



## A wonderful blend of tradition and new beginnings

It all began with a young boy singing, alone, the first verse of **'Once In royal David's City'**. The treble voice, beautifully tuneful, belonged to **Leo Gomersal**, a Marsden lad. Leo had only joined Colne Valley Boys in September so he was making his Town Hall debut.

The rest of the Boys joined in, then the full Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, the wonderful Brighouse and Rastrick Band and the audience, too. Then the choirs went straight into a jaunty Christmas song, **'We Need a Little Christmas'** and the 2023 Huddersfield Town Hall Christmas Concert was off to a great start.







Our new compère, **Andrew Edwards**, welcomed everyone and began his excellently structured commentary to the evening as he introduced the forthcoming numbers. Andrew, with his broadcasting background, brought a new warmth and clarity in this his first compèring role with the Choir - a task that was well done by his predecessor **Dr. Simon Lindley** with his wit and deep musical knowledge. (Simon was up in the 'Royal Box' with our VIPs.)

The Choir continued with an excellent new piece, '**Jubilate, Exultate**' and then added a lively clapping rhythm to further enliven a jolly '**Nowell for the Merrie Citie**'.



There were 67 singers onstage plus about 20 'Boys'. Well over a dozen of the men were new members, recruited during the last year after the Choir's phenomenally successful community-based singing initiative, '**Let All Men Sing**'.



If they - and some of the 'old hands', too - were slightly nervous before the performance, by the time 'Jubilate' came up they were just revelling in the joy of performance and singing with skill and gusto under the clear guidance from our very esteemed Musical Director, **Thom Meredith**.

And it was Thom conducting the magnificent **Dan Forrest** version of the old hymn, '**Great is Thy Faithfulness**'. He stationed a fanfare of six brass players high up behind the Choir and arranged that the Father Willis organ, in the hands of super-talented young organist, **Caius Lee** should accompany.





Starting with an earthy low organ rumble and then with the rousing fanfare both boys' and men's choirs joined in with a unison melody. The sound was magnificent as each element moved into harmonies and built towards a great climax, which rattled the Town Hall's splendid architecture. The Choir loved it and so did the audience





In the second half the music continued to entertain. Second tenor, **Tom Law**, distinguished with a fabulous solo to 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. This was a challenging arrangement by **Michael Betteridge**, an up and coming choral conductor - and soon to be Marsden resident - who has taken rehearsals with Colne Valley as a very welcome 'Guest Conductor' this year.



By audience reaction, perhaps the highlight of the Band's contributions was a delightfully comic version of the Disney, 'Jungle Book' number, 'The Bare Necessities'

This featured E flat bass (and sousaphone) player **Dan Hebb**.



**Magic!**



The concert came to an end, once again with Thom leading the Choir, The full band, the organ and even a piano duet, involving bass, **Benjamin Stubbs** alongside our esteemed accompanist, Chris Pulleyn, in another Dan Forrest re-arrangement, this time of that all-time favourite carol, 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'. Wonderful.

The audience - which incidentally pretty well filled the Town Hall - were enthusiastically warm in their applause and went home - no doubt - with the sense that Christmas had well and truly begun.





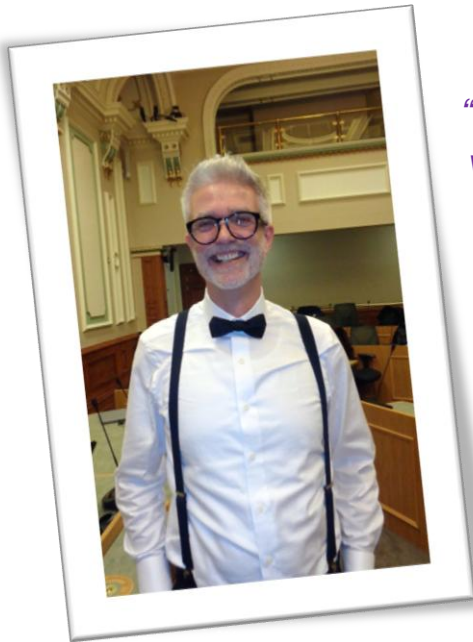


# Some singers made their Town Hall debuts.

The Choir has seen many new members joining in the last year. Many a Colne Valley singer recalls his first experience of singing in the splendid Town Hall as both anxious and exhilarating - but, mostly, with the excitement and the joy topping any nervousness.

So VotV grabbed a handful of the 'New Boys' for a photo and a comment on their first performance.

