



Letters from Lockdown

"OH HOW I MISS MY SINGING"

At Ageing Better in Camden we firmly believe in amplifying the voices of older people in our communities. Now, more than ever, we strive to support our members to raise their voices and share their experiences.

Far from being a great equalizer, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed some of the deepest inequalities that have often remained hidden in our society. Our members have been writing a weekly newsletter for one another, to keep informed and connected in these challenging times. It has also brought us all closer together as we share our personal experiences of lockdown.

Here, Phyllis shares her experiences.



Hello OPAG_VoCuS Friends,

Well, I was chatting away to some OPAG friends, when I mentioned that I used to write a newsletter for the Kilburn Pensioners and suddenly found that I had agreed to write something for this newsletter. This is Phyllis Young, and I always find myself being the girl who 'caain't saay NO'.

You may not know that my computer has died on me so my only means of communication has been through the phone. My first job when we get back (Back – oh how I miss my singing) to normal will

be to buy a new one. I was so pleased the other evening I had a call from Harriett in Barbados, it's rainy here and we had a lovely chat. Thanks now to all the people who have phoned me.

I think I will backtrack in the form of a diary with bits added as I think of them.... From the beginning of the year there were rumblings about this new virus which circulating rapidly, and we began to worry that we could be affected. Early in March my friend Mitsue came from Tokyo to take part in a fundraising concert on 6th for Rosslyn Hill Chapel. The theme was around the world and I sang 'my Normandy'. I am not sure how much we raised but it was a good sum.

On the 8th March it was my 90th Birthday! (what??) My eldest daughter, Heather, had secretly arranged a party. I knew something was happening but had no details. All sorts of people from my past turned up. How did she find them? From past choirs, from Yorkshire, Annie and Fanny from France and my ex-boss and fellow workers from 30 years ago. A good time was had by all. Next day Heather went to Slovenia with London Mayors Association, LMA and planned to end up in Lake Bled.

On Tuesday self-isolation started in earnest. First cancellation was my Bench to Bench walk with KOVE (Kilburn Older Voices Exchange). Then all KOVE meetings, film shows, talks and pensioners' meetings, art classes gone too. OPAG gone, that's all the talking shops!

Now for singing. Faure Requiem with London Pro Arte. My week in York with a group called Felicite* Services, Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Good Friday at St Martins in Fields. Ada Court solo singing all gone. I rang Angela, conductor of Felicite* to tell her I had found tape recordings made in Hastings in the '90's and I sang along with them during Saturday and Sunday.

Mitsue rang from Heathrow to say that as we couldn't meet, she would not stay for the rest of the month and went back to Tokyo. On 13th March, Heather rang from home. LMA had heard that the airport in Slovenia was about to close and they managed to charter a flight back, so no Lake Bled!

OK, so no last outing before really shutdown. Health-wise I have spinal problems and Dr A. had arranged for a bone density scan. Had to get to Wimpole St. Clinic on an eerily empty bus. The staff were all dressed in gowns and masks. Later had really brief call but not full results. Need to get a blood test and stop taking weekly pill for 2 years. Her final words were 'Don't fall over'.

How life is now. – My nearest neighbours have all offered support, but I am OK as shops are only 5 minutes away and I don't queue.

My garden is communal but, out of 17 flats, no one is interested or too lazy to help. I do all the gardening. I am slowly getting the grass cut with long handled shears. I never cut grass until about end of April as it is full of primroses (from one wild planted some years ago) and Forget-me-nots escaped from flower beds. Then I can finish off with the Hover Mower.

Indoors, I am like a butterfly, not purposeful like a bee, flitting between jobs. Not sorting out stuff for Oxfam, not putting songs back into their paper folders, not doing ironing, not cleaning windows but kitchen is really clean!

Heather has walked up to me a couple of times. We sit in the garden hidden behind a rose bush and watch the birds. I have hangers for bird seeds, and nuts and ground feeder for robins. As it is nice and sunny today, I think I will make something for lunch and go outside. I might scatter a few crumbs. Enough of my twittering.

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