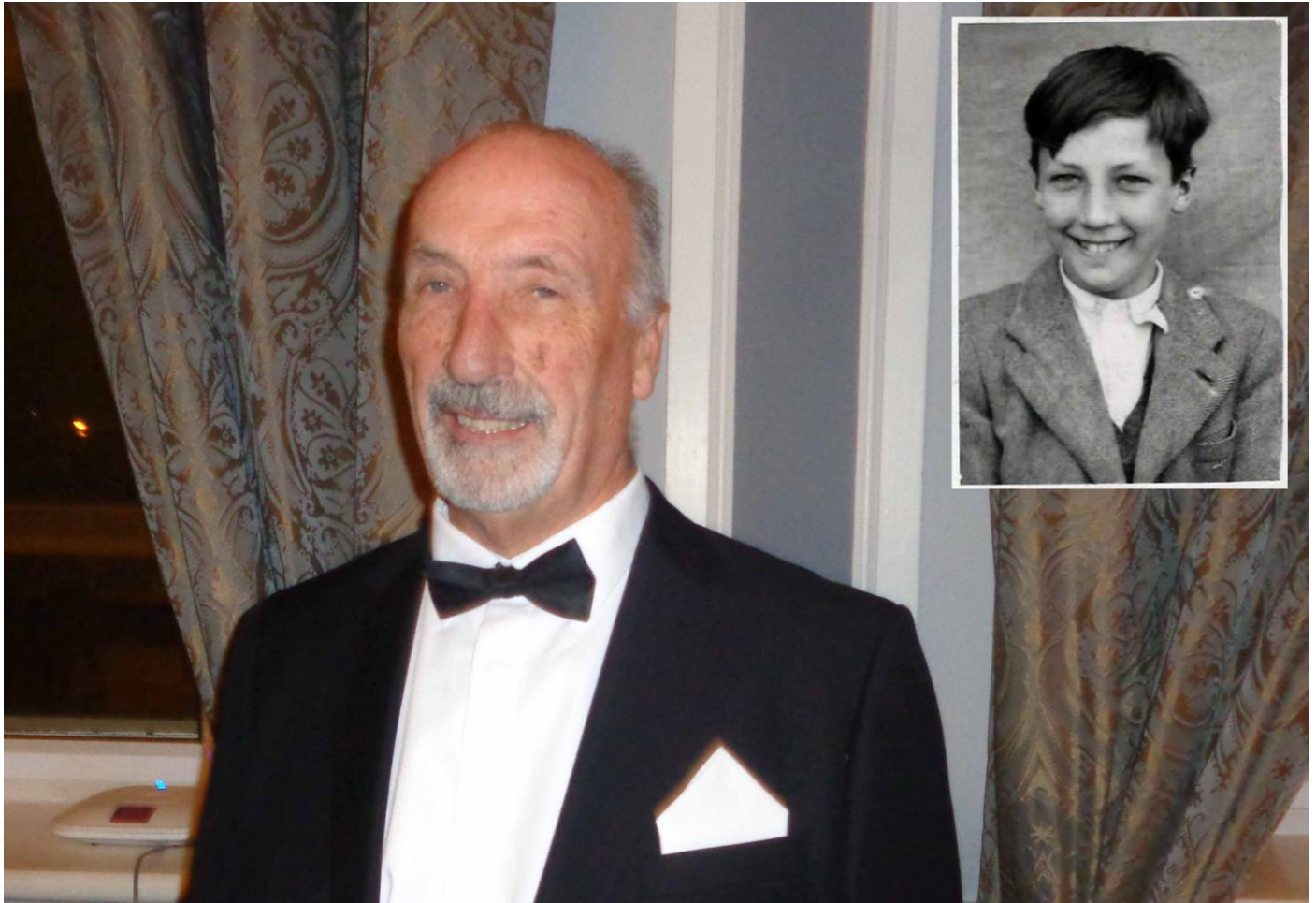
He was singing 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love'

I expect everybody was drunk and in forgiving mood!

Well Done, Trevor

Geoff Bedford: a life story, chapter II - Jordan

Regular readers will remember second tenor, Geoff Bedford's, account of growing up in Linthwaite in the Colne Valley. Geoff grew up and become an electrical engineer. Here he gives us some of his memories of contracts in the Middle East in the late 1970's



*Most of my working life was in the electrical industry, and my first overseas contract in **Jordan**: a country full of historical artefacts, and strong scenery.*

I was about 36 years old and we had just had our third child, a boy.



The company I worked for took on a contract to electrically install 3 small power stations and I was asked if I would supervise their installation.

*Armed with drawings and design details etc. and having had the relevant jabs, yellow fever, hepatitis etc. (and sore arms) we took a BA plane to Jordan's capital **Amman**.*

*One contract was out in the 'desert'; more a sandy shale, but extremely bare, and of course hot. This power station was located in an area called **Azraq**, around one hour's drive away.*

We travelled along with the one engineer in a 6 seater mini bus complete with driver. It was the driver's pride and joy as he kept the seats covered in plastic, now plastic, and Englishman, a one hour's drive in temperatures of 40⁰ plus does not lend itself for comfort.

