

COMMUNITY MUSIC-MAKING FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND THEIR CARERS

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2009



Silver Song comes to Whiteley Village

Whiteley Village

(www.whiteleyvillage.org.uk) is a retirement village near Esher in Surrey, where some 500 retired people live independent lives in cottages or sheltered flats, or are cared for in the Care Centre.

In terms of the BBC's "Round Britain Quiz" the question would be, "What have the Isle of Skye, the sunny side of the street, glorious mud, a sweet chariot, and a lot of saints got in common?" The answer is that they all featured in the first Whiteley Village Silver Song session.

Having been instrumental in arranging this session I arrived at the venue anxiously wondering whether anybody would come to join. I noticed one person standing outside the building. "At least one other person will be there," was my first reaction. Then the village bus came round the corner. "Oh, good, there will be many more," I thought. But instead of disgorging dozens of eager singers the bus simply picked up that one waiting person and drew away. But all was not lost. Soon there was a steady stream of people emanating from the cottages, flats and the Care Centre, and the circle of chairs set up in the dining room had to be widened again and again to accommodate what ended up as some 60 residents and half a dozen or more members of staff.

Matthew Raisbeck and Celia Jeffery soon had us all singing lustily some of the old favourites, but soon some challenges were introduced: Two- and three-part rounds got us into occasional disarray, a medley of "When the Saints", "I wanna Sing", and "Swing low, Sweet Chariot" filled the room with much melody, but also produced smiles of bemusement or satisfaction – or a bit of both - on many faces, and later we were made to wonder what would be left of the Skye Boat Song after we had been asked to omit all the words beginning with the letter 'o', and then also all the words beginning with 'b'.. and so on.

When during tea break the discussion went to what else might be in store no-one ventured as far as mentioning handbells, but soon sets of these were handed out, and their melodious chords added a truly new dimension to the music making with Matthew



supporting on the keyboard and Celia co-ordinating the groups of bellringers. No wonder time flew, and as we sat over lunch recalling the highlights of the morning it was quite clear not only that the morning was most inspiring and a huge success, and more such music sessions would be welcome, but also that some participants were putting bellringing firmly on their agenda.

Our thanks go to Matthew and Celia for giving us such an enjoyable morning, and of course also to everybody at Sing for Your Life who made this possible.

Johanna Farrer



Club News



Petersfield

After a year at Petersfield United Reformed Church this club is moving to Ramshill. A first session took place in September and was well attended by residents of Ramshill, users of the attached day centre and people from the town. This is one of the clubs funded by Hampshire County Council and we are fortunate in being supported by many local voluntary organisations in the Petersfield area.

Southampton

Sessions will resume at Padwell Road Age Concern in the City during the Autumn. Once again we will be working with the University of Southampton and music student Harriet Rudge will lead the sessions assisted by student volunteers from the Community Volunteering scheme.

Bishops Waltham

A new club is being established here in partnership with Hampshire County Council. Sessions will initially take place at the Kings Church in the High Street and are being supported by many local voluntary organisations. Please contact us for further information about this club.

Eastbourne

Patricia Cullen, the facilitator for the Silver Song Club at the William and Patricia Vinton Centre for Age Concern in Eastbourne, recently left to pursue other musical interests. During her last session everyone present not only enjoyed an afternoon of music, but also shared in a little celebration with Bucks Fizz and a cake made especially for the occasion.

Patricia has led a group of singers on a monthly basis for almost three years and everyone joined together to thank her for her hard work and interest, and wished her every success for the future.

Her place has been taken by Carole Matthews, another member of the Phoenix Choir who, together with the Centre, provides volunteers and singers for the afternoon sessions of Sing For Your Life.

Aylsham

Aylsham Silver Song Club meets every month at Eastry Court in Aylsham, Kent. The club is well supported by volunteers from Snowdown Colliery Male Voice Choir and facilitated by Aileen Dickson. There is a strong, regular membership, who eagerly look forward to each session and often arrive very early to ensure they get their favourite seats.

