

# 20 Years On

It was back in 1993 when we first decided to perform a show that would eventually become Flying High. At the time the group was based at St. Luke's in Clayton and the Cub Pack decided they would like to put on a concert that would hopefully encourage them to move on to be part of the District Show, "Castle Capers" in 1994.

Six weeks of rehearsals took place on pack nights that allowed for a 'one-night only spectacular' to take place in July 1993 in the Church Hall. The show, consisting of 16-20 Cub Scouts and lasting just 45 minutes, contained items such as 'The Ovaltinee's,' 'My Boy Lollipop,' finished with 'We Are The World' and included a 'biblical item,' something every show since has incorporated.

The show had a £20 budget and we begged, stole or borrowed what we needed. The music was all recorded and put on tapes (not even CD's!) and there was just one spotlight, which Tony Wilkinson, as he has for every show, operated. Tony and show producer Dot Bailey have been involved in every show since.

The show was a huge success and the Group Scout Leader at the time asked Dot if the show could be repeated in 1995 but this time to include all the Group. So two years later the Scout Section joined the Cub Scouts to present 'Luke at Us.' The show programme included 'Summer Holiday,' 'Flash Bang Wallop' and a version of 'Swan Lake' featuring Dot and John Griffiths (that image might take some shifting!)

Jonathon Lycett provided live music for the show for the first time, and his father Malcolm, who had previously been Gang Show Co-ordinator for all of the United Kingdom described the show as being 'exactly what a Group Show should be.'

We had a 'backcloth' for the show that consisted of a roll of wallpaper that had been coloured in by the Cubs, Scouts and Leader – a bit different than the video wall that we used in 2011!

The show sold out again so a decision was made to do two performances in 1997, these too sold out. While the show was fast becoming a major fund raiser for the group, we held on to the original reasons for doing it – development and fun!

For differing reasons 1998 saw the group move to the United Reform Church in Clayton and when the Leaders came to look at the premises the Elders of the Church kindly agreed that we could use the Church for the Group Show. They assured us that this was a decision they never came to regret.

The move into the Church gave us a bigger capacity and we made a decision to go for a three-night run in 1999. This show was the first that the Beaver Section

appeared. We basically just cleared the stage and added a few disco lights – oh how things have changed!

The 2001 saw us introduce basic theatrical lighting for the first time along with the introduction of radio microphones. However it was the 2003 show that saw us make the decision to attempt to turn the Church into a real theatre. As soon as the Church service was over on the Sunday morning a scaffolding team went in to erect scaffolding to allow us to hang extra scenery, curtains, and put lighting bars on the 'stage' this process took, and continues to take, three days to complete. Sound and lighting boards were put in to the rear of the theatre and star and slash cloths put on the stage.

As we were becoming more established, in 2005 we decided the show needed more of a proper name. We had Cub Packs with the names of Spitfires and Hurricanes and Scout Troops with the names of Harrier and Mitchell so it seem natural to stay with an aviation theme; as Ralph Reader had written a song called 'Flying High' this seemed an obvious choice.

While there were Group Shows in the United Kingdom before 2005 only District and County Shows were allowed to apply for official Gang Show recognition. When these rules changed in 2005 the leaders of the group met and we decided we should attempt to achieve the level required with that year's show. Flying High 2005 was assessed as achieving the standard required. We became the first Group Show in the UK to be granted this status – an achievement we are all very proud of. This gave us the opportunity to wear the prestigious red Gang Show Scarf, however, instead of this we decided that we would just add a red trim to our Group Scarves and allow the cast to go on and perform in the District Show, Castle Capers, and receive a red scarf then. This took us back to one of our original reasons for starting the show in 1993.

Having reached these standards we went on to perform to sell-out audiences in our 2007 show when we celebrated 100 years of Scouting.

In the continuing effort to improve with every show 2009 saw us using professional trussing to create our stage and in the same show we purchased our own set of theatrical curtains. 2011 saw an 'X-Factor-type' video wall across the back of the stage and this year sees us incorporate plazma screens into our show for the first time.

So looking back over the past 20 years what has changed?

- In the first show it took 3 hours to get the stage ready, it now takes 3 days!
- The recorded music is now replaced with a four-piece band under the direction of one of our Scout Leaders Marianne Dyde.

- We have a full technical and back-stage team to look after the sound, lighting and staging although Tony is still there on the spot!
- The budget has gone from £20 to £2,000 but we make a profit of £3,000-£4,000
- The production team has grown considerable, but Dot is still here to lead it.

What hasn't changed is the feeling of being part of something very special!

*Here's to the future!*