This is what they had to say....



Chris Beith and Steve Keeley

Chris says, *"I joined 'Let all Men Sing' in January. This was the first time I had sung in any kind of group since school in the 1970s. Less than one year on after LAMS I felt very privileged to be able to contribute to such an uplifting performance as our choir gave at the Town Hall"*

*"Huddersfield Town Hall has always been a special venue and I have seen many concerts there over the years, most notably when my daughter has performed. So to perform there as part of such a prestige choir, well rooted within the rich musical heritage of Huddersfield, was absolutely magical".*

Keith Lockwood



Steve joins in:- *"My first Town Hall was a truly exhilarating experience. With a mixture of nerves and excitement I enjoyed every minute! Looking forward to the next time."*

David Lynch says, *"I was a little nervous to begin with, but soon settled in, and really enjoyed the performance."*

*It was very special for my Mum who flew over from Belfast. And my 6 year old daughter really enjoyed it, especially 'The Bare Necessities' which is a firm favourite in our house.*

*Huge thanks to Thom, Chris, and all members of the Choir, who've made us feel so welcome."*





Another newbie, Clarence Ricketts, tells VotV...

*“The concert was a lovely, festive occasion in a beautiful setting and enhanced by the presence of the Brighthouse & Rastrick Brass Band.*

*Kind regards,  
Clarence”*

David Brammah



Ben Stirling

*“Who would have thought at the start of ‘Let All Men Sing’*

*last January, says David, “That I would have the pleasure of singing with CVMVC at Huddersfield Town Hall. And what a thoroughly enjoyable and positive experience it was. It was well worth all the hard work over the past few weeks to get to sing off-score and although it was a nerve-racking experience and not quite a perfect performance from me, I am certainly looking forward to singing in 2024.”*

*“It was exhilarating & so much fun, I really enjoyed it!!” adds Ben.*





# It's always good fun at Marsden



Not much room left in Marsden Church before the concert starts

Saint Bartholomew's, the parish church in Marsden, was packed to the rafters on Sunday night for this year's Christmas Concert. It's a collaboration between the wonderful **Marsden Silver Prize Band**, the good folk at the 'cathedral of the valley' and their regular guests, **Colne Valley Male Voice Choir**.





For the Choir - and probably for the listeners, too - it's a relaxed and convivial evening; all the performers in the closest possible contact with the audience and all feeling at ease and in the festive spirit.



The band, guided by their Musical Director, **Andrew Lofthouse**, (who, by the way, plays a mean jazz-trumpet solo) is terrific these days.

They picked numbers that got people into foot-tapping and celebratory mood.



The Choir's items complemented the band's choices. Together, an atmosphere of pre-Christmas enjoyment and goodwill was generated.

So when the audience was invited to join the band - by now in Santa Claus hats - in singing the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' everybody was having a fine time.





It's a cracking band these days.

It was a lovely event to be part of - an annual event the Colne Valley can be proud of; one that never fails to delight.



David Hirst, who joined the Choir in 1960 singing with new guy, Clarence Ricketts



# New audience member behaves impeccably - - and enjoys the music



Dear Jenny, (writes Pat Rodgers...)

I understand the Town Hall management approached the Choir about whether my sister could bring her new Guide Dog puppy-in-training to the concert last night.

I want to thank you for agreeing and to let you know that little Petra behaved impeccably and remained totally calm even during the loudest band pieces.

She seemed particularly to enjoy the trombone solo in Frosty the Snowman.

The underlying purpose of this stage of Guide Dog training is to accustom them to all sorts of situations before they go on to formal support training and she certainly proved herself adaptable the other night. She behaved like an angel despite the decibels.

Thank you for looking positively on it and giving her the opportunity to come.

## 'Great Concert' says Pat

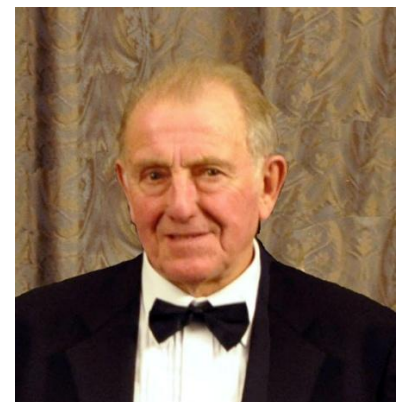
The concert was a triumph, one of the best we have been to, so congratulations to all.

The new compère was a very positive addition to a most joyful event.

