



Ken Farr recognised



This rather ghostly apparition is **Ken Farr**, stalwart member of the first tenors, who, on Monday last, received the warm congratulations of the Choir for having achieved 25 years of membership.

Chairman Joe referred to the joy that Ken has brought trailing in his wake to his fellow singers throughout his many years of distinctive participation in all that the Choir does.

Always enthusiastic, Ken rarely misses a rehearsal and anticipates many more years of singing.

Well done, Ken, keep up the good work

New LAMS 2024

Halloween might be putting us in mind of a gloomy winter ahead but there are some things that can make us feel more cheerful!

And probably, for the Choir, one of the best of them will be the return was the **Let All Men Sing'** community music initiative.

'**Let All Men Sing'** was a project that Colne Valley Male Voice Choir set up in its Centenary Year to bring the joy of singing to local men who might not normally think of choral singing as a priority.

It was a fine experience for its participants in the gloom of January last.

But more than that, it also generated 17 new (and mostly younger) members, which has totally re-invigorated the Choir.

As these newcomers have found their feet some of us 'old lags' have seen - and heard - the potential for a resurgence in the quality of our music making.

So we are delighted that the project is to be run again to brighten those otherwise dull days in January.

Members and Friends are invited to help draw to the attention of family, friends and workmates to this wonderful opportunity.

Starts Thursday 18th January 2024.

A PROJECT SUPPORTED BY
Colne Valley
Male Voice Choir

Let All Men Sing! returns in 2024

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

If you've ever fancied trying out singing but haven't been able to find the right choir, or haven't quite had the courage to take the plunge - now is your chance!

Let All Men Sing! is open to men of all musical abilities - whether you're classically trained or have never sung a note in your life. Rehearsals are relaxed and friendly. And we start with the basics - so there's no expectation that you'll be able to read music.

Eight weekly rehearsals from 7:00pm to 8:30pm (with a cuppa afterwards) starting Thursday 18th January 2024 at The Civic, Slaithwaite
£20 one-off registration fee

Plus a celebratory concert at the end of the project
2:30pm on Sunday 17th March 2024
at St James' Church, Slaithwaite
Everyone welcome!

Find out more and sign up now
at www.letallmensing.co.uk
or email LAMS@colnevalleymvc.co.uk

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



Let All Men Sing! got off to a flying start in 2023

Nearly 40 men, from all walks of life, came together to give singing a go. Some hadn't sung since being at school, some wanted to polish up their rusty skills, others had (apparently) never hit a note in their lives.

Starting a choir from scratch takes patience, passion, and practise but after just eight weeks, these remarkable chaps proved they were more than up to the challenge.

Hard work? Definitely.
Life-changing? Possibly.
Worth it? Absolutely!

We asked a few of last year's participants to sum up their Let All Men Sing! experience:



Peter
"A great learning experience. We were welcomed and encouraged every week"



David
"The perfect opportunity to rekindle a love of making music, with a friendly and supportive atmosphere"



Steven
"A fun experience, challenging myself in an area I never considered I'd be involved with"



Clarence
"Let All Men Sing! was welcoming and uplifting"

Brighten up those gloomy winter evenings and get 2024 off to an inspirational start with Let All Men Sing!



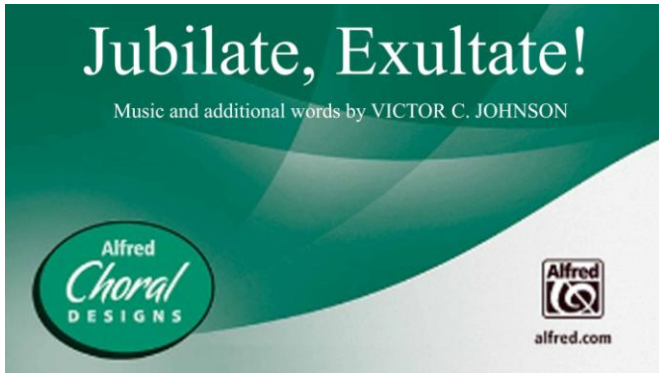
- ✓ All ages welcome
- ✓ No experience necessary
- ✓ No auditions or solo singing
- ✓ Short-term commitment
- ✓ An ideal new year challenge
- ✓ Perfect for fathers & sons



