



## RIP Keith Swallow: truly the end of an era

After a relatively short but uncomfortable illness, our Accompanist Emeritus and dear friend, Keith Swallow, died peacefully on Sunday afternoon, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2023, aged 92.

Born on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1931, his first performance with Colne Valley Male Voice Choir was at Zion Chapel, Olney Street, Slaithwaite. That was March 13<sup>th</sup> 1957 - just prior to the Choir's successful tour to West Germany.



After the Christmas Concerts at the end of 2019, he stepped down to a less demanding role as 'Accompanist Emeritus' ceding the main job to his successor, **Christopher Pulleyn**.

His last performance with the Choir - as part of a special 'Concert Tribute to Keith' celebration - was held at Golcar Church at the end of March 2022, some 65 years after his being appointed as accompanist. Hear him play by following this link.

<https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/keith-swallow-plays-question-and-answer>





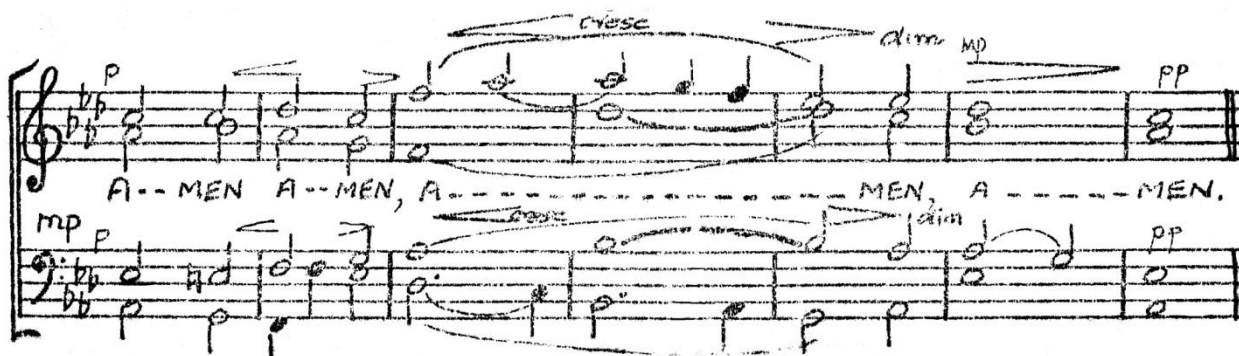
Choir Chairman, Joe Stones, writes, "Keith was a source of inspiration to many and we will miss his humour and wit dearly. He was a wonderful pianist and regarded as a huge talent in the music world where he worked at every level with amateurs to the highest level of professionals. Keith was a fine soloist in his own right having also made many recordings. He also enjoyed an incredible international music career while always making Huddersfield his home."

Following a private cremation, a service of celebration will be held on Friday 29th September, 1:00pm at Christ Church, New Mill (HD9 7ER).

We expect to do a more detailed obituary later. For now we will just note his death in sadness and sing – as we always do for departed members - the "Fourfold Amen" at the Choir's next rehearsal.

### Fourfold Amen

G. E. STEAD



Keith Swallow receives rapturous applause at his last Town Hall Christmas Concert.

# More sad news - John Gulley departs.

Word has reached VotV that a former conductor of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir has also died. John Gulley's son, Jon, writes:-

I am writing with some sad news, I'm afraid. My father, John Gulley, passed away on 9th August.

He was well into his 90th year and had been ill for some months, but the final cadence of his life came very peacefully. He died at his home in Spain, as he very much wished, with my mother and myself at his bedside. I listened with him to a CD of Beethoven's 9th Symphony on the day before he died.

As you will remember, he very much enjoyed a visit to one of your rehearsals a few years ago in 2016, while he was making a farewell visit to Huddersfield which also included a reunion of staff and students from his department at what was then "The Poly". I well recall how thrilled he was to be given the chance to conduct at the rehearsal. Thanks for sharing Voice of the Valley with me since then, as it has been fun to share news with him from time to time.

Please share the news of his passing in your newsletter. If you do, it would be great if you could use the picture of my Dad conducting a rather sheepish-looking Harold Wilson, which is a favourite of mine.



Once again, all the best to the choir - please feel free to pass on my email to anyone who asks for it as I would be happy to be in touch.

