



## Numbers boost to Colne Valley singers



**John Garner**, our valued Membership Secretary, has, for many a year, tracked and compiled data about The Choir. His most recent report highlights some very positive new facts.

It seems the Choir now has some **83 singers**, auditioned and formally welcomed into membership. "And there's still a couple more to come," said John. "We've sadly lost a few to ill health and the like but we've added lots of new members during the last couple of years".

"It's mainly down to the success of our 'Let All men Sing Community engagement initiative,'" he explained. "In the last two years this programme has seen seventy odd men joining Thom and Chris to try out singing for a few weeks. It was an eye-opener for many of the participants and led them to come and sing with the main Choir. Over 30 have subsequently gone on to become full members."

John told *VotV*, "This number of singers is higher than we have seen for thirteen years - very welcome."

These enhanced numbers recently triggered our esteemed Music Director, **Thom Meredith**, to reminisce about his youth. He told us that, as a student on a holiday in Wales, he got the opportunity to sit in with the baritone section of a renowned Male Voice Choir; '**Cor Meibion Dowlais**'. He was bowled over by the experience and has loved male voice choirs ever since. "I was in the middle of this incredible sound. They had a passion for singing and sang without copies straight from the heart. It was the richness of sound," he said, "the fullness and yet unforced power that surrounded him that made such an impression."



As we rehearsed '**Morte Christe**' the other night Thom told us, "You sound absolutely great. Now we've got so many new singers, bedded in and becoming more confident alongside the more established members, the Choir's sound is terrific. It just took me back to that time in Wales years ago."

There's no doubt the Choir is rejuvenating and it's inspiring that Thom and Chris are once again excited to be leading our progress and renewal.

(Incidentally, we sang this classic male voice choir anthem to great effect with **Hammonds' Brass Band** in **Halifax Minster** on the 27<sup>th</sup> June.)



John Garner didn't know it but the Choir will lose one valued member for a while, baritone, **Matthew Thomas**, who joined just as 'lockdown' took hold has just left us for to take up a temporary post in **Helsinki**.

Matt's day job is as a geography lecturer at Manchester University and he's taking the opportunity is to contribute to an academic research project, based in **Finland**. "It's just for one year," he told VotV.

Modestly he claimed it was not very exciting - almost certainly untrue - but added, 'I'll be back this time next year.'

We wish you an exciting time and good luck.

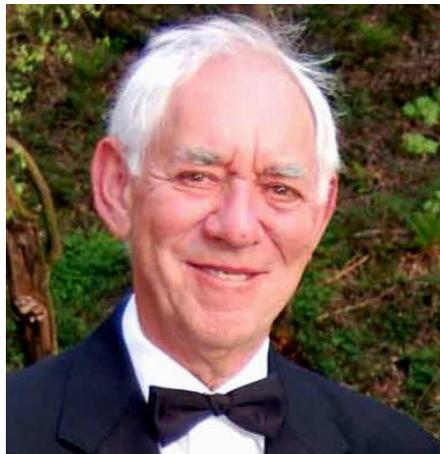
**'Tsemppiä'** as they say in Finnish.



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## Room for new talent

Three of the four 'Section Leaders' who look after singers in the Choir have decided to call it a day and to make room for new blood.



Baritone Section Leader, **Simon Durrans** is stepping back due to pressure of work in his business preventing him doing the Choir job to his full satisfaction.

For **David Morrison** (second tenor leader) and **John Garner** (basses) it's increasing age and health issues that have prompted them to step back.

It will be up to each section to elect successors but VotV is aware that each section has potential replacements lined up if singers wish to endorse them.

VotV feels able to speak for the whole Choir in thanking the three of them for great service over many years. They leave the role at a time of regeneration for the Choir, with prospects for CVMVC being brighter than for many a year.

We are grateful for your contributions, chaps.

# Big night for Chris

We all know that Chris Pulleyn is a lovely bloke and a hugely talented musician. But, Thursday night at Halifax Minster he found himself slightly out of his comfort zone, facing a large choir and a band with a formidable reputation. This was Chris's concert conducting debut with CVMVC.



It was one of those vanishingly-rare occasions when our Music Director, **Thom Meredith**, found himself with an unavoidable diary clash. Of course, Thom had no doubts that Chris would rise to the challenge. After all he has conducted us in rehearsal plenty of times and has a long list of performance credits as singer, piano accompanist and soloist.

