

Singing for Health

You will remember reading a piece by Dr. Eileen Pankhurst in the SRA Newsletter last year, when she wrote about the Singing for Health Choir, formed mainly out of her enthusiasm, under the auspices of the Lavant Road Surgery. I have been a member of the choir since last Summer, and I absolutely love it!

It was the end of term this week and one of my singing friends said, somewhat sadly, to me, that she did not know what she was going to do with herself on Monday nights now until the start of the summer term, she enjoys the evenings so much.

I think that was the feeling of all of us in the choir – the sheer pleasure that we all gain from these evenings is amazing. We sometimes arrive, feeling somewhat jaded, but always bounce off at the end of the session, invigorated, and so greatly cheered by the singing we have done under the wonderfully encouraging and professional guidance of our conductor, Dr. Rod Paton from University of Chichester. We are so lucky that we are able to meet at the University each week.

We sing such a variety of songs, and for me it is a completely new experience to sing Blues, Negro Spirituals, old English folk songs and some of Rod Paton's own brilliant compositions – a Mass still in the making, and a variety of very jolly songs. The ability to read music is not required, but the emphasis is on (1) enjoying ourselves, (2) using our bodies in warm up exercises (not too strenuous) and (3) our brains, in order to remember and perform songs as we are taught, line by line. We do not have music, just the words of the songs. We are now learning beautiful harmonies. I have found it quite extraordinary how my breath control has improved during my 9 months of membership and my range has increased, although the top notes are still somewhat of a squeak sometimes! Our conductor comfortingly says to us all, that there is no such thing as wrong notes, although obviously he receives more encouragement if we manage without too many...

We recently performed at a Health Event held by the Lavant Road Surgery at the Chichester Baptist Church, Sherborne Road, and we all gained from singing to an audience. The speakers were extremely good and we all learned a lot about deafness, the causes and the treatment, surgical and otherwise. So please look out for future events hosted by the Surgery.

Gillian Berry
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