To find out more
and to register, see the
'Let All Men Sing' website on this link:-
<https://www.letallmensing.co.uk/>

New pieces for Christmas

As the Choir rehearses for our big Christmas Concert at the wonderful **Huddersfield Town Hall**, we are getting to grips with some fine new pieces – some of which will feature our guests - the magnificent, **Brighouse and Rastrick Band**.



This is one:-

It's terrific. Get the flavour here. Click on this link <https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/jubilate-exsultate>

It's just one of four pieces - totally new to Colne Valley - in our Christmas repertoire.

We will be performing entirely

new arrangements of 'Once in Royal David's City', 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' and - a fine arrangement by **Michael Betteridge** of 'In the Bleak Midwinter'



Personally, I was also pleased to see 'Torches' come out of our extensive library. **David Hirst** tells Voice of the Valley we last sung this in the Town Hall 15 years ago.

If you still haven't got your tickets for December 10th you can get them online via Kirklees Booking on this link or you can give them a call on **01484 225755**

<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/town-halls/book-tickets.aspx>



Join Colne Valley Male Voice Choir for their annual, unmissable festive celebration full of music, magic, and Christmas cheer! Performing with The Brighouse & Rastrick Band and Colne Valley Boys, the choir takes to the stage to kick off the festive season in style.

At this year's special event, we introduce broadcaster **Andrew Edwards** as our new compère - bringing extra sparkle to a wonderful evening of entertainment.

With a selection of old favourites, reimagined classics, and new discoveries, there's something for everyone.

Join us in celebrating Huddersfield's exceptional musical talent, and let the Christmas spirit brighten a gloomy December evening! Don't miss out!

Another sad departure - Trevor Bowers



Choir Secretary, Jenny, talked to the Choir at rehearsal:-

'You will have all received my email letting you know that Trevor Bowers died last Thursday. (October 12th). He suffered a stroke whilst out and about and was taken by ambulance to hospital, where he died a few days later.

He was a member of this Choir for only five and a half years and was 83 years old, when he joined. He said many times that he wished he had found us sooner.

He was a perfect example of not giving in to advancing years.

Those of us who were with him in Cornwall in 2019 will never forget his take on the 'Hissing Snake' the first time we heard it. He had already told me he was working on his 'Party Piece' for 2024.

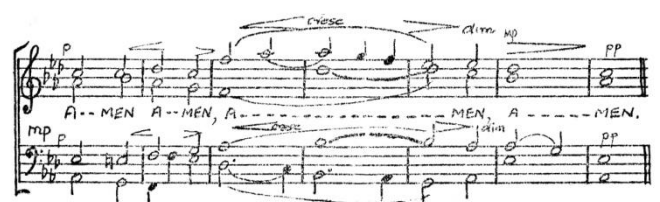


He was a reliable member of the Second Tenor section during his time with us and he will be affectionately remembered by us all with a smile.

Can I ask you to all stand and sing, "The Fourfold Amen" for Trevor Bowers.'

Fourfold Amen

G. E. STEAD



Rest in Peace, Trevor

Chris does his double act -
Michael Betteridge to return



Rehearsals in October have been nothing if not interesting. On the 20th Chris once again performed his double act – both accompanist and conductor at the same time. If really pushed, Thom will attempt it - but if truth be told - nobody does it better than **Chris Pullein**.

Thom is on holiday. VotV understands he'll be back on November 6th.

Next Monday will see the return of **Michael Betteridge**, who took a rehearsal with us a few weeks back and made a positive impression on the men. No doubt he'll be taking us through his own arrangement of 'In the Bleak Midwinter', amongst the other items we are preparing for Christmas.

