

RossenTales

The Magazine of Rossendale Male Voice Choir



In this issue:

- P3 Centenary Shows
- P5 Permanent Tributes
- P6 On tour in Belgium
- P8 Civic Pride and Friends
- P9 Farewells
- P10 New members
- P11 A Quiz
- P12 Irwell Shantymen
- P13 Fundraising / Charity
- P14 Travel – the Camino
- P16 Here comes the bride!
- P17 Gone Fishing
- P18 Jolly Japes
- P19 Centenary Dinners
- P20 Britain's Got Talent
- P21 Get Involved!

What a magnificent year we've had celebrating 100 years of the choir's history. Inside this special edition of our magazine you can read all about it. To whet your appetite, here are some of the highlights:

We marked the start of our centenary year with a spectacular concert on 14th March 2024 - in the Church of St Mary and All Saints, Goodshaw - exactly 100 years to the day on which Fred Tomlinson and the other founder members met in Spencer's Café in Rawtenstall to form the choir. We were delighted to be joined by several members of the Tomlinson family and a great supporter - our Honorary Patron, Catherine Bott.

The year has been filled with events including our visit to Belgium, a sell-out concert with internationally famous tenor Sean Ruane, and many performances with other friends including the Rossendale Scout band and local schools. It has also been 'topped and tailed' by two highly enjoyable Centenary Dinners.

Sadly, some of our past and current members have died during the year and we extend our deepest sympathies to their families and friends. We also welcome the new members who have joined and are contributing to a growing and thriving choir.

In April '24 we recorded some of our favourite pieces to create a CD which will provide a lasting record of the choir as it is 'today'.

In May '24, after much deliberation, we moved our practice venue from St Peter's Church, Haslingden - our happy home for many years and to whose (now retired) vicar, Rev Stephen, and congregation we are very grateful - to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Rawtenstall where we have been warmly welcomed by Bishop Ivan and church members and have settled in really well.

We have been developing our links with the local community, taking opportunities to sing in support of local events - sometimes as the RMV Choir and sometimes as our off-shoot, the Irwell Shantymen - and also donating funds to our chosen charities.

Whilst singing binds us together, the choir is an eclectic mix with a wide variety of personalities, life experiences, interests, skills, views and senses of humour. This is evident from the contributions to our WhatsApp chats and the various activity groups that have sprung up e.g. walking, fishing, cycling, lunchtime concerts, golf, the 'Cheeky Vimto Club' and the Monday night pub-goers. And then out of the blue.....

We were approached by the team behind 'Britain's Got Talent' to audition for the show - which we did in October 2024. What a day we had and how we enjoyed the performance - as you can now see on ITVx and YouTube.

Overall, it's been a great year and we look forward very much to continuing to build strong foundations for the next 100 years of Rossendale Male Voice Choir.

➤ **If you enjoy listening to singing**, we would love to see you at our future concerts and events. You are assured of a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Join our email list.

➤ **If you enjoy singing - or think you might enjoy singing!** - come along and join us on a Monday night practice. You are assured of a warm welcome, encouragement and any support you might want to develop your singing.

➤ **If you would like to support us**, we would be delighted if you would become a Patron or Sponsor of the choir.

All contact details on the back page

Thank you for your interest and we hope you enjoy reading.

Rossendale Male Voice Choir - as seen on Britain's Got Talent



The Centenary Shows

We started planning for the centenary year - particularly the Centenary Shows - way back in 2020 when Covid-19 was affecting everything - not just singing. Thanks to: the vision of Matthew Thomas our MD; the drive and phenomenal research, script-writing (with Geoff Blow, Baritone) and IT efforts of Peter Ormerod (Bass); the hard work of the Events team led by Chris Calvert (Baritone Section Leader); and the 'show business' experience of our accompanist Liz Baker, husband Tony and son Jonathan, the choir delivered memorable experiences for our audiences - and ourselves.

The first Centenary Show was presented to an invited audience at the Church of St Mary and All Saints, Goodshaw on Thursday 14th March 2024 - 100 years to the day after the founding members of Rossendale Male Voice Choir met at Spencer's Café in Rawtenstall to form the choir and appoint Fred Tomlinson as their temporary MD 'until they found someone better'. 50 years on he was still leading the choir.

The audio-visual presentations co-ordinated with the singing of the choir to reflect 100 years of history - of the choir, the Rossendale Valley, the country and the world in general - skilfully linked together by our narrator Tony Nixon (Rossendale Radio).

The Centenary show was a triumphant combination of singing and social history that both entertained and made an emotional impact - particularly on those with longstanding connections to the choir.

It was so good that we repeated the show for wider audiences - on 11th October 2024 at St Mary's Church, Rawtenstall and on 8th February 2025 at Dundee United Reform Church in Ramsbottom. We also have recordings for the choir archive that we hope will be of interest many years in the future - during the bicentennial perhaps?

