



‘Let all men sing’ gets off to a ‘cracking start’



LAMS - Let All Men Sing - Colne Valley’s initiative to get men singing - has started brilliantly reports **Matt Houston**, one of the organisers.

Matt told *VotV*, “At the second of the eight sessions local chaps commit to, there were just shy of 40 men registered and what looks like 35 + who will be regular attenders. Enquiries are still coming in but we are now closed to further applicants.

People are really enjoying it. It makes me smile to hear all the laughing and camaraderie that’s developing. They think Thom’s great and of course he is. We gave out a booklet of the music we’ll be concentrating on - ‘Viva la Vida’, ‘The Wellerman’, ‘Sound of Silence’ and a few more, including, of course, ‘Let All Men Sing’.

I did a recording of the second session and played it back - ‘We sound alright, don’t we!’ said one chap, slightly surprised.

Another chap, maybe works in a school out on the Wakefield side, said, ‘I haven’t stopped smiling. It’s amazing’.

So, asked *VotV*, who are these blokes who have signed up?

“A real mix,” said another of the organisers, **Kieran Chadha**, “There’s some who sang a bit in school or church years ago and some who never tried it before, except maybe in the shower. Mixed ages, from mid-twenties up to seventy, with the majority in their 40’s-50’s. We’ve a couple of instrumental musicians who play recreationally in groups who want to do a vocal or do it better.”





Linda Houston, as ever stalwart in support, adds that there's four 'Dad's' to young singers in our Colne Valley Boys choir amongst them.

"It's really friendly and relaxed and strikingly informal. Everyone is open-minded and keen to just give it a go!" adds Kieran. "Maybe we can learn a bit from that as we all move forward into our next century."





“We didn’t know, when we launched this programme, whether it would get off the ground,” says Chairman, **Joe Stones**, “But it’s started brilliantly, way beyond our expectations. We are really looking forward to our joint concert at Saint James on March 26th. (It starts at 2-30 in the afternoon and tickets are just £5.00, available on the door.) We get the impression that many friends and families are very keen to come and see their menfolk perform.

100 singers onstage for 100 years

We set ourselves a Colne Valley Centenary target of having 100 singers onstage for our 100 years. March 26th should see at least a hundred, when the ‘Let All Men Sing choir’ join with the main Choir and Colne Valley Boys.

We want it to be a welcoming and informal event and it should be great - and you never know - a handful of the LAMS men might be so caught up in singing and performing they’ll want to join us. We’ll be pleased to see lots of them come along, at least, to the two ‘Open Rehearsals’ we’re planning to follow on after the LAMs concert.”

It’s going so well, so far - and there are still enquiries coming in, probably much helped by the web and publicity work that **James Cooke** and the others have put in - that we’ve got to be thinking maybe we should do this again at a later date.



So make it a date not to be missed- it’s going to be a great event
Sunday afternoon, March 26th at St James Church in Slaithwaite.
2.30pm start. Tickets just £5.00 on the door.

Married at Longwood



MR. JOHN Marcus Parkin, son of Mrs. B. Parkin and the late Mr. Irvine Parkin, of 14, Taylor Street, Golcar, was married to Miss Margaret Helen Wemyss, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Wemyss, 43, Lamb Hall Road, Longwood, at Longwood Methodist Church on Saturday. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. J. R. Maddran and Mr. P. R. Beaumont was the organist.

Mr. J. Raymond Ellis officiated as best man and the groomsmen were Messrs. Richard Kenworthy, Nigel Kenworthy and Keith Gledhill (cousins of the bridegroom) and Robert Bamforth.

Given away by her father the bride wore a gown of parchment crepe falling into a full-length train. The bodice and bishop sleeves were trimmed with guipure lace and her short three-tier veil was held in place by two white rosebuds. She carried a crescent-shaped bouquet of stephanotis, bridal pink roses and lilies-of-the-valley, interlaced with loops of ribbon.

In attendance Miss Christine Hoyle, the chief bridesmaid,

Mrs. Barbara Pinhay (cousin of the bride) and Miss Lisa Pinhay (the bride's godchild) wore gowns of lavender robia voile with Empire-line bodices, puff sleeves and floating skirts with frilled hemlines. Their picture hats were trimmed with lavender voile. The adult attendants carried Victorian poses of pink roses, lavender carnations and lilies-of-the-valley and the younger bridesmaid carried a basket of pink carol roses and lilies-of-the-valley. The page-boy, Master Simon Ellis, wore black velvet trousers and a white frilled shirt.