Hear Michael's choir - '**The Sunday Boys**' - doing bleak midwinter on this link:-



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie5wiNQ6mYs>

Christ Church
New Mill



Service of Celebration for the Life of

Keith Swallow

4th February 1931 – 20th August 2023

Friday 29th September 2023

A Eulogy for Keith Swallow

Our accompanist Keith Swallow who died in August this year, was remembered at a service of celebration at Christ Church, New Mill late in September.

A eulogy was given by colleague, friend and former TV presenter, **Geoff Druett** at the Church.

Voice of the Valley thought Keith's many friends would be interested to note what Geoff said about him.



Geoff Druett offers his eulogy to Keith Swallow

"It may seem strange, even disrespectful to start a eulogy by saying we are here to honour the life of and give thanks for a modest man.

But Keith was a modest man. A modest man though with so little to be modest about, because, in his inimitable bouncy smiley way he was an extraordinary man of achievement both as a human being, a friend to all of us and as a musician.

But that modesty was never far below the surface. It was as though he did not want us to know how special he was. Perhaps he was embarrassed by praise.

I imagine it will have occurred to you by now that all the wonderful music we are hearing was chosen by Keith. Only a few weeks ago we were asking him about some detail or other and he interrupted to say: "I don't know why you are worrying, nobody will show up." That modesty again, and sorry Keith, you were wrong. More than a few people have turned up.

Keith was a man of these hills and valleys. He was born and brought up at 1 Butterly Lane and there he stayed until about ten years ago when he moved the massive distance of half a mile down the hill to Upper Fold.

He told a close friend only a few weeks ago that he felt so happy that he could wake up in the morning draw the curtains and look across the valley to a view that included this church. He truly loved this place.

Keith went to Honley School where he had his first piano lessons. I was surprised to be told that he hated them. The problem it seems was not the teacher or the syllabus but the pace. When it came to the piano Keith wanted to go at his own speed and in his own direction to explore the wonders of the musical world which was opening up before his eyes.

Then came a West Riding music scholarship to what is now the RNCM and it was here he first appeared on a professional stage. This happened thanks to the BBC. In the late 1940s and 50s, on most mornings, the station broadcast a live recital by up and coming young artists on what was then the BBC third programme. Just before the concert started more observant members of the audience would have noticed an unobtrusive young man slipping onto a chair just behind the piano. Yes, you're there ahead of me. It was the page turner and it was Keith. I am not sure how he got the job but I suspect he was self-appointed.

In that period the cold war became even colder and tensions between east and west deepened even further. Was it coincidence that this was the time that Keith could defer his national service no longer? He headed up the A1 to Catterick. Suffice it to say there was no official response from the Kremlin to this provocation. He was based at Catterick for 2 years. Whenever he could he avoided the tedious repetitive life of a squaddie and slipped into the scarlet jacket of an army bandsman. Playing the piano was not enough, he also chose or maybe was ordered to learn the clarinet.

I regret I never asked him how he managed to march up and down while playing the clarinet at the same time.

Keith did not realise it at the time but, in 1957, he was offered one of the most significant gigs of his life. CVMVC offered him a one-off tour to Germany as choir accompanist and soloist. A musical tour to the Ruhr Valley by a large Yorkshire choir was a big deal. The memory of the war and the horrors of the nazi years were still jagged and raw. This country and its allies had fought the war as a conflict for survival. It was not easy or even possible to just shake hands and say let's move on. As they surveyed the ruined landscape the choir must have felt they were the first Brits to have visited since the Dam Busters. But reconciliation against all the odds was possible and tentative steps towards a lasting peace were made.

But the choir knew a good thing. And before they boarded the plane home Keith had been offered and – after much thought – accepted the position as accompanist and soloist. And that was the way it stayed for 63 years.

It turned out to be a musical marriage not just of convenience but of an ever deepening exploration of and sensitivity to the heart of the music they performed together. But it was also like all good marriages based on mutual affection, the ability to give and take and trust.

From the choir perspective they had got themselves one of the best if not the best accompanists in the business and as a bonus an accompanist who was also a virtuosic soloist even if he was in his own modest words a reluctant soloist. But the deal suited Keith as well.

