

Voice of the Valley

COLNE VALLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026 EDITION

2026: It's back to business.

Having had enough of Christmas, the Choir was back in rehearsals early January, getting stuck into what will be another exciting and busy year. The engagement diary is full of opportunity and challenge to keep us and our audiences happy until next Christmas.

We decided, after all, to enter the Mrs Sunderland Huddersfield Music Festival. It's a competition we don't choose to enter every year but we thought we'd give it another go in February.

The Choir has entered two choir competitions and it would of course be nice to win a first prize, as we did last year, but all our focus is on performing just as well as we possibly can and the results will take care of themselves.

Amongst the pieces we are preparing is the striking version of that famous poem, **Invictus**.



This powerful work from **William Ernest Henley** conveys the rock-solid determination of the poet not to be beaten by the grave physical ailments that beset him.

He writes,

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.*

It's this 1875 work that inspired **Nelson Mandela** to tolerate and triumph over his long years of incarceration on Robben Island. More recently, it's the poem that underlies the courage of many disabled athletes in the **Invictus Games**.



Henley is said to have been the inspiration behind **Long John Silver**, so iconically portrayed by that brilliant screen actor, **Robert Newton** in the classic Disney movie, '**Treasure Island**'.

Treasure Island's author, **Robert Louis Stevenson**, certainly acknowledged the character was strongly influenced by what he knew of William Henley and all his years of grappling with severe illness, which - amongst other catastrophes - saw him lose a leg and nearly lose the second.

The music by **Daniel J Hall** is powerful and dramatic. We hope that (in a contrasting performance with other pieces) it will impress our adjudicator as much as it impresses us when we sing it as dramatically as we can.

The 2026 plan

Our Choir's engagement list for this year is copied below.

As you plan your diary do bear in mind that some of the dates are still provisional and subject to the possibility of change.

Check our website Events page for updates.

CHOIR ENGAGEMENTS DIARY 2026

Saturday 21 February

Mrs Sunderland Music Festival and Competition

Colne Valley Male Voice Choir will be entering competition in two classes and, if successful, may later sing in the evening Gala Concert.



Huddersfield Town Hall

Saturday & Sunday, 28 February and 1 March

'Let All Men Sing & Friends'

Two days of workshops for all voices followed by a

Celebratory Concert with LAMS, CVMVC at St James's Church in Slaithwaite. 4:30 pm



'Saturday 28 March

'AMAZING GRACE'

Hymns and Marches Concert

CVMVC as guests of Brighouse & Rastrick Band

Huddersfield Town Hall



Saturday 18 April

Choir Workshop Day (tbc)

Huddersfield Area

Details to follow

Sunday 10 May

MUSIC IN MAY

'Pay as you Feel' Concert

St John's Church, Golcar



Saturday 6 June

'Page, Stage & Screen' Concert

CVMVVC with Yorkshire Imperial Band

St George's Hall, Bradford



COLNE VALLEY LIONS ANNUAL CHARITY CONCERT(tbc)

Various artists with CVMVC top of the bill

Slaithwaite St John's Church

from 7-30pm Mon evening - early June - date still unclear



HALIFAX SUMMER FESTIVAL (tbc)

Hammonds Band Joint Concert (tbc)

Probably Thurs, late June - - date still unclear

Halifax Minster



Saturday 4 July (tbc)

'Down the Decades'

Marsden Summer Fayre and Concert

St Bartholomew's Church, Marsden



Saturday 26 September

AUTUMN CONCERT

Stones Methodist Church,

Ripponden



Sunday 4 October (tbc)

Joint Concert with

The Regimental Band of the Coldstream Guards

Huddersfield Town Hall



Sunday 13 December (tbc)

COLNE VALLEY CHRISTMAS CONCERT

with

Brighouse & Rastrick Band & Colne Valley Boys

at **Huddersfield Town Hall**

For tickets contact Kirklees Booking Office **01484 225755**

or book online



Saturday 19 December (tbc)

MARSDEN SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S CHRISTMAS CONCERT

MARSDEN SILVER PRIZE BAND & COLNE VALLEY MALE VOICE

In joyful performance once again



The results are in - Christmas Concerts were a great success.



