



## Investing for the Choir's future

The other day, two authorised signatories (Rob and Joe) finally put into effect an Investment Plan, at which a Management Committee sub-group has been beavering away for some time.



## A happy bequest

The Choir has been extremely fortunate to have been left a substantial bequest in the will of the late **Muriel Stead**, deceased daughter of former Conductor **George E Stead**.

The bulk of this legacy is now safely invested in funds, which should ensure the Choir stays in financial good health as we start into our next 100 years of music-making.



Mr Stead led the Choir from shortly after its formation in 1923 for some 44 years - a marathon contribution that took the choir to national pre-eminence in the sphere of male choral singing.

George is shown here with Muriel, outside Buckingham Palace, where he went in 1963 to be awarded, by the Queen, with an MBE for his services to Music.

The investment process proved to be more legally complex than we hoped but the group, ably assisted by a professional Investment advisor from '**Origen Financial Services**', gradually cleared the way to proposals and decisions.



Members will see direct benefits from the legacy, in that some funds have not been invested but have gone to support:-

- some of the additional costs of celebrating our Centenary.
- to provide cover for a shortfall in income due to the Pandemic and its after-effects in reduced audience numbers and hence ticket sales income.
- Finally we have recently confirmed that we intend to take part, once again, in the **Cornwall International Male Voice Choir Festival** in 2024. We plan to subsidise our singers for some small part of the costs of the trip down to the South West.