Choir concerts then as now would often feature some of the country's most distinguished singers. From Keith's perspective this meant the chance to work with top international artists. They recognised in Keith his extraordinary insight into the music and his flawless technique. For many he became their accompanist of choice. Knowing he was playing for them gave them the confidence to rise towards their own pinnacles of perfection.

But he was not a totally uncritical observer of his fellow performers. He often spoke of seeing the great Arthur Rubinstein playing Manuel de Fallas Ritual Fire Dance. At first he was very impressed. Then he went home and in his own words: "I got out the score and do you know what - he was playing it all wrong!"

Among those who played or sang with Keith and whom we must assume got it all right were Owen Brannigan and Ian Wallace, Shelia Armstrong and Dame Kiri te Kanawa. Keith recalls their first concert together. He was told she had recently arrived in this country and was a Maori princess -You'll like her. "I did and still do," said Keith. "She's fabulous."

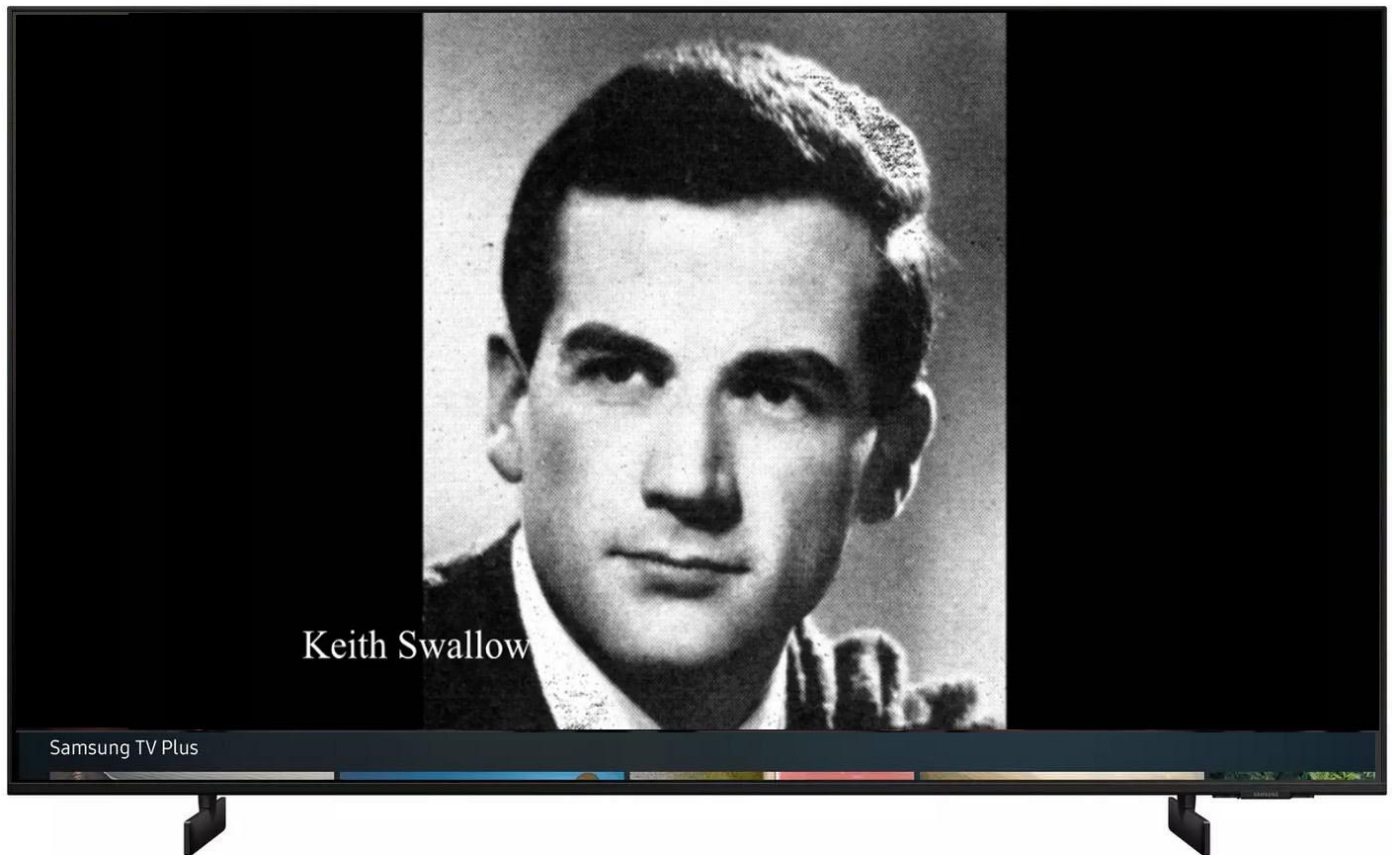
But there was also Sheila Armstrong, Constance Shacklock, the oboist Leon Goossens, the clarinetist Janet Hilton, and of course, Paul Hudson and Margaret Duckworth.

