



A horrifying tale but true

Many a Voice of the Valley reader will have fond memories of **Jack Smith**, or John Smith as he was christened. He was a Second Tenor for years and he always had a good story.

At one time he told me a tale, suggesting he was very lucky to have joined the Choir at all.

It all goes back to when he was 13 or so, just after the war. This was in 1946. He told me this story and it has taken me a long time to verify it. Jack had quite an imagination so I wondered for a while if it was apocryphal.



It turns out to be 100% true and it's a shocking story about a devastating explosion.

Jack and his pals find a bomb!

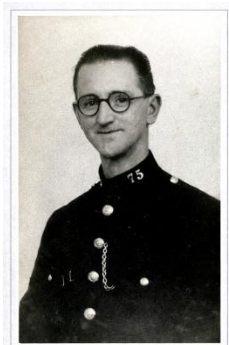
It seems that Jack and his pals, when they were just young lads, heard that during the War a German aircraft had crashed on the moors somewhere near Deer Hill above Meltham and they set out to find it. They didn't manage to find any wrecked plane but they did come across some fins sticking out of the ground on the moors above Meltham and they dug away at it and unearthed what looked like a bomb. Well, they set it up on a dry-stone stone wall and threw rocks at it - all good fun.



Later there was a bit of an argument as to who was to get to keep this trophy. Jack told me that he only lost that argument because he suddenly remembered he had to get back to do his paper round back in Cowlersley. It was his mate, John Chapman, who got to keep it and he took it home on the bus.

Seemingly, whilst Jack was delivering his newspapers, there was an enormous explosion near his home on Winget Avenue.

(The street is still there but not the original houses. Al has clarified the picture of the house in the local paper - presumably taken before the explosion.



Anyway, Jack went on, it was his father, the local bobby who lived very nearby who was the first to arrive. He came across a scene of utter destruction. The house was pretty well destroyed.

It was clear that the bomb, found on Meltham Moor and taken home by one of Jack's pals, John Chapman, had gone off.

The lad's father, who was a veteran from the D-Day landings, apparently felt he had the skills to defuse it. Well, it turned out he was wrong.

Jack's pal, was instantly killed, so were his father and his aunt. His mother, who wandered hurt and bleeding into the street calling for help, survived.

A neighbour, Mrs. Beatrice Wilson, who had gone round to see Mrs Chapman so that they could go to 'the pictures' together, was also very badly injured and taken off to hospital. They amputated her legs in an attempt to save her but a few days after the event, she became the fourth victim when, the injuries that she'd sustained proved to be terminal. It seems she died while her husband was at the triple funeral in Linthwaite Church.



Mr. Chapman



John Chapman



Jack Smith (seen as a boy in his Army Cadet Uniform, above) carried the coffin of his pal, John Chapman.

He told me he often thought that he would never have managed to join the Choir if he'd been the one to win that argument and take the bomb home with him instead.

The shocking story comes to light

At the time, Jack told me this tale, your Editor, tried to research it, but with a name as common as John Smith to look up, you don't get very far, even in these days of internet searches.

However I had the good fortune recently to meet with a leading light of the Meltham-based **Huddersfield and District Family History Society**, **Maureen Wheeler**. (<https://hdfhs.org.uk/>)



I began to relate it to her and she exclaimed, 'I know this story.' Subsequently she has kindly sent VotV copies of the contemporary reports in the Huddersfield Examiner. It seems that the only thing that I misunderstood from Jack's initial telling of the tale was that the event took place, not in Golcar, where I thought it had happened, but in nearby Cowlersley, just across on the other side of our Colne Valley.

Thanks, too, to Andrew Smith for the photographs of his Dad and Grandfather



Why do I mention this story now?

Well we were immensely grateful for Jack's survival.

He was in the second tenors for 47 years and his older brother, **Melvin**, was also a stalwart of the Choir for many years, too - indeed our one-time Librarian.





It's also because Melvin had been married to **Doris Smith**. She was - because of Melvin's enthusiasm presumably - also a keen supporter of the Choir.

Later, the childless widow of Melvin, she continued to have close links with CVMVC via a very good and close relationship with Jack Smith, her brother-in-law, right until his death a year or so ago.



It turns out that when Doris, herself, passed away quite recently, she remembered us in her will.