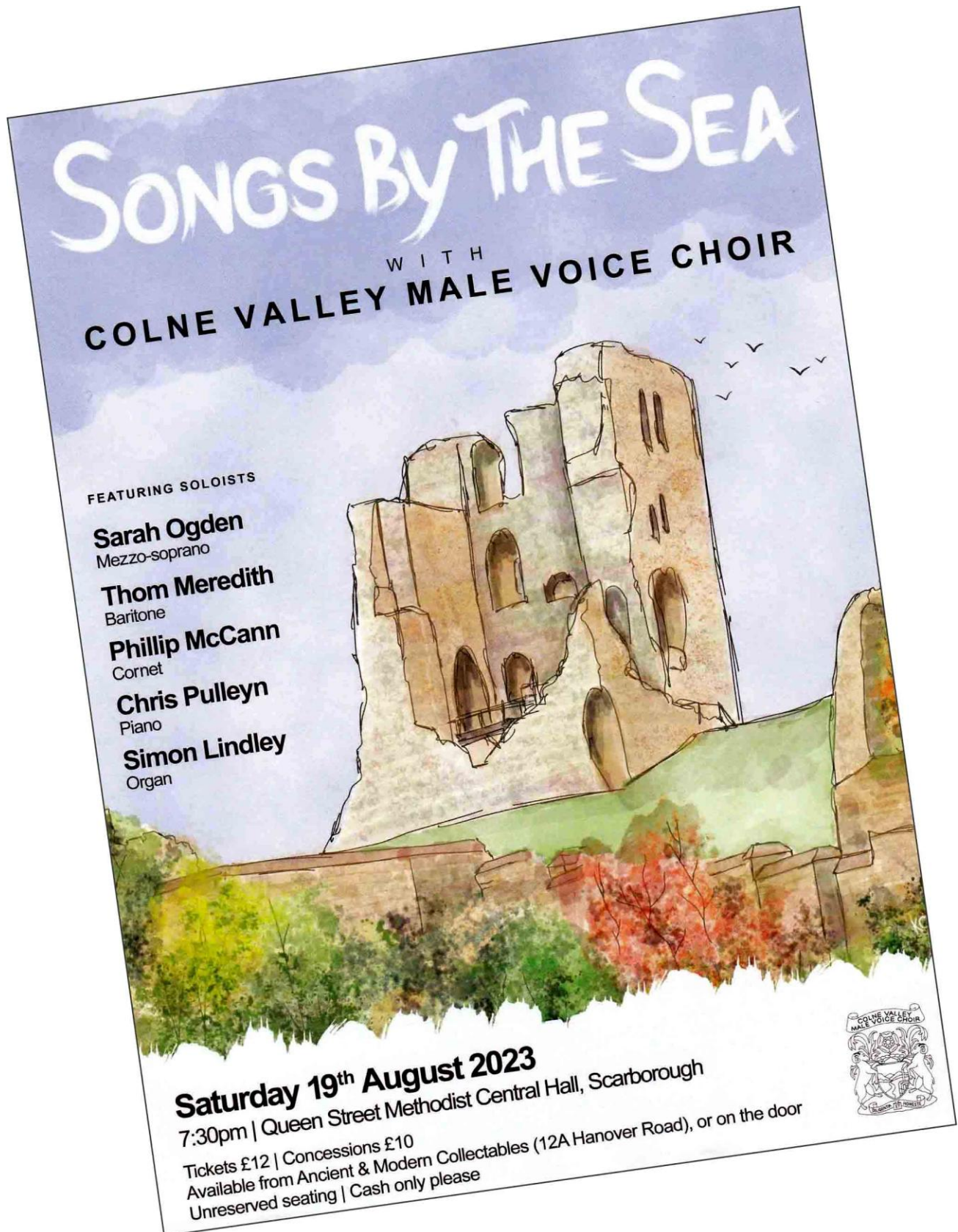
## The Choir's financial future secured

The remaining bequest has been invested in ways which should, we hope, secure the Choir's future through to our next Centenary in 2122.

Throughout the process, with advisor, Barry Crawford, the sub-group has endeavoured to make investments that should provide long-term growth, whilst at the same time, putting emphasis on funds which take due regard to environmental and climate issues, to social and community concerns and to ethical business governance - so called **ESG Criteria** - that guided the Fund Managers' selection of businesses to recommend the Choir buy a stake in.

The investments will be regularly monitored by the Choir to see that they are indeed meeting our expectations.

Next Performance: we're back in Scarborough




**SONGS BY THE SEA**  
WITH  
**COLNE VALLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR**

FEATURING SOLOISTS

- Sarah Ogden**  
Mezzo-soprano
- Thom Meredith**  
Baritone
- Phillip McCann**  
Cornet
- Chris Pulleyn**  
Piano
- Simon Lindley**  
Organ

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2023**  
7:30pm | Queen Street Methodist Central Hall, Scarborough

Tickets £12 | Concessions £10  
Available from Ancient & Modern Collectables (12A Hanover Road), or on the door  
Unreserved seating | Cash only please



And what could be better?

Once again, the Choir will be making its annual appearance at that jewel of seaside resorts, Scarborough, performing, as the guests of irrepressible patroness, Miss Christine Cox in the old town at Queen's Street Methodist Church just above the quaint harbour and its beach side amusements.





As usual, fabulous cornet-player, **Phillip McCann** will be there and on the organ, the inestimable **Dr. Simon Lindley**. Our Thom will be singing and so will old friend of the Choir, **Sarah Ogden**.



But, with luck, the stars of the show will be the singers of **Colne Valley Male Voice Choir**, filling the lovely auditorium with enthusiastic and exciting vocal sound.



That's Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August at Queen Street Methodist Central Hall (YO11 1HQ) at 7.30 pm.



# Another Dan Forrest song for our repertoire

One of the most exciting new composer/arrangers on the choral scene is Dan Forrest. We are working on a new piece of his for later in the year.

Readers will already know that his arrangement of that most popular hymn, '**How Great Thou Art**' has been a great success for the Choir, with its fabulous piano part played so well by **Keith Swallow** and more recently, **Christopher Pulleyn**.