Best Regards  
Jon Gulley



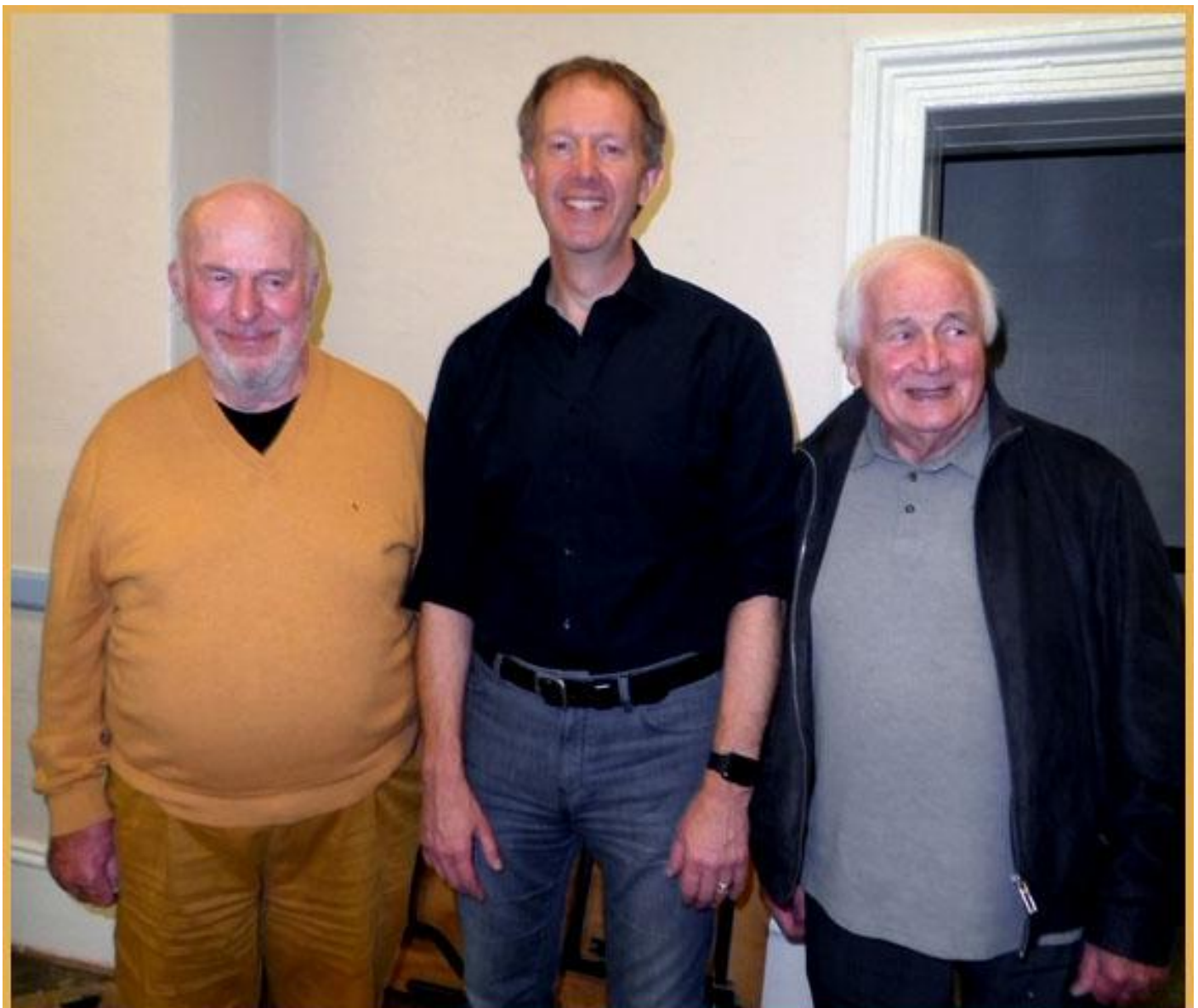
Jon's letter also includes a poem which, sadly, is too long to quote but it included this verse, appropriate to his time with us.

With the Colne Valley Choir, you loved to beat the odds  
By trouncing the Welsh at their own Eistedfodds;  
Now the judges in these contests are very strictly purdah'd,  
But these poor boy-ohs could well have been murdered,  
For when they emerged wi' t' bubbly bucket,  
The cup had been gi'en to t' lads from Sla'w't.

Also, Jon refers to a visit he and his father made to a rehearsal in July 2016, which was covered by VotV at the time as follows:-

## From VotV 2016 – 'John Gulley Returns'

Older members of the Choir, especially, were delighted to see former Colne Valley Musical Director, **John Gulley**, return to visit a recent rehearsal.