In such distinguished company it is not fair to single out one among so many. But perhaps his favourite was the mezzo Alfreda Hodgson.



To show that extraordinary combination of technique and insight please listen now to the first of Brahms Serious Songs sung by Freda Hodgson accompanied by Keith Swallow.

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



“That is so perfect, I can't believe that I was part of it. That is beautiful. I had no idea at the time.” said Keith.

What else can we say to round off our memories of Keith? He liked cars, always seemed to be a smart Mazda outside his door. Susan and I had Golfs. “They are ok but so boring.”

And for the last ten years or so his medication has meant he has not been able to enjoy a glass of wine with his meal. His response has been to ask: “Can I just have a sniff of yours – oh, I think you will like that.”

He asked for not too much religion at this service – apologies Sean. But the poem he asked me to read is intensely religious: the Christ-like figure “Love” offers welcome and a seat at the feast but the central figure feels unworthy and is reluctant to accept. I will read it now – “Love” by George Herbert, the 17th Century courtier and country parson.

LOVE bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

‘A guest,’ I answer'd, ‘worthy to be here:’
Love said, ‘You shall be he.’
‘I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee.’
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
‘Who made the eyes but I?’

‘Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.’
‘And know you not,’ says Love, ‘Who bore the blame?’
‘My dear, then I will serve.’
‘You must sit down,’ says Love, ‘and taste my meat.’
So I did sit and eat.

All Keith said was: “That’s me, that’s me.”

Thank you”

Geoff Druett

Geoff’s Eulogy was followed by a recording made by Keith Swallow and Thom Meredith of **Gerald Finzi’s**, ‘**Fear No More the Heat of the Sun.**’ <https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241>





The Choir's fund-raising **200 Club** draws a lucky number every Monday. The holder of that number wins £45.00, £180.00 or a whopping £1,000.00, while at the same time providing financial support to help keep the Choir going.

The trick is that we pay out 50% in winnings and keep 50% for Choir funds. (Incidentally, that's a way better pay-out rate than the National Lottery.)

Well now Hi-tech reaches Slaithwaite we've gone hi-tech.

No longer do we drag out a barrel on a stand, with a turning-handle to rotate the tokens inside so that a previous winner can draw out the number (whilst ceremoniously averting his gaze).

No, now, the **200 Club Supremo** simply presses a button on his phone and a '**Random Number Generator**' produces the winning number. Well, it's progress, I suppose.

However we pick our numbers being in the 200 Club is a brilliant idea - get a number - or another number - by emailing the address on the advert below.

	<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 Peter Kelly at peter.kelly10@btinternet.com or phone him on 07802 544717.</p>
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Well, it made me smile.



Do you have a Story for the Editor?



Voice of the Valley is always looking for stories. As long as your story – even if only somewhat vaguely – is related to Colne Valley Male Voice Choir and its members and activities, then I would be tickled green to hear from you.

Put your feelers out to me at this address

cvmvc_newsletter@yahoo.co.uk



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir
Est 1922

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