And so it proved. Chris seemed initially a little nervous but as soon as the music started he led the Choir with increasing assurance. The acoustics in the wonderful Halifax Minster are tricky. Sound swirls around the mediaeval roof space in disconcerting ways. The 58 strong Choir soon learned that the key was to carefully follow the visual directions from Chris's hands and to disregard some of the aural cues from the sound reverberating oddly from the old architecture. We'd caught on to that, for our second piece; the ancient unaccompanied Italian anthem. 'O Sacrum Convivium'. The performance was secure and the many virtues of the acoustic became apparent. I'm told we sounded terrific! Moreover, Chris, now at ease, led the very fine **Hammonds Band** in two joint numbers, including the final, magnificent, '**Morte Christe**'.



The Band were wonderful partners in this joint concert; part of the Halifax Minster's Summer Festival. Under the direction of **Morgan Griffiths**, they played superbly. A terrific piece, 'Harlequin' by Phil Sparke featured a magnificent euphonium performance by resident soloist, **Daniel Hohm** from Germany.



But perhaps their greatest piece was an arrangement of the 'Theme from Babe' - the climax of the **Saint Saens' Organ Concerto**, ably supported by **Dan Browning** one of the Bands trombonists, this time playing the **Minster organ**.



Newly promoted to Deputy Accompanist, Ben Stubbs, did a flawless job at the piano. Well Done, Ben!



What a fine body of men!



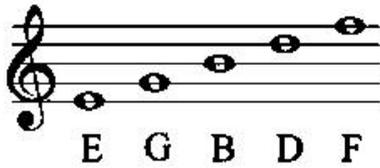
Some 'old boys' and 'new lads' getting ready to perform



More 'veterans' and newcomers'

Conductor and Chairman both happy





# Every good boy deserves fruit...

...and the fruit of their studies is a better grasp of Music Theory

About a dozen singers with Colne Valley Male Voice Choir have taken advantage of an offer by Music Director, Thom Meredith to get a better handle on the 'Rudiments of Music', via two Sunday morning 'teach-ins' that Thom delivered at Slaithwaite's Watershed Community Centre.

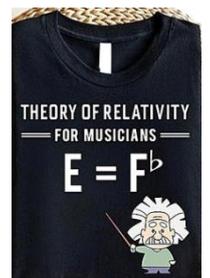


Many of the participants had been 'LAMS' men who had enjoyed the 'Let All Men Sing' experience so much they had come to join the main choir.



For many it had been a new and rewarding experience but with so many new scores being handed out in rehearsal, quite a few, who had never had any training in reading music, had owned up to 'being a bit at sea' with musical notation etc.

'It all makes a lot more sense now,' said one participant.



Well done you chaps for putting in the effort and well done, Thom, for giving up your time to helping our newer members out.

## Historic recording:-

### “I was on it.” says Colne Valley veteran

The 1967 reel-to-reel tape recording of Colne Valley Male Voice Choir in performance in Derby seemingly included the baritone singing of the Choir’s longest-serving member, **David Hirst**.



David writes to VotV:-

*‘Good Evening Mr Editor,*

*Thanks for the great memories.*

*I am pretty sure than I am the only living member or indeed living ex-member who actually was singing in the Choir at that 1967 Derby Concert which you have resurrected from the tape recording. Also I was part of the 1960 Llangollen visits.’*



This claim is substantiated by information from Attendance-Records-Keeper, **John Garner**, who confirms that David was indeed a member, having officially secured his membership on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1960 - well over 63 years ago.



Another august veteran of the Choir, top-tenor, **John Lees**, points out that the photograph from the year of the Derby Concert, showing George Stead leading a rehearsal in Slaithwaite, also shows John himself, singing away, far left on the second row.

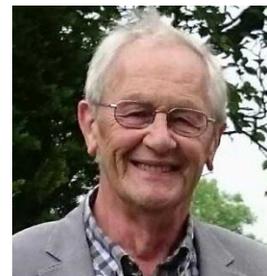
He writes.

*‘Just read VOTV and re your picture relating to the time of the Derby concert with its reference to Arthur Quarmby:- I am behind him on the second row.’*

*‘Perhaps the only man still alive’ adds John, (perhaps forgetting that David was probably across the room with the baritones, just out of shot, when the picture was taken.)*



Another keen reader, **Michael Shaw**, (a Colne-Valley born lad now living in France) noticed that one of the solo performers at the concert was tenor, **Eric Walker**. Michael tells me he has sent on a copy of the recording to Eric's son, **John Walker**, who now resides in **Mexico**.



