

# Fosbrook Folk Education Trust

Providing music, dance and song opportunities for

## 'YOUNG FOLK' IN THE NORTH WEST

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Dear Members, Friends and Families,  
**AUTUMN TERM NEWSLETTER**

Once again it has been a busy start to the academic year. Various groups have been busy on the Autumn entertainment front at New Mills Lantern Festival, Dialstone Lane Methodist Church's Kamla Foundation Fund Raising concert and Marple Old Folks' Hall.

We are now well into December and I can look back on some of our autumn and winter activities with great pleasure and satisfaction. Our most recent whole group performance presentation has combined traditional English music and the singing of an archaic Cheshire 'Souling' song with sword and morris dancing. Alongside this we have explored the festivals of light of Great Britain and developed material for a Christmas Folk Show with a theme of 'light'. (After harvest time, the junior assemblies have followed the same themes so as to culminate in a celebration of Christmas which will encapsulate the diversity of our British culture.)

As is usual, I am required to start Christmas material far too early because of the December events. The 'up' side of this is that I can spend lots of time on our presentations. The 'down' side is that Christmas starts a bit too early - with all the giddiness and excitement which arrives with this festival. For this reason I chose a very different tradition for the junior assemblies this year

I am always keen to introduce fresh traditions rather than rolling all the same ones out. This year the juniors have been involved with learning about what a Jesse Tree is. This traditional involves the hanging of story based medallions on a homemade tree. The idea is to represent the lineage of Jesus through both Mary and Joseph and to trace the blood lines back to Adam and Eve via King David and his father Jesse. My own mission was to give the younger pupils a quick reminder of some of the stories we cover over the key stage. Therefore, in addition to the Bible stories, I have added a few special cards of our own like 'The Open Door' to represent hospitality towards Christmas entertainers, as well as 'Holly and Ivy' to represent the underlying pagan aspects of a very traditional folk style Christmas. Anyway, the content has more of an emphasis on being quietly prepared for Christmas rather than getting over excited. Therefore I look forward to Advent being a time of learning, calmness and spiritual renewal for all our students.

I assembled the 'Jesse Tree' last week from the Somerset willow wands left over from our recent Fosbrook Family Evening when we made lanterns for our annual carol service. The family evening was a great success and I was so pleased to see the concentration and enjoyment on the children's faces as they assembled their lantern. It was a great family project too involving discussion, experimentation and creativity. I have posted some photos of participants being creative, dancing and playing music on that evening on this letter.

It has been our school Christmas Fair recently. My responsibility was to produce a choir and a Fosbrook Christmas Band with a few clog dancers. I started to recruit my choir at the bottom end of the school. On Friday mornings I have a group who do their 'reading' through lots of chorus songs. It's a new initiative and so far we love it. These children got my first invitations to



join the choir. Another 75 keen warblers volunteered to join in from throughout the school and we had to build a bigger stage to accommodate the biggest choir I have ever had. I am now recruiting for our next **'Big Sing In' at Saint Mary's in the Market on 20th December.**

The night before the event I was very touched by the huge number of messages I had on Facebook from the older students promising to be at the fair to support the junior children. These young people reflect the beneficial effects of belonging to a community group like ours in that they demonstrate commitment, manners, obedience, loyalty and an ongoing interest in their hobby. The same group of seniors opened the Demon Barber Christmas Roadshow at Clonter Opera the week before. Clonter Opera is a super venue. It was a packed show and they had a very appreciative audience. Fosbrook student Zoe Moores was part of the roadshow cast and is one of a growing number of Fosbrook students who have clog danced in this show. Despite the fact that Fosbrooks are often celebrated by many as being the UK's greatest youth clog dance team, they are not prima donnas. They were still happy to come and do the Christmas Fair because it was their old school and because I asked them to. 'Bless them all - the long and the short and the tall'

I love the Christmas songs so this year I have been inspired to post a Christmas related song a day on Facebook. An old friend called Liam Robinson did this a couple of years ago and I liked the idea. Up to now they have been carols or carol tunes and the exercise has taken more time than I imagined it would. Here are some of my favourites and the reasons for choosing them.

