



Colne Valley's legendary Christmas Concert at the famous **Huddersfield Town Hall** took place on Sunday night December 14<sup>th</sup> 2025, much as it has done for the last sixty years. It's a fixture in the district's cultural timetable.

Usually we have one of the world's best brass bands as our guest and this year was no exception - once again we welcomed the **Brighouse and Rastrick Band** and it was generally acknowledged - by our audience, packed into apparently every single seat in the Area and Balcony - to be totally brilliant.

And the Choir was great, too. In fact everything about the evening was magnificent; the auditorium, beautifully decorated and lit, the compère, **Andrew Edwards**, illustrating the programme content with carefully-chosen snippets of information, the wonderful **Father Willis Organ** that introduced the concert and occasionally accompanied Band and Choir pieces - everything contributed to a glorious experience.



All concert photos thanks to Alex Beldea



## A very dramatic start: Silent night

Time to start; the hubbub of conversation faded to silence as the house lights dimmed to nothing. In the hall all was darkness apart from the little lights in the Christmas decorations.

Chris Pulleyn at the Steinway began playing a tinkly, wintry piano part which seemed somehow familiar.

Then a blue and dim winter light rose on part of the Choir picking out one singer in particular, **Matt Houston**.



Matt began to sing - ever so beautifully – the opening verse of that most-loved of Carols, '**Silent Night, Holy Night**'. After a while the Choir joined in, in support

This was the version of 'Silent Night' arranged by one of the Choir's favourite contemporary composers, **Dan Forrest**.

The song developed - clearly our familiar carol - but now it came with variations of melody and rhythm, building towards a crescendo (the stage lights brightened too, in step with the volume).

And then the volume (and the lighting) faded to pianissimo until all that remained was Chris's accompaniment which diminished to a final haunting single note and darkness. The auditorium was entranced. Then after a brief moment of profound silence in the hall, there was an eruption of applause and the house lights returned.

Well done to the Lighting Technician in the gallery, to Thom Meredith for master-minding the drama, to Matt for taking the solo role so poignantly and, above all, to Chris for bringing out the music so magically.



It was a stunning start to a wonderful concert and everyone present was now in a mood to appreciate and enjoy the musical treats to come.



## A brilliant Band – as always

**Brighouse and Rastrick** are world class. It's was a privilege for the Choir to have them as our guests once again this year.



It's great, too, for Choir members, sitting as we do, just behind the band on the risers.

We get a terrific view of these expert players and their leader (this year **Dr David Thornton**) as they perform musical magic.





## Organist, Edwin, to the rescue

Many feel that the wonderful organ in the Town Hall adds so much to the quality of a Christmas celebration. So the Choir was devastated to learn at very short notice that the organist we have had the last few years, Caius Lee had revealed he could not, after all, be with us.

Cue some small panic - but we were thrilled to find that organist, **Edwin Field**, was ready at very short notice to step in - and step up - to the occasion. Here our compère Andrew Edwards introduces Edwin to the audience, explaining why we are all very grateful to him.

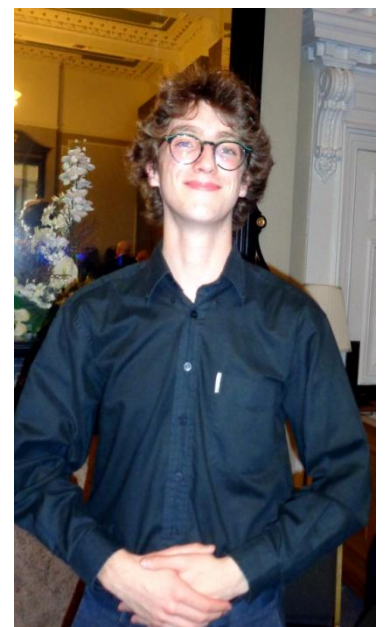


For Choir members, it was clear during the few minutes' rehearsal we had with him just before the concert that all was going to be well.

Edwin - soon to be a graduate of Greenhead College - is a young man with a great future. He currently plays the organ at Halifax Minster, studying under that legendary organist, Darius Bhattiwala. Soon he will continue studies at Hereford Cathedral and has already secured a place as Organ Scholar at Queen's College, Cambridge for 2027.

That's a prodigious CV for one so young. He certainly was a great asset to Sunday's concert, playing welcome carols to the incoming audience and then expertly backing several pieces by Choir and band.

Well Done, Edwin.





## The Boys were brilliant

**Colne Valley Boys** (including Damian who stills sings with the boys even though he's just reached the age of 18 and also sings with the men) were just tremendous. They certainly capture the hearts of the audience - particularly the younger ones. The Boys' version of '**A Thankful Heart**'; from the 'Muppets Christmas Carol' - helped out a bit by the men doing the chorus bits – was just lovely.



There may have been only 16 of them but they sang beautifully.

Good Job, Boys!



