



A lovely way to spend an afternoon

...spend it in the Town Hall being entertained by band and choir.

Saturday at about tea-time, the hugely talented **Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band** struck up the opening measures of their matinée concert in the splendid Huddersfield Town Hall.

Behind the band, their invited guests, Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, keen to add their magnificent music to a menu of beloved hymns and marches - in a programme billed as the '**Amazing Grace**' concert.



Chris Wilson

Brighouse and Rastrick recently won yet another great victory at last year's **British Open Brass Band Championships**. The British Open is the oldest and most prestigious brass band contest in the world, where the very best bands compete to win its famous Gold Shield Trophy. The magnificent trophy plaque was on display in the Town Hall on Saturday.



As winners B&R are now preparing to represent the UK at the **European Brass Band Championships** in **Montreux**, Switzerland in 2027. Best of luck to them! As for our choir, we are still celebrating our record-breaking **52nd First Prize Victory** at the **Mrs Sunderland Choir Festival and Competition**.



The Band, as always, was in great form under their conductor for the afternoon **Dr. Jonathan Corry**.

Jonathan has a terrific track-record as a musician; he clearly loves his music and engages his audience with his enthusiasm.

The Choir can be a bit on edge when being conducted by a bandsman - neither Thom nor Chris were present. Sometimes band conductors don't fully take into account that their band performers have the music on the stands in front of them - the choir doesn't. But we were quickly reassured that our conductor was attuned to the special needs of choral singers and in our rehearsal prior to performance, Jonathan put us at our ease, then later, confidently provided the guidance needed to bring a broad smile to his face and - more importantly - to enthuse our audience too.

One audience member - a fan - adds....

'Loved the concert - it was brilliant. The conductor was quite entertaining too. The quiet clapping sign during the 'Radetzky March' encore was very amusing. I really enjoyed the lady on the xylophone. (Harriet Kwong). It was a great sound.



Chris Wilson



*It was also very pleasing that the Choir's own, **Raymond Ellis** was mentioned. Lovely that the band and the conductor dedicated "The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended" to his memory.'*

Second Tenor, **David Morrison**, who has missed a few rehearsals recently, was fit enough to attend the concert. He tells VotV it was a rare experience - you can't be both onstage singing and also with the audience on the balcony seats at the same time.

He reports, *"We really enjoyed it, all three of us, lovely programme - very moving at times. It made me realise how much I miss it!"*

Our Choir were superb. I've not heard us sing since 1997 when we were in Rhyl. After winning in the afternoon competition, I wasn't up to singing in the evening performance and joined the audience. And then the next time was Saturday afternoon.

It was brilliant but I'd rather be up on the risers singing."



photo:Chris Wilson

Behind the scenes



Matt, Tom Richard & Joe

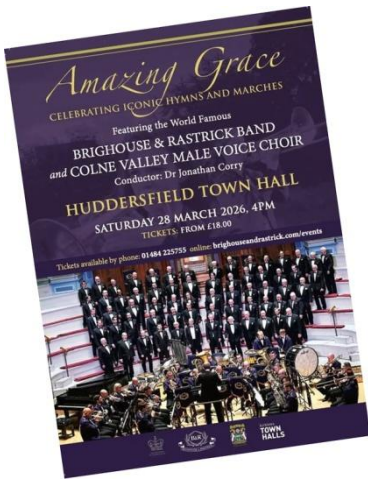


Librarians Keith & Peter



Steve with Joe & Tom

Damien - sporting his new Choir uniform - our latest member in his first Town Hall concert
Keith Lockwood - sporting a big smile



Furtive shot from a percussion player's phone



A wonderful life comes to an end;
we knew it was it was coming but it
was still a shock.

We feel for you, Thom and wish you well.



It was only the other Friday that Thom sent a message to the Choir via Chairman, Kieran that his wife, Lynn Meredith had moved into 'end-of-life care'.

That in itself was a blow. We had grown used to her brave determination to live life to the full, despite a cruel diagnosis. We somehow expected her to carry on.

Then, only a few days later, on the following Monday afternoon, Harry - Thom and Lynn's son posted this announcement that Lynn has passed away. He writes....

