

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **How Things are Going: “By Special request”: Encouraging Participation in the Project: Beyond Covid 19.**

The Bells of St. Mary’s Rang Out Today

for the first time since the beginning of lock down – Hooray!! Thank you so much, Jenny and Robert, for all your hard work to make it happen.

And a couple of days ago I had another very practical indication that here in Debenham we are well past the really worrying stage of the pandemic. I happened to come across Richard Blackwell in the High Street as he was removing the posters advertising the “Helping Hand” service that he organised at the beginning of Lock Down. As he said, “This doesn’t mean we won’t respond to anyone who calls asking for help - It is just that requests have now tailed off - Of course, information on how to contact us will still be in the Parish magazine”. This voluntary service has been vital to many local families and individuals over the last few months and grateful thanks are due to Richard and his team.

Statistically, although just recently we have had a small number of new cases, the incidence in Mid-Suffolk has been uniformly very low since the beginning of July when compared with the peak at the end of April. As far as Suffolk is concerned, the picture is very similar but with, perhaps, some indication of a slow but small and continuing rate of increase. I do not believe this is something we should unduly worry about as it was to be expected with the relaxation in the guidelines. However the nature of this illness is that an outbreak can suddenly appear as we have seen some towns in the North West of England. So please “Take Care & Stay Safe”.

Last month I mentioned that we are launching a new music attraction called “By Special Request”. If you have a favourite song which has special meaning for you – a lovely memory of a place, or a time, or a person you will never forget, our amazing Music Man – Stephen Mckie – has offered to record it just for you. As everyone who has attended our annual Garden Party knows, Stephen is a brilliant entertainer – you can watch his on-line concert by clicking on [...The Debenham Project Song Book.....](#) We have already had some advance requests, so don’t delay. All that’s needed is to e-mail me, phone me, or drop a note though my door with your song and a few words describing why you have chosen it. And if you are happy for us to share it we will upload it to a special page on The Debenham Project Website. When we have enough we will link them all into the “By Special Request” album. **And** we want to include **everyone** in the The Debenham project, from carers and those they care for, to lunch guests and other participants, through to volunteers, donors and anyone else. Every contribution will be a pleasure and I look forward to hearing from you **all**. Who knows, it may become a double album or even a triple.

I know that we have been pretty successful over the years in connecting with as many in our area that are living with the impact of dementia on their lives as possible. I am also aware that there are a significant number of carers and those they care for that either, do not know of us, or who, when they are aware of the Project, do not choose to take up our offer of help and support. Regarding the former, of course it is up to us to advertise what we do

to as many in our community that might benefit as possible, and to do it in such a way as to be positive and to encourage participation. However, as far as the latter reason is concerned, why might this be? Perhaps it is a perceived general image of “dementia support” as institutionalised day care, information sessions, busy-bodies, charity, amateur, limited, strangers, lack of privacy, “I can cope”, and RESIDENTIAL CARE??? Nothing could be further from the truth with The Debenham Project but we have to recognise that these are very real concerns of those who are worried about, or have recently received a diagnosis of dementia for a loved one. When it comes to overcoming reluctance to seek advice, engage in services or take part in activities there is nothing better than being encouraged by their family, friends and neighbours. And, especially, by those carers, cared-for, volunteers, and other participants who are already part of the Project. So, I would like to ask you all to think about what you might like to tell someone you know about The Debenham Project, how it has really helped, and how different it is from what they might expect. If you can share your thoughts with me in an e-mail they could be so valuable in showing how good it is to join in.

One thing that has been so very clear during this crisis is the importance of “the community”. What has been achieved by individuals and local groups has been amazing. So, as a member of the Suffolk Dementia Forum I am very pleased that they have set up an expert group to advise our NHS and Adult Care Services on how to involve communities and local groups in the provision of care. I hope that this may be the beginning of a new awareness of how critical the “High Street” is in delivering health and social care support.

You can access all of our on-line help by visiting our new “[On-Line Resources](#)” page, where you can find the current version of our "Coronavirus - Local Information and Support" list, and our [News and Project Progress page](#).

I hope you find this letter useful and of some comfort at this difficult time.

With all best wishes,

Lynden