You can hear a sample of Eric's solo singing in this excerpt from the Derby tape.



**"Because"** is a song with music and lyrics by Guy d'Hardelot with English lyrics by Edward Teschmacher, originally published in 1902. It was recorded by perhaps the world's most famous tenor, **Enrico Caruso**, in its original French in 1912.

The song got a new lease of life 50 years later when it was included in the 1951 movie, **'The Great Caruso'**, sung by another great tenor, **Mario Lanza**. **Eric Walker** does an excellent job with it in Derby. Just a shame the recording technology does the performance scant justice.



<https://on.soundcloud.com/AsjF9MUUPnDvttGM7>

Incidentally, there's some evidence that the compère on the Derby tape might well be Eric Walker.

**George Stead MBE**, the Choir's leader also did a solo spot in the concert.

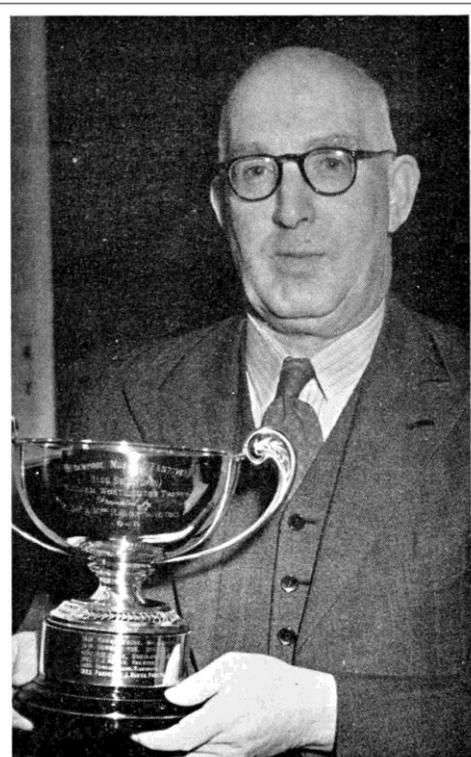
George, a renowned and prize-winning bass, sang three songs to own accompaniment, that night in Derby.

It is believed that the tape carries the only recording of George Stead in existence.

VotV brings you a sample. *"Think on Me"* by Lady John Scott. It's an elegant piece, attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots; with contemplative harmonies, that provide ample opportunity for George's expressive music-making.

As is well known, George's sudden death the following year threw the Choir into deep grief and disarray.

We remain grateful to George - not only for his choral legacy. It was his daughter, Muriel, who left the Choir a substantial bequest, around the time of the Choir's Centenary Year. Now invested, George's legacy should support the Choir's financial security through our next 100 years.



George E. Stead, conductor since 1924, has spent many years in the service of choralism. Here he is pictured after winning the bass solo class at the 1954 Blackpool Musical Festival.

George E Stead sings 'Think on Me'  
Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

1:40 2:54

[https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/george-e-stead-sings-think-on-me?si=32c3370141b64877853f4c1783e47163&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/john-clark-124140241/george-e-stead-sings-think-on-me?si=32c3370141b64877853f4c1783e47163&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

VotV includes two further samples from the second half.

**Widdicombe Fair** and **'Valderi, Valdera' - the Happy Wanderer'** show that the Choir was quite at ease with more light-hearted pieces.

**'All in the April Evening'** is simply beautiful. It was composed by **Hugh Roberton**; a figure in many ways comparable to George Stead. Roberton, the founder and conductor of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir also led his singers to great acclaim for well over 40 years.

Incidentally, 'All in the April Evening' remains in the Choir's library and comes out afresh every so often.

'Widdicombe Fair' and 'Valderi, Valdera'  
Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

1:40 6:26

JAN PETER PETER DAN'L HARRY BURNELL  
STEWER GURNEY DAVY WHIDDON MARK TITCHER  
OFF TO WIDDICOMBE FAIR

**Widdicombe Fair**

<https://on.soundcloud.com/Ro7kPy5EA1qiACko6>

'All in the April Evening'  
Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

0:23 3:04

'All in the April Evening'

**All in the April Evening**

<https://on.soundcloud.com/2VGKExS1Pyf4sdDD8>

Would you like the full concert? ....

....Text a few quid to Choir funds...

