

Glee Singing for Pleasure Report 2024

The Glee group was extremely successful for many years with meetings every fortnight. However in 2023 interest was declining rapidly with meetings reduced to one a month, numbers attending dropping to the teens and the subscription raised to £3.00 in order to cover the £30 cost of the Hall rental. There was real concern about the future of the group.

I took over the leadership of the group in January 2024 after many years as the accompanist. I have publicised it as much as I am able using U3A coffee morning recruitment opportunities, newsletter and website and, of course, word of mouth. I hope that the recent web site improvements will keep the spotlight on the group.

My first decision was to cancel the January and February sessions in order to start the process of updating the heavy folders, containing lyrics to 256 songs in plastic wallets, and make them more manageable for the group members. I created a number of small (A5) booklets of lyrics (7 so far) which were much lighter in weight, with a larger type face and clearer page numbers. This was not as straightforward a task as I first envisaged. To date I have typed out the lyrics to over 220 songs, formatted them into booklets, printed 40 copies of each one with a card cover and stapled them together!

I have also deleted some of the original songs which were out-dated e.g. "It's a long way to Tipperary" and "Pack up your troubles" etc. I have added many new songs and categorised all of the songs into "Musicals", "Popular Songs" and specific artists like "The Beatles" and "ABBA." These changes have been very much welcomed by the group members and I am confident that they have helped in the recruitment process. Group membership is now around 45 and, since members do not have to attend regularly every fortnight, we are getting around 30 for each session. This increase in numbers has enable me to reduce the subscription to £2.00 which covers the cost of the Hall rental, the refreshments, the booklets and the piano music.

There are regular enquiries from new members wanting to join the group and occasional requests for performance elsewhere (although we are not a performance group!). A small group of volunteers have done a St Leonards afternoon-tea session with me and, more recently, I have been invited to the Caterham Ladies' group in November to play for them. All good publicity for the group. The prospects are certainly much healthier than they were looking at the start of the year!

Alan Brinded
Group Leader