Connecting with Past Members of RMVC

Paul Dickinson (Top Tenor and RMVC Welfare Officer) writes.....

The 2024 Centenary was a very special year for the Choir and the Events group wanted to ensure that the year was full of opportunities: to make memories for everybody and especially to honour all past and retired members who have made the choir so special. I offered to research past members who had either died or retired from singing; without them the choir would not be where we are today. Retired members were easy as many of them were singing members when I joined in 2000. Their details are recorded and contacting them was straightforward. It was also crucial to remember those deceased members so I asked current choir members to put me in contact with their relatives in order to invite a family member to join in our celebrations by attending our March Centenary concert. We were pleased to invite family members of Fred and Ernest Tomlinson, our three other past Musical Directors, and Molly Lancaster, daughter of Joe Ashworth who helped persuade Fred to start the choir in 1924. This first event of our year was very exciting. For the first time we produced a show with the choir's history being shown through film and newsreel footage to accompany the songs we have sung over our hundred years. It was a privilege to speak to everybody and invite them to our show but even more special to see their reactions on seeing their family on screen enjoying singing with choir.

If you are, or know of, a past member of the choir who would like to get in touch with us then please contact Paul via our secretary:

[Email: peterbeetham@hotmail.com](mailto:peterbeetham@hotmail.com) or phone 07808 733892



'The giants on whose shoulders we stand'. Clockwise from top left: Bank Street, Rawtenstall where it all started; in concert in Whitaker Park; maestro Fred in full flow; ready for the TV documentary cameras; in Llangollen; Triumphant at the Eisteddfod.



The Centenary Shows.....



Two Permanent RMVC Tributes

Geoff Blow (Baritone) writes....

Peter Ormerod (Bass) and I started to write the narrative to accompany the videos for the centenary shows back in 2022. Re-reading the History of the choir, I found two addresses for the Tomlinsons on Beech St, but later the family lived at 6 Derby Terrace. I thought "There ought to be a Blue Plaque on that house". I asked the choir's good friend, County Councillor Anne Chesham, who granted us the funds to purchase, not a blue plaque but a black and white one, and suggested it would look best in Rawtenstall Library. This was duly installed in October 2023, by guest of honour Geoff Tomlinson, Fred's grandson (above).



My second distraction from the narrative was harder. I felt we needed an information panel in the town centre to catch the eye of visitors and residents alike. Thankfully, Peter picked up the idea and ran with it, following the structure he'd decided upon for the show. Once we'd created the artwork and wording, the panel was produced. With advice from Elie Constantinides (Second Tenor), construction by Bill Hughes (Bass), assistance from Paul Heaton (Baritone), and a further grant from RBC Communities Fund, we installed it in Town Square in April 2024 (pictured below).



We hope these solid memorials will be long-lasting tributes to our founder, our conductors and the choir.

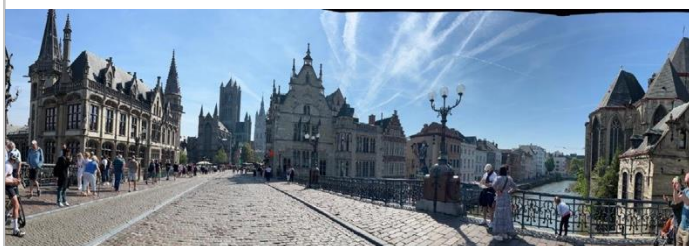
On Tour in Belgium

As part of our centenary celebrations, on 10th May 2024, the choir embarked on a trip to Belgium to enjoy a wonderful mix of singing, sight-seeing and social events. We travelled by coach, on hire from Belle Vue, Manchester with two expert drivers one of whom was Top Tenor Michael Banham-Guerrero - a 'Busman's Holiday' for him!

We were based in the beautiful city of Ghent where, by a happy coincidence, a food and drink festival was in full swing. We enjoyed an evening of impromptu singing around the streets, both surprising and delighting the locals who gave us a great reception.



Strolling around the sun-lit streets the following morning we were entertained by a pair of buskers - a very talented singer, Marjolien Acke, accompanied on keyboard by her brother, Elewout. They accepted our invitation to perform during our concert later that day in the splendid Sint-Baafskathedraal. What a pleasure it was for all of us to sing in such beautiful surroundings with those resounding acoustics!



The following day we travelled towards the town of Ypres and had a poignant tour of the WW1 landmarks and cemeteries - Tyne Cot and the Langemark German Cemetery - giving us the opportunity to reflect on the immense loss of life on both sides and to pay our respects to the fallen.

The mood was lightened during the afternoon as our visit to Ypres happened to coincide with the Kattenstoet - the triennial 'Cat Festival' that draws great crowds to the town for a huge parade of giant mannequins, floats, musicians and dancers which is followed by the ceremonial throwing of toy cats from the belfry tower. Depending on which story you believe, this bizarre event reflects the association of cats with witchcraft or their role in vermin control to protect woven cloth in mediaeval times.



