



## A happy return

Second tenor, **Ben Stirling**, made a welcome return to singing with the Choir in 2025. He had been missing for many months with a health issue affecting his voice, which happily has resolved. He's pleased to be back, he tells VotV and the Choir were equally pleased to see him at rehearsals once again. Here we see him with his son, **Damian**, a former Colne Valley Boys Choir singer, now fully engaged with the adult choir. Damian is studying Musical Theatre and Performing Arts at Wakefield's CAPA College and we look forward to him doing solos with the Choir at our 'Songs from the Shows' performance at Lawrence Batley Theatre in July.





# Our Christmas season reviewed

The Choir's Management Committee has been taking a retrospective look at the at the Choir's three Christmas concerts at the end of last year. Not only were they terrific to be part of, they were clearly successful as events for our audiences. Our first concert with the **Hammonds Brass Band** in Batley marked the start of a new collaboration. Audience numbers weren't brilliant but this was during a period of terrible weather. The performance by Band and Choir, however, was super. The Choir hopes that this new partnership will flourish with a repeat event towards the end of this current year

Our wonderful Huddersfield Town Hall Concert with **Brighouse and Rastrick Band** - our biggest event of the year - showed that audience numbers are finally returning after the Covid drop-off, that affected pretty well everybody's events. The Town Hall was packed, scarcely a seat unsold. This made for a memorable performance for both Choir and audience - and equally pleasing - resulted in a decent profit for the first time in several years. This will underwrite the Choir's finances for much of the year to come.



Finally, as the guests of the **Marsden Silver Prize Band**, the Choir entertained the good folk of Marsden at Saint Bartholomew's. Many said it was the best ever Marsden Christmas Concert and once again there was hardly any pew space left in the large church,

known as the 'Cathedral of the Valley'. This is good news for the Band's finances and will have made a good contribution to the church's efforts to meet running costs.



# New Guy, Graham

The Choir was happy to welcome a new chap into that fine group of men, the first tenors. Our newest member is **Graham Schofield** and we wish him many joyful years singing with us.



Graham describes himself in a note to *VotV* as an *'Itinerant Head Gardener looking to put down roots of his own'*.

*"I moved to Golcar 3 months ago, our 6th move in 4 years! I discovered singing in 2017 when I joined a small MVC in Wiltshire - a community-minded choir singing solely for charity. Then a brief stint in a mixed choir in Normandy, followed by another MVC in Romsey, Hampshire.*

*As I steadily become a full time carer for my wife, the need to sing and be part of something is evermore important, hoping to improve my voice and singing technique, social network, and do something for the local community, and help us settle in the area.*

*Thank you for welcoming me to CVMVC!"*

He certainly looks happy to be at rehearsals.

Like the rest of us, Graham is learning - or perhaps re-discovering - material for our spring and summer repertoire. The choir is preparing for competitions at the Mrs Sunderland and Eskdale Music Festivals and has a range of concerts coming up. Not least is a Musical Evening with guest performers at Lawrence Batley Theatre. This will focus on songs from musical theatre of recent years.

Most of the material will be current or at least recent but Thom couldn't resist adding in a piece from **Gilbert and Sullivan's** comic opera, **Ruddigore**, first performed in 1887. It's a song the Choir has had in its repertoire for many, many years but one we've not performed for quite a while; **'The Ghost's High Noon'**.

Here's a video from our Scarborough concert in 2015 which, while not of the best technical quality, gives a flavour of a fine anthem.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mGn1uC5oJM>



# LAMS 2025 has a terrific start

The 2025 running of the 'Let All Men Sing' community initiative got off to a cracking start in mid January.

PROJECT SUPPORTED BY  
Colne Valley Male Voice Choir  
150TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR



It seems to have really struck a chord with local men, who once again, have turned out on cold winter nights to have a go at singing with other men. Of course, the top team who run the programme and Thom Meredith's super musical direction have been vital. Nonetheless there appears to be something in the 'Zeitgeist' that has made these three years of LAMS so successful.

