

Songbirds Newsletter - Christmas 2020

Hello Everyone

Here we are then, part way through our second national lockdown but still going strong! This final Newsletter of a most unusual (and unwelcome) year includes some of the items you have hopefully grown to expect (and love?!) - poor jokes, puzzles, recipes and celebrations of members' achievements. There is also a brief review of the year and a proposed plan for some of next year.

This time last year we were in the final stages of preparing for our very successful 2019 Christmas concert and also getting ready to enjoy some festive fundraising activities and a lovely meal at the Oat Hill. In January we presented our final cheque (of £1000) to the VASL Young Carers group and then went on to choose a new local charity to support - **Spectrum Autism Group**. This is a Market Harborough based support group for parents and carers of children with autism. In normal circumstances they meet twice a month to provide support and guidance as well as running family activities throughout the year and raising awareness locally. They are currently aiming to provide some training sessions for parents and carers.

2020 was, however, to prove a challenging year for everyone and, for Songbirds, it completely stopped us from coming together to sing, to perform our regular concerts, to raise money for our selected charity and to enjoy time as a group each week rehearsing music for others to enjoy in turn.

We have not, however, been idle! Over the last nine months we have maintained communication with each other using the technology available (a new skill for many of us) we have sung together (albeit remotely), we have shared news, projects, events and ideas through this Newsletter and through Zoom and WhatsApp, and we have even tried out a new song or two. All of this has helped to forge stronger relationships and means that when we do arrive at the point of meeting together as a choir again, we will be in a really good position to 'hit the ground running' as they say.

Watch out for the Christmas cracker jokes (yes, they really are that bad).

Which Christmas song is about an animal with 3 legs? Little Wonky!

Why was the Turkey in the band? He was the only one with drumsticks!

(Boom boom as Basil Brush might have said!)

Zoom-Alongs and 2021

We have been Zooming along since September, meeting twice a month, and intend to do the same in December - on the 3rd and the 17th - with the last one of the year being a Christmas Event with a raffle and a Christmas hat challenge (more later). Our Zoom sessions have been lively and fun and have allowed us to enjoy being 'together' and singing - keeping some of the songs we were rehearsing fresh in our minds as well as giving us an opportunity to sing some other favourites - old and new!



(Apologies for the token male!!)

So - what about 2021? To be honest, your committee can see little likelihood of our choir returning to live rehearsals early in the New Year and so has planned a continuation of our Zoom sessions between January and Easter with the hope that by the start of the summer term we may be able to begin rehearsing together. The committee feels that our financial situation is strong enough to run Zoom sessions and also cover the necessary overheads until the Summer Term when we may be able to resume live rehearsals.

How does Good King Wenceslas like his pizza? Deep pan, crisp and even!

What's the most popular Christmas wine? "...but I don't like Brussels sprouts"!

January to Easter

The committee would like to propose that the existing arrangement of fortnightly Zoom sessions continues up to Easter and, as well as enjoying the Thursday evening general sing-along, we would like to focus on some of the songs we already know (or are getting to know). Our starter suggestion, because it was a very popular choice amongst members when we asked for ideas, is 'We Shall Overcome/Lean On Me'. The purpose of practising the song(s) would be so that we feel confident to individually make a recording of it. The committee is currently testing this out using the technology we have in our own homes. Our individual recordings can then be put together, again using technology, to produce the sound of our choir the only way we can at the moment. You may have seen and heard examples of this technique being used very effectively on YouTube and television and we are keen to try this out with Songbirds. Such a 'performance' could be added to the website along with photographs of us during lockdown, serving as an advert for the future and a souvenir of our experiences. By Easter we could have some really good results!

What do you call a snowman with a six pack? The abdominal snowman!

December 17th - Our Christmas Zoom

Be sure to have a mince pie and your favourite Christmas tipples on hand and please wear a home-made hat (preferably Christmassy but not exclusively so....it's entirely up to you.) - the more outrageous the better!! Make sure you take a selfie that we can use on the website. We will also take some screen shots during the evening.

Here are a few ideas to get your creative juices going!



There will be plenty of singing of festive songs and carols (if you have any particular favourites please let us know by November 30th and we will do our best to include them), as well as the drawing of a raffle* and a bit of a Christmas quiz somewhere in there too. Feel free to invite other members of your household to join in if they would like to.

