

Voice of the Valley



COLNE VALLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2024 EDITION

Happier news follows the sad

A few weeks ago there was devastating news that newly-appointed Chairman, **Peter Kelly**, for personal and health reasons, had felt obliged to relinquish the Chairmanship.

On May 6th he wrote a note to the Choir along these lines:-

'Re: Resignation as Chairman of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

It is after a great deal of thought and much regret that I must resign as Chairman.

Although I was only made Chairman in January this year, I feel pleased that I was able to set out the 'Three Pillars' (Sustainability, Quality and Community) as the underlying foundation for the choir and an Outline Fundraising and Marketing Strategy.

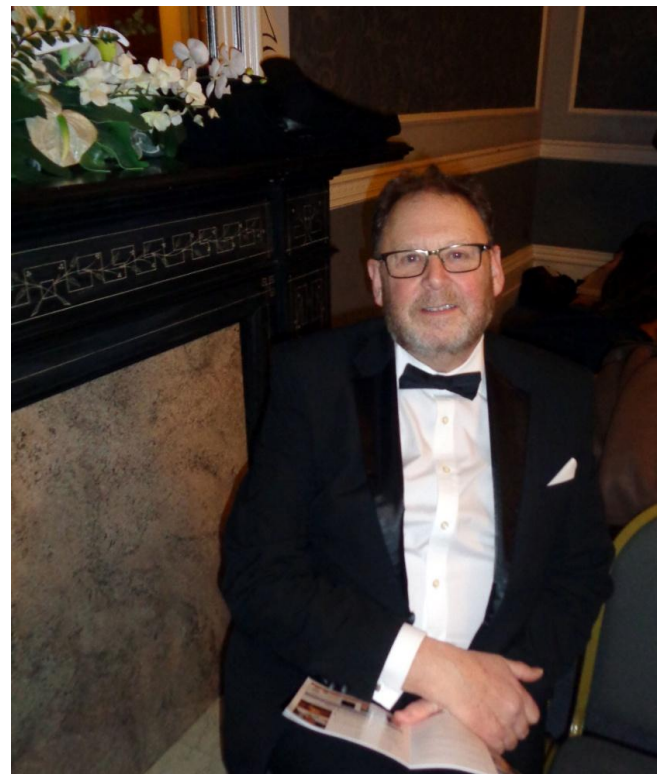
I know there are people who are immensely capable of continuing along the road to realise our goals, so I leave the choir in good hands.

I also have to consider that I am vulnerable to respiratory infection, which leads me to the very sad decision to also resign from the choir as a singer.

Singing in the choir has brought immense pleasure, purpose and friendships over the last two and a half years and I am heartbroken to have to resign, however I will continue to follow and support the choir as an audience member.

I wish you all the very best in your continuing development of the choir as it strives to push forward and I thank you all for the opportunity you have given me to play a part in it and also for the support that I have had in doing so,

*Kind Regards'
Peter Kelly*





VotV can say with absolute conviction that the Choir wishes Peter, his wife, Elizabeth, and family all the best in coming months.

We thank him for his commitment and many contributions in the relatively short time we have known him as a bass, as a committee member and, most recently, as Chairman.

Well Done, Peter and Thank You

Scarcely had the Choir begun to come to terms with this bad news, then, into the breach steps **Kieran Chadha**. At the Management Committee meeting on May 9th Kieran let it be known that he would be willing to stand. He briefly outlined his candidature then stepped out of the room to allow the Committee to consider his proposal.

There was general approval of this idea and there were no objectors and no dissent was expressed. On his return he was unanimously invited to be Chairman for the usual 2 year term.

VotV is glad to say that he accepted.

Kieran, (38 and likely the youngest Chairman in the Choir's history) may not have been up Kilimanjaro like Chairman Joe, but here we see him looking rugged in the Lake District.



Chairman Kieran Chadha sends these first thoughts to VotV:-

'Stepping into the shoes of the Chair role is definitely a daunting task. Like many charitable organisations, the Choir is in a difficult position - our costs continue to increase, whilst our revenue has taken a hit from recent economic events. Audience habits are changing and music-making as an interest faces competition from a whole world of entertainment, available at the click of a button or the tap of a screen.

There are so many things about CVMVC to celebrate: We make a truly impressive sound, as recent competition success has shown; we bring joy to audiences and singers alike; we help people's sense of confidence, connection, and contribution. And - as our LAMS project has shown - we can play an important role in encouraging music-making in the community. But - in order to thrive in today's world - we can't rest on our laurels.

*I spent a lot of time working with **Peter Kelly** (our previous Chair) - and others - on ideas to move the Choir forward, so when he found himself unable to continue in the role, I felt it was important for someone to step up, to keep up the momentum of the changes we've been trying to make. After I nervously put my ideas to the rest of the Committee, expecting uproar and mutiny, I was actually met with approval, overwhelming support, and (dare I say it?) excitement!*

I think there are a lot of things about how the Choir works, that need modernising, tweaking, and refining, but protecting what we have and ensuring that everyone feels included as we move forward is also really important. It makes sense to have ambitious aspirations for the Choir, but it also makes sense for us to set a measured pace in fulfilling them.



