



St Mayeux Franco-Britannique Choir

Elaine I'm here in St. Mayeux to talk to Kevin Scarborough and some other members of the choir of Chorale de St. Mayeux to find out a little bit more about this amazing enterprise. So to start with, Kevin, could you tell us how the choir started and why?

Kevin. Okay, I myself moved to St. Mayeux just under four years ago and back in England I had quite an extensive musical background in theatre and concerts and there is here in St. Mayeux every summer we hold an event which is called the Fête de la Musique which is national, a national thing. Myself, my fiancée and our 2 friends who moved to France at the same time decided we would perform at the Fête de la Musique and then some time after one or two of the members of the local community asked us if it would be okay to form a choir. So we've started meeting on a Monday evening here in the Salle Municipale in St. Mayeux. We started off just singing to backing tracks and then we developed that into one of our members is a pianist so he brought along a keyboard so we moved from singing to recorded tracks to live music. And then that, that enabled us really to extend our repertoire considerably. It was important to us that it was a Franco-Britannique choir and as such we, we were very careful to try and sing an equality a quantity of songs in French and English. It's difficult sometimes to find French songs but that's what we try and do. Most of the members of the group live in St. Mayeux or very close to. But by word of mouth the territory in which we recruit from, as it were, has expanded and there's people living in St. Agnan and another couple near Pontivy. So we've built up from maybe a dozen up to about thirty members at our peak. And this year we've decided to do a Concert de Noël this is our first time we've done this and we're also going to take a version of the concert to a Maison de Retraite in Liquilio and possibly others as well so really that's kind of a potted history of the group.

Elaine. That's brilliant, absolutely brilliant, I mean bearing in mind that you've not been here really that long [??] and to have initiated such an amazing enterprise would you say that it's from the point of view of integration that it's working well?

- Kevin. It's I think so it's really working well because we the rehearsals are conducted in English and French and it gives all of us an opportunity, the English to sing French songs and therefore practise French pronunciation and vice versa.
- Elaine. Do you have a problem, as many groups do that get together with people to-ing and fro-ing like because they have to go back to England, we seem to have a problem at the moment with people dealing with elderly parents or other things that they come and go?
- Kevin. The majority of our members are permanent residents
- Elaine They are permanent.
- Kevin. We do have a few that are sort of semi-permanent and so that does beco..., well it's never a problem because we just carry on regardless but it works, it works really well.
- Elaine. That's brilliant. I'm moving over now from you gentlemen to talk to this young lady over here Christiane and I've got, I've enlisted the help of Dot here in terms of translating what Christiane says so when did you join the choir?
- Christiane 2013. She thinks it was the beginning of the Chorale.
- Elaine Did you know anybody here?
- Christiane No! We go to the Breton Dance on a Tuesday. (She's new to St. Mayeux she's from Paris.) The chorale was a way for Christiane to meet French inhabitants of St. Mayeux as well as English inhabitants. They met at the Breton Dance and Kevin asked if they would like to come and join the chorale and that's how they've made some friends.
- Elaine. Would you say that since you've joined the choir, the group, that your English has improved?
- Christiane Yes, of course it is better. But it rests difficult to sing. Sometimes there's difficulty to sing the words in English, you know.
- Elaine Would you encourage other French friends of yours to come and join the choir?
- Christiane She says it's difficult because the French are afraid.
- Elaine. They don't like to make a mistake [No!] Actually just one thought came to me, how do you decide, how do you choose the songs that you're going to sing?

Kevin. Basically I pick from our repertoire songs that I know we do well; ones that are challenging; I try and pick an equal amount of French songs as English songs if possible. It's been difficult with a repertoire for the carol concert because we've only just started learning the carols, we haven't got a massive repertoire of French carols at the moment but we will for next year.

Elaine Thank you very much all of you, merci Christiane