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](mailto:newsletter@colnevalleymvc.co.uk)

Some reader's prefer a CD version. Just let me know and I can arrange to make you a 2 CD set.



## More changes

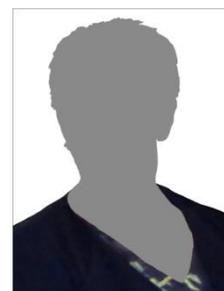


Earlier This year we saw Chairman, **Peter Kelly** stepping down from his role as chairman of the Choir - and indeed from membership. This was entirely to do with sad developments in his physical health.

Young **Kieran Chadha** stepped up. His new role as Chairman was unanimously confirmed at the Annual General Meeting of the Choir in June.

Also stepping down after many years keeping the Choir afloat is distinguished Choir Secretary, **Jenny Baxter** (She who is not to be photographed).

The Choir reckons no single individual can replace her and is looking – still so far without success - for people to take on some elements of the task she has so skilfully fulfilled.



## History is made

The good news is that Jenny will still be around to contribute - a wise Management Committee has made her a '**Vice President**', so there will be no escape.



Jenny was the Choir's first female secretary and now makes history again as the first female Vice President in our 102 years. Chocolate provided the 'nominal' expression of the Choir's gratitude.

Well done and thank you, Jenny

# 200 Club gets a boost



New 200 Club supremo, **Tom Jennings**, has been working hard to boost the income that the Choir derives from its 200 Club scheme.

That's the one, where friends of the Choir, buy a number for just £50.00 a year. That puts them into the weekly draw and gives them a pretty good chance of, at least, winning their money back.

There are weekly prizes of £45.00. Then every month a generous £185 prize and - joy of joys - twice a year, you get a shot at a mid-boggling bumper prize draw of £1,000.00. Wow!

Your chances of winning are way better than you might get in the Lottery. And even if you don't win you can be pleased that your participation in the 200 Club has helped the Choir. Half the stake money is given out in prizes - the other half helps keep the Choir ticking over financially.

Here are this last quarter's lucky winners.

## Recent 200 Club Winners

Date		Who won?	Lucky Number
04 March 2024	£45	Helen Armitage	187
11 March 2024	£45	G. Pinder	103
18 March 2024	£45	Raymond Ellis	74
25 March 2024	<b>£185</b>	Ian Rex	119
01 April 2024	£45	Tim Swift	181
08 April 2024	£45	Peter Partridge	104
15 April 2024	£45	Richard Prior	169
22 April 2024	£45	Trevor Sykes	111
29 April 2024	<b>£185</b>	Lynn Durrans	197
06 May 2024	£45	Peter Meredith	157
13 May 2024	£45	James Cooke	138
20 May 2024	£45	Loiis Hall-Jones	159
27 May 2024	<b>£185</b>	John Morrison	106
03 June 2024	£45	Geoff Bedford	177

Incidentally, Tom reports that after the good-natured appeal by newly appointed Chairman, **Kieran Chadha**, at our last performance in Golcar, he has sold about 18 numbers.



This puts him within striking distance of finding participants to take up the remaining few. Contact Tom, if you want him to keep you one of the Numbers - then you, too can be a Winner!



£45 in prize money weekly, £185 in the monthly draw and two whopping £1,000 draws each year.

Even if you don't win, you win - because half of the fund supports Choir concerts and performances.