On arrival we stripped down to almost nothing and slipped on a pair of overalls, as all the building was covered in a fine red dust. It was our job to guide the working team in carrying out the electrical installation. The work went smoothly and although we knew no Arabic and the lads almost no English, by working ourselves and them 'copying' us, the work was soon ready for testing.

Our driver would arrange little sightseeing tours after work. The first place was an Oasis: yes they exist, palm trees, cool water, lovely. Later we went to a stone fort, right out of a 'Lawrence of Arabia' setting, with huge stone doors moving easily on top and bottom pivots, stone steps with solitaire hollows carved directly into the stone, a pastime for bored legionaries.



We had a many a bar-b-q Arab style in the form of a mansaf, lamb, with yogurt, rice and large flat breads, all served on huge platters, the centre lifted with flat breads and the lamb 'stew' poured around this centre and the rice. The polite way of eating was to pick up a nice piece of lamb, a scoop of rice, work the two into an egg sized ball and pop it into your mouth, all done with the one hand only. The hosts would find a nice piece of meat and place it before you; the bread was to 'mop' up the 'gravy'.

Rose-red city half as old as time

We were able to borrow a car occasionally, collected a VW beetle and the three of us set off to find and look around 'The Lost City of Petra'. We had very basic map which showed our destination lay about 3 hours south west.

As we neared we could see what was obviously our target, in the distance was a cluster of strange looking 'hills' almost resembling something from a castellated 'jelly' mould, and instead of slate coloured it was similar to our UK sandstone, yellowy orange, it had to be the place.



Indeed we were on the entrance to Petra; I say entrance, because the major part of the City is hidden within these sandy boulders.



All visitors must hire a guide, a horse led by an attendant, for us that meant 3 horses complete with attendant and finally one guide. I'd never ever ridden on horseback, but with the attendants' help we all mounted safely and moved to the entrance of the City - just a cutting between two towering rocks. The tour around Petra was great.

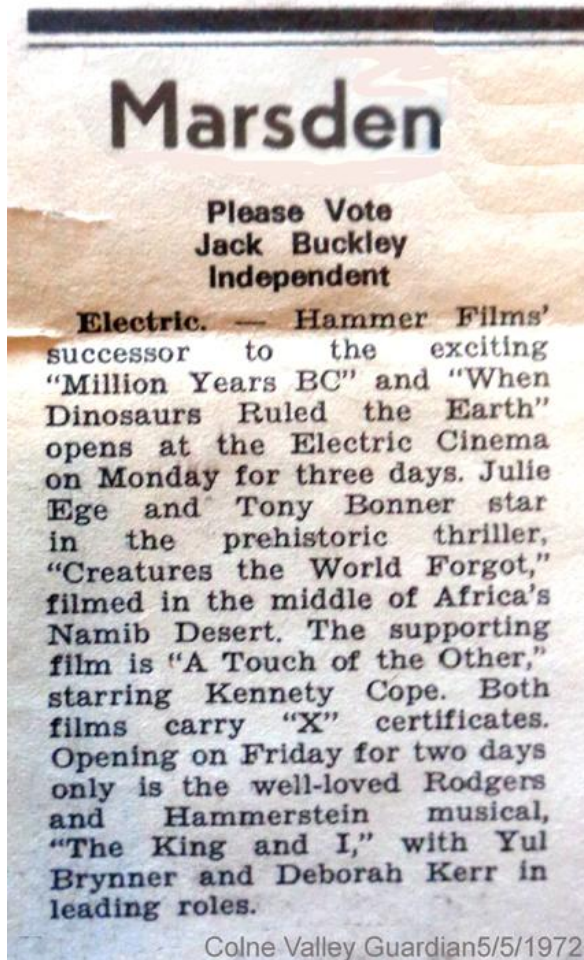
Altogether we were out in Jordan for around 4 months.



This account is very much truncated by your VotV editor. Anyone who wants the details, including fascinating descriptions of electrical installation in difficult conditions can get contact Geoff at this link (gmbedford@gmail.com) and he will happily send you a copy of the full story.

50 years on – 50 years back

50 years on, to the week, after Colne Valley Male Voice Choir was formed in 1922, what might a Colne Valley lad have done for fun?



Well perhaps he might have taken his girlfriend to the flicks in Marsden, to see 'Creatures the World Forgot'.

Marsden had its '**Electric Theatre**' - it must have been one of the earliest to open in the country. It ran from 1919 from a site just the village side of Manchester Road. In 1949, on the death of its original owner, Thomas Leyland it was taken on by his daughter, **Laura Beardsall** and her two nieces. It became known, affectionately as '**Aunty Lauras**'.

VotV is grateful to **Judith and David Morrison** (leader of the second tenors) for finding this historic local newspaper extract.



It struggled on to the 1970's until illness forced a closure in 1975.

The last film shown was, '**Day of the Jackal**'.

Finally, when the roof collapsed the building was demolished and there is now no sign of it.



50 years back - David wins another prize.