* We are raffling off the beautiful blanket that Wendy made earlier in the year, as well as a bottle of gin and a lovely scented candle - all to raise money for our new charity. Obviously we can't sell raffle tickets in the usual way so we are asking for members to take part if they possibly can, and buy a £10 ticket (electronically to the Songbirds account) to have their name put in a hat. Three winners will be

picked out from that hat on the evening of our Christmas Zoomalong, (December 17th) in the full glare of the cameras!!

We hope as many of you as possible will take part in the raffle as it is our only opportunity this year for raising any funds for our charity and it has been a year that has been especially hard for many, if not all, charities as they have been unable to raise money in so many of the usual ways.

Raffle Prizes



- A marvellous home crafted blanket made by our very own Wendy's fair hand!
- A bottle of rhubarb and ginger gin!!! (Faye, it might have your name on it!)
- A sandalwood candle with more than 50 hours burning time in a beautiful, lidded glass jar - ideal for a cosy Christmas!

You can purchase a ticket (or more than one if you wish) by paying the money into our account and the treasurer will then ensure your name goes into the hat. If you buy two tickets your name will go in twice!!

Account details are: **Songbirds Ladies Choir, Sort Code 30-95-47, Account Number 1568666.**

Tickets are available now and can be bought up until Monday December 14th. The draw will take place at our Thursday evening Christmas Zoomalong. Please be as generous as you can for Spectrum. Once you have transferred your raffle ticket money please email Julia, our treasurer (JuliaBrittain8470@gmail.com), so that she can add your name to the 'hat'.

Why is it getting harder to buy Advent Calendars? Because their days are numbered!

Cryptic Carols

Can you work out these well known carols from the clues provided?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Adorn the corridors | 11 As ovine attendants saw their charges in the darkness |
| 2 Jubilation to the terrestrial globe | 12 The sound of bells ringing from the top of the steeple |
| 3 No noise between 8.00pm and 6.00am | 13 Confused hot helm beef follows small urban settlement |
| 4 Small equus africanus asinus | 14 Miss Willoughby together with the hederia genus |
| 5 Removed in an animal feeding trough | 15 Observe through the seasonal precipitation |
| 6 Summon twice footballer Adebayor | 16 It arrived at 2400 hrs on a transparent day |
| 7 Summon the entirety of believers | 17 One perceived with eyes a trio of vessels |
| 8 Small trio of wise men | 18 Listen the celestial messengers are vocalising |
| 9 The first Edmunds or Gallagher | 19 A single time in the noble conurbation of Mr Beckham |
| 10 Mix the orcs (to light our way) | 20 Celestial beings originating in Kingdoms of happiness |

Why has Santa been banned from coming down chimneys? Carbon footprints!

PAM'S TRIFLE - A Christmas contribution from Ali

It's called Pam's trifle as it was first made by a Slimming World friend and has now become famous! It's made in a slimming world way so is delicious whilst having no fat and sugar so you can eat as much as you wish.

Ingredients:

- 1 sachet Hartley's sugar free jelly crystals made up to 1 pint
- Fresh or frozen berries of your choice

For the custard layer:

- 2 fat free Muller light banana & custard yoghurts
- 1 fat free Muller light vanilla yoghurt
- 6 sheets gelatine

For the topping:

- 1 x 500g tub fat free Greek yoghurt
- 1 fat free Muller light vanilla yoghurt
- 1 tbsp granulated sweetener

Method

Make up jelly and pour into a dish (or individual dishes). Add fruit as desired and chill to set.

Once set, mix the banana & custard yoghurts with the vanilla one, add the gelatine (see packet for instructions) and spread over jelly layer, then chill until set.

Once this is set, mix Greek yoghurt with the remaining vanilla yoghurt, add sweetener to taste and spread over the custard layer.

Yoghurts can be changed to different flavours if desired but I find these flavours work best.



Martine is imagining 'A Different Kind of Christmas'

My 2020 Christmas
Might not be what I hope.
It's usually such a family time
So I wonder if I'll cope.

I'll still put up the Christmas tree
And make the Christmas pud,
Listen anxiously to Boris
And hope the news is good.

I'll be sure to take more time this year
And with those I love I'll share
A letter, call or Zoom chat
To let them know I care.

To all my friends in Songbirds
I wish you festive cheer.
A socially distanced Christmas-
So we can be together next year.

What do Baroque
musicians do if they
don't like their Christmas
presents?
Hand them Bach!