# Feedback and assessment

As our Musical Director, **Thom Meredith** said to the Choir the following night; *“Thank you for singing so beautifully.....*

*I got lots of positive feedback after.....*

*It was a lovely joyful Christmas event .....*

*An absolute pleasure.”*

Your VotV Editor concurs.

And it's mainly thanks to our wonderful Musical Director.

Thanks Thom



That's not to say the performance wasn't without a few glitches.... adds VotV .... there were a couple of places where we maybe deviated from the score a tad (though always harmoniously). On one or two occasions our entries were perhaps less than confident - maybe even wobbled a bit - just a few times our diction wasn't quite spot on.

But either our audience didn't notice or maybe they didn't care - they were enjoying it too much to bother about the odd slip. The atmosphere in the hall was that of an audience having a right good time. Partly that came from there being not a single empty seat that your Editor could see and maybe it was because we made a wonderfully theatrical start.



*“A big thank you to Thom, to Chris and the Boys, our wonderful soloists and to everybody who worked behind the scenes to make the event one everybody will remember”*, added **Chairman Kieran**

He is seen here, somewhat reluctantly, sporting his Chain of Office.

(All acknowledge that Kieran has done so much to keep the show on the road this year.)

Well done **Kieran** and well done **Chris** for stunning piano work and also to our terrific solo performers, **Matt, Damian, Tom and Chris.**

# First timers' make Town Hall debut

## - new singers make their appearance at our Christmas Concert

In recent years, the Choir has been very happy to see new men arriving to rejuvenate our singing. Some of these newer members, for the first time, took to the stage at the Town Hall the other night.

Here are a few, captured backstage in the Lord Mayor's Reception Room. Some admitted to being a little apprehensive but, mostly, they were having a jolly good time. Good for them!



Abe Richards



Austin Thornton



Joe Lodge



Matt Treece

### Some New Guys



Graham Schofield



Paul Wray

We wish them many happy years of singing with us.



# A Joyful Night at Marsden



The wonderful **Saint Bartholomew's Church** at Marsden at the head of the Colne Valley were hosts to a joyful annual concert on Saturday night. The so-called 'Cathedral of the Valley' is a big church but it was packed with enthusiastic families determined to have a good time - and so they did!





Not only was the church full to bursting but with so was the performance space. The Band needs lots of room for tuba's and the like and so the Colne Valley Singers were crammed in like sardines (in greater numbers than we have had for many a year). But we all somehow found space and sang and played to our generous audience with great gusto. The building shook, on occasions, with joyful music: the sound of brass instruments and choral harmonies, ringing round the vaulted heights above the packed pews.



**Colne Valley Male Voice Choir** was once again delighted to be the guests the **Marsden Silver Prize Band**. And under the direction of conductor, **Leigh Baker**, it's a class outfit. Leigh is renowned in the brass band world as a superb musician and bandsman. He's certainly got Marsden's, already excellent, team performing like champions. They finished their final set with Eric Ball's '**The Kingdom Triumphant**' - what a stunning piece.

As for the Choir, we sang extremely well, as the warm applause confirmed. Perhaps our highlight was the beautiful **Lauridson** piece, '**Sure on this Shining Night**', which reverberated round the lofted roof-space magnificently.



All in all a terrific night.



Thanks to Chris Wilson for the photos



# VotV's long reach



Voice of the Valley' gets all over the world.

Your editor has recently had a contact from the USA, close on 200 miles west of Chicago.



Turns out it's the daughter of Choir singer **Peter Vincent** who is now settled by the mighty Mississippi River- a long way from Slaithwaite - in a town called Dubuque.

Tracy wants to be sure her dad is not getting into mischief – as if?

She writes:-

*Thank you for including me on the VOTV mailing list. It's a great way for me to keep tabs on my dad.*



*I am unable to see and hear you perform in person this Christmas as I live in the USA. Having travelled the world as a teacher for many years, I have now settled in the American Midwest. We (husband, 5 kids) live just outside of Dubuque, Iowa, and I cross the Mississippi River daily for my work as a high school special education teacher in Illinois.*

*The Dubuque area reminds me a lot of the Colne Valley, with its semi-rural location and farmland. The VOTV newsletter brings me a little closer to home.*

*Hoping I can make it to a performance next time I am home.*

*Merry Christmas to all!*

*Tracy Horstman*

*VotV says – welcome Tracy – your Dad's behaving - singing very well - in fact*



# Colne Valley Ale Voice Choir

- on song at Broad Oak Bowling Club



Sometimes the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir lets its hair down.

All thoughts of quality and precision are cast aside.

We've probably had a couple and inhibitions are nullified.

Now that the Choir has moved to new premises in Linthwaite, the Choir has also found a new location for its Christmas Singalong. Our new hosts; The Broad Oak Bowling Club

We had a good time.

Maybe the enthusiasm will outweigh the complete lack of musical sophistication and accuracy.

Click on this link to listen to this awful rendition of, '**Ding-Dong Merrily on High**'

It's really pretty terrible!

<https://youtu.be/-N5E4RRVLBQ>