Mrs. Weymess was attired in an orchid-pink coat-dress with navy accessories and Mrs. Parkin chose a bilberry-coloured coat-dress with toning accessories.

A reception was held at Greenhead Masonic Hall and when the newly-weds left for a honeymoon the bride was attired in a dark cream suit with deep orange accessories.

Mr. and Mrs. Parkin are to live at The Croft, High Street, Scapgoat Hill.

Colne Valley Guardian 5/5/1972

John Parkin's Wedding captured by local press

Baritone, **John Parkin**, got married in 1972 - the year that Colne Valley Male Voice Choir reached its 50th year.

David Morrison, second tenor, came across a copy of the local paper from 1972 and, to his surprise there's a write-up of John's wedding, which he sent on to VotV

John and Margaret are still going strong and, of course, celebrated their 'Golden Wedding Anniversary last year.



Do you recognise John's 'Best Man'?

Peter's birthday bonus.

At Slaithwaite the other Monday night, the 200 Club draw was made and Secretary, Jenny announced that the winning number for £185.00 belonged to a **Mr P Meredith**.



“Heh, that’s my Dad - Peter Meredith.” said Thom, adding. “. He’ll be pleased about that. He’s just had his 90th birthday. We were down at the weekend - most of the family - to help him celebrate.

He’s a retired professor of medieval history and literature and when we asked him what he wanted for his birthday he said he’d like us to do a reading from Shakespeare’s, ‘Twelfth Night’. We did it and it helped make his birthday party a very happy one.”

Well, reckons **VotV**, a bonus £185.00 would cover the costs of tickets to see the real show at Stratford. Professor Peter turns out to be a bit camera-shy but **VotV** has acquired this shot of him cutting his cake.

And, there’s more good news about the 200 Club.

Peter Kelly, who now organises this excellent fund-raising scheme, tells **VotV** that there will be a draw at the end of the month for a **massive £1,000**.

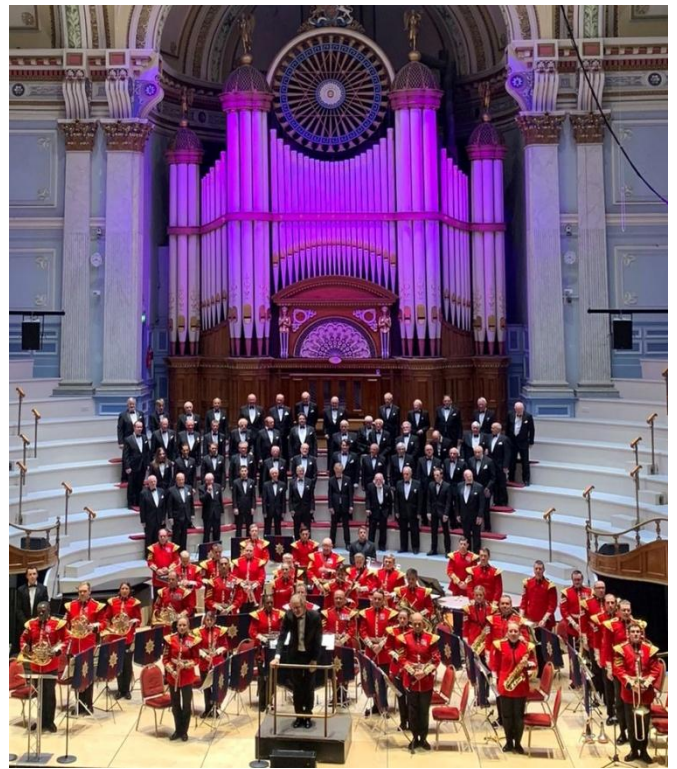
It’s not too late to get yourself a good chance of winning the next bi-annual **‘Big Prize’**. Just contact Choir Secretary, Jenny Baxter or, better still, **Peter Kelly** on 07802 544717 or by email on peter.kelly10@btinternet.com . And you could be on your way to a 200 Club bonus, too.