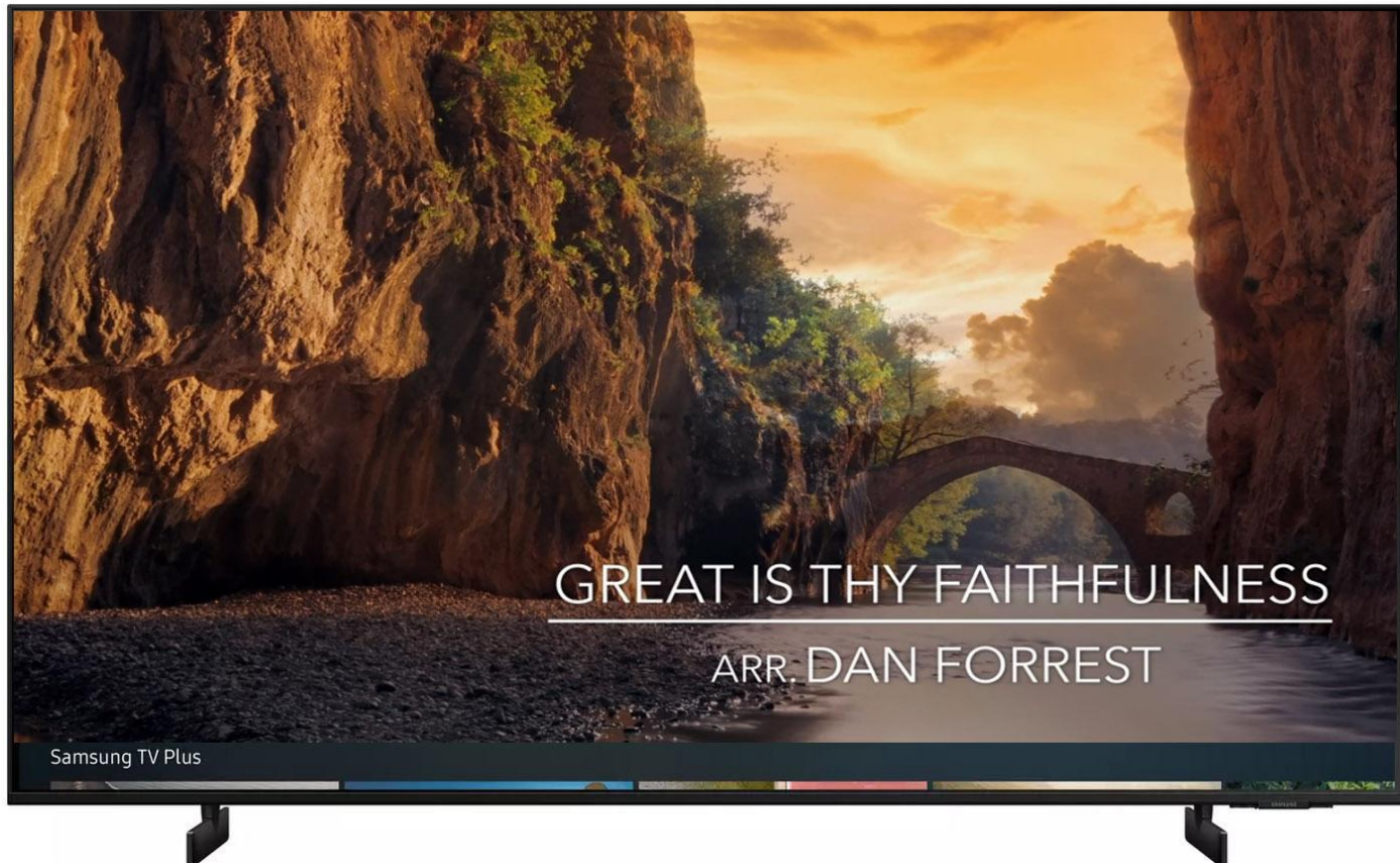
They will also remember another fine anthem, '**And Can It Be?**' a song which equally shows the Choir off at its best.

Now we are practising a new work by Dan Forrest, which VotV feels certain, when we have it ready, will be one more big hit with our audiences.

It's another old hymn with Dan's inimitable restyling and musical creativity: it's called '**Great is Thy Faithfulness**'.