John Gulley with Thom, his successor and Keith Swallow, who joined long before either of them.

Maestro John Gulley led us to great successes from 1969 to 1980 and again from 1983 to 1989.

John was invited to take to the podium and to lead us in Choir favourite, **'Love Could I Only Tell Thee'**. For John, now retired and living in Devon, it was clearly an emotional experience and he remarked how pleased he was to see us again and to hear the Choir, "still in fine voice".

This fine photo shows John at a Choir concert, probably at Huddersfield Town Hall, in 1976. With him is organist, John Wood, and soloist, Dorothy Ross. **Keith Swallow**, always dapper, sports flared trousers and a velvet jacket.

Below we see John, returning for his second spell as conductor, at rehearsal in Slaithwaite in 1983.

Readers, with internet access, interested in seeing more of the Choir's rich history, can check out our website at this link

<http://colnevalleymvc.org.uk/our-history/>



John Gulley 23/1/1934 to 9/8/2023 RIP

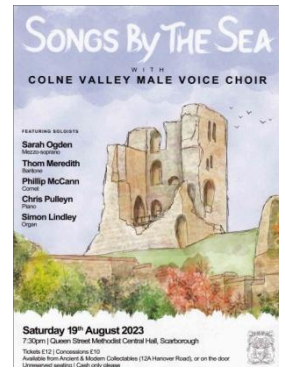




# A lovely night in Scarborough

Once again that wonderful **Miss Christine Cox** invited us back to sing in her seaside concert in Scarborough.

Every summer we get the pleasure of singing in the acoustically pleasing auditorium at Queen Street, where Christine arranges a fabulous concert for her many friends and Scarborough residents and visitors.



Christine took the opportunity when introducing us to conduct the Choir. We were happy to follow her lead.



This year, at short notice, the noted cornet-player **Philip McCann** had to pull out. But this did not faze our professionals one bit. The Choir did an extra piece. **Thom Meredith** and good friend of the Choir, **Sarah Ogden**, sang extra items and our very skilled accompanist, **Chris Pulleyn**, played a terrific solo spot.



And as usual a generous contribution was made by that master of music, organist **Simon Lindley**.





It was a great night. The Choir sang well and the audience were enthusiastic



The evening culminated with our 'premiere' performance of the **Dan Forrest** arrangement of '**Great is Thy Faithfulness**,' which was a bit scary for us singers as we don't yet feel fully confident with it; so new is it in our repertoire. But we reckoned we did a pretty good job of it and the listeners gave it generous applause

VotV photographer, **Chris Wilson**, who provided most of these photos, also sent this live recording of another great piece more familiar to the Choir. It's from the musical Jekyll and Hyde - power ballad, '**This is the Moment**'. VotV hopes you enjoy it.



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



Incidentally, the Songs by the Sea concert also saw another premiere performance by the Choir:- 'Save Me' by Queen.

It's surprisingly tricky and VotV reckons our version, while not at all bad, will get better as we grow in confidence performing it. Perhaps we need to channel our 'inner Freddy Mercurys' a bit more.

Maybe we can all watch the original video - though I don't recommend we take off our shirts at any point.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lw3izcZd9zU&list=RDIw3izcZd9zU&index=1>



Well it made me smile.....





# Stand-in conductor a big hit with the men

As we often do in the summer, Colne Valley men welcome a visiting conductor, coming in to take a rehearsal. It's good to have a change of perspective and a new face.

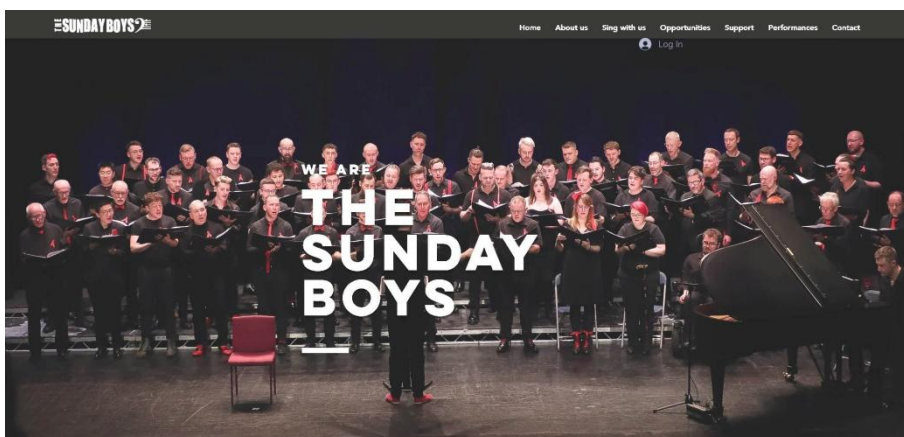
This year our visiting choir leader was **Michael Betteridge**. And he was a big hit with the men who clearly responded to his musical knowledge, his appreciation of choral technique and his awareness of how we take music off the page and make it a performance.