That evening, our thoughts returned to World War 1. We had the privilege and honour of taking part in the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres. The Menin Gate is the memorial to the British and Commonwealth soldiers who were killed in the Ypres Salient of WW1 and whose graves are unknown.

On Tour in Belgium (Continued)



During the ceremony, we sang 'Sing Your Way Home' and 'Only Remembered' - a song from the film War Horse - which was led by Geoff Whitehead (Baritone). The Last Post ceremony included the laying of wreaths by family and friends of the choir on behalf of RMVC, Rossendale Borough Council and the wider community, Helmshore British Legion and, for those whose relatives had died during WW1, their own families.



The fabulous city of Bruges was the destination for our final outing. We had time to sample its many delights: its stunning architecture, the canals, moules-frites, Trappist beers, chocolate, waffles etc and, of course, we had time to sing, entertaining the crowds out in the open air of the Grand Place.



We gave our final concert of the tour - including solo performances from John Chadwick (Second Tenor) Chris Calvert (Baritone) and Mike Black (Bass) - at the magnificent Sint-Salvatorskathedraal which is Bruges' oldest parish church dating from the 12th century.

On the final evening, we gathered for a celebration meal in Ghent during which several of the choir were unfortunate enough to be awarded 'prizes' (presented by Paul Heaton (Baritone) and Kevin Downes (Second Tenor) to mark their notable contributions to the tour ranging from their ability to dress in the correct uniform (or not!) to providing instantaneous translations from English to Flemish, or French or German or???)



The following day, we arrived back in Haslingden after a restful ferry crossing and coach journey to end a memorable trip - for those lucky enough to experience it - and with thanks to our drivers and our organiser in chief, Peter Beetham (Baritone).

Civic Pride Rossendale create The RMVC flower bed

Roger Roundell (Bass) writes.....

For the past 7 years I have been a volunteer with Civic Pride Rossendale, which included serving 5 years on the operations committee. I joined RMVC in the summer of 2022 and in spring 2024, to commemorate the choir's centenary, Civic Pride Rossendale created a flower bed in Sparrow Park Rawtenstall (aka Library Gardens). Rawtenstall was entered into the RHS "Britain in Bloom NW 2024 competition under the large town category and Sparrow park was included in the route the judges took around the town centre. Sparrow Park was also entered into the pocket park category. On judging day in July the choir suddenly entered the park from Church Pad singing 'Seize the Day' - much to the delight of the judges - and continued to sing as they lined up behind the flower bed. The two judges were "well impressed". On the 31st October we found out that they were also impressed with the Town and the Park when the results were revealed at the award ceremony held at the Bolton Wanderers Stadium: both entries were awarded Gold!!



Rossendale has talent!

We are fortunate to have a lot of musical talent in the Rossendale valley and we were delighted to join, in concerts during our centenary year, two particular friends of the choir: internationally renowned tenor, Sean Ruane and the inspirational leader of Rossendale Scout Band, Graham Helm.

With Sean, we sang to a full house at the Royal Court Theatre, Bacup, thrilling the audience with a mix of solo and choral singing. What a night!

With Graham and the very talented Scout Band, we enjoyed a Christmas concert combining brass and voice to great effect in the Circle, Bacup. Separately from the concert, our Chairman, Charles Crowley, was very pleased to be asked to present Graham with a BBC 'Ray of Sunshine' award for his stellar work with the band, particularly the young musicians.



Farewell to our departed members....



On September 5th 2024 the choir assembled once again at St Peter's Church in Haslingden, to say goodbye to one of our longest serving members, bass Ray Tunnicliffe. Ray was many things in his family and professional lives, and in the choir he was an institution, being one of the few to have served under the legendary musical director, Beatrice Wade. For many of these years he graced the baritone section, but after a short sabbatical, he returned to join the basses. Ray was devoted to the choir and formed lasting friendships within it however he avoided taking on posts of responsibility in the choir, deciding that he had enough voluntary commitments with his work for Haslingden Cricket Club, his love of the guitar and his service on the Rossendale Magistrates' Bench. It was only when current MD

Matthew Thomas asked every member to contribute to his vision for expanding the choir's reach that Ray took a leading role in the Music Development group - helping to shape repertoire for the concerts in our centenary year, 2024. It is especially sad that Ray's final illness deprived him of the chance to take part in all the concerts and other centenary events. So it was that we met again at our former rehearsal venue to play our small part in Ray's funeral, singing Gwahoddiad at his request, and Sing Your Way Home, as his coffin left the church. Such a strong character as Ray was already missed, but all the more now that he has "crossed the Bar"



Rex Trippier was one of the 'giants on whose shoulders we stand' as current members of the choir. Rex was Headmaster at St James CofE Primary School in Blackburn, an avid traveller, reader and gardener. He enjoyed the daily Times crossword and loved going to Bridgewater Hall and the Halle Classical music. As a member of Rossendale Male Voice Choir in the 1950's, Rex contributed to the choir's magnificent four wins at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod including the outstanding achievement of three consecutive wins. At his funeral on March 5th, 2025 at St Mary and All Saints Church, Crawshawbooth, the current choir was proud to sing, in honour of Rex, Gwahoddiad and Softly as I Leave You.