Much to our surprise, that bequest, which has only just arrived, turns out to be fairly substantial. It will be very useful in boosting Choir savings and hence in securing our financial future for the coming decades.

Thank you, Doris.

Your Editor has been unable to find a photo of Doris Smith. (If you have one, do please send it in.)

But we do have this fascinating tale.

And a record of the incident that so nearly put paid to Jack's long career as a singer.



Readers who may want to see the original reports and transcripts can see it all in the special PDF edition, available on our website on this link.

<https://colnevalleymvc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Bomb-story-full-reports.pdf>

Our Next Concert



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MALE VOICE CHOIR
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Thom Meredith
ACCOMPANIST
Christopher Pulleyn
Registered Charity Number 500324

200 Club - Matt wins again

Matt Houston can be relied on to make a curmudgeonly comment, claiming he's been in the 200 Club for 40 years and has never seen a penny. When his number came up a month or so back - true to form - he claimed it was his wife, Linda, who won the prize - not him, not at all!

Well he was lost for words, briefly, when just the other night his number came up **again**, leaving him with nothing to complain about and few quid in his pocket.

There are lots of winners in our 200 Club - two big £1,000 prizes every year and plenty more besides. So get yourself a number - or another one - and start winning!



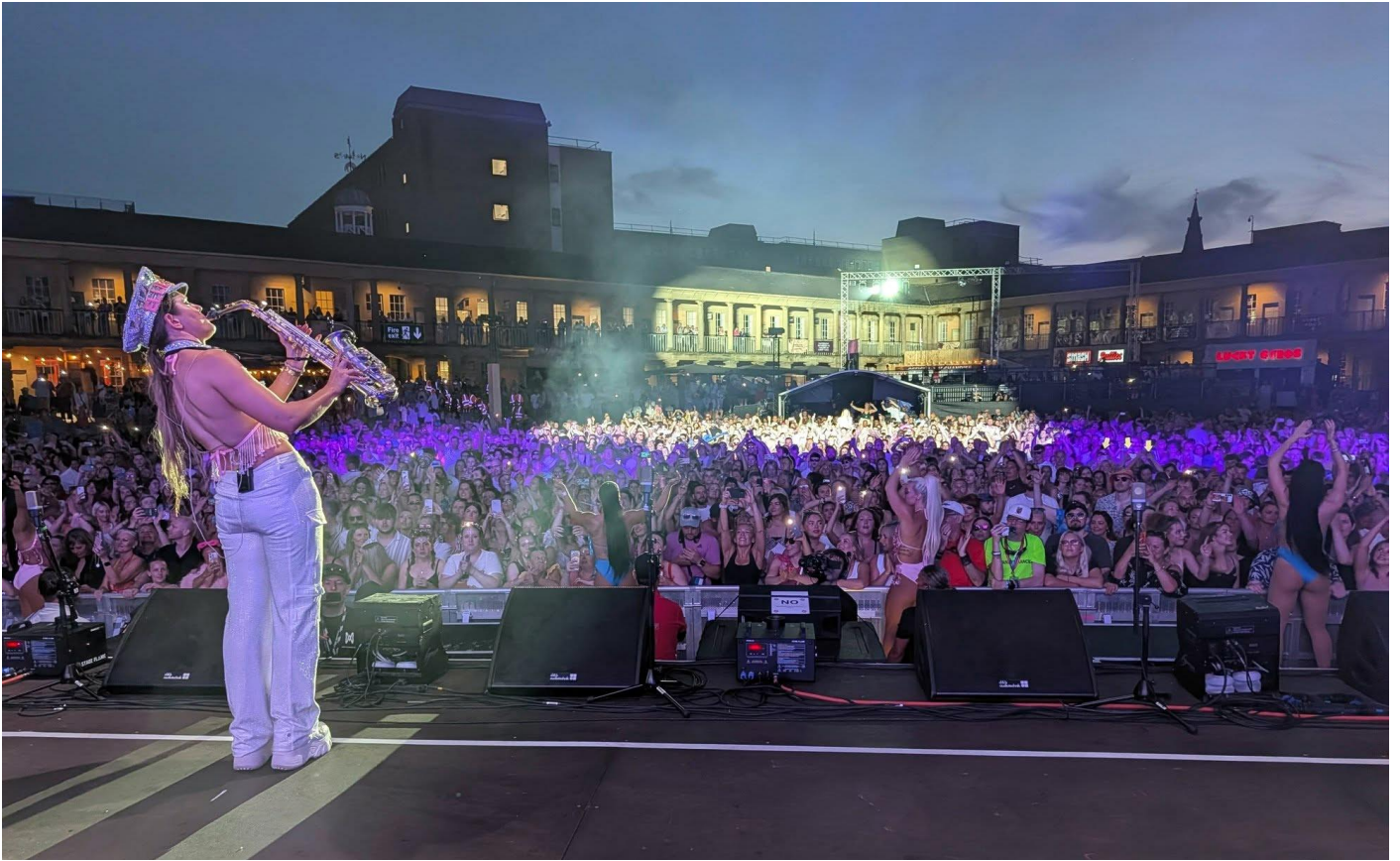
	£45 in prize money weekly, £185 in the monthly draw and two whopping £1,000 draws each year. Even if you don't win, you win - because half of the fund supports Choir concerts and performances. Contact Tom Jennings at:- 200club@colnevalleymvc.co.uk	
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Dr Max