Today we say goodbye to our wonderful Mum and Wife Lynn Meredith, with so much love and gratitude in our hearts.



We want to thank everyone who sent messages, memories, and kind words over the past few days while she was at Kirkwood Hospice. We were able to sit with her and share them together, and it meant the world to see just how loved she is. As you can imagine, she agreed with all of you that she was indeed an incredible woman.

There's real comfort in knowing that her passing was peaceful, gentle, and truly beautiful. She went so calmly, surrounded by love, and that brings us a great sense of peace. We're choosing to hold onto the joy she brought into our lives — her warmth, her laughter, and all the special moments we have shared.

We will let you know when we have a date for her funeral, as you can imagine she has already planned it all out so we don't "mess it up".

We will miss you more than words can ever say, Lynn - a wonderful wife, amazing mum and our world.'

23/03/2026

At rehearsal on Monday night, Chairman Kieran told the Choir members the stark news. Visibly emotional, Kieran briefly related the circumstances of her peaceful death at Kirkwood Hospice and outlined her life in music and how fully she had supported Thom's career.

'Our thoughts and very best wishes are with the family as they come to terms with this devastating turn of events. The world is sadder, less interesting, and less colourful without her'.

It was Lynn, a talented choral conductor in her own right, who urged Thom to apply for the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir Conductorship. She has been a friend and champion of CVMVC for decades and solidly supported him and us over the next 37 years until her last days.

It is difficult to conceive of the Choir without Thom. And Thom has now lost 'an unfaltering source of support, inspiration, and guidance'.



'We expect,' said Kieran, that Thom will be back - Lynn powerfully urged him on that, too - but for now we will do our best to keep the Choir going as Thom takes whatever time he needs'.

For our part, the Choir extends our warmest condolences to Thom, in particular and to Harry and Ellie. Their loss is immense and, as Thom's friends and loyal band of singers, we feel it too.

Lynn's funeral service, Thom tells *VotV*, will be held at 1.30pm on Tuesday 21st April at St Stephen's Church, Lindley, HD3 3JB with a reception afterwards at Manor House.

LAMS & Friends - another triumph



Let All Men Sing and Friends was tested in its new format in March.

Run as a weekend of fun and singing, the programme featured workshops with Thom and Chris. These culminated in an informal concert with Colne Valley Boys and the adult Choir at our local church in Slaitthwaite.

This year, LAMS was run not just for men but also welcomed boys and girls and adult women, too.

It was hoped that maybe some wives or kids might urge their dads to participate – maybe some who maybe wouldn't have signed up without a bit of family pressure and solidarity.

Judging by the feedback *VotV* received, the weekend was reckoned to be a real pleasure and people were amazed by what they learned in just a couple of days.

Well done everybody!



Photo: Chris Wilson

It definitely worked as a happy community event - people had a good time whether as participants or as audience members. And there have been many requests to run it again.

Has it worked in terms of Choir recruitment?

It's too early to tell but *VotV* gathers that a handful of 'boys' and of adult men are reckoning to sing in with the choirs with a view to possible membership.



Photo: Chris Wilson

Alex's Charter



Alex - part of the team shedding new light on historic Charter's unlikely survival

Choir member, **Alex Pearson**, when he's not singing, is an Archives Assistant with West Yorkshire Archive Service. Just recently, he has been closely involved with a most significant document in the history of Leeds. The original **400 year old Leeds Royal Charter** was lost in the English Civil War but fortunately this faithful copy was made in 1646 and is now going on display.

'This ancient copy very nearly didn't make it, either. It was rescued from being turned into a lampshade,' so Alex tells Voice of the Valley'.

Alex and his fellow archivists, in a recent press release, tell a fascinating story:-

It's one of the most important documents in the history of Leeds.

The one-of-a-kind copy of the Leeds Royal Charter, written centuries ago, was about to be repurposed as an unusual decorative feature by the unwitting owner of a Canterbury book shop in the 1950s.

Fortunately, a chance consultation with a friendly expert disclosed that the delicately inscribed text was the sole remaining copy of the Royal Charter first granted to Leeds by King Charles I in 1626.