 The logo for the 200 Club, featuring the number '200' in large, white, 3D-style font on a blue background, with the word 'CLUB' in white, bold, sans-serif font below it.	<p>Just one pound a week buys you one of the 200 Club numbers.</p> <p>There's a good chance of winning: £45 in prize money weekly, £185 in the monthly draw and two whopping £1,000 draws each year.</p> <p>Even if you don't win, you win - because half of the fund supports Choir concerts and performances.</p> <p>Contact Choir Secretary, Jenny, on 01484 645192</p>
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CVMVC make sizable gifts to charity

The accounts are in for the wonderful Coldstream Guards Concert in October last year. And the Committee was pleased to announce that the Choir will be making two large donations to charity from that terrific Centennial event, when we performed with our guests from the Band of the Coldstream Guards onstage at the Huddersfield Town Hall.

The concert was organised by the Choir at very short notice and was one of the early 'post-covid' events so we had some misgivings beforehand. But it turned out to be a fabulous concert. From the outset it was organised, entirely as a charitable event, with all profits going to good causes.



And now the results are in. The Choir will be making a substantial donation to the 'Army Benevolent Fund' of some **£2,000**. In addition, the profits from programme sales generated a small but welcome contribution of **£350** to **Kirklees Musica's** local Fund for Young Musicians.



"It's just a fact that Town Hall audiences are down following the Pandemic and the recent 'Cost of Living' issues." comments Choir Chairman, **Joe Stones**. "Add to that we had very little time to market the concert. You will recall Queen Elisabeth II's sad death. The Guards' duties in relation to her funeral put the concert at risk - for a while we feared it wouldn't come off at all. But it did happen and it was a huge artistic success and a decent audience will remember it for years.

And to emerge with such a decent contribution to our charitable causes is a great bonus. We remain in touch with the Guards - who like us - felt very positive about the concert and it's a real possibility that we might organise another joint event in a year or so.

Wouldn't that be great?"



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Golden memories as choir embark upon another fifty years

One of the major highlights in the fifty years' history of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir. The choir, with their conductor, the late Mr. George E. Stead, pictured after their first success at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod in July, 1960, prepare to return home with the international trophy and first prize of £100.

“Take the letters of Colne Valley and mix them together and you have two new words – clean and lovely.” So wrote one admirer of this district.

But in saying this he did not have in mind the incongruous beauty of the woollen mills and moorland. He was thinking more of the cultural phenomenon which has developed in Colne Valley over the last century. In particular, he was thinking of the **Colne Valley Male Voice Choir**.

The Choir have won the acclaim of communities in Wales and Germany, the praise of highly regarded musicians, and recognition from the whole of Britain.

This year the choir celebrate their **Golden Jubilee**. A celebration concert is to be held on Saturday May 13th, and it is perhaps significant that they will sing one or two pieces for which they have been given so much praise in the past.



Most notable of these is **Wagner's "Love Feast of the Apostles,"** a “gruelling test -piece” which they sang in 1937 at the Blackpool Festival.

Other choirs were discouraged from entering knowing that it was such a difficult piece of work, but Colne Valley carried it off so well that at the close hundreds in the audience stood and cheered and the conductor, **Mr. George E Stead**, was carried shoulder high in Jubilation.

“**The Daily Mail**” wrote of the performance, “Then came the singing which electrified the Opera House. Maintaining perfect pitch and exquisite richness of tone, the choir, largely composed of working men from the Slaithwaite district made their way serenely through the gruelling test, revealing in the last few pages an unexpected reserve with which they worked up to a thrilling climax.

The most difficult part of the “Love Feast” was the beginning. Forty pages of music, which meant ten minutes’ singing, had to be sung unaccompanied. The moment of truth came when the orchestra started the accompaniment and to the amazement of those present the pitch of the choir, who were singing from memory, was exact.

You can listen to the ‘Love Feast’ on this link:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0M0xh6W5fQ>

Two years earlier they had “passed” the Holme Valley Male Voice Choir which at the time was regarded, by those best able to judge, as the best in Britain.

Singing in competition one week and Blackpool the next in October, 1935, Holme Valley were twice beaten to first place by their younger neighbours.

Colne Valley Male Voice Choir was formed under that name on May 8 1922.

Those younger members had come together a year earlier as the Colne Valley Men’s Vocal Union, a branch of the district’s mixed choir, The Colne Valley Vocal Union.