(And he was kind enough to tell us at regular intervals how great we sounded - we like to be buttered up, too.)

Michael has a terrific background as composer, arranger, performer and choir leader. He mainly works in Manchester, though he told VotV that he's moving into Marsden very shortly, so will soon be a Colne Valley resident.

Amongst Michael's many and varied engagements, he ranks highly his conducting role with 'The Sunday Boys'. He describes it as a Choir for 'low voices'. "It's an open access and predominantly LGBT+ choir based in the heart of Manchester. I founded it in January 2016 to offer an informal weekly opportunity to make music together." And he proudly observes, "It has engaged over 200 participants, reaching audiences of over 400,000 (live and digital) since the choir's launch, performing across the city, the country and internationally"

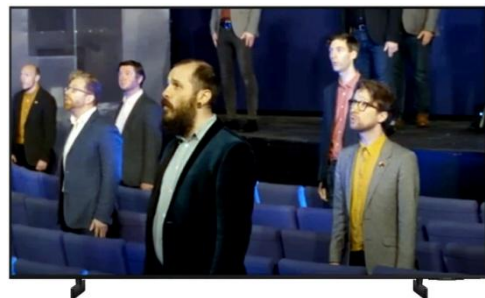


There's plenty to see on the choir's website.

<https://www.thesundayboys.com/>

Or watch this super video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g71HYiYTIE>



(Incidentally, VotV notes from their website that non-concessionary members pay £280 pa in subscriptions - which puts into context some of our recent AGM discussions in CVMVC.



## Two Roses

David Morrison, leader of the second tenors, is well-known as a keen gardener. Green-fingered David sent VotV a fine photo of two roses that he has recently grown.

### He writes:-

*'Hi Mr Editor,*

*I just had to send you this picture of two roses. They are out of my garden.*

*Of course, they put me in mind of one of my favourite Choir songs – 'Two Roses'. They're stunning and smell wonderful.'*

*Cheers, David*

*"On a bank two roses fair,  
Wet with morning showers,  
Sweet to view, in fragrance  
grew;  
I, then, pensive, full of care,  
Gathered both the flowers.*

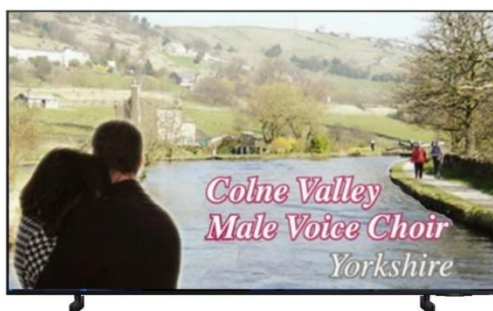
*Tell me, roses, truly tell,  
If my fair one loves me well."*



### Your Editor responds:-

'It's a lovely picture and a lovely song.'

I would have liked to have used the Choir's version of '**Two Roses**' that we recorded in 1970, conducted by the recently deceased **John Gulley**. Sadly, I am hampered by 'rights issues' reasons.



So, we have, instead, the version the Choir did in 2011, 'Romantic Colne Valley' with Thom Meredith to guide us.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zmq7wAs--W8>





# Your Contributions are very welcome.

As we start into an 'Indian Summer' with the heather in full flower, your Editor reckons your life would be **'blooming lovely'** if you had your story in the Voice **of the Valley**.

If your tale has some connection with the Choir and its members and activities - even if the connection is a bit vague - send me a draft and I'll help you get it ready for publication.

And, if you haven't signed up to the email version of VotV just yet, send me an email and I'll add you to the readers List. Then - and for as long as you care to receive it - VotV will land automatically into your email inbox every few weeks to let you know what the Choir is up to.



Get in touch with me on this link:  
And see our website to get the full story.

[cmvc\\_newsletter@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cmvc_newsletter@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.colnevalleymvc.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleymvc.org.uk)



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir  
Est 1922

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