On 19th March 2025 the choir gathered at St James' Church Haslingden to to bid a sad and fond farewell to Ian Turnbull. Ian sang as a top tenor with the choir from 2011 and leaves a lasting impression with us for his singing, and beaming smile which he maintained even when suffering for several years with Parkinson's disease. Ian was much-loved by his family and friends for his warm personality, sense of humour and deep knowledge - particularly of the Romans - which he was keen to share. The choir was proud to sing in Ian's honour: Gwahoddiad, Baba Yetu (at his request as it was his favourite) and Sing your Way home.

Welcome to our new members

We are delighted that the choir continues to grow in number and we warmly welcome all new members. We encourage anyone who is thinking of joining us to stop thinking about it and do it! Two of our newer members share their thoughts on joining the choir.....

Dave Fielding (Bass) writes.....

I am one of the newer members in Rossendale Male Voice Choir. I joined RMVC in May 2024 after learning about the choir through a friend. Joining any choir as a new member can be quite daunting but my concerns were quickly allayed as I was immediately made welcome into the group. The simple joining process was quick and seamless. When I started my hobby, singing in choirs, like many men I had the same excuses: "I can't sing", "it's not for me"....but all these excuses were quickly dismissed as I was proved wrong. Anyone can sing and with a little guidance as to how to use your voice to get the best of it you will soon be making a great sound. Since joining RMVC I haven't looked back.

I now look forward to our weekly rehearsal evenings and to me they are 2 hours of pure escapism from the stresses of modern day life. RMVC is not only a choir but a family into which you are quickly and warmly welcomed. The collective sound we make is great and the friends you quickly make are always there for help and guidance. But be aware, it is very addictive and you will very quickly be looking forward to your next rehearsal or concert. The whole experience of singing with a group is so rewarding and as a choir member you will never be asked to sing on your own or be embarrassed, the camaraderie experienced in RMVC is second to none and you will very quickly feel part of the family. Joining the choir is by far one of the best things I have ever done.

Ian Hargreaves (Bass) writes.....

Born in Rossendale, I was encouraged over 50 years ago by my mother to join Rossendale Male Voice Choir, a successful choir conducted by Fred Tomlinson. A young family and every spare minute playing tennis meant that I never had the time to join the choir even though I had a passion for music and singing.

Eventually I did join a male voice choir, but it was Nelson Arion Male Voice Choir, a successful choir, which, like Rossendale, had won the Llangollen International Eisteddfod for three consecutive years. When the Arion folded after singing for over 135 years, and beginning to miss the camaraderie of a male voice choir, I fulfilled my mother's wishes and joined the Rossendale Male Voice Choir.

I joined the choir in the midst of their centenary year performances, and despite how busy they were at the time, received many warm welcomes from choir members. My induction into the choir was smooth, thanks to the help from Steve Brown (Baritone) who does an excellent job with new members. Equally impressive was the standard of singing by the choir, who obviously find the enthusiasm of our conductor Matthew, and his attention to detail, infectious.

I am really looking forward to many years of making music with this great choir and would encourage prospective new members not to wait as long as I did!

ROSSENDALE MOLE VOICE CHOIR Quiz

Set by Gaffe Blow (Burytone)

In this quiz, you'll see some descriptions of songs from our current and upcoming repertoire, but with one letter changed. You need to identify the new song. e.g. *This song extols the virtues of heavenly visitors to the City of Light.*

Answer: Panis Angelicus = Paris Angelicus.

Try these:

- 1 We hear lots of songs about eyes but writer of this ballad likes a different part of the face.
- 2 This rousing song should be sung when pots of colouring material sprout legs and begin to walk.
- 3 A funeral piece about someone trying to traverse the road over freshly laid hot black sticky bitumen.
- 4 A show tune about young people who set out to acquire dry grass fodder.
- 5 A painter of flowers struggles to decide between one position and another for his model.
- 6 A beautiful melody accompanies the singer throwing someone gently.
- 7 If you like a medley of songs about the richest country in the world, consult ChatGPT, perhaps.
- 8 Allow Tom Daly to quit the pool and start competing on the track, please.
- 9 This player of woodwind plays a tune about his male bovine.
- 10 Warning - avoid peering over your shoulder in this historic part of Islington.
- 11 Return to one's abode singing "White Christmas" and other songs by Mr Crosby.
- 12 Rocket? Magnum? Zoom? Which lolly is the most sugary?
- 13 This love song expresses the feelings of a young man towards a fellow primate.
- 14 This player of woodwind sends a request for payment.
- 15 A group of singers continue their habit of annoying others.
- 16 Interrupt songs by this pop group for a children's musical party game.