Ironically, the choir had a very shaky start to its life. Just eight months after its birth it was almost disbanded. By a vote of fourteen to seven it was decided that they should continue. Mr. Clarence Roberts was elected president and began fifty years’ close association with the choir.

They won their first prize at Batley that same summer under the conductorship of Mr. Hervey Haigh.

The following year he resigned and **Dr. T. E. Pearson** took his place. Mr. Sydney H. Crowther, alias, Playfellow, music critic for many years of the “Huddersfield Examiner,” described Dr. Pearson as “one of the finest musicians who ever came out of the district”, so it must have been a great loss to the choir when he resigned because of other commitments in 1924.



Fortunately, from his shadow as deputy conductor came **Mr. George Stead**, who developed a close relationship with the ensemble as its conductor, a relationship which later helped them to the unrivalled successes.

For a while their future was not secure. Again, in 1928 because of new entertainment value in the wireless and the cinema which affected all choirs and every other “home-made” diversion, Colne Valley choir were in danger. But soon after their crisis, they won, for the first time first prize in the “Mrs. Sunderland” competition.

In 1932 they made a recording at the BBC Manchester studios so the coming of the radio soon made the benefits apparent to the choir. This was one more step to universal recognition.

One of the most treasured compliments for the choir was strangely enough in the form of an accusation from rival choirs made at the 1935 Blackpool Competition.

Das Liebesmahl der Apostel.
The Feast of Pentecost.— La Cène des Apôtres.
Eine biblische Szene.
English Translation by F. CORDER
Adaptation française de MAURICE KUPFERATH.

In ruhiger Bewegung.
Andante con moto.
Ganzes Chor der Jünger.
Full Chorus of Disciples.
Chœur complet des disciples.

Richard Wagner.

Tenore I. *f*
de ge-richt ar-d. Hra. der. in des Her- ren. No.
We ge-richt ge. brach-ren. in ih-rem Na-me. Je.
No. Ich. o. Ich. o. Ich. o. Ich. o.

Tenore II. *f*
In Na-men des
In-ri-ku-ly
In-ri-ku-ly

Basso I. *f*
In Na-men des
In-ri-ku-ly
In-ri-ku-ly

Basso II. *f*
In Na-men des
In-ri-ku-ly
In-ri-ku-ly

Five tenors sang a passage from “Great is Jehovah the Lord” in such unity that it was seriously suggested after the contest that only one man was taking part.

To quote from the “**Huddersfield Examiner**, “Schubert’s beautiful melody was so successfully phrased and its prayerful character so earnestly captured that many in the audience listened to it with tears in their eyes, visibly affected.”

Henceforth, Colne Valley Male Voice Choir was regarded as the best in the country and the climax of that run of successes came at the fiftieth “Mrs. Sunderland” when they beat off a challenge from Holme Valley Male Voice Choir with a remarkable performance of Josef Holbrook’s “Jean Richepin’s Song” and Elgar’s “Reveille.”

The choir were split at the outbreak of war when twenty-two of their members joined the Forces but momentum was renewed after 1945 and 1953 saw one of the most glorious moments at the Leeds Festival when, conducted by **Josef Krips**, (at that time, Principal Conductor of the London **Symphony Orchestra**) they sang **Stravinsky’s “Oedipus Rex”**.

In the 1950’s their successes decreased. Perhaps it was due to stagnation because a visit to Essen in 1957 soon revived them. There they received all forms of praise from German audiences.

In the sixties further triumphs followed when they visited the Llangollen Festival. Three years running from 1960 they took first prize and for a fourth time in 1967.



A group of long-serving members, pictured before the choir’s Christmas concert in Huddersfield Town Hall last December.

Finally the choir gave promise of a future as rich and as successful as the past by bringing home first prize from the Cardigan Eisteddfod last year.

Josef Krips who came to the **Slaithwaite Socialist Club** to rehearse the choir when he conducted them at the Leeds Festival, was amazed at the competence of the choir. He asked how they worked all day and “were able at night to undertake such difficult work, such as a Stravinsky choral composition. But everything comes from enthusiasm and the love of music and here I discovered a true example of art among working men”.

Why should Colne Valley produce with such consistency a choir composed of fine singing voices, trained for two hours on Monday nights – the day of their rehearsals for fifty years?