VotV is informed that there's no space for new registrants as the programme, (which culminates in a joint concert with the main choir on March 16<sup>th</sup>) is now full. If you feel you missed out you should know that we always welcome new men at our normal rehearsals on Monday nights at Slaithwaite.



LAMS Concert with Colne Valley Boys and the main Choir March 2023

**FAMILY PANTO FUN**  
MARSDEN PARISH CHURCH AMATEUR OPERATIC & DRAMATIC SOCIETY  
**PAROCHIAL HALL, MARSDEN**

# Aladdin

18<sup>TH</sup> TO 22<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.30PM  
MATINEE: SATURDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> AT 2.30PM  
**TICKETS JUST £10**

AVAILABLE FROM: FRESH'N FRUITY, 5 PEEL STREET, MARSDEN  
ONLINE: [WWW.TICKETSOURCE.CO.UK/MARSDENOPERATIC](http://WWW.TICKETSOURCE.CO.UK/MARSDENOPERATIC)  
EMAIL: [MARSDENOPERATIC@OUTLOOK.COM](mailto:MARSDENOPERATIC@OUTLOOK.COM)



## Happy to oblige, Joe

In the spirit of support for our Colne Valley communities, ex Chairman, Joe Stones, urges VotV to give a bit of a plug to the forthcoming pantomime in Marsden.

Happy to oblige, Joe!

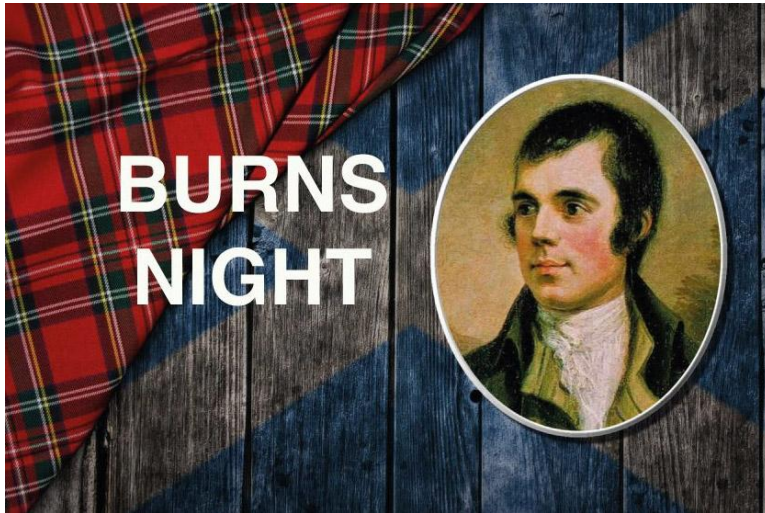
It's at the Parish Hall....

... and the first night is on Tuesday 18th

You should go see it.



# Burns Night



**Burns Night** takes place on 25 January each year to celebrate the life and legacy of Scotland's National Poet, **Robert Burns**.

Locally the Choir's Social Secretary has teamed up with **Marsden Silver Prize Band** and the good people at the Parish Hall to organise a Burns Supper.

'This is the second time we've done it and this year's event was the best yet.'

Your editor is not sure how many of the 60 odd participants have Scottish roots or are lovers of poetry. Maybe, it's just a good excuse to get together, have a good meal and drink whisky - and why not?

**Andrew Leyland** and **Joe Stones** from the Choir put plenty of effort into encouraging people to participate and in helping kit out the hall for a banquet.

By all accounts it was fine event, accompanied by bagpipes.