~



With apologies to Ken Bruce and the Radio Times, all you need to be successful in this quiz is to be One Letter Out!

If you are not too familiar with our repertoire then you could skip straight to the answers. Hopefully you'll find there plenty of songs that you would like to hear us sing - at one of our concerts perhaps?

Answers on Page 16

~

The Irwell Shantymen

Charles Crowley (Top Tenor and Chairman) writes.....

Once Upon A Time....there was a very successful choir, singing in concerts, festivals and a whole load of events up and down the country. When they got to the pub (!) after practice, they always wanted a bit of a sing, just to "warm down" after their 2 hour rehearsal.



It just didn't sit well to carry on with the same sort of music, so some bright spark remembered that we'd heard shanty choirs on a recent trip to Cornwall, the spiritual home of that sort of thing.

Thus began our foray into something completely new to us, with rather amazing results. Having muddled our way through a few harmonies, we started to make a half decent sound, and thought we'd leave it at that....just carousing in the pub, armed only with a refreshing beverage...

As is often with these happenstances, it was never going to be that simple, and we were soon being approached to perform in public (without the "pub" bit)...ok, so we thought we were fine on licenced premises, but this called for some proper practice, consistent harmonies and some sort of costumes....There was some confusion on this last topic, with members turning up as pirates, navy ratings or cast members from a YMCA revival !!

The end result was exactly what you'd expect from this band of ne'er do wells, yet another string to their bow of brilliant fun and super music...

'What's next?' I hear you ask.....



Fundraising / Charity Giving

The choir has a long tradition of supporting various local and national charities. This has resulted in considerable funds being raised, either directly by ourselves, or through supporting the efforts of others. with our singing. One constant over the years, has been our involvement with the Rotary Club of Rossendale at their traditional Christmas concert. This joyous event involves not only the male voice choir, but also the ladies and mixed choirs, and for all of us, it represents the real start of our festive season. Another regular diary item sees us showing up at our local Asda for their Children in Need event, every November...great fun for choir and shoppers alike. The centenary celebrations needed something a little different, so we decided to offer rather more substantial support to our own Rossendale Hospice, along with Derian House, the children's hospice in Chorley.



Grace Cole representing Rossendale Hospice receives a cheque for £1,000 from RMVC

Emma Jacovelli representing Derian House receives a cheque for £1,000 from RMVC



2025 will see us adopt a different approach to our charitable giving. The intention is to give all members the opportunity to propose their own suggestions for good causes needing support. We will then see which get the greatest number of votes, and select perhaps the top 3 to receive our help. Whilst a registered charity in our own right, we've always known that others are in extreme need of extra funding so we try to do whatever we can.

Travel Feature: The Camino de Santiago

Steve Lowe (Baritone) writes....

Some four years ago Linda and I attended the funeral of Fred, an old family friend who had succumbed to cancer after a brave fight. He was a larger-than-life character, and the eulogy delivered by his lifelong best friend was truly moving.

We'd been members of the same running club, and many of the old members attended the funeral. We were remembering the good times over a pint or two, when the story of the Camino de Santiago was told. Although being quite ill, Fred had completed the final 100km of the Camino, which entitled him to the much valued "Compostela" certificate issued by the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. We decided, as a group, including Fred's daughter, that we would do the same route the following year in memory of Fred and, of course, to experience it for ourselves.

Our group was lucky to have a brilliant organiser, Pat, whom the choir will remember for his filming/recordings last year. Pat used the world-famous John Brierley guide "A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino de Santiago", which breaks the whole route down into 33 "manageable" stages from St Jean de Pied Port to Santiago.

Planning done, we were in the final stages when Covid hit. We finally decided to book the flights, around Christmas 2022 and then work out the rest. We had kept in touch with Fred's wife and, indeed, she had returned to re-do the route solo. Very impressive! She also supplied us with all the details of each stage she did and where we stayed. We decided to do the final 11 stages of the guide but broke down a few of the more challenging stages into shorter ones and we varied the starting/finishing points of the stages to suit our aim of enjoying, rather than suffering, the experience. So, we ended up with 14 stages covering 268 km from Astorga to Santiago. We also built in a couple of "rest days" to get laundry done etc.

We flew Manchester to Madrid, then train to Astorga; deciding to get the travelling out of the way in one day meant around 18 hours of travel! Our arrival in Astorga was later than expected and we were concerned that the Hostel (Albergue pronounced Albergay) would be closed when we arrived...early nights are the norm on the Camino. We needn't have worried, the owner waited for us, gave us a Tortilla supper, with a beer, and settled us in. This, along with the young woman who phoned us a taxi from Astorga train station, bore out the saying that "the Camino will provide".