Best wishes for a happy Christmas

Pat Rodgers

(that's Mrs David, wife of tenor David Rodgers)





# 100 years ago: new choir decides to pack it in

Just about 8 months after being set up, **Colne Valley Male Voice Choir**, came close to giving up.

On Monday January 1<sup>st</sup> 1923, at the first annual meeting, the Choir considered a proposal to disband and it seemed there was a majority in favour. (It's anybody's guess what triggered the proposal to close down; quite possibly that choir numbers weren't great.)

However, at the last minute, someone proposed that a final decision to close down should be deferred until the Choir had done three concert performances, which were already booked in the Choir's Engagements Diary. Sufficient votes were cast by Choir members for that amendment to pass - so an immediate shut-down was put off.

## 'No, let's carry on' - the Choir never looks back.

After this delay - and we might suppose - three successful concerts - there was a change of heart and the Choir resolved to continue. Under a new Chairman, **Clarence Roberts**, the Choir once again tried its skills in concerts and competitions.



On July 7<sup>th</sup> 2023, the Choir won its highest prize - second place - at the Thornhill Festival and then the following Saturday the Choir won 'First Prize' for the first time at Batley.

Since then we've averaged one 'First Prize' in competitions every year for the last 100 years.

This is Chairman Roberts seen many, many years later with some more trophies.

## Meanwhile in other news...

Women get the right to divorce their husbands but under the new '**Liquor Act**' young men lose the right to buy beer in pubs until they are 18.

The BBC makes its **first 'outside broadcast'** relaying the 'Magic Flute' from Covent Garden.

And at the newly opened but staggeringly over-crowded Wembley Stadium, fans invaded the pitch and **Billy**, the white horse, gains temporary fame for clearing the



spectators - enough to allow Bolton Wanderers to win the FA Cup.

And the **Flying Scotsman** goes into service. This is him coming in to the Colne Valley recently.



# New chap takes on the 200 Club

There's a new man running our 200 Club, **Tom Jennings**. When Voice of the Valley learned that Tom, a singer quite new in the Choir, had taken on responsibility for operating our fund-raising scheme, it seemed like a good idea to find out a bit more about him.

Tom tells VotV:-

*"I've always had a passion for singing, playing the piano and music in general.*



A PROJECT SUPPORTED BY  
Colne Valley Male Voice Choir  
IN THEIR CENTENARY YEAR



*It was the 'Let All Men Sing' initiative that brought me to the Choir.*

*I wanted to reignite the spark for singing and LAMS did just that. And more - I thought LAMS would help me promote boys' singing within the school that I am a teacher at and encourage more boys not to be scared about doing other activities which they may enjoy.*



*I'm still relatively new to primary school teaching coming to education in 2021, after choosing to have a career change from being an Outdoor Instructor and Youth Worker. I feel that educating our children to express themselves through music is so important.*

*After singing in the centenary concert with all the LAMS men, the Choir and Colne Valley Boys, too, I was certainly eager to join the main choir and build upon what we had learnt.*

*I thoroughly enjoy being part of something bigger and love to be involved, giving 100% in all that I do.*

*When the opportunity came to be more involved and take over the 200 Club I was more than happy to oblige and get to know more members. I look forward to spending many happy years with the choir in the coming future."*

	<p>£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 Tom Jennings at:- <a href="mailto:200club@colnevalleymvc.co.uk">200club@colnevalleymvc.co.uk</a></p>	
--	--	--

Tom says, you could do worse than to buy a 200 Club number for yourself or for a friend, this Christmas. A number costs you just a pound a week - £50.00 for a whole year. Fully half of the 200 Club income comes back as prizes to lucky number holders, so there's an excellent chance that your number will come up as a winning number sometime in the year.

Contact him email by clicking on the advert above. He'll answer any queries you might have and sort you out a number.

Well done, Tom

.... And just for Tom and for anyone else who shares his passion for music and singing:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq4L5tcxFcA>

Renée Fleming - America's Queen of Opera performs in the Palaces of the Czars in Saint Petersburg. She sings the aria, 'Casta Diva' from Bellini's otherwise forgotten opera, Norma.

Norma, a priestess, leads her people in a prayer to the goddess of the Moon ('Casta Diva') pleading that the Goddess shed upon Earth the peace that she has created in heaven.







## John Radcliffe checks out

Sadly, veteran baritone, John Radcliffe won't see another Christmas. Or, maybe, he will as part of the 'Choir Eternal'.