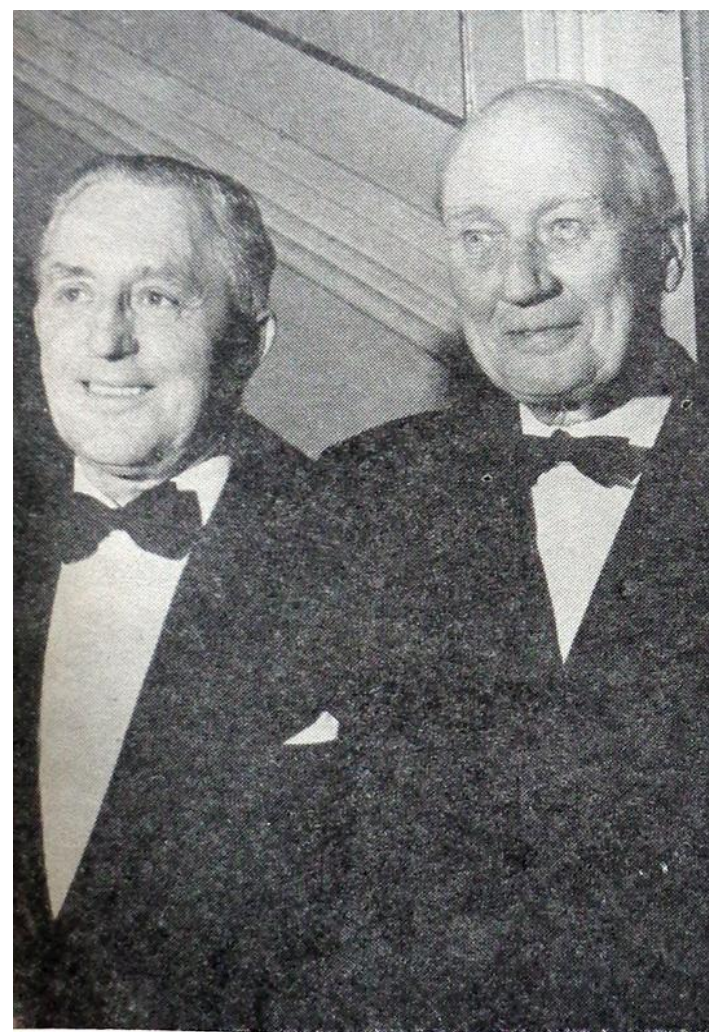
The origins of such a destiny can be attributed to anything from the demands made on the lungs by stiff Pennine climbs, to the development of true Yorkshire dialect’s deeply acute and active syllables.

In more simple terms they have been fortunate to have developed in their ranks the amateur genius of Mr. George Stead and the dedication of their present conductor, **Mr. John Gulley**.

They were led to their first successes by hard practice, determination, mutual confidence and the resulting enthusiasm which inevitably snowballed.



Josef Krips attends a rehearsal in Slaithwaite in 1953



A fifty-year link. The choir’s first president, Mr. Clarence Roberts (right), is pictured with the president, Mr. Ronald Hill.

Their president, now, **Mr. Ronald Hill** and **Mr. E.V. Dyson**, a vice president, agree on the reason for their consistency over fifty years.

“One of the secrets of our success is that the choir has always been run on absolutely democratic lines. Nobody is the top man so far as administration is concerned.

After the death of Mr. Stead in 1968, said Mr. Dyson, they had to make a delicate decision. They took the opinions of all members and bore them in mind when choosing a new conductor.

This democratic approach has always encouraged members although the membership covers a much broader area than Colne Valley itself.

It was true there was a minor crisis after Mr. Stead’s death, but said Mr. Dyson, when he died people asked if this would be the finish of the choir. “We thought that the best memorial we could give him was to carry on.”

New Vice Chairman, Peter Kelly

Peter Kelly is now the Choir's Deputy Chairman.

At a recent Management Committee meeting, a proposal to select Peter for the role was unanimously approved and Peter starts the new job straightaway.



A relative newcomer to the Choir, Peter brings with him welcome fresh ideas about forward strategies as we move into our second century of operations. 'There are a good number of organisational issues we need to consider and decisions we need to take as we plan our way forward.