On many occasions those attending include equally as many Volunteers as Participants, demonstrating the fact that Volunteers also benefit from the sessions. Choir members say that it is pleasing to see the obvious enjoyment on the faces of the Participants. It gives them a sense of pride that they can use their skills to give enjoyment to others in the community. They also enjoy the tea and cakes at half time! A short break for "a cup of tea and a chat" gives an opportunity for some social interaction, which hopefully brightens up Participants' lives and shows them that they are cared about.

Our sessions include singing well known songs and rounds (often

accompanied by a variety of percussion instruments), light exercising to music and a selection of entertaining activities, which provide mental and physical stimulation. There are always lots of smiles – especially when the co-ordination of movement to music does not go as intended!

A key ingredient to the success of the Aylsham Court is the very special rapport between the choir and the community. This produces a relaxed and friendly atmosphere with lots of laughter. In each session our Participants and also look forward to a "rest" and the opportunity to sit back and listen to our wonderful choir members singing a favourite piece. The session then comes to a close with a rousing song.

Everyone leaves feeling that their spirits have been lifted!

SNIPPETS FROM CHOIR MEMBERS...

The smiles on the faces and the looks of concentration speak highly of personal involvement.

The fact that many attend every session is proof of how much they enjoy the sessions.

You can tell by the reactions of the people who attend that they really enjoy it.

If laughter is classed as exercise, we do a full work out.

...AND FROM THE HELPERS

We go to help the residents of Eastry Court and come out "lifted" ourselves

To see the sheer enjoyment on the faces of the residents is an absolute pleasure. Long may it continue.

*Aileen Dickson
Aylsham Silver Song Club*

Herne Bay

Members of Canterbury and District Pensioners Forum are busy preparing for a Christmas extravaganza to include a variety of well known music hall, stage and screen songs. Watch this space for further information.

Margate

Trinity Resource Centre have taken over responsibility for this Silver Song Club and a group of volunteers will be leading the sessions. As part of this handover a lunchtime concert took place in July after which members of the club presented Andrew Mussett with a card and present to thank him for leading sessions over the last year.

Worthing

We have recently welcomed a new facilitator, Aedan Kerney, to the Worthing Silver Song Club. Aedan has been teaching music in schools for many years and has also lead singing with school and adult choirs, young families and music workshops. To quote Aedan: "I recently ran my first session at the Lovett Centre – with 18 attendees – and came away feeling extremely positive. There was a mainly Australian theme for this first session, with a few additions. I found the hand chimes a wonderful resource and we managed to make some slick three-chord harmonic backing to 'She'll be coming round the mountain'!

The main thing I took away from the session, however, was the deep happiness in the eye of the members of the Club!"

Silver Song Clubs for Export

Silver Song Club Networks are being established in Canada and Finland.

Canada

Following Stuart Brown and Stephen Clift attending the launch of the AIRS Project at Prince Edward Island University in July, Sing For Your Life is establishing programmes in Charlottetown PEI and Kelowna BC. Kelowna City Council has agreed to fund a pilot project early next year.

Finland

SFYL has enjoyed a number of exchange visits with the Learning Campus at Jyvaskyla in Central Finland. It has now been agreed that Silver Song Clubs will be established for a two year trial period in Jyvaskala supported by SFYL

Resignations and Appointments



James Fergusson, one of our Trustees, and Trish Winter, a Director, have resigned due to the pressure of other commitments. We are grateful to them both for the advice and support which they have provided.

We are very pleased that John Griffiths and Mike Wilson have been elected Directors and welcome them both to the Charity.

York Conference

Sing For Your Life partnered with for Dementia to present at the prestigious Dementia Services Development Centre's international conference held in York this September.

Matthew Raisbeck and Pat Brown, Admiral Nurse Clinical lead, gave an interactive presentation on the creation and running of Dover Silver Song Club as a pilot to test the two organisations working together.

A great deal of positive feedback was received about the presentation and the value of linking Silver Song Clubs into the admiral nursing service, and we will be rolling this out during the coming year.