Like many of his pieces, its deceptively simple - in reality his work is difficult to sing well. We hope we will do his talent justice when we get onstage to perform it

Here is a version for mixed choirs and orchestra which will give you a feel of what it will be like.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bpgmJGkQbsy>



# Who do they think we are?

A posse of arty types in Whitechapel took a look at Kirklees and thought - Oh yes, sheep! - when they thought they would bid for shed-loads of money in linkage with 'The Kirklees Year of Music'.

So they came up with a few big sheep that emit droning organ noises interspersed with occasional bells clanging (NB Yorkshire sheep don't have sheep bells) and thought it was the 'community engagement' and therefore would also ring bells with arts funders. It worked. They called it 'Herd' (heard, get it?)

A few of these large sheep sculptures appeared in local venues and did attract a bit of gawping and a few passers-by took pics whilst wondering what it was all about. (We get plenty of real sheep in Marsden but the models - crafted by local artist, Dave Young - were, admittedly, rather good.)

The Hackney hipsters behind the scheme say it was all about the various sheep coming together outside the train station where groups gathered to participate in a sort of musical performance. The sheep brought people out but the music, reportedly, was rather less than impressive.



Your VotV Editor wonders whether it might have been more cost-effective just to give a bit of more cash to local groups, bands and musical organisations to just get on with the business of making music. (CVMVC may be reasonably secure but many worthy local groups are in difficulty.)

But probably he's just a jaundiced miserablist.



Anyway, **Colne Valley Boys** took part in the St George's Square finale on Sunday afternoon and I hope they and their audience had fun.



Go to this link to see the video

*'Herd' - Seize what the future holds*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqx093Kgh4Q>



# Last of the new men - (for now)

The other night at rehearsal, Secretary Jenny Baxter, formally welcomed Second Tenor, **David Brammah**, into full membership of the Choir, which greeted him with a round of applause.

David was the last (or probably the last) of the new men who stayed on after the phenomenally successful, 'Let All Men Sing' project that the Choir initiated at the start of the New Year.



This programme challenged men in the community who maybe never thought of joining a choir - maybe only ever sang in the shower - to participate in eight sessions with Thom and Chris and then do a one-off charity concert. The project obviously struck a right note because 37 men signed up and all of them stayed through to the glorious concert at the end.

And better still for the Choir, a substantial number came to sing with the main choir and many found it a happy experience they wanted to continue. And, over recent weeks, after an assessment, many have been inducted into membership - and the Choir is really beginning to feel the benefits of rejuvenation as the new members find their feet and come to grips with repertoire.

It's great!

**David Brammah** was the 16<sup>th</sup> new man and (probably) the last of the new men to make the transition from our First LAMS project. There may still be a few others. Enquiries are still coming in and the Choir has resolved to run the project again in early 2024.

This is what David tells VotV:-



*'Last Christmas I was on holiday in Malta with friends. My wife and her friend noticed a post on Facebook about the 'Let All Men Sing' programme and booked me in before I had chance to object. They obviously knew what was good for me, because I thoroughly enjoyed the experience when I got back home in the New Year. There were plenty of us at the Civic and Thom and Chris soon had us singing enthusiastically. It was great.*

*Well, after the concert I didn't want to stop. I accepted the invite to the 'Open Rehearsal' sessions with Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, sang in - even joined in a couple of concerts. Then came the vocal assessment and an opportunity to join, which I'm pleased to say was successful.*

*Jenny Baxter wished me many happy years of singing and - thanks to the help I've had - I, too, look forward to challenging rehearsals and performances to come'*

You're very welcome, David - you and the other 15 new chaps.