Your Editor can't remember which Choir member thrust this clipping into his hand the other week. Nor does he know who Dr Max is. But he's pretty sure she's dead right about singing.

Rich still buzzing after **Ellie Sax** at the Piece Hall



A few weeks on from that lovely summer evening in Halifax, I still find myself reflecting on what a special experience it was to be part of the finale for Ellie Sax.

I've been a member of CVMVC for just over two years now and have enjoyed every minute, but this really stood out as a highlight. Performing music that's a little outside our usual repertoire brought a different kind of energy, and it was great to challenge ourselves while connecting with a new audience.



It was also great fun to "hang out" with choir members prior to our performance, dancing (or swaying gently) to Ellie and Harry putting on such a fantastic show.



It was a memorable evening from start to finish, and I feel genuinely grateful to have been part of it.

Rich



Hi everyone,

Last year during August, in the period of no rehearsal, I've organised a quiz night with a pie and pea supper.

I've organised another for the 17th August at Marsden Golf Club 7.00 pm onwards.

For the benefit of those who won't be at rehearsal on Monday could you let me know if you are taking part and how many of your party there will be.

Price per person is £6

*Thanks
Andrew
Chair*



Choir Day and Lakes Tour agreed

Choir organisers, working with new chairman, **Andrew** have cleared the way for two super bonus projects for the Choir in the next few months.

Firstly there will be a special 'Choir Day' in October. Members will be treated to a day of singing, with new music, vocal coaching, group work and lots more all in the convivial spaces at **Bower's Mill**, near Barkisland. (HX4 0AD)

Lunch, in-course refreshments and all the musical components will be **free of charge** to our members. It'll be a good do - both chorally and socially. So, it's a special - just for CVMVC members. Do clear space in your diaries to be there.

As a further attraction, there will be a social dinner that evening for members and their partners/guests. We know the Bower's Mill catering is top-class and with some, substantial, Choir subsidy, the price for the full evening meal will be held at just £25.00 per head.



Lakes Tour

The Choir has been planning a tour of the Lake District for some time. The dates should now be fixed - **Friday 4th to Sunday 6th June 2027** - and while many details remain to be sorted out - the Choir has decided it can provide a generous contribution to reduce costs to the individual singers to ensure that all our singers can participate. (Singers should note - as has been the case for decades - that should any members be constrained by financial difficulties, a discreet word with their Section Leader can result in additional help.)

The committee recognises that our singers have plenty of commitments but we strongly urge all members to free the dates above so that the maximum number can take part. The tour will allow people to see something of the glorious countryside and bond with fellow singers. Perhaps the highlight will be a concert at the magnificent Carlisle Cathedral. This would form part of three engagements over the weekend, including Carmel Priory and Kendal Parish Church.



Fuller details will emerge shortly and, as we are designing it to be somewhat flexible, there will be scope for singers to tailor their engagement.

Be there - it will be brilliant!

Eric Cooper leaves this world

Those who have been Choir members for a few years - indeed almost all fans of choir singing and of the music scene locally - will have heard with some sadness the news of the death of our friend, Eric Cooper, towards the end of June.



For many years Eric sang with the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir, initially with the basses but latterly with the second tenors.

