

1st ANNIVERSARY OF HESWALL UKULELE GROUP (HUG) AN INTEREST GROUP WITHIN HESWALL U3A

As we celebrate our 1st anniversary on the 2nd May (actual anniversary is the 3rd May) it is appropriate to record how the group came to be.

The Heswall Ukulele Group (HUG as it has come to be known) came about after a negative experience of starting a Ukulele Group in another U3a. Whilst this group was initially a fun and uplifting experience it was the victim of politicking by just two people who secretly undermined my leadership of the group. Without further detail suffice to say I resigned from the group and the U3a. It was to put it mildly, a very upsetting experience. That is just to give some background as to how Bill Woods came to play a key role in the creation of HUG. I have known Bill for a number of years from my association with WUF (the Wirral Ukulele Fanatics). I was aware that Bill as Chairman of Heswall U3a had been involved with their defunct Ukulele Group. I had suggested to Bill that if the group was to start up again I would be interested in joining as would at least 2 others Jean and Tom who had left the original group at the same time I left. Bill sounded out interest amongst Heswall U3a and an initial meeting was arranged for 14 people. Now this is when I found out how devious (in a nice way of course) Bill could be. After starting the meeting Bill said he was too busy to actually run the group and as I had experience of starting and running a previous group that I would be running the group! Much to my surprise! This was though typical of Bill who knew I was down from the experience with the first group I set up and needed something to lift me.

I very much believe it was fate and the formation of HUG has been a privilege to be involved in. In the early days though it was touch and go as to whether it would survive as membership dropped to just 7 of us! This is where a massive thanks goes to Geoff and Sheila who believed in the project and have sold it to others who went on to join us. They have continued to be a great support for us. So much so that at the end of our first year membership stands at 50 with a core of 35 -40 being actively involved. Including people new to ukulele.

Looking back at the aims for the group that we agreed at our first meeting I believe we have held firm to them, they are - to encourage learning, to give people the chance to feature their talents, playing favourite songs and continuing to learn new songs.

It continues to be an absolute pleasure to be associated with all the members of HUG who bring their infectious enthusiasm for all we do and brighten up our Friday mornings. Yes and even put up with me! All of this, with not a hint of egos getting in the way.

We continue to evolve and learn and share new skills, after all that is the foundation for the existence of the U3a. The strength of the group is that even in the exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in the group has found ways to virtually stay together!

I look forward to many more anniversaries and excuses to actually get together, party and of course keep music live. Thank you to all for your support and to Geoff and Sheila, Dot, and Roger for your enthusiastic help which is always willingly offered.

Dave Jones

Ukulele Group Leader
Heswall U3a