European Learning

Partners from across Europe met in Canterbury this September to discuss forming a European Network of arts and health organisations.

The meeting was organised by the Health and Europe Centre and is being supported by the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust.

A total of 8 European countries are involved and we will be working together to share best practice and observe each others work in action.

We would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work in establishing this project and in particular Gillian Vass and Alice Chapman-Hatchett of the Health and Europe Centre.

Music activity at the Milan Day Centre

Music has helped older people from the BME community to enhance their memory and improve communications, through a project held at the Milan Day Centre in Dartford.

Funding was obtained through 'Sing for your Life', and the sessions, for approximately 40 people, are held once a month. The activity co-ordinators and day centre staff experience a sense of innovation and creativity in helping people realise their potential and fulfilment in being active. All the participants are encouraged

to sing and play various instruments, which provides mental and physical stimulus. The sessions have enhanced the participants' singing talents and confidence; and enabled them to reminisce about the old songs they sing, which in turn reminds them of their youth. This activity is very popular, enabling them to work as a group and share memories. This leads to recalling long-forgotten experiences and puts participants back in touch with parts of their lives which are pleasurable to remember.

Kuljeet K Rana said, "The music sessions relax me; they relieve my stress and I feel that I am in a different world."

Jagir Kaur says "The sessions bring happiness, and I enjoy reminiscing when I hear old songs."



Get Hampshire Singing

The Get Hampshire Singing Event Celebration took place at the Winchester Discovery Centre on the 21st July 2009. This exciting event was a celebration of all the singing clubs which have been started around the county and all the excellent singing which has taken place. Hampshire County Council Community Support Team and The Older Peoples Wellbeing Team worked in Partnership with Sing For Your Life in order to provide this event for older people and to meet the County Council priorities of Maximising Well Being by Increasing Participation by developing activities to support older people.

The free event attracted over 100 people who attended through community associations, care homes, community groups and individually. Free Transport was provided, along with lunch and refreshments.

The singing was a huge success thanks to the facilitators from Sing for Your Life, and everybody thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon especially when musical instruments were introduced!

If you require any further information on the event please contact Abigail Walton on 01962 846022 or on Abigail.walton@hants.gov.uk



A fond farewell – Leonard Lee

The Angmering Chorale and the Silver Song Club of Littlehampton are mourning the loss of Leonard Lee our talented accompanist. Len died on September 17th 2009 aged 84 after being diagnosed with cancer just a few months earlier. He leaves a wife, daughter and two grandchildren.



Most of the songs enjoyed by the members of the SSC were played 'by ear' as Len's repertoire of songs and music was so vast. He was just as at home playing the old favourites, folk or jazz at the SSCs he enjoyed so much. He was an excellent accompanist – a role he fulfilled for nearly 20 years with the Angmering Chorale. Combining all these talents he was able to immediately pick up the song a SSC participant was singing as a solo and in the same key!

During the second world war Len entertained the troops as a member of 'The Combined Forces Entertainment Troupe. After which, whilst living in London, he was assistant organist at Central Hall – working alongside Dr William Lloyd Webber, father of Andrew and Julian.

It will be unlikely we will find anyone with all his gifts but we will be looking for a replacement and continuing the Silver Song Club from the beginning of November '09.

*Littlehampton SSC Facilitator
Rita Russell*

Roadshows

Over 20 Road Show sessions have now taken place across the South East.

We still have some funding for 'one-off' sessions which need to take place before the end of February 2010.

If you are interested in hosting one of these please contact us.

Funding and support

We are grateful to the following for their recent help and support:

Dartford Borough Council

for supporting Punjabi clubs in North Kent

Kent County Council

for supporting Silver Song Clubs in both East and West Kent

Queenborough Fishery Trust

for support towards 'for Love of Song' in Sheppey

Henry Smith Charity

for supporting Crawley Silver Song Club

Awards 4 All

for supporting "Singing for the Brain" in North Hampshire

This Newsletter is published by
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