Gabriel's Message - I enjoyed seeing the presentation which Sting put on at Christmas in Durham Cathedral a few years ago. 'On a Winter's Night' began at 'souling time' and stretched through midwinter and the Feast of Christmas. I was moved when I listened to this beautiful arrangement of this carol - and also delighted to see an ex Fosbrook member clog dancing in the finale of the concert. Well done Wallsend lad Sting, and well done clog dancer Amy Thatcher. I didn't like the video which came with the Sting clip much as the angels were clearly not celestial beings. I much prefer Franco Zeffirelli's annunciation scene and my older pupils at school have liked it too. The angel in

this is not visible and speaks to Mary's consciousness rather than audibly. The upper school children criticised this and suggested that Franco should have provided a 'shadow' or at least a voice. I enjoyed this critical discussion session very much and hope lots of them will grow up appreciating good films.

My favourite selected post so far in my Musical Advent Calendar is the Wexford Carol with artists Alison Krauss and Yo Yo Ma. I am a great fan of Alison Krauss's work. One of my Facebook contributors who lives in America wrote that he doubted that I would find anything to surpass this. So far I haven't. It is an interesting carol with a melody which may go back to the 12th century. The inflections in Alison's voice make the melody difficult to master but once learned it can be accompanied with two simple chords. I have posted it to one of our students Amy Eckersley who is currently studying at Leeds Conservatoire. She is a great fiddle player and has an unusual and strong voice which would lend itself to a haunting performance of this song. I am hoping that she learns it for our Christmas show.

Folk sometimes ask why I spend so much time at school and I am not entirely sure. I enjoy most aspects of my job but do find it tiring and will need to retire at some point, however, while I can still do it I will continue.

My favourite part of the week is (obviously) the weekend. Fosbrooks rehearse on Saturdays and it is a lovely day. My day always starts well as I do the morning registrations and chat to parents about news, politics, lost property and ethics! Our timetable includes social dance, with a range of ages from 7 to 17 year olds helping each other on the dance floor, as well as band activities, instrumental tuition, clog dance, sword dance and singing. We have a 20 minute break for tuck and for letting off steam in what are supposed to be traditional games. The football has been out a lot recently. Our boys' sword dance team are skilful and enthusiastic players - but very considerate of each other and of fair play. Girls play too but also love skipping with a long rope as well. My husband makes bacon sandwiches so I am always well fed. If I am still peckish I do 'quality control' on the

'tuck' while Phil does the crossword with Kay who teaches piano on a Saturday morning. It is a grand session and we all like it. The seniors teach groups and get a small wage for their efforts. Many thanks to them and the helpers and volunteer staff who come each week.

I am writing this on a Sunday - and we are entertaining today. Audrey and Phil are fellow trustees of the Fosbrook Folk Education Trust and we eat at each other's houses alternate weeks. Our meals are a good opportunity to discuss the ongoing business and the sort out the events diary. Today it is a 'brunch' with them and an evening dinner with another trustee - Sue Smith and her daughter Lydia who is our Junior Director at Fosbrooks. Fosbrooks would not survive without the dedication of these (and other) lovely people. I have also spent some time in email conference with our Junior webmaster Nathaniel Bradbury who is also a 'mover and shaker' in the Fosbrooks. His website will be launched in January. I am also immensely grateful all the young people who make Fosbrooks what it is today. It is a true co-operative, with all the investors reaping intangible but real benefits and confidence from their involvement.

This evening all my visitors have gone home and I am back on the computer searching for today's DVD clip for the Musical Advent Calendar which has ended up being a clip of the Leahy Family who come from Canada. At the beginning the youngest Leahy child starts of the song 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town' which is a song we will be performing in our show on 17th December. Now seems a good time to remind you to get tickets!

Here are the details : It is a seated concert at **Banks Lane School**. Doors open at 6.30pm for a 7pm start on **Saturday 17th December**. Tickets are £3 for adults and £1 for children who are not performing. There will be tea, coffee, juice, mince pies and some mulled wine after the show. Please stay and have a chat and make an appropriate contribution towards the costs of the refreshments.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Liza



Fosbrooks have a regular audience of over 500 visitors from all over the world who drop in regularly to their Facebook page.



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