Joe welcomed the guests, Andrew delivered the 'Selkirk Grace' and Fraser Hill addressed the haggis this;

*"Great Chieftain o' the Puddin'-race!*

Well done, Chaps



# Chairman checks up on absentee baritone

Chairman Kieran writes:-



*Hoping to escape the sub-zero conditions at home, Chris and I recently took a trip over to Helsinki in Finland, where - for a day at least - it was actually warmer than Huddersfield. The real reason for our visit was to see how our good friend and CVMVC Baritone, Matt Dennis, and family are getting on during their year abroad.*



*With plenty of sightseeing (through the blizzards), and lots of coffee and cake, we had a great long weekend. We followed the trail of winter light sculptures through the city, and visited an incredible exhibition exploring the work of Finnish artist (and creator of the Moomins), Tove Jansson. No time for sauna, unfortunately (the Minus 19<sup>o</sup>C wind chill somewhat put us off).*



*But we did manage to visit the spectacular TempPELLIAUKIO 'Rock Church', which is carved out of solid rock, topped with a metal and glass roof, and sits hunkered down in the middle of the city. Fantastic place for a male voice choir concert*



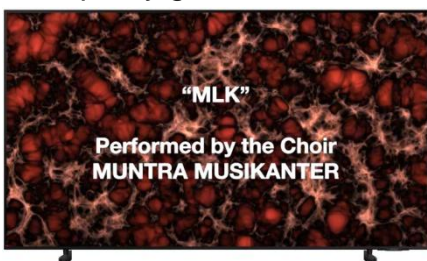


*We're glad to report that Matt and family are all doing very well. Matt continues to sing. He has recently joined a small mixed voice choir. I'm told they tackle choreography!*

*His son, Elmeri, sang with Colne Valley Boys before their year abroad, and is keen to rejoin once they're back home. He was quick to grill Chris on their current repertoire, membership, and whether the annual 'Sweeties Concert' still took place.*

*Sadly, Chris and I didn't get chance to learn much Finnish - everyone spoke impeccable English. But it's a beautiful language to listen to - and I'm sure we could find an interesting male voice choir piece for the CVMVC men to sing. Matt and family are aiming to return to the UK in the summer. Let's hope by that time he has mastered the language so he can coach us all on pronunciation. No pressure!*

Helsinki, readers may remember, is home to a wonderful male voice choir, who we competed with at our last appearance at the Cornwall Male Voice Choir Festival. We were bowled over by some of **Muntra Musikanter's** singing and they rightly won first prize. I'm pretty sure they thought we were pretty good, too.



Click on this link to listen to their terrific version of Bono's MLK. It was part of their winning performance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5DjJECxQbE>



# A night at the opera

Kicking off this year's **Mrs Sunderland Music Festival** was a workshop and performance from opera and musical theatre. Led by our very own, **Thom Meredith**, accompanied by our equally special pianist, **Chris Pulleyn**, the workshop featured a scratch choir that included a handful of Colne Valley Men.



One of them, **Andrew Taylor** sends **VotV** this report:-

*'CVMVC was well represented at the opening event of the Mrs Sunderland at Huddersfield Town Hall on 2 February.*

*The workshop and concert, 'A Night at the Opera' (apologies to The Marx Bros), delivered a broad programme of operatic choruses, arias and duets (featuring Anne Wilkes and Sarah Ogden) with instrumental pieces performed by the Musica Youth Orchestra. Sopranos, altos, tenors and basses from across the area came together as a choir for the first time.*

*The CVMC contingent - two basses and three tenors - was Dave Brammah, James Blagbrough, Chris Beith, Peter Stubbs and Andrew Taylor.*

*Rehearsals were intensive, beginning at 10.00 (there were breaks for lunch and tea!) and the day ended with an early evening concert. Although tiring the workshop was an enjoyable and memorable experience; singing in French and Italian was interesting especially as some of us have problems singing in English.*

*First class guidance and the enthusiasm of participants made for a very worthwhile and enjoyable event. Feedback from both the audience and participants was extremely positive and those from our Choir can recommend any CVMVC member, who fancies trying something different, joining in any future events.'*



Of course, our Choir will be in competition at Mrs Sunderland in the afternoon of February 22<sup>nd</sup>.