Our first encounter with other "pilgrims" was in Astorga the next day when a lovely lady from Puerto Rico gave us cake. Then our first "Pilgrim's meal" in the Albergue where all the people staying there meet at 7 for a communal 3 course meal, with wine, for around 13 euros. This is very common along the route and is called the Menu del Dia if served in a café/restaurant. The weather in this area of Spain is notoriously fickle and we were caught in a thunderstorm as the Camino said Hello!

I fell in love with the village of Rabanal del Camino...don't know why but, as I walked down that traditional main street, I was almost overcome by it. As we walked, we met again the ladies from Puerto Rico who indeed were lovely. Whenever the opportunity arises, my advice is to just introduce yourself to other people. They will invariably

The Camino de Santiago continued....

welcome you into their company so you're likely to get into conversations with Americans (from many different sates), Canadians, Peruvians, Australians, Kiwis, people from France, Germany, Austria, Venezuela and, of course Spain itself...you get the idea. This makes the miles go past with ease. Don't forget to collect your sellos (sel-yos), they are all different and interesting in their own way.

There were times on this journey where I felt as light as air and could have walked all day. I found myself just bursting into song, usually when I had the trail to myself, probably for the best!

When you get to a place called O'Cebreiro, you pass from the region of Castilla y Leon (the way markers bear evidence of local politics) into Galicia. As you head downhill from O'Cebreiro, the vista of Galicia opens up to you and it's magical. The paths are lined with fruit trees, wild grapes, chestnut trees and walnut trees...watch your head those shells are hard! I've never seen such abundance. I reminded me of the Cotswolds in that way but there's just so much of it!

You're now in a region of Spain that has overtones of Portugal giving some idea of the history of the area. You'll see thousands of horreos, which used to be grain stores; almost every house or farm seems to have one and they vary wildly in design and size.

We were handed red grapes from the roadside by a French couple and green ones from the guys juicing them for the local wine which is plentiful and cheap.

When you reach Sarria, the route gets very busy, it's the run-in to Santiago. Not all the trail is off road so be prepared to both cross, and walk alongside, roads at times.

All the way, match your pace to other people and you'll gain the most by interacting with them. The Spanish and Galician people are lovely and friendly; don't be afraid to approach them even if your Spanish is as bad as mine. They will try to help! If you find yourself in a bigger town then they are much like towns everywhere with people getting on with their lives. The villages retain that traditional look that you'd hope to find with a lot of properties that had fallen into disrepair, fortunately, now being renovated. I hope this continues to preserve this way of life.

The final walk into Santiago is initially disappointing as you cross the motorway and make your way through the suburbs but, when you get near the old part of town, and the sound of the Galician bagpiper in the tunnel to the Cathedral square meets your ears, the emotion is incredible. Walk through the tunnel and there it is! End of journey for you and also, if the history is accurate, the end of the journey for St James, whose path you've just trod.

Sit in the square, bask in the atmosphere, and watch the people arrive in the square. You'll see every emotion there is on those faces. Attend the pilgrims mass. Even if you're not religious, and I'm not particularly so, it's an experience not to miss. It's every day at 1200 and, if they do swing the sensor, the Botafumeiro, it's a great show. I'll make no secret that I'd love to go back and walk other parts of the Camino Frances (the Camino we walked), or the Portuguese or any of the many other routes. If I do go back I'm hoping my Spanish will be significantly better!

You can follow our route in the Brierley guide starting at stage 23. Some parts of the route are tough but do-able with a reasonable level of fitness. Just be as well prepared as you can be.

Ready to sing? Here comes the Bride!

Charles Crowley (Tope Tenor and Chairman) writes....

Sunday 8th September 2025, saw the choir fulfilling a two-year-old booking, helping Laura and Roy celebrate their wedding at the Wellbeing Farm in Edgeworth. Two years ago, the bride and groom came to see us with a view to booking the choir for their wedding, and we were honoured to think we would be the perfect accompaniment to their ceremony.

The warmth of the day was matched by the warm reception we received from an extremely smart group of guests, gathered to join in the happy couple's special day.

The location itself was amazing, with a beautifully revamped barn, which had been transformed into a fabulous venue, full of light and "quirkiness" even the ceiling was made up of silk parachutes.... Speaking with the staff, the place is also used for corporate functions, musical evenings, and an extravagant Oktoberfest (something I think we need to explore !!).

In keeping with its rural setting, we were also introduced to the resident llamas and sheep, all of which were decked out in dicky bows, to match the occasion.

Getting back to music, as the bride entered, the choir sang The Rose, a very fitting love song for the occasion; and when registers were being signed, we entertained the guests with Seal Lullaby, the Sweetest Kick and finally American Trilogy as the couple departed. A further sing as everyone relaxed afterwards, gave a special finale to the occasion, with Don't Look Back in Anger, for all those who missed out on Oasis tickets!!