Photo: Alex Beldea

It's the routine practice of the Choir's Management Committee to take a critical retrospective look at our Christmas engagements. Did they live up to our hopes and expectations?

Well broadly yes was the conclusion.

Town Hall and Marsden concerts were full, scarcely a vacant seat to be found. This speaks well of our marketing efforts and more significantly seems to point to the last of the long tail of the Covid Pandemic's baleful impact on audience numbers generally. People are back and keen to enjoy our performances.

Financially these events have seen a return to success - and despite rising costs - as successful as they used to be before the virus laid waste to public events.

Our Town Hall concert in the old days used to provide a revenue sufficient to keep us 'ticking over' for most of the year. Alas those days are long gone! But nonetheless it is encouraging to see that a substantial contribution to our running costs has been made.

Better still, audience feedback from Christmas seems to have been overwhelmingly positive.

There was some suggestion that our repertoire might have been a little too serious and musically demanding. Some wanted a little more light-heartedness in our selection of Christmassy numbers. Voice of the Valley is sure that the Music Committee will ponder this feedback for next year.

Our Colne Valley MP, **Paul Davies**, certainly liked us.



Flood at the band room - buckets out.

There was one lamentable feature of the Christmas season for our colleagues and partners, the Marsden Silver Prize Band.



Early in January a disaster occurred. An internal water pipe burst in the roof.

A band spokesperson reported, *'Water has ruined floors, walls, and ceilings. Precious instruments are damaged or destroyed.'*

Hundreds of years of irreplaceable sheet music are soaked and lost.

Uniforms, essential equipment, and furniture are all damaged. The ground floor, first floor, and upper rooms are unsafe and unusable.

We are shattered by this sad incident but we are determined to carry on. Logistically, we face a long road ahead with insurance claims, drying out the building, eventual repairs and replacement of equipment.

The band need to keep rehearsing as we prepare for the Yorkshire Area Championships in early March, but we cannot do it alone.

We have been overwhelmed by the offers of support and help from our friends, supporters and the wider brass band community. This fundraising page has been set up to allow those who have expressed a desire to make donations to help us with the costly road ahead.'



A temporary rehearsal space has been found and the band is meeting as close to normal as possible to play and rehearse.

All over the banding world, support has been coming in, physical, moral and financial, to help conductor, Leigh Baker, and the whole team to get back to normal and a 'Just Giving' page has been set up - which is already showing the generous solidarity of brass players across the country.

https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/marsdenbandflood?utm_medium=CA&utm_source=CL



Buckets out.

Apart from messages of sympathy and support, the Choir opted for a bit of practical help.

Organised by Matt Houston, a bucket collection was initiated and members were exhorted to throw in a couple of quid to help out.

Matt totalled up the contributions the other night at rehearsals. We'd tossed in £335 or so, which even today will cover a few tins of paint.

Edwin's dad rocks up.

Readers will recall that when our Town Hall organist failed to appear, that talented newcomer Edwin Field stepped in and stepped up to enrich the sound and to entertain the audience streaming in, to await the start of the performance.

Well done, Edwin, said Voice of the Valley at the time.



Well, there's been another spin-off.

When Edwin stepped up, part of the deal was that his parents got two seats in the Royal Box. Word is that Edwin's dad, **Damien**, was so impressed by the Choir's sound, he turned up in January to give it a go himself.

Your Editor, who sits just behind him in rehearsals can attest that he's some musician. You can tell he's sight-reading entirely unfamiliar scores with some precision. Voice of the Valley isn't surprised to discover that he's an accomplished pianist and is happy to report he's come back to rehearsals a few times now.

Damien tells VotV that 'Accomplished Pianist' doesn't really fit. We suspect this may be just modesty on his part. But, as he himself adds, 'Why let the truth get in the way of a good story'.

'He says he's enjoying singing with us – and without counting any chickens - it looks likely that he will come into membership shortly.

He would be a very welcome addition.



