

A Few Notes



Newsletter No 34

Hello all members of The Wing Singers,

This is my opportunity to say a lengthened and very personal 'thank you' and to share how special The Wing Singers is to me. Our choir has continued to grow from strength to strength since it was formed in January 2015 and it is now a true Community Choir, made up of supportive, tolerant and kind people all here for the same purposes. Firstly, to sing in a safe and nurturing environment. For many it is also for very personal reasons an escape/switch off from the challenges of life, feeding and strengthening their mental wellbeing and providing friendship and company.

For me on a professional level, I have the pleasure of:

- being the choir's Musical Director, thus having a key role in the choir over a long period of time;
- training and developing the singers in: score reading, singing in harmony, technique and performance skills;
- always planning, working and delivering to create a 'choir for ALL';
- frequently seeing new members and getting very excited for our next chapter.

On a personal level my pleasures have been and are very varied:

- years ago now, my dear friend Alan Mossford (I was a soprano when he was a conductor approximately 20 years ago) and my beautiful Mum, Olive, suggested to me the concept of a choir based in Wing – to be a choir for everyone. Dog-walking friends such as Peter Clay and colleagues from when I worked in Overstone School, such as Dave Varey, all encouraged me to start a choir.
- Just as when I perform professionally, so much reliance is placed upon Jim, my very supportive husband. Added to my time and energy is his commitment and technical expertise in 'Sound and Lighting'.

Over the last year, my Mum was diagnosed on 21 December 2018 with a rapid and aggressive form of Motor Neurone Disease. From that time:

- I and my family had immeasurable and constant support from choir members through her decline, diagnosis, illness, losing her, the run up to the funeral and life afterwards - helping me to find a 'new norm'.
- there have been hugs of love/support, text messages, food/meals, shopping, cleaning, sitting with Mum - to allow me to attend choir rehearsals and the MK festival, driving my boys to lessons or to their friends' houses.
- there was the funeral – a full celebration of her life – she loved music and our choir played a huge part in the singing and the feeling of 'togetherness' that day.
- since Mum's death, Dad has found life without his wife and carer emotionally torturous and very difficult on a practical level (he has cognitive impairment since suffering a stroke in 2016), but personal support from choir members - coffee and chats, car rides, shopping, meals, walks around

the village, sitting with him and doing jigsaws, car journeys and many other ways continue to help him to cope.

- rest assured that coming to rehearsals – ‘giving’ to all of you – helps me and I leave feeling stronger and more positive.
- you will know that Dad sits at the front of the choir, but you won’t have realized that he is clasping onto a photograph of my Mum and, for me, the choir is ultimately a legacy to her.

Thanks to you ALL, my friends, for this support – many with your own challenges of ill health, personal matters etc. I feel very humbled, but despite tragedies, challenges and life-changing events I believe that ‘The show must go on’!

Thank you for enveloping me in ONE HUGE MUSICAL HUG throughout 2019!

I WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY & HARMONIOUS 2020

Jilly x

Fundraising for the Choir

You know that our choir is registered as a ‘good cause’ by EasyFundraising, from which our funds already stand to gain more than £820, that we use for the benefit of members, such as paying for a coach to take members to Wolverton for the annual choral festival competition. The total raised has increased markedly in the past couple of months as members have been making online purchases for Christmas and for holidays. One member raised more than £20 just by booking an hotel for six nights through www.booking.com. Warm thanks to everyone who has helped increase this funding.

As examples of where the donations have come from, members have raised this money for the choir through EasyFundraising when: changing their energy supplier, booking hotels, flights or holidays, insuring their car or home and doing online shopping (Amazon, Boost, John Lewis, Musicroom, Expedia, uSwitch etc etc). The trader donates a small percentage of what you have paid.

You can help to increase this with minimal effort - and at no cost to you. All you have to do is:

1. Go to <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/thewingsingers>
2. Sign up free of charge
3. Get shopping - your donations will be collected by easyfundraising and automatically sent to *The Wing Singers*. It couldn't be easier!

After that it’s very straightforward – you just have to remember to visit the online trader via the easyfundraising link each time you shop. Lance Redler or Claire Collier are happy to help anyone to get started.

Since it was created in 2003, EasyFundraising has distributed well over £30 million to more than 90,000 good causes.

2019 Carol Concerts

Our thanks and appreciation go to all choir members and volunteer helpers for making the two carol concerts on 8 December such a success. Nearly 80 choir singers sang at each performance – there would have been more had not the chest bug struck – and the Village Hall was at capacity with 210 people present, including the choir; all tickets were sold well before the day. As a trial, tiered staging was used for the choir both on and immediately in front of the stage, which seems to have been well received. We are grateful to the joint owners (St Michael’s CE Combined School, Stewkley, and the Stewkley Singers) for the loan of the staging.



From the nett proceeds of these two carol concerts, donations are being made to three local good causes:

- Wing Volunteer Drivers' Group (£190)
- Hospice at Home Volunteers (£200)
- Age Concern Pop-In (£190)

Choir Membership

We have welcomed a number of newcomers to the choir since September, with our total membership now 115. To some degree these increases have been offset by members leaving during the year for a variety of personal reasons, but the average rehearsal attendance for the whole of 2019 was 72 (62 in 2018). Choir members come from Wing and 23 other towns, villages and hamlets (as far afield as Thame)!

2020

In 2020 your Committee hopes to:

- organise a Summer Social for choir members, family and friends;
- hold singing workshops for men, conducted by a professional male voice tutor, prior to the Summer Concerts and
- apply for a grant to obtain a rehearsal microphone and loudspeaker system, replacing the loaned system currently used that is now unsuitable for the choir's size.

Choir Contact Details

Email messages for Jill Neenan (choral matters), or Lance Redler (membership and general administration), should be sent to wingsingers@yahoo.co.uk. Please don't contact Jilly direct unless it concerns your private tuition with her. Lance can also be contacted by telephone on: (01296) 681286 or 07769 942951. The choir website is: www.thewingsingers.org.uk.

1 January 2020

Happy New Year Everyone!