

**Dementia Case Study, Scottish Opera, Participant 2012 -2014**  
**Interview with Linda, carer, December 2014 (five months after project)**

Linda is a carer for her Dad Jim who has dementia. They have attended the project since the first year in 2012. They both joined the project in week four of the first year and have stayed ever since.

Linda:

We started noticing changes in Dad about four years ago and he got diagnosed quite quickly. He was very good at covering his tracks – he didn't want anyone to think anything was wrong, or worry. He still denies there's anything wrong.

Diagnosis was a big change for us. I'm very involved. My mum's 80 and Dad's 86. Mum's fit but looking after Dad can be very tiring. She never gets a moment to herself. I'm there all day Saturday, Sunday afternoon and three times during the week.

Our big problem is how to fill time together. So much time is spent persuading my Dad to wash, change his clothes, eat food. I feel like we spend all our time nagging at him.

Before the choir, the only place we went was Asda. I'd take him for coffee and a cake, then we'd do a bit shopping. By the time we'd walk past the café again, he would have forgotten he'd had cake already so we'd have another. It was a good way to get the calories into him because he sometimes hates eating. Asda is warm and safe. If I needed to go to the toilet, I knew he'd stay in Asda and he'd be ok there.

The other project we tried was the football reminiscence project but that was in the morning and getting him ready in the morning is terrible. He is very upset if he feels he's being rushed and gets quite angry. We have to schedule everything for the afternoon.

When we heard about this choir in the afternoon, we thought we'd try it. It's so much fun! We have a great time and the fact that we do it together is great.

I see everyone being so happy. People with dementia get so anxious and agitated all day long but at the choir, everyone is all smiles. The change in Dad after choir lasts for days – it makes him so much happier.

It's really precious to do something together. I've got one of those camera phones and all the photos on my phone are of Dad at the choir – my screen saver is a picture of Dad dancing with Audrey (SO staff). My Dad was a real charmer and loved company so it's just wonderful to see him happy.

He doesn't remember going to the choir now (December) but when I start dancing and singing, he joins in and his mood lifts. He remembers Rachel (the singer) and talks about her. It's been amazing for us. We've had to re-make our relationship over the last few years. Dad feels, when we're out of the house, that I'm his ally and it's really nice to feel we're in it together.

I feel like I'm always moaning at Dad – do this, do that, c'mon. Monday's were the best day of the week. It's had a real impact on my mood too. I feel so much more confident about being acting as an advocate now.

Linda's mum:

*"I truly believe it was one of the best things that he's ever done. I have limited ways of engaging him now – he needs a lot of stimulating. It's so beneficial to him, to Linda and to me and – to everyone. We all loved it.*

*Linda's brother came through from Edinburgh to see each show and I know he's really enjoyed seeing his Dad look so happy. He can't help as much as Linda so it's nice for him to see his Dad have fun. It's been great for the whole family."*