Repeat success for Meltham singer

DAVID HIRST, the Meltham baritone, and Elaine Riches, of Dewsbury, repeated their success of a year ago at Wharfedale Music Festival at the weekend by winning first prize to retain the Winder Trophy in the lieder class.

In addition to winning this class at Wharfedale last year they also won the Wilfred Chappell Trophy at Barnsley and have won the George Stead Memorial Trophy at the last two "Mrs. Sunderland" Festivals in Huddersfield.

Both are members of Huddersfield Choral Society and Mr. Hirst is also a member of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.

In the male voice choirs class at the Wharfedale Festival, Skelmanthorpe, conducted by Jack Haigh, won first prize and the Ilkley Chamber of Trade Trophy.

Colne Valley Guardian 26/5/1972

Skimming through recently rediscovered old newspapers, your editor found this gem:-

This is indeed our very own baritone, Chairman of our Music Committee and longest serving singing member, **David Hirst**.

With Elaine Riches, he was the winner in the 'Lieder Class' – and this was his fourth victory prize, mentioned in the Colne Valley Guardian snippet from half a century ago.



Still a top singer.

Well Done, David

Cost of Living Crisis?

CO-OP SUPERMARKET
super savers

99 TEA 1/4 lb **7p**

dairylea CHEESE SPREAD 3 1/2 oz **8p**

JAFFA CAKES Economy Packet **10p**

food savers

Garden Peas 10 oz **4p**

CROSSE & BLACKWELL Baked Beans 15 1/2 oz **6p**

CO-OP FRIARY Cooking Oil 35 fl oz **29p**

COLMAN'S READY MIXED Mustard 3 1/2 oz **9p**

breakfast saver

NABISCO Shredded Wheat Economy Packet **11p**

dessert savers

CO-OP Peaches HALVES/SLICES 29 oz **14p**

CO-OP Redi-Custard 15 oz **6p**

CO-OP Redi-Sweets 15 oz **7p**

Angel Delight FAMILY PACKET **7p**

pet saver Winalot Large **12p**

home helps ZAL Disinfectant FAMILY SIZE **9p**

SCOT Towels Twin Roll **14p**

snack savers

ENERGEN Crispbread **7p**

Peak-Freen Family Asst **13p**

Granny Smith's PASTRY MIX 1lb **8p**

CO-OP SUN-SIP Orange Drink 25 1/2 fl oz **13p**

CO-OP Mixer Drinks 8 1/2 fl oz Bottle **5p**

and at CO-OP self-service branches through Co-operative Retail Services

Colne Valley Guardian May 1972

That same paper tells us that food costs more than it did - though when you consider the average wage for men in 1972 was less than £40.00 a week maybe food price inflation is less than in other areas.

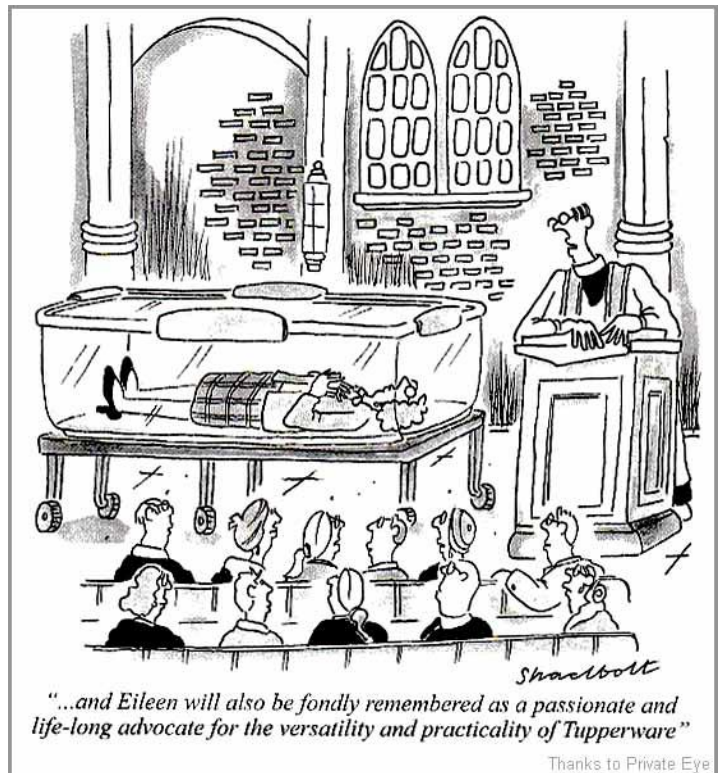
It's also worth noting that the average wage for women was just about half that of men – about £20.00 per week.

These wage rates are national averages - Colne Valley pay was probably quite a bit lower!

But the Coop is going strong.

Thanks to Judith and David for these antique finds.

Well it made me smile...



Contributions welcomed



Your Voice of the Valley Editor reckons that readers would find their new year so much richer if they sent their story in to VotV. If it's got some connection with the Choir and its members and activities, send me a draft and I'll help you get it ready for publication.

And do check out these websites...

[Let all men sing](#)

[Colne Valley Boys](#)

[Colne Valley Male Voice Choir](#)

Colne Valley Male Voice Choir
Est 1922

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