We had some amazing feedback from many of the guests, but the most poignant came from the bride, who wrote "Oh my days!! We were blown away. I cried all the way in. Everyone commented how amazing it was to have you there, and it really was. Thank you again; you guys really made the day".

Top job from everyone....

~

ROSSENDALE MOLE VOICE CHOIR

Quiz Answers (from P11)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 9 Phil the Fluter's Bull [Ball] | 1 The Nose [Rose] |
| 10 Don't look Back in Angel (Anger) | 2 When the Paints [Saints] go Marching in |
| 11 Bing [Sing] your Way Home | 3 Crossing the Tar [Bar] |
| 12 The Sweetest Lick [Kick] | 4 Seize the Hay [Day] |
| 13 The Monkey [Donkey] Serenade | 5 The Two Poses [Roses] |
| 14 Phil the Fluter's Bill [Ball] | 6 Softly as I Heave [Leave] you |
| 15 We Rile [Rise] Again | 7 AI [An] American Trilogy |
| 16 Beatles for Chairs [Choirs] | 8 Let the Diver [River] Run |

~

Gone Fishing

Geoff Whitehead (Baritone and Trustee of the choir) writes.....

I joined the choir in 2010 after being 'coerced' by Charles Crowley on Rawtenstall Market! I soon found that singing was a new passion to add to my lifelong and enduring love of fishing - particularly fly fishing on rivers.

To a non-fisherman it's hard to convey the mystery and beauty of the sport. Watching 'A River Runs Through It' or perhaps, closer to home, 'Mortimer and Whitehouse: Gone Fishing', which is filmed on some of our exquisite rivers, reveal some of the magic. Then there is the complex conundrum of what will the trout be feeding on and the excitement of outwitting a wild creature in its own environment.



The principal rivers I fish are the Ribble at Gisburn and the Hodder which runs down from above Slaidburn through Newton, Dunsop and Whitewell joining the Ribble below Mitton - a valley well worth exploring on foot, bike or car ! You don't see many people so it's good for practicing the odd choral piece but I'm not sure that lures any extra fish to the net - probably the opposite!

Over the past year or so, I've brought a couple of second tenors along to try their arm - Kevin Downes, who bid for the experience in our fund-raising auction, and Mike Yates who was also keen to try. On both occasions we fished on the Hodder at Knowlmerre Mansion (owned by descendants of Robert Peel) - a lovely spot .

Casting a tiny fly, with no weight, 15 or 20 yards takes a conceptual leap and an irritating and sometimes frustrating technique! A bit like golf - the more force you try to put into it the worse it goes. Unlike other types of fishing the casting weight is in the line itself not a ruddy great lump of lead so it takes timing (and absence of trees behind you)! And then you have to be alert enough to hook something at the other end! Enough of the technical stuff - how did it go ? Well Kevin struggled at first but stuck at it and got his casting good enough to lure a trout to his floating fly but didn't react to this so the fish lived to fight another day! Second time around though he was on to it and was rewarded by a decent, dare I say possibly suicidal, trout! All-in-all a great day starting with an excellent sausage sandwich at Kevin's first thing! **RMVC 1 Trout**

The day was absolutely glorious when Mike and I set off and the Upper Hodder Valley was resplendent. Mike mastered the casting part of it really well and was not bad on the other bits too. But as the day unfolded it got hotter and hotter which saw every trout and grayling



for miles diving for the deepest cover available which made it tough going. Unlucky - it's why its called fishing not catching ! However, Mike demonstrated a degree of determination and good humour which I would like to think isn't confined just to the second tenors. Final score: **RMVC 1 Trout 1**

'Jolly Japes'

Paul Heaton (Baritone and Choir Treasurer) writes.....

"If the mountain will not come to Muhammed, then Muhammed will go to the mountain."

The Rossendale choirboys are not to be stopped in their mission to increase membership and promote men's singing. Perhaps the oldest boy band (and largest) in the Lancashire area, these lads knew that a cunning plan worthy of Baldrick at his finest, was required, to undo the isolation days of Covid-19 and the decline of male voice choir singing nationally. For almost 100 years the gents of the Rossendale Male Voice Choir had been singing and entertaining on stages up and down the county, the country and abroad but as the centenary approached, thinking caps were donned for a new way forward.

For entertainment these days, more people are comfortable & satisfied sitting at home watching their televisions, their computers or even streaming games on their phone. When they find what they really like, they might book to see a show or a film, or even head out to a meeting place for company and a chat.

So how could we possibly introduce these people to the Rossendale Male Voice Choir, to experience the exhilaration of a four-part harmony explosion? SIMPLES (perhaps for meerkats!) we need to head to where people meet: Supermarkets, railway stations, town squares, pubs, museums, libraries....you can take a male voice choir anywhere.



We are so fortunate to have a choir member Michael Banham-Guerrero (Top Tenor) who owns (and drives) a vintage bus aka Shirley Bus (check it out on t'internet at shirleybus.com). This fine vehicle is capable to taking numerous male voice choir singers to numerous pubs to sing numerous songs. Fine ales may be consumed, fine harmonies are made and many fine comments have been proffered re. our singing and the great vibes created wherever we have performed.