## Who's been winning in the 200 Club this year ?

Lucky Winners in the 200 Club			
Recent Winners	Winner	Winning Number	Prize
25 November 2024	Stephen Molinari	<b>10</b>	£ 185.00
02 December 2024	John Parkin	<b>23</b>	£ 45.00
09 December 2024	Cyril Pearce	<b>60</b>	£ 45.00
16 December 2024	Brian Hibbert	<b>26</b>	£ 45.00
23 December 2024	Barry Slater	<b>155</b>	£ 185.00
06 January 2025	Lynn Meredith	<b>31</b>	£ 45.00
13 January 2025	Connie Denby	<b>1</b>	£ 45.00
20 January 2025	Maureen Stead	<b>49</b>	£ 45.00
27 January 2025	Carol Hey	<b>28</b>	£ 185.00
03 February 2025	John Robinson	<b>27</b>	£ 45.00

Do buy another 200 Club Number, says Tom

	<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>	
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Click on this link to contact Tom.

He'll see you right

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



# 2025 Schools Tour: a date for singers' diaries

One of the most enjoyable events in the Choir's calendar is the Schools Tour.

## **This year it's Wednesday, February 26th**

As many singers as the Choir can muster for an all-day event - usually about 30 without work commitments - visit half a dozen local primary schools. Under Thom's inimitable guidance - and together with 100 or so children sitting cross-legged in the hall at each school - we do an informal mini concert.

These are very much collaborative. Thom gets the children singing almost as much as the Choir members. And they are not sitting for long. A little playful choreography is usually involved. Typically the kids 'do the actions' much better than the men but we all have lots of fun.

Ostensibly, the purpose is to draw attention to the Colne Valley Boys Choir and to invite teachers, parents and pupils to think about lads joining our boys' choir which like the adult choir also rehearses in Slaithwaite on Monday nights. The Boys Choir meets before the men and gets the full range of skills that Thom and Chris can offer.

The trouble with a boys' choir is that they will insist on growing up, so recruitment of new singers is a recurring need - like painting the Forth Bridge. On the other hand, one of the best things about a boys' choir is that they will insist on growing up so giving the 'granddads' a chance to enjoy a sing-song with such enthusiastic youngsters.

It's a brilliant day

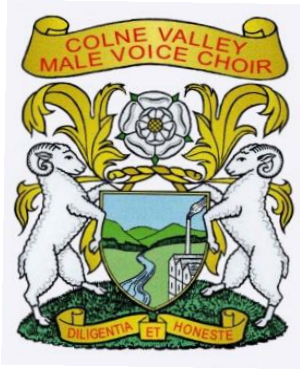




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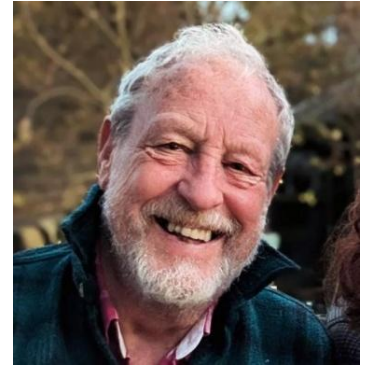
# Tell me a story, send me a picture

Do please keep in touch.



Let the 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 it into publishable shape.

Voice of the Valley Editor: John C Clark



email me at  
[newsletter@colnevalleymvc.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@colnevalleymvc.co.uk)

And see our website to get a fuller picture of our fine Choir

[colnevalleymvc.org.uk](http://colnevalleymvc.org.uk)

A banner for the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir website. On the left is the choir's crest. To the right of the crest, the text reads 'Colne Valley Male Voice Choir' in a large, white, serif font, with 'Est 1922' in a smaller font below it. Below this text is a navigation bar with five yellow buttons: 'Events', 'Recordings', 'Our History', 'About Us', and 'Information'. On the right side of the banner is a large QR code.

Events	Recordings	Our History	About Us	Information
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