

# Gigs for good causes – a very charitable bunch

**IF there is one thing that musicians from all walks of life have in common – be they amateur or international stars – it's that they'll always be prepared to support your charity fundraising effort by donating their musical services for a good cause.**

**by BRIAN NICHOLLS**

A few weeks ago whilst chomping on a burger in Bridgnorth, I bumped into Blackheath lad **Alan Morley**, former drummer with Walsall's 1960s Decca recording artists, **The Redcaps** and later, of Kidderminster's **Chicken Shack**.

## Singer

Alan enthused over his latest musical venture with Bridgnorth group **The Bradeney Bunch**. The group comprises six mature members fronted by Wolverhampton-born and bred **Carole Westwood** – a popular local singer on the jazz music circuit.

The current line-up photo shows (top right), **Les Jones**, **Paul Dunbar**, **Alan Morley**, **Carole Westwood**, **John Malcolm** and **Roger Wall**.



Les Jones with his wife Jane. The couple run the Bradeney House care home

“Our stock-in-trade is predominately charity fundraising events for which we have performed loads of gigs throughout Shropshire over the past three years,” says Les, “mainly at care homes throughout the county, but also pubs and open air festivals. We are now seeking to break out into the Black Country circuit starting with our first gig in the area at Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge on Saturday 14 September. It's for a charity called The Little Princess Trust who support children with hair loss as a consequence of cancer treatment.” I interviewed Les at his place of work, Bradeney House in Worfield, which is just outside Bridgnorth. He runs the care home along with his wife **Jane** and a team of dedicated care staff.

Les is a most personable character who looks every bit your archetypal rock star, and he exudes enthusiasm when asked about his work and his

musical fundraising.

Les started to learn the guitar about eight years ago when he was fifty three, initially taking lessons from **Bob Key** in Wolverhampton, and even taking his guitar on holiday to to maintain his practice.

## First gigs

Four years ago he was collared by the Activities Manager at Bradeney House bemoaning the fact that she was having a ‘disastrous time’ trying to raise money for the residents’ comfort fund, and put it to Les: “It's about bloody time you played that guitar to raise some money!”

This was a spur for Les, who enrolled a few members of staff, and The Bradeney Bunch was formed. It was to be his very first foray into live gigging and soon his fundraising ventures were yielding incomes of four figures with ease. The Activities Manager was well pleased!

“I know only too well the power of music,” said Les. “Music also acts as reminiscence therapy for long term memory loss. We had a resident with dementia, but he knew the lyrics to all **The Beatles'** songs we played and would sing along with the group, word perfect. He sort of came alive!”

Pop groups have a regular churn of personnel and The Bradeney Bunch are no exception. Four years ago every member was a Bradeney House employee, at the time of writing only Les remains



The Bradeney Bunch: Les Jones, Paul Dunbar, Alan Morley, Carole Westwood, John Malcolm and Roger Wall

as the sole founder member because co-founder member/ keyboardist and Bradeney House receptionist **John Malcolm** has departed to be replaced by keyboardist **Steve Millington**, formerly of folk band **The Houghton Weavers** (formed in 1975).

## New boy

New boy Steve has toured the world as a sideman to international musicians. He has worked as a session musician in recording studios, written TV and film music and owns Frog Recording Studios.

Vocalist Carole Westwood joined in June, 2018 but, still continues with her jazz commitments throughout the West Midlands. She, along with her

trio of jazz musicians, opened the 2019 Bridgnorth Jazz Festival and proved so popular that they were immediately booked to headline the 2020 festival. After once sharing a stage with jazz luminary **Humphrey Lyttelton** in Wolverhampton he later said of her on his BBC radio programme as he introduced her album, “having a good voice quality, good range, ability to take a song and make it right, she deserves a place in the top rank of contemporary singers.”

Carole was voted Shrewsbury Jazz Singer of the Year in 2005 and has won top prize in the Birmingham Music Awards Jazz/Blues category.

Bassist and guitar collector **Paul Dunbar** is originally from London's East End where he played with a number of local groups during the late sixties/early seventies. Upon moving to the West Midlands in the eighties he played with Alan Morley, in **Texas Flood**, **Crawling Kingsnakes** and **Fablon Five**. In recent times he was a member of Worcester groups **The Lazy Sundays**, **Barrelhouse Blues Band** and **Big Fat Shorty**.

Lead guitarist **Roger Wall** was originally with Cheltenham cult band **One Over 237** who played to packed houses across the UK in the style of **AC/DC** and **ZZ Top**.

Roger lived and played in Germany for a while performing with an acoustic-style group who went on to travel through Iran,



Carole Westwood in action at Bilston's famous jazz venue, The Trumpet

Pakistan, India and Nepal, and would you believe they have thriving blues clubs over there. Upon returning to the UK he formed **Harrison Eddy** and then **The Business Soul Band** who once being headlined at the Birmingham National Arena.

He was a founder member of Stourport classic rock group **The Barefoot Serpents**, followed by a brief spell with **Slick Chick** and **The Rhythm Roosters** and then, with Carole Westwood, the acoustic trio, **Hopstoned**.

## Openers

Drummer Alan Morley served with The Redcaps from 1962 to 1965 and then Chicken Shack whose singer **Christine Perfect** eventually went on to join Fleetwood Mac, and find fame as **Christine McVie**.

The Redcaps were known locally as the group's group and notably, whilst working the Regan ballroom circuit, frequently opened for acts

such as The Beatles, **The Rolling Stones**, **Jerry Lee Lewis** and **Gene Vincent**. The Redcaps cut three singles for Decca including a superb cover of Shout by the **Isley Brothers**, a year before **Lulu** and **The Luvvers**.

## Diverse

The Bradeney Bunch are a competent functions band. Collectively, they exude a most diverse fusion of jazz, blues, folk, rock and popular musical genres. They are not flash or pretentious and have given generously of their time to support local good causes. In their repertoire there is something for everyone.

Do please help them to break into the Black Country by going along to Mary Stevens Park on Saturday September 14. It starts at 12 noon and I guarantee you'll enjoy it a lot more than trudging around Merry Hill.

If you manage a care home or are a charity fund raiser, please give Louise a call on 01746 716686.



The Redcaps in 1962. Alan Morley is third from left