# Thank you for the music, Mr Meredith

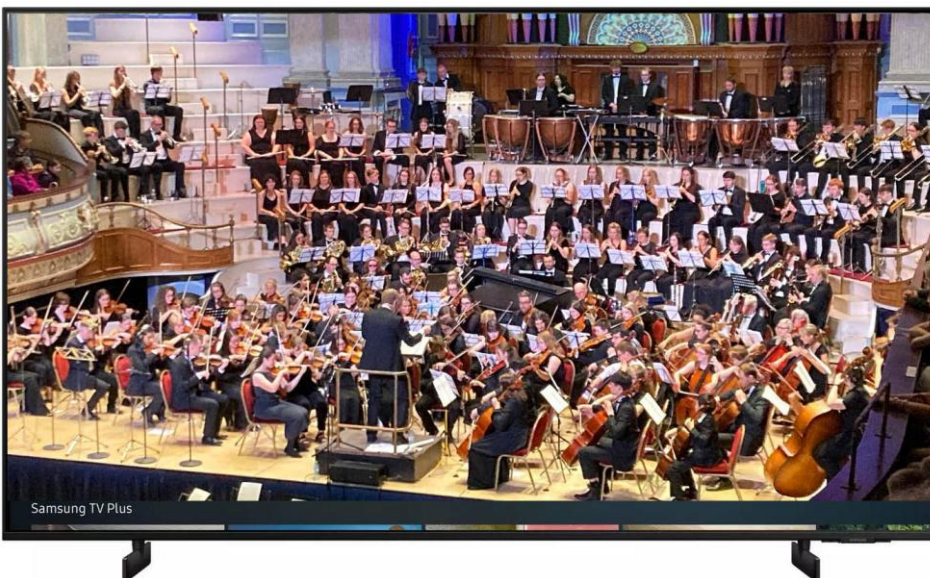


What a wonderful event - a truly joyful occasion.

Onstage around 160 musicians, young players from the Musica Youth Orchestra, supplemented by many a returnee: past players from recent years keen to join in and a sprinkling of current and former tutors.

They all wanted to be at a concert to mark and celebrate **Thom Meredith's** retirement after 20 odd years of leading high-quality ensembles in Colne Valley High school, as Assistant Principal then, since 2004, Principal of Musica - formerly Kirklees Music School.

Home turf - Huddersfield Town Hall - was just about full to capacity and indeed so was the stage; the strings especially were packed in like sardines while high up on the risers, the brass, woodwind and percussion had a little more space to work in.



Hear them play in this brief excerpt sent to VotV by from fan, Philippa Lang.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62oLTVAmVM>

Within a few bars of this huge ensemble striking up Richard Strauss's '**Also Sprach Zarathustra**' your Editor was fighting back tears as magnificent sound filled the auditorium.

Why tears when the occasion was so joyful? I suppose it was partly nostalgia - my children's social lives had revolved around playing in Music School ensembles. But more, I can only surmise that, in a world where stupidity, greed and selfishness seem to predominate, how wonderful was it to see and hear the better side of humanity coming to the fore.

Here were young people demonstrating huge skill and intelligence; people who, with their tutors, were giving so freely of their time and talent, with an unselfish love of music, a gift of thanks to a man, who with his **Musica** team, unstintingly, give of themselves to enable such quality of performance.

It was heart-warming and emotional. And so apparent from audience and performers alike was the huge level of respect and appreciation for the contributions Thom has made to generations of local young people.



## And what a concert!

Quite apart from the warmth and the gratitude, this 'scratch' orchestra, revisiting many of their favourite pieces, played exceedingly well.

At one point, in **'The Pines of Rome'** there's a slowly building crescendo as the music recreates the distant sound of marching Roman soldiers slowly approaching. The low beat of far-off marching feet gradually becomes more insistent as the pounding feet get closer. Soon the whole hall is full of a whole army, thundering past. Just when the noise and excitement reaches what you think is the peak, suddenly twenty or thirty brass players (who had surreptitiously snuck off into the gallery, high up at the back of the auditorium) join in, full forte, doubling the crescendo and the excitement. The hall shakes and the audience is enveloped in the might and majesty of the ancient 'Roman Empire' - just a terrific musical experience.



Vocally, too, the entertainment was superb. Various singers, individually and in small ensembles, sang to the orchestral accompaniment, popular anthems and excerpts from hit shows; **'Les Miserables'** and **'Miss Saigon'** amongst the highlights. Thom joined in many of these items and, at one point, reappeared onstage with crown and cloak, as King George III to sing a sinister comic song from **'Hamilton'**.