Records show Mr C E Cheshire, the owner of the bookshop, had purchased it at a village sale in east Kent before it fell behind a bookcase at his shop, where it lay forgotten for the next six years.

Upon rediscovering it, he asked his archivist friend to take a look at what he initially thought was just a piece of antique vellum.

But when the true significance of his extraordinary find came to light, the Corporation of Leeds quickly put plans in motion to secure the charter, offering to buy it for £10 and 10 shillings.

However, in a noble gesture, Mr Cheshire instead decided to gift the document back to the people of Leeds, writing on July 8, 1952: *“As we now realise the importance of this missing link in your civic history we would like you to ask the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the Corporation if they would accept this Copy of the Charter as a gift to the Citizens of Leeds from my Son (C E Cheshire Junr) and myself.”*

Today the precious parchment resides at the West Yorkshire Archive Service in Leeds, where it will soon go on display as part this year’s Leeds 400 celebrations, which will see the city come together to mark four centuries since the charter was bestowed on the city.

Beautifully inked on animal skin in Latin, the document itself dates from 1646, and is a precise copy of its 1626 counterpart that was urgently written as a replacement by 17th century scribes after the original was lost during the English Civil War.

The granting of the prestigious charter changed the course of the city’s history, laying the foundations of modern-day Leeds by incorporating it as a “free borough” and a “body corporate and politic.”

Alex Pearson, archives assistant with West Yorkshire Archive Service, said: *“The charter is a truly impressive document and a physical representation of what was without a doubt one of the most significant moments in the history of Leeds.*

“It’s astonishing to think the only remaining copy almost became a lampshade, and it goes to show how even the most important documents can sometimes crop up in the most unlikely places.

“Not only did having a Royal Charter give the city a considerable amount of added prestige at the time, it also laid down some of the pivotal political, economic and social rules which helped the city take control of its own destiny and begin to grow into the place we know today.

“Four hundred years later, we can still see the massive impact the charter had on Leeds and as the city celebrates this historic year, it’s a privilege to give people the chance to see such a remarkable piece of heritage in person.”



Well done Alex.

Brian does 25 years



Brian Hearn – the second tenor has many friends in the Choir. He was warmly congratulated the other night for having completed 25 years of membership. A quarter of a century of singing with us – no mean feat.

It was Brian who took on perhaps one of the most useful, though least appreciated tasks in the Choir – that of '**Wardrobe Master**'. It fell to Brian, for many years, to ensure new members got kitted out with Choir uniforms and when members changed shape – generally around the middle – he would endeavour to fit them out. He 's handed on his tape measure now and can just enjoy the pleasure of singing with us – hopefully for many, many more years to come

Well done Brian.

Sarah steps up

The very lovely, Sarah Ogden stepped in to help out in Thom's absence. An old friend of the Choir, Sarah found time in her busy schedule to drop into Linthwaite to lead a couple of rehearsals.

She's so good, does her homework, knows what she wants and doesn't hold back in telling us. She generally urges us to bring out the emotion and the poetry in our singing – maybe even our feminine side – and she's dead right to do it.

Of course Sarah is not the only one who has stepped into the breach. The Choir is very grateful for Chris's role in keeping us on track. And Benjamin, too, has done great work accompanying our rehearsal leaders.

Thom dropped in at half time on Sarah's rehearsal on Monday. All being well, he told us, he'll be back mid-April to resume directing us.



&Piano Festival 2026

Our esteemed pianist, **Chris Pulleyn**, aided by outgoing Chairman, **Kieran Chadha** are once again running their acclaimed **&Piano Festival** – now established as the cultural highlight of the Slaithwaite Year.



With a diverse range of events on Saturday April 25th and Saturday May 2nd there will be plenty to entertain engage and delight.

With Chris both playing piano and introducing a wealth of talent, they will be lots to enjoy.

Follow this link for more information:-

<https://mailchi.mp/92fb6912c785/piano-music-festival-2024-is-coming-14048337?e=2d44e18d54>

Colne Valley Male Voice Choir
Est 1922

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