



Participant Feedback

Highlights

- The Communitas project was a really rewarding and stimulating experience during the very difficult days of Covid. Having the opportunity to sing outdoors, in beautiful locations with like minded people was so good for both my physical and mental health. It was the only group activity I engaged in for many months. The musical picnics were very well organized and Covid safe and maximized our appreciation of our local, beautiful environment.



- Physically, I was only able to access 8 of the Communitas 2021 projects, because of distance or difficulty of terrain but I enjoyed those I was able to access. The scenery around Cumbria is so inspiring, and although I attempted Peace How at Grange and Fleswick Bay with some difficulty, the end result was worth it. And even though a couple of venues were plagued with midges it only adds to the fun and memory. Of all the venues, the wettest was closest to home and thankfully only 10 minutes walk, so that we were able to dry off quickly afterwards - that was Cockermouth Castle.



- It was great to meet up with people I had only seen on the computer screen on Zoom.
- I love singing, it makes me happy, it makes me smile and smiles put smiles on other people's faces and makes them happy too.



- Connection and a warm feeling of shared experiences during a strange time for all. This developed from zoom Merry Neets to camping out with a neighbour to attend a singing workshop and join with others in "real life".
- Good for the soul, mind and body. I'm so so grateful to have been drawn out of myself and had the opportunity to participate in person. Oh and to believe that I can sing after all.
- Singing at the Sill on a glorious sunny day and being able to socialise with everyone again after the second lockdown.



- We attended several of the Communitas events which were brilliant. It was so uplifting to meet up again in person and sing together in such wonderful surroundings. The day on Lindisfarne will stay with us for a long time. The island, the weather and the warm camaraderie of the group made it such a wonderful experience.
- I was able to do only one of the community events unfortunately but the one I did was absolutely wonderful and joyous. I joined the workshop at The Sill visitor centre. It was a glorious, hot, sunny day and I had been missing singing with other people just so much throughout the pandemic, so it was quite an emotional experience when we saying our first night together. Just that lingering sound hanging in the air, voices raised in song just moved several of us to tears. Dave is such a skilled organiser and choir leader. He makes everyone feel at ease and had prepared just the right amount of material to learn, rehearse and then sing on the rooftop. He managed to make everyone feel included and safe, singing outside with enough space between us so that people didn't feel uncomfortable and concerned.

I would love to do more similar events in future. I love the way that Dave planned them in several sites across Northumberland and Cumbria, using the landscape as much as the music to bring people together with the land. The idea of an interactive map of song is brilliant and it's a wonderful record of this amazing project.



- The effects of the COVID pandemic hit everyone in so many different ways but for those of us who love being in choirs the restrictions on group-singing were a bitter blow. By the summer of 2021 it felt like we had suffered enough so imagine the sheer sense of joy when the Communitas project popped up and organised opportunities to meet up with like-minded souls and sing together in the open air across the North of England. My favourite moments were singing 'Walking in Sunshine' on a bright, sunny day on the roof of The Sill Landscape Discovery Centre in Northumberland and performing Dave Camlin's beautiful song 'First Light' where it was inspired on Lindisfarne. After the long nightmare of COVID these were days of magic and singing with other people again felt like a release. Hope was in the air as well as a sense that in raising our voices together we really could sing a better future into being.



- Singing at Hardknott Fort during a gift of an evening. The ghosts of the past listened and we heard them. Singing with people again was fantastic and helped me get through. A variety of fab locations with fab folk enjoying the joy of giving voice to experience. A great and memorable time - oh and singing All That Magnificence at Allonby!! 🙌🙌😊



- The Communitas project heralded the opening up of the post lockdown period for me. After being shut away from friends and family for so long being able to sing safely with a group of fellow singers felt liberating, exciting and joyful. We met in some beautiful places and sang our hearts out surrounded by fresh air, mountains, woodlands and lakes. Communitas helped to alleviate the anxiety caused by the pandemic. We reconnected and bonded with friends old and new, local and from across the north, in a unique and valuable way. I'm missing wild singing already now that the project is over. I'm only hoping there will be more next year.



- My over-riding memory was singing outdoors at Ennerdale Water. It was as though on a film set, not only were we doing what we love but others out walking were drawn like magnets. The feeling was reverend. Clearly, we heard over and over, folk had not heard people singing for such a long time. It stopped them in their tracks. It caused us all singers and walkers to catch a breath. The time, the place, the music - the heart of humanity being no more complex than song.



- We took part in the Merry Neets remotely - it was great during lockdown to have something to look forward to musically especially as performers. It was great to meet new people and to hear new songs and to build connections with Dave who I knew a bit professionally already. We would love to get to a Merry Neet in person in the future and actually meet people in the flesh that we've met via Zoom. We thought it was professionally handled with lots of variety - yes there were tech glitches but that's inevitable. The move to blended sessions has been well handled and allows a combination of live and online.



- Just what was needed for the many that had been trapped in their homes for such a long time especially for those living on their own. Meeting others in Lindisfarne perhaps the best of the best.



- I attended all of the Communitas workshops, and it's no exaggeration to describe them as life changing. I was already well aware of the health and well being benefits from communal singing, having been part of one of Dave's choirs in the North East. The first of the workshops in June was the first chance to sing together for over a year, so I jumped at the chance. And while I knew it would be fun and immensely enjoyable, I had no idea of the impact on me. I went from knowing no-one to being part of a warm, welcoming family of wonderful people, who I know will be friends for life. I went from vaguely knowing Keswick, Ullswater and not much else, to falling in love with Borrowdale, Ennerdale, Honister, Smithy Beck, and can't wait to explore more places. Over this summer, I've emerged from the black cloud of COVID, into bright sunshine, feeling positive about the future, healed from the pain of the last year, and having dealt with a lot of the buried emotions and fears that I simply couldn't admit to before.



And in the space of three months I went from someone who was happy to sing in a group but would never sing alone, to standing in front of a crowd, (three times!) singing not just any old song, but one that I'd written in an attempt to capture the magic of this 'Summer of Songs'. Aply assisted by The Ennerdale Singers. So if anyone is in any doubt about the importance of projects like Communitas that bring people together to share music and song, just send them to me and I'll bore them rigid about how wonderful and important it's been. I might even sing that song for them.



Suggestions for Future Activities

- I would love to do more musical picnics in the future.
- More singing in more accessible places.
- We would like to think that this could become a yearly event.



What Could We Have Done Differently?

- Standing still to sing at Solfest. Singing and walking is difficult at the best of times but I think the 'audience' would have preferred us to stay still to hear the whole of the song, rather than just half a verse as we passed by.
- Personally I love the remote locations that require a walk, for others I think it's important to use some venues with easy access.