The concert culminated in what they billed as the 'Cheesy Suite' - a collection of **Abba** songs, arranged by incumbent principal, **Nick Dolling**.

Thom led the verse for **'Thank You for the Music'** joined by all vocalists, and arm-waving audience with a big orchestral ending – so good the audience made them do it again.



Watch the 'cheesy' finale on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5YWR2vJj4g>

## A wonderful night!

*(And **VotV** hastens to add: Thom is not retiring from CVMVC.)*



# Christmas isn't so far away.

Very soon you'll be able to get your tickets for Colne Valley Male Voice Choir's Town Hall Christmas Concert on Sunday December 10th.



Not only is it fabulous concert. It's arguably the best in the district. Once again we'll be with our guests from the country's leading Brass band - Brighouse and Rastrick - and it will be a wonderful event.

But it's also a very important event for the Choir. If the hall is full it adds immeasurably to the sense of occasion – and better still contributes hugely to keeping the Choir's current accounts in balance. It's well recognised that audience numbers, for every variety of musical and theatrical performance, have yet to recover from the impact of Covid. Nor does the 'Cost of Living Crisis' help. But we are determined to see a very full Town Hall, even busier than last year.

**Colne Valley Guardian**  
FRIDAY, 26th OCTOBER, 1975

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**Colne Valley  
Male Voice Choir, Yorkshire**

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT**  
SUNDAY, 14th DECEMBER

The booking of tickets for this concert takes place tomorrow morning, Saturday, 25th October, at 7.30 am in the Mayor's Reception Room at Huddersfield Town Hall.

**Reserved prices: 70p, 50p and 35p**

**Tickets limited to ten for each person.**

Of course we can't compete with the ticket prices, second tenor leader, **David Morrison** found in this gem of a newspaper clipping from 1975 but nonetheless our seat prices are still very reasonable and, thoughtful of our audience's concern about 'making ends meet' the Choir has decided that this year's tickets won't cost a penny more than they did last year.

Get your orders in soon to **Ticket Supremo, Roger Fielding** and avoid the Town Hall's additional booking fees. Contact Roger on this email contact or by phoning him on 01484 846262



# Fathers and sons - together in music



James the elder with Sam

For many a year now, bass **James Blagbrough** - esteemed member of the Music Committee - has had his equally talented son, baritone, **Sam Blagbrough**, as a co-member of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.

And some while ago we were pleased to see a second father-son combination, when first tenor, **Peter Stubbs** was joined by two sons, **Benjamin** and **Nathaniel**, bass and baritone respectively. The three are shown here late in 2020 before the boys joined the main Choir.



Peter Stubbs and sons

But there's more:

**William Taylor**, who came to the Choir from Colne Valley Boys some time ago - a first tenor with a fine voice, who takes a solo line whenever we sing 'I dreamed of Rain' has recently been joined by his father, **Rob**, who signed up after being part of the recent 'Let All Men Sing initiative.



William and Rob

Three father-son combinations in one choir - that must be a record!

(Whether it's a record or not, **VotV** thinks it's rather cool!)





James and young Richard Cooke

And I haven't even mentioned second tenor **James Cooke** who on several occasions has been joined in CVMVC concerts by his son and Colne Valley Boy, **Richard**, who is still a bit young to join the main Choir so maybe doesn't quite make the list.

Here's Sam and William, James and Nathaniel (Ben isn't singing with us at the moment) and for some reason **Chris Pulleyn** - who can't resist getting in on a photo-opportunity.



Sam- son of James, Will- son of new man Rob, James- father to Richard, and Nathaniel Stubbs in blue

## VotV welcomes your contributions



Send your story into [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.

Email: [cvmvc\\_newsletter@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cvmvc_newsletter@yahoo.co.uk)



**Colne Valley Male Voice Choir**  
Est 1922

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