

The Birmingham Clarion Singers LHI Project Begins!

The Clarion singers have been in existence since 1940, when a group of like-minded people gathered around a piano in the Old Contemptibles public house in Birmingham. In the following 63 years, this small group of men and women have inspired many others to join the choir, and bear witness to many of the great cultural changes of the last century.

We aim to use the grant from the LHI to document the collective memories of the choir, to preserve this important piece of cultural heritage for the future generations of the West Midlands. We also hope to involve the local community in our events, and have plans to hold a workshop for people to experiment with their voices, and introduce new members to the choir.

We began our project in November 2003, and elected a small committee to co-ordinate the various strands of the project. In the past two months we have performed two free concerts, and have completed the first draft of a book detailing the history of the choir. We invested in a digital camera to begin documenting our performances. Another element of the project will be the recording on video and audio of oral histories – again as much part of the wider community as the choir itself.

All Saints Church Free Concert

Thanks to the LHI grant, we were able to host a free concert at All Saints Church in Kings Heath, Birmingham on November 22nd 2003. The event was well attended, and provided the audience with some excellent pieces from the choir's repertoire of classical songs. Support was provided by Cuckoo's Nest, a trio of local performers from Moseley. We have since been asked to take part in another performance to support the redevelopment of the church buildings, scheduled for 2004.

We also began work on our "travelling exhibition", which includes photographs and historical artefacts collected by the choir over the years. We have a number of rare programmes and photographs, which form part of our archive and help to tell the story of Clarion. (see our picture from Czechoslovakia, 1957 with Irene on the left!)

St Phillips Cathedral

On December 10th 2003, we performed an outdoor concert in the City Centre. A bitterly cold evening, with christmas shoppers bustling past and office workers scurrying home, we sang several songs which resounded around the heart of the City Centre. Maureen provided great delight by arriving on her bike from the shadows just as the performance began! Filled with enthusiasm and Christmas cheer, we retired to our Christmas event where the whole choir came together to reflect on the past few months.

The New Year brings new challenges and new activities for Clarion. Watch this space to see how the project develops....