I'd describe myself as an optimistic realist (or perhaps a realistic optimist - not sure!). My plan is to aim high, lay out a roadmap so that everyone is on the same page, then offer plenty of encouragement and ask for lots of support to make sure we all make it there together.'

Welcome Chairman Kieran.



Historic recording comes to light

A reel-to-reel tape recording of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir performing has come to light, thanks to **Stewart Baxter**.



It was made at a concert performed by the Choir in Derby in 1967.

It happened at the **Queen's Hall Methodist Mission** on September 30th - nearly 57 years ago.

The building still exists on London Road in Derby but it ceased to be a place of worship in 2012



The Choir was internationally recognised in those years. For a golden period during the 60's and 70's the Choir triumphed over worldwide competition at the International Eisteddfod at Llangollen.

The Choir sang nine times at this prestigious event and established a record of victories that has not been matched by any other male voice choir, before or since.

We won four first prizes (with a hat-trick of wins in 1960, 1961 and 1962). We were first again in 1967 - the year of the Derby concert - and also found time to take first prize at the inaugural Teesside International Industrial Eisteddfod in 1966.

Several of these prizes were won with the settings of psalms composed especially by conductor, **George E Stead MBE** for that purpose.

1960's Successes

1960 Llangollen International Eisteddfod 1st, Mrs Sunderland 1st

1961 Llangollen International Eisteddfod 1st, Mrs Sunderland 1st

1962 Llangollen International Eisteddfod 1st, Mrs Sunderland 1st

1963 Llangollen International Eisteddfod 2nd

1964 Llangollen International Eisteddfod 2nd

1966 Teesside International Eisteddfod 1st

1967 Llangollen International Eisteddfod 1st

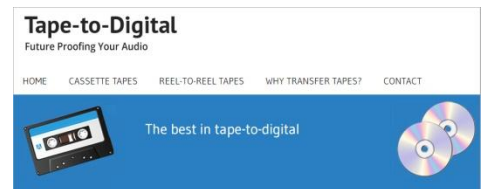
'Truly outstanding singing and musical direction' - The chief opposition during these years came from University choirs from the United States, the teachers' choirs from the Eastern European countries (then behind the Iron Curtain) of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland and some excellent choirs from Italy. The Colne Valley choir was so outstanding during these years - truly Europe's leading male voice choir - that only international competition was adequate.

Excellence came from all parts - especially rich basses, warm baritones and a splendidly robust set of first tenors, plus what George called the "salt of the earth", the often neglected seconds.

As far as is known, no photographs of the concert are extant but this picture shows **George Stead** at rehearsal with the Choir in the same year of the concert. Front row, third from left we see first tenor, **Arthur Quarmby**, who, we think, had a hand in preserving the recording, if not in making it. George Stead died suddenly in 1968, the following year.



A specialist in vintage recordings, **Thomas Bryan** of www.cassette-to-cd.co.uk assisted your Editor in rescuing the tape, transferring and editing the contents into digital format. He writes:-



“Thank you for posting the tape. I have now completed the capture and editing.

The recording was quite well done, with good mic placement, and narration inserted between sections of music, but was rather noisy - I think the music may have been played on another tape recorder, which would add some noise. Although it is not possible to completely remove noise without significantly affecting the wanted recording, I have greatly improved this.

Because the recording was made from the audience perspective, the applause was painfully loud, so I have reduced this in level where it occurs. The effect is quite natural, and it's no longer necessary to reach for the volume control after a section of music!

I also removed a lot of clicks and pops between recordings where the tape machine had been stopped and started in the process of making the tape.

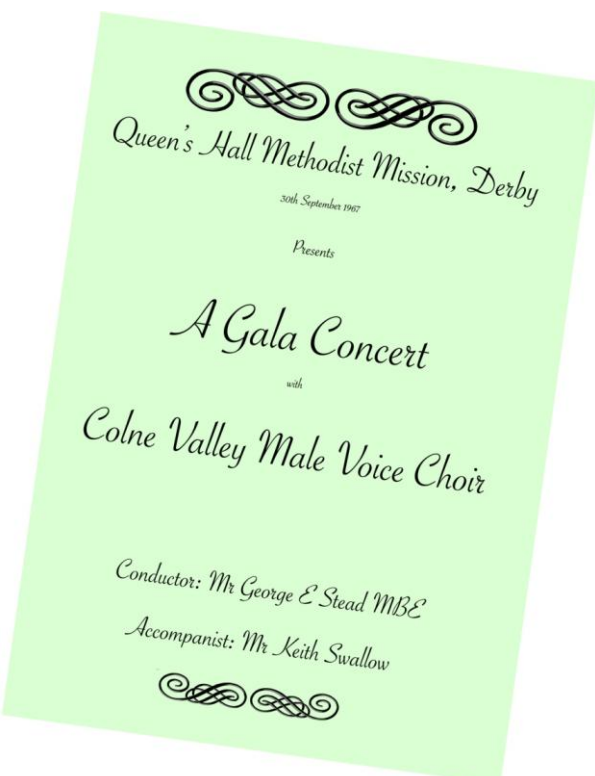
Thank you for this project, I hope you will enjoy listening - you can pick out individual voices at times, and the extra detail from the narrator is a nice addition.