"I'm interested in helping formulate strategies to take us through the tricky times to come. Yes we've got a great history but there's still a need need to revisit our plans to ensure that we have a great future."

Peter's background in organisational development and management should prove to be a great asset, says VotV.

Welcome Peter

Simon steps down

Great friend of the Choir, **Dr Simon Lindley**, has decided to call it a day as compère of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir Concerts after many years of sterling service.

He brought great personal warmth and a sometimes endearingly quirky, but always comprehensive, knowledge of the musicians whose work we were performing; and thereby enriched the audience experience. As an organist of great distinction he would frequently accompany the Choir in our grandest anthems. But the years take their toll and Simon's health is no longer tip-top. So after discussions with Music Committee Chairman, **David Hirst**, Simon has 'passed the baton'.



Not that this is the last we'll see of Simon. VotV hopes we might still see him as occasional guest conductor in Thom's absence and Simon assures us he'll be in the VIP Box at next Christmas's Town Hall concert on the 10th of December.

He will, of course, also continue to be the maestro sustaining the **Scarborough Music Festival**, **Miss Christine Cox's** wonderful summer concert, which features Colne Valley Male Voice Choir as regular guests. It should be already in your diaries for Saturday, August 19th 2023.

Thank you, Simon, for all the support and pleasure you have brought the Choir over so many years.

New compère to lead our Christmas offering

The Choir is pleased to announce that our new Christmas compère for 2023 will be Andrew Edwards

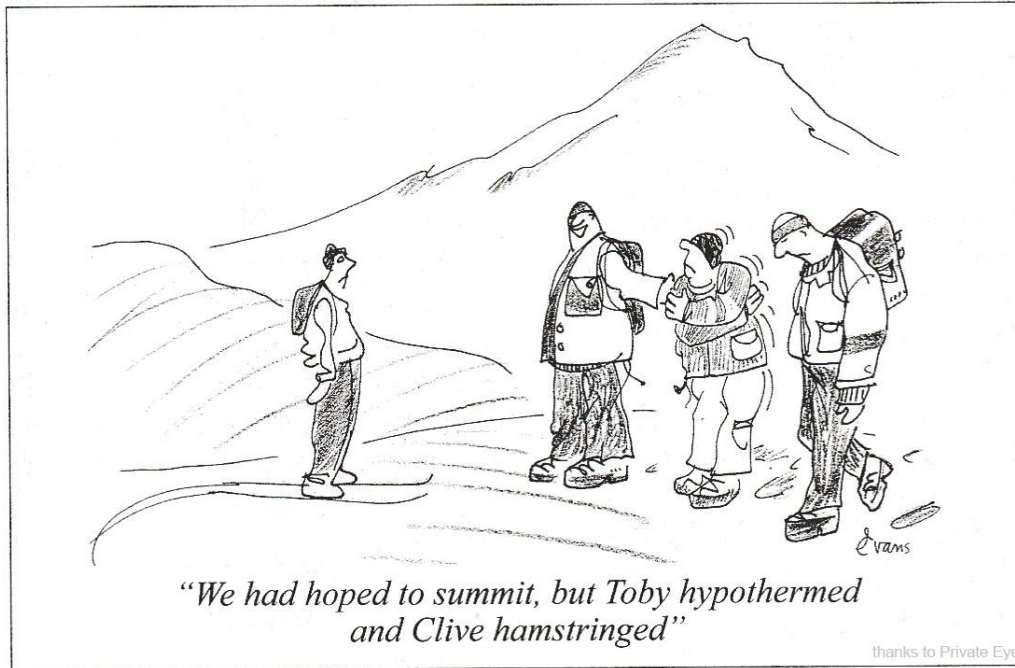


Andrew, currently with BBC Radio Leeds, made a very positive impression when compèring last October's Slaithwaite Band Concert, the so-called, 'Anniversary Concert' to celebrate the Bands' 120th anniversary and our 100th.

So good in fact that he was top of our list to approach after Simon's retirement.

We are very pleased to say he was keen to accept and we look forward to his vigour and good humour in December, when Brighouse and Rastrick Band again join us to create the district's best Christmas Festival.

Well it made me smile....



Do you have a story?

contributions really welcomed

Your Voice of the Valley Editor reckons that readers would find their Spring even more interesting 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 our website.



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir
Est 1922

Events Recordings Our History About Us Information