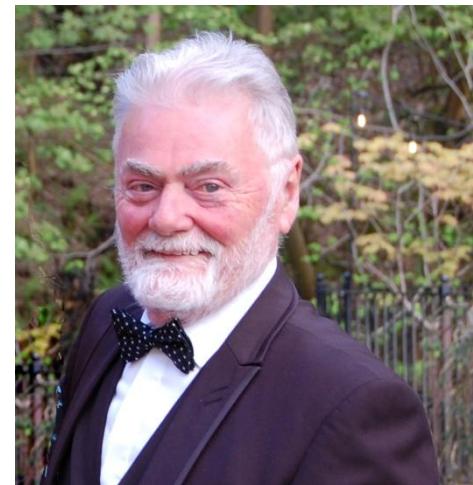
Matt breaks his duck.

The pattern has been clear for years. The 200 Club draw is announced and the winners identified.

Thereafter there's a sotto voce rumble of complaint from **Matt Houston** to the effect that he'd been paying into the 200 Club for donkey's years and has never seen a penny in winnings.

Well, blow me down, the other night Matt's number came up. The announcement was met with raucous cheers.

Matt seemed underwhelmed. But at least he can no longer claim to have missed out on every draw.



In fact, Matt's strike record is statistically unusual.

Your chances of winning in the 200 Club are way, way better than they would be in the National Lottery, for example.

Why not sign up!



Just one pound a week buys you one of the 200 Club numbers.

There's a good chance of winning: £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 Choir Secretary, Jenny, on **01484 645192**

Remember, even if you don't win, you win. That's because fully half of the money committed supports the Choir's endeavours to entertain and educate the Colne Valley community.



But more important than any of that; your Editor is happy to announce he's just been a lucky winner, once again.

Hurrah!

Coming soon - New Style LAMS

The 'Let All Men Sing' Community initiative is coming up again at the end of this month: **Saturday 28th February and Sunday March 1st** to be precise.

This time it will be a bit different. **Thom** and **Chris** will lead workshops at the **Civic in Slaithwaite**. And then after the Sunday afternoon session, participants will join in a celebratory concert with the main Choir in support - at Saint James's Church.

And even more exciting – this year's run of LAMS will be open to all voices – not just men but women and children, too.

It may be that a few 'Colne Valley Boys' will emerge. Maybe even a handful of men for the main Choir might surface. Who can say?

Well, what we can say is that it will be a fun weekend for all the participants.



Thanks to Alex Pearson in particular, for his social media advertising - not to mention his '**Reels**' featuring previous LAMS men - we are pleased that the word is spreading.

At last count, at least 25 people are registered with a month or so to go - VotV advice: - if you fancy giving it a go - don't delay in signing up.



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir  Colne Valley Male Voice Choir - Original audio

Don't miss out. Follow this link to the LAMS website and book you and your family in. You won't regret it!

www.letallmensing.co.uk



Trophies relocated

It was definitely the end of an era when Colne Valley Male Voice Choir shifted its rehearsal space to the neighbouring village of Linthwaite. It's a move we don't regret but after nearly 60 years at the Slaithwaite Conservative Club, it was a bit of a wrench.

This January, the final break was completed when a handful of Choir Stalwarts removed Choir trophies from the Club's bar area; lots of cups, medals, silverware, certificates, plaques and statuettes - **marking 100 years of successes** in competitions and festivals.

The haul even included the OBE presented by her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II to long-standing Conductor, **George E Stead** in 1968.



All is now recovered to storage facilities, as we think through where we might house and display these fruits of our glorious history. Perhaps a local museum?



Our real treasure - the Choir's Music Library - precious to no-one else but us of course - was moved to our new rehearsal space in Linthwaite months ago. Big Thanks to librarians, Keith and Peter for shifting it and the others who helped out.



Fire in the tunnel

All train services between Manchester and Leeds were halted the other day, when a fire broke out in the main Pennine tunnel, at the head of the Colne Valley, outside Marsden.



Standedge Railway Tunnel, Marsden



Second tenor, **Richard Holliday** was consulted. He works for the railway and is generally held by the choir personally responsible for delays - and just occasionally - for acts of engineering excellence. He tells us that during maintenance work an engine caught fire and did quite bit of damage.

He adds that all will be back to rights by the beginning of February.

Nothing less than we'd expect, Richard!

 **Colne Valley Male Voice Choir**
Est 1922

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