Also thanks for the newsletter, it's always nice to get more of an idea of the backgrounds of the recordings I work on. I'm fortunate to work on some very personal stuff and often the tape deck acts almost like a time machine - recordings on tape really survive very well.

I hope the choir enjoy hearing this, and perhaps if anyone has dusty tapes in the attic you'll pass my details on.

*Best wishes,
Tom*

VotV includes three samples from the first half.
Click on the links:-



<https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/the-tide-rises-the-tide-falls>



<https://on.soundcloud.com/XbGPXahvQKGD3kNUA>



<https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/impromptu-in-e-flat-schubert>

Text a few quid to Choir funds...

... get the full concert

Your Editor would be happy to send on a full digital copy of the whole concert to any reader who would like to hear the full recording.

Please contact me at this new link:-

newsletter@colnevalleymvc.co.uk

and may I suggest -

text a small contribution to Choir funds.

How the programme might have looked

No programme has yet come to light - maybe there was none.

But, had there been one it might have looked something like this.

The Derby Tape



A pleasant afternoon

What a lovely afternoon we had of it - both Choir and audience - all gathered to enjoy a concert of Music and Memories, featuring the piano that our esteemed former accompanist, **Keith Swallow**, bequeathed to the Choir in his will.

Sunday 12th May 2024

2:30pm | St. John's Church, Golcar

Free admission

With a 'pay what you feel' collection following



It was one of those lovely concerts where the Choir performed without guests; Choir members themselves providing the party pieces between Choir sets.

First up, Young Tom (**Tom Law**) brought along his guitar and sang a terrific couple of tunes.



Then **Ben Stubbs**, accompanied by **Christopher Pulleyn** at the piano played the 3rd Movement from Elgar's Violin Concerto. 'Why aren't we playing the First Movement?' asked Chris, innocently. 'Because it's too hard' replied Ben, promptly. Banter aside, Ben and Chris did a super performance, much admired by a full audience



'Fear no more the heat of the sun' - a song which Keith Swallow and Thom recorded, was Thom's choice for his party piece. "It was played at Keith's funeral." said Thom. "Perhaps I should have sung it. But I just couldn't, I would have broken up"

It was superb.

Thom, who loves dressing up, donned cape and, armed with crown and sceptre, sang as **King George III**, from **Hamilton** - **'You'll Be Back!'**

The audience loved it.

This being the concert that featured Keith's piano, Chris Pulleyn, said he was going attempt a piece that Keith often chose as one of his solo pieces when he performed with the Choir. This was **'The 'Impromptu in E Flat' by Schubert.** VoTV thinks that some of Keith's modesty has rubbed off on Chris, for his performance was absolutely terrific.



What Chris didn't know, then was that the historic recording which turned up of the Concert in Derby in 1967, was one where Colne Valley Male Voice Choir did the whole performance with Party Pieces from Choir members; one of whom was the Maestro himself, Keith Swallow.

Nor did Chris know that on that recording Keith played the very same piece that Chris did - **Schubert's 'Impromptu in E Flat'.** VoTV is pleased to say that readers can enjoy Keith's performance from well over half a century ago.

'Impromptu in E Flat' - Schubert.
Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

#piano classical

0:37 5:01

<https://on.soundcloud.com/wNHkw1CJ4oC4ThzW8>

Our new Chairman, **Kieran Chadha**, talked to the audience briefly about the trial of the 'Pay what You Feel' method of raising funds for the Choir without prior tickets sales. 'Whatever happens,' he said, 'We do thank you for coming this afternoon and for making it feel like a great success.'

And then we finished singing with the 2024 LAMs men joining in. The Choir enjoyed it (even if we sometimes look as miserable as sin) but we do know that without an enthusiastic audience we haven't got a performance to remember. And what an added pleasure it was for the Choir to see outgoing chairman, Peter Kelly and Elizabeth upstairs in the gallery enjoying our singing, too!



The Choir says 'THANKYOU'.

O Love

Thom sends the Choir another version of, 'O Love', one of the new pieces that we are learning for the summer concert season.

It's a terrific piece and will be very effective - even deeply moving - when we've got to grips with its surprising complexities.

You'll get the flavour on this youtube version.



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

Your editor has been on holiday - here's one of his snaps



It's never too early to discover music.

This is your editor's new grandson enjoying his first piano lesson.

Tell me your story, send me a picture

Do let the VoTV Editor know if something happens to you, that might be of interest and has some - even if tenuous - connection with the Choir. Doesn't matter if you are not very confident writing, I'll help you put into publishable shape.



Voice of the Valley Editor: John C Clark

New email address: newsletter@colnevalleymvc.co.uk

Ring Choir Secretary, Jenny, on 01484 645192 for other queries

And see our website to get the full story

www.colnevalleymvc.co.uk