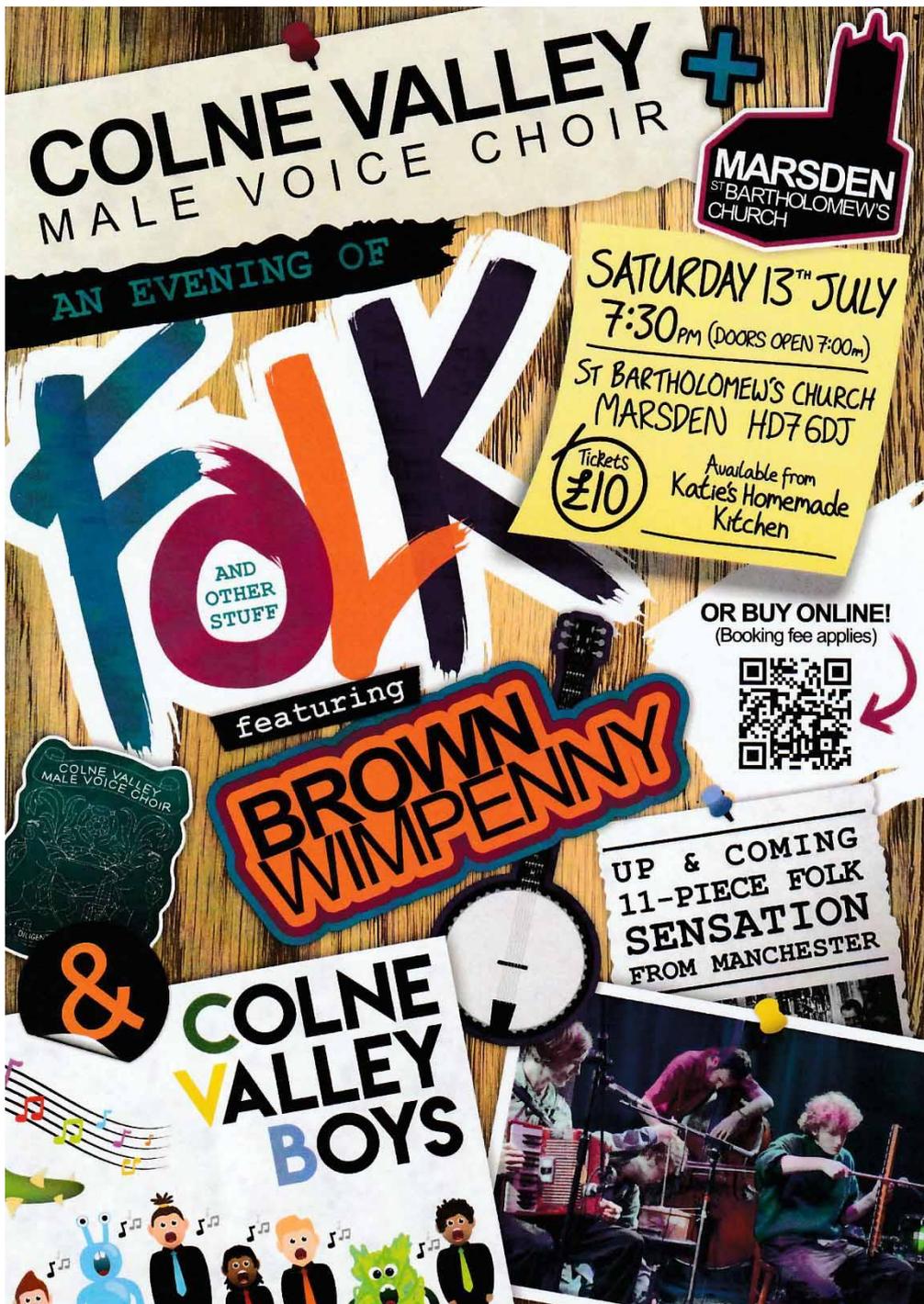
Contact Tom Jennings at:-

[200club@colnevalleymvc.co.uk](mailto:200club@colnevalleymvc.co.uk)



# Our next appearance

A different kind of concert next - informal, friendly and light-hearted.



Organised by the good people at Marsden's Parish Church, this will be an entertaining evening with the Choir, Colne Valley Boys and- a super Folk Band – eleven enthusiasts for a hootenanny by the name of 'Brown Wimpenny'.

*"Brown Wimpenny are young singers of old songs and new dancers of old jigs."*

The word is that they will get your feet a-tapping and get you singing along, too.

And watch out for Colne Valley's new informal performance gear.

Do come – you'll enjoy a great night out!

Get a flavour here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irfm2tYrpiE>



# Noticed in the Colne Valley - lots of barn owls



'We see them every few nights at our place as the sun begins to go down' said Colne Valley resident and local nature-lover **Cate Clark** (relation). 'They used to be quite rare but there now seems to be lots about. I was watching 'Spingwatch' on the telly and through the gable-end window I caught a glimpse of one gliding over the top field. This happens every few nights. I dash out and get a better look. A few weeks back, we saw three at once, back of Blackmoorfoot reservoir. We watched them for twenty minutes or more. That was special'



## Tell me your story, send me a picture

Do let the VoV 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 your contribution into publishable shape.



**Voice of the Valley Editor: John C Clark**

New email address: [newsletter@colnevalleymvc.co.uk](mailto: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.ork.uk](http://www.colnevalleymvc.ork.uk)