He was a wonderfully accomplished musician and a hugely enthusiastic advocate of choral music, singing with and conducting many choirs locally and supporting the development of music in many ways - in latter years as chairman of the Association of Yorkshire Choirs.

His musical talent became evident early on in his life - as a very young man he won the Rose Bowl at the Mrs Sunderland Music Festival for spectacular virtuosity on the cello - just one of his instruments.

He recalled with some amusement that his accompanist at the Mrs Sunderland Competition was another young chap, **Keith Swallow** and that they didn't play together again until 60 years later when Eric and Keith did a solo spot in a Colne Valley concert in Clifton.



Eric and Keith rehearse before the Clifton concert



Eric's 1958 medal in the Open Cello Class.

Eric played in a myriad of different ensembles as an individual but his career was given over to Music and the education of young musicians - he was in charge of one of the forerunners of the Kirklees Music School, indefatigably devoted to introducing children and adults to the abiding joys of choral and orchestral accomplishments.

The keen-eyed will spot Eric with the second tenors at a lovely collaborative concert we did with the Lindley Junior School Choir



Eric was noted for his sometimes mischievous wit. And for his strong opinions. He wasn't afraid to take a pop at anyone or any organisation - but always genially. You could call him an activist, always keen to support his musical causes with vigour. He was also keenly interested and alert to politics and not without some degree of scepticism. Here we see him protesting unneeded road building.



But, whether you agreed with him or not, he was typically good-humoured and without rancour.

Just shy of his 88th birthday, when he died, Eric surely made his mark in life.

He will be missed.

RIP Eric Cooper

Reet lads - 'ats off

In a stunt for social media - and frankly just for the fun of it - our rehearsing of "Ilkla Moor baht 'at" was videoed on Monday night. We had previously been admonished to "bring us flat 'ats wi' us" to create the mood.



It's an initiative from bass, **Alex Pearson**.

The piece is as traditional a Yorkshire favourite as you can get but we do it in a clever arrangement, which whips through the old anthem at a hectic pace with piano excerpts from the 'Wedding March' as we go '**courting Mary Jane**' and from the Chopin Death March as we catch our '**deeath o' cowl**'.



It was written by renowned bandsman, **Bill Relton**.

Bill was a famous conductor and onetime trumpet player with our friends in the Brighouse & Rastrick Brass Band.



It will figure, no doubt in our autumn repertoire.



As for the Social Media Impact, the video was only released on '**Yorkshire Day**' - the day this issue went out - but VotV reckons it will be substantial.

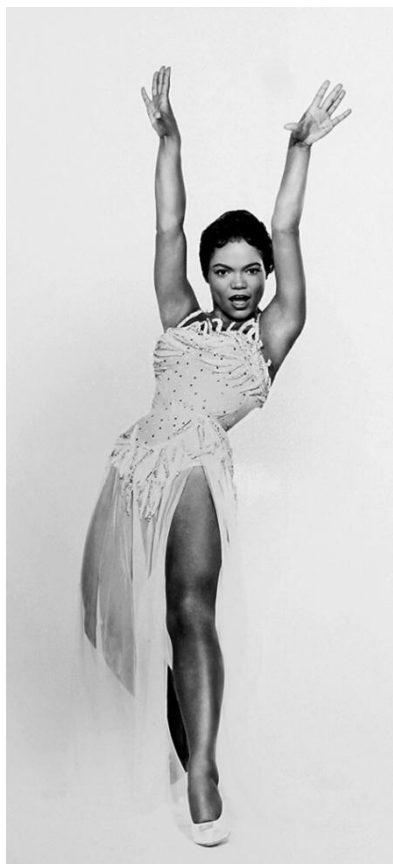
Here's the youtube version.

<https://youtu.be/MOvDnG81pXA>

Well done Alex

Eeh bah gum – a postscript

Eartha Kitt, once labelled the 'Most Exciting Woman in the World' was filmed by the BBC in 1970 learning 'Ilkla Moor baht 'at' with the good folk of nearby Batley, teaching her.



[Click here or on the 1970's TV to enjoy this - it's a good watch .](#)



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir

Est 1922

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And see the website to get the full story: colnevalleymvc.org.uk

For those who want a deeper dive, the full 'Bomb Story' is available as a pdf in the 'Newsletters' section.

<https://colnevalleymvc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Bomb-story-full-reports.pdf>