John died the night of the concert. We knew his health wasn't good but I'm told he was out and about earlier in the week. So at least the illness that took him to Calderdale Infirmary was brief.

John had stopped singing with the Choir a couple of years ago but was regularly seen by old friends at Choir events.

Few members will match John's years of membership.

He joined In 1957 at the age of 18 yrs and sung with us for well over 60 years before becoming a non-singing member.

Here we see him pouring the wine on a Choir tour to France in 1975.

John was the Choir's Librarian for 17 years but was perhaps best known as the Choir's 'Padre', always called on to say a few words at times of celebration and grief.



Better still, he was a lovely chap. He will be missed.

The Funeral Service will be held at 11.30 am on Friday 5th January at St Bartholomew's Church Meltham. It will be followed by a private cremation.

Family flowers only, reports secretary, Jenny Baxter, but donations in lieu will be shared between CVMVC and The Crossroads Centre, Meltham. The Choir, as always for departed members, sang the 'Fourfold Amen' in his memory. At the funeral Jenny expects that, particularly the older members, will want to turn out in numbers and join in the hymns. It may be that we sing, 'The Irish Blessing'

RIP John





# Practice makes perfect



It turns out that it's not just male voice choir singers who need to practise. It seems birds do, too.

Recent research, reported in BBC wildlife magazine, tells us that robins and blackbirds need to rehearse regularly in the autumn and winter months in order to be performance-ready for the Spring, when the quality of their singing makes all the difference if they are to be successful.

It seems even in the egg and as newly-hatched in the nest, that baby birds listen to their parents singing. Then, as young birds, they practice using their own voices, learning how to sing. And, in the months before their first breeding attempts, the youngsters repeat and refine what naturalists call 'sub-song' in preparation for their adult singing they'll use to attract a mate. With each rehearsal they become more assured in their material and more persuasive to their listeners.



I can't be entirely certain that Colne Valley men use the similar techniques to melt the hearts of their lovers but it wouldn't surprise me. It's certainly the case that the more confident we singers sound, the more impressed our audiences are.

So keep practising, gents!

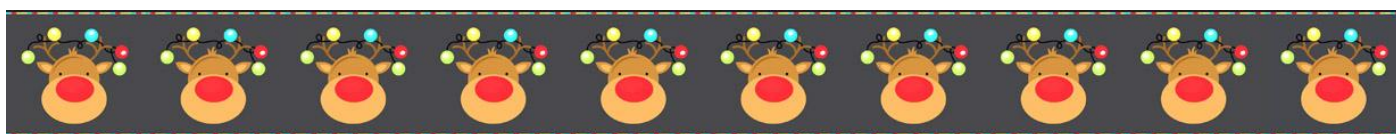
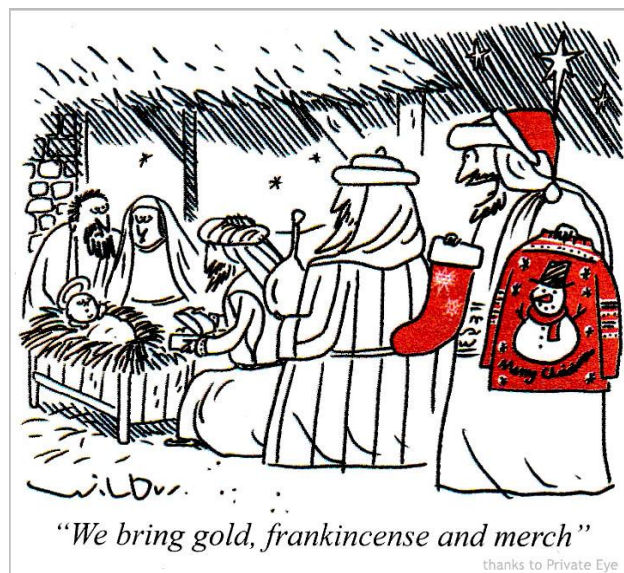
And listen to the blackbirds singing in the dead of night

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Man4Xw8Xypo>





Well, they made me smile ....



## Tell me a story...

As you get a bit bored with second-rate movies and general Christmas excess, you might think what fun it would be to jot down an item for 'Voice of the Valley'. You know your Editor reckons really likes getting your pictures and stories.

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.

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



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.

For general queries about the choir: - Ring Choir Secretary, Jenny, on 01484 645192

And see our website to get the full story.

COLNE VALLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR  
Colne Valley Male Voice Choir  
Est 1922  
Events Recordings Our History About Us Information  
QR Code