However, there are still places that we haven't yet managed to sing ...so....if you can arrange a great location for our fine body of singers then please get in touch with events@rossendalemalevoicechoir.co.uk or simply phone Paul on 07952615608 and he'll do the rest.

Centenary Dinners

To mark the beginning of our Centenary year in 2024, we held a 'members only' dinner At Nino's restaurant on Bacup Road, Rawtenstall. We had such a good time that we decided to close the centenary year in March 2025 with a dinner at the same restaurant - this time inviting our husbands, wives and partners to join us. Once again the evening was a great success with an excellent three course, great service from the restaurant staff and a good sing-song around the piano to end the evening.



Britain's Got Talent

It may have been the great work done by Michael Banham-Guerrero (Top Tenor), Mark Stapleton (Second Tenor) and the media team in publicising the choir that got us noticed. They have promoted us through our web site, the socials, the press and youtube where we can be seen performing. Maybe it was the currency (with Oasis announcing their comeback) of one of the pieces that we have been singing for a few years now - Don't Look Back in Anger as arranged by friend of the choir Ian Crawford. Whatever the reason, we were excited to be asked to audition for Britain's Got Talent. And so it came to be that, on 19th October 2024, our coach dropped us off at the Blackpool Winter Gardens where we spent the day eagerly awaiting our turn on stage. We chatted amongst ourselves and with the other acts (the Japanese robotic dancers, the human tennis racket, the three-headed ventriloquist etc) and some of us were interviewed and filmed. Then we were called to line up on stage, shaking hands with Ant (or was it Dec?) on the way. The looks on the faces of the judges and the audience said 'we're not expecting much from this ageing bunch!' - then we blew their socks off! The reaction was incredible - a standing ovation from the audience chanting 'press the gold' and a 'Yes' from all four judges: Bruno Tonioli, Alesha Dixon, Amanda Holden, KSI. A star of the show was our oldest member, Owen Stanton (Second Tenor), who celebrated his 90th birthday a few days after the show and to whom, it must be said, Amanda took a particular shine. They both enjoyed an entertaining off-the-cuff conversation which led a few days later to a spoof video, created by Peter Ormerod (Bass), which showed Owen looking forlorn after Amanda's non-appearance in local pub the Holden Arms. The video was part of the 'charm offensive' mounted by our secretary, Peter Beetham, who spent months developing a great relationship with the BGT team in the hope that we would be one of the acts selected to appear in the live semi-finals. Sadly (or possibly thankfully!) we haven't been called so far. However, we were chosen to be one of the acts whose audition was screened on 'BGT Unseen' on ITVx (BGT Series 2 Episode 7) and Youtube . As a result, we are now being exposed to a worldwide audience of hundreds of thousands - possibly millions. Great credit goes to our musical team - our MD, Matthew Thomas, and accompanist, Liz Baker, who have shaped us into the choir we are today - and to all who made our TV appearance possible. Who knows to where this will lead?



Amanda

Owen



Get Involved with Rossendale Male Voice Choir

>**If you enjoy listening to singing**, we would love to see you at our future concerts and events. You are assured of a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Let us know if you would like to join our email circulation list to keep informed.

>**If you enjoy singing - or think you might enjoy singing!** - come along and join us on a Monday night: 7.30pm at LDS Church, Haslingden Road, Rawtenstall BB4 6QX. You are assured of a warm welcome, encouragement and any support you might want to develop your singing.

>**If you would like to support us**, we would be delighted if you would become a Patron or Sponsor of the choir.

Contact our Secretary
 By email: peterbeetham@hotmail.com
 By Phone: 07808 733892

~

Follow Rossendale Male Voice Choir
Click on the links below

On our Web Site:

rossendalemalevoicechoir.co.uk



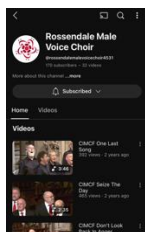
On Facebook:

[Rossendale Male Voice Choir](https://www.facebook.com/RossendaleMaleVoiceChoir)



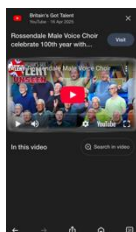
On

[YouTube - Our Channel](#)



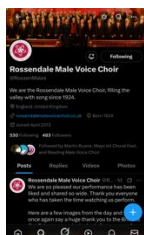
On

[YouTube - BGT Channel](#)



On X formerly Twitter

[#RossenMales](https://twitter.com/RossenMales)



On Instagram

[rossendalemalevoicechoir](https://www.instagram.com/rossendalemalevoicechoir)



~

Edited on behalf of the Rossendale Male Voice Choir by Kevin Downes with many thanks to those who have provided written content & photographs and apologies to those who haven't featured in this issue – next time!