I DRINK WINE
BECAUSE THE DOCTOR
SAID... I SHOULDN'T
KEEP THINGS
BOTTLED UP! 🍷

Why do you never see
Father Christmas in
hospital?
Because he has private
elf care!

These items of information might be of interest

Countesthorpe Festival Chorus 2021 - Less than a year away!

Past, present and potential new singers are invited to join this Come and Sing Workshop on September 11th 2021. The Workshop and 'performance' will be led by Giles Turner and accompanied by Ivan Linford. Music will be by Vivaldi and Pergolesi and, after such an 'arid' time for singing the day should be a delight.

Please share this news with your choirs, churches, singing friends and any others who will delight in a day of music-making with friends - and fun! We will be sending a reminder later in the year along with a form you to register for the day. In the meantime reserve the day: Saturday 11 September 2021.

We send emails to members past and present who have shown an interest in singing again.

Mailing address:

Countesthorpe Festival Chorus
14 Jubilee Way, Countesthorpe
Leicester, Leicestershire LE8 5UB

Alison Roberts (our thespian alto) has recently become an Independent Trader for Flamingo Paperie (used to be called Phoenix Cards). These are British made recyclable cards, gift wrap etc and for Christmas, there are advent calendars and charity Christmas cards.

Alison's website www.flamingopaperie.co.uk/web/alisonroberts

There are also on-line catalogues (called flipping books)...

<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/905540>

... and a Christmas supplement.

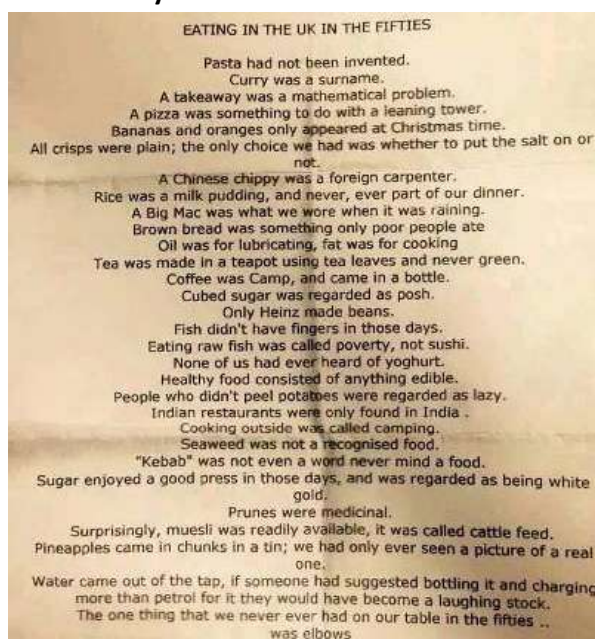
<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/766962>

If you prefer, you can also speak to Alison direct on 07732 120151.

10% of any sales to choir members will be donated to Songbirds funds.

What is a duck's favourite Christmas carol? In the beak midwinter!

Do you remember when... ?



Some highlights of 2020... !



Answers to last Newsletter's Dingbats puzzle

- (1) Forget it (2) Jack in the box (3) Somewhere over the rainbow (4) Back door (5) Read between the lines
(6) Blood is thicker than water (7) Bee line (8) Cancelled cheque (9) Once upon a time (10) Green eggs and ham
(11) Try to understand (12) Downtown (13) Bump in the night (14) First aid (15) One in a million (16) Apple pie
(17) Ice cube (18) Rocking around the Christmas tree (19) Think outside the box (20) Six feet underground
(21) Won by a nose (22) Too big to ignore (23) Half baked (24) Neon lights

Answers to cryptic carols in this Newsletter (in case you want to try them out on friends or family members over Christmas)

- (1) Deck The Halls (2) Joy To The World (3) Silent Night (4) Little Donkey (5) Away In A Manger
(6) O Come, O Come Emmanuel (7) O Come All Ye Faithful (8) We Three Kings (9) The First Nowell (10) Torches
(11) While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night (12) Ding Dong Merrily On High (13) O Little Town Of Bethlehem
(14) The Holly And The Ivy (15) See Amid The Winter's Snow (16) It Came Upon A Midnight Clear (17) I Saw Three Ships
(18) Hark The Herald Angels Sing (19) Once In Royal David's City (20) Angels From The Realms Of Glory

*Merry Christmas One And All
And A Happy New Year
from the
Songbirds Committee*

