

### Teen in bid to lift football ban order

A TEENAGER who received a three-year football banning order two years ago has applied for it to be lifted.

Christopher Anthony Courtney, aged 19, of Eigen Crescent, Mayhill, was banned from attending all football matches following his involvement in an altercation with police following the Swans' 2-0 win over Millwall in October 2006.

Solicitor Andrew Evans said Swansea City fan Courtney had put his offending past behind him and was considering a career in the RAF.

"My client has no particular reason for the application," he said.

"He does not want to partake in football-related violence, but would like to go to support a football team he has followed since he was a child."

Magistrates adjourned the matter for 14 days because details of the offence that led to the banning order were not presented in court.

### Dock site sign

PERMISSION has been granted for one externally lit free-standing sign to be put up at the former Bresnan Coal Yard on Langdon Road, Swansea Docks.

## MAKING MUSIC: Why hitting the right note is so

# Vocal pair Inspire staff to feel better

**HOW about this for a bit of a difference in the office? You've spent the past four hours on the phone to potential customers.**

BY PETER SLEE  
peter.slee@swwmedia.co.uk

Your voice is hoarse; your mood, well, not at its best maybe.

Then along come Andrea Beardshaw and Georgina Jones for a good old singsong.

Yes, you've got that right, a singsong in the workplace.

Doh Ray Me and all that malarkey.

Embarrassing? Yes, for some.

Good for team-building? Absolutely, say the experts.

For while the idea of moving your daily tonils exercises out of the shower and into the workplace may fill you with dread, Georgina, aged 31, and Andrea, aged 33, know just how to get workers more in tune with their colleagues.

They have combined their call

centre skills with their singing to get the best out of office workforces.

Inspire is the result — a corporate choir business aimed at encouraging team-building and reducing sickness and absenteeism with a simple two-hour singsong.

The two singing teachers with a strong commercial background believe that businesses can benefit from using music to raise staff morale and motivation, and improve their overall results.

In particular, phone-based companies can gain from focusing on their staff's vocal health — one of their greatest assets.

"This isn't some sort of arty company; we want to make a difference," says Georgina, who comes from Birchgrove in Swansea.

She added: "We understand the magic of singing and the benefits are huge.

"We don't just teach them how to sing — we teach them how to work with a team, how to listen to each other and motivate each other.

"Our experience in teaching has taught us that singing is so much more than just making a noise.

"Working in the business world has also told us that happy staff make such a difference to the bottom line, and we know that singing makes people very happy."

Inspire has just won a contract to work at insurance giant Admiral in Swansea.

It will give staff professional support and training in how to use their voices effectively, prevent sore throats, manage infections and other vocal issues that might affect their day-to-day work.

The business duo say vocal improvement is only a small part of singing coaching.

Other benefits include growing confidence and self-esteem, improved listening skills, better self-management and increased motivation.

Former Birchgrove Comprehensive School pupil Georgina worked in call centres for Admiral in both Swansea and Cardiff for more than eight years, even being relocated to India where she spent six-and-a-half months, and knows the daily pressures of life at the end of a phone.

"There have been studies that show working in a call centre can be stressful," she adds.

**'Singing as a group gives people confidence and a sense of camaraderie'**

"People don't generally want to call. They are calling because they have to and that creates a lot of pressure on the staff.

"People need forms of morale boosting." The idea for Inspire came when Georgina began singing lessons with call centre colleague Andrea, a trained opera singer and Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama graduate, who encouraged her to start coaching.

Four years later, they have made their dream company a reality.

Inspire spends four to six months with a business, hosting sessions with staff twice a month, with the first focusing on vocal health training.

"We're really passionate about vocal health," says Georgina. "People aren't told how to project their voices, and this leads to a lot of pressure on the throat, and illness.

"The worst thing is too much coffee.

"Big offices often subsidise coffee but it's not good for your voice.

"We give good people tips on looking after their voice.

"Vocal chords need to be wet, so we tell them to drink plenty of water and gargle with water at the first sign of infection."

After a session, Georgina and Andrea stay in contact with the company to monitor the results. "One lady has even reduced her blood pressure medication," says Georgina.

"And you can always tell people seem happier in general. "At the end of a session, people are often laughing hysterically.

"The negative impact a tired voice can have on a business

## important to workers at insurance giant's city call centre



EVERYBODY SING Georgina Jones and Andrea Beardshaw (centre), singing coaches from Inspire, leading workers from Admiral Insurance in a singalong which they say boosts confidence and gives them a feeling of camaraderie.

AW090409A-001

can't be under-estimated, particularly in somewhere like a call centre.

"We don't do requiems and classics. The majority of people are under 30, so we sing contemporary songs and we teach body rhythm, so it's very energetic."

So instead, after being taken through their scales, managers, team-leaders and

frontline call centre staff belt out rousing anthems by the likes of Ray Charles, Duffy, Outkast, Queen and Catatonia, before returning to their desks having had a good vocal workout.

Georgina adds: "While all our exercises are motivational, we appreciate that the thought of performing or singing in

front of other people can be daunting for some, so the first thing we do is

make people feel comfortable. Singing as a group gives people confidence and camaraderie.

"It also allows them to step outside their comfort zone — essential if a company wants to develop and improve in a non-confrontational and relaxed way.

"Most of the people we

work with have never sung in public before and before the end of the hour they've perfected four-part harmonies," says Georgina.

"We are passionate about what we do and how we do it, particularly in companies where work is centred on the voice.

"I really have seen people be completely

transformed, it's about confidence. We focus on people feeling good and the positive benefits that can come out of that, such as reduced absenteeism.

"We want to put the fun back into singing."

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MEET some Admiral workers with something to sing about...



"It really helps break down barriers between everybody. You get to know people on a much better level, which really helps in the workplace."

Rhianon Sharpe



"It's great fun but also really energises you. If you are having a tough day, it can help make all the difference. I would really recommend it."

Yvonne Seage



"You feel so much better when you get back to your desk after a singing session. Working in a call centre can get stressful. Singing together as a group can work wonders."

Wyn Thomas

### Pub plans to light up

A SWANSEA pub is hoping to be allowed to put up illuminated signs.

The Carpenters Arms, on the high street in Clydach, wants to install two lit-up signs bearing the name of the pub.

It has also asked to put up a further double-sided sign in the planning application.

### Shops go-ahead

CONDITIONAL approval has been given for the construction of a single-storey building, containing two shops, to be built on land between Cwmdu Industrial Estate and Cave Street, Swansea.

### REVIEW

#### County Youth Dance Company Talliesin Arts Centre Swansea University

COUNTY Youth Dance Company — formerly known as West Glamorgan Youth Dance Company, but reborn and rejuvenated due in no small part to the involvement of Talliesin — have thrilled dance enthusiasts with some wonderful works over the years, but their latest triple bill has to be one of the company's most focused offerings to date.

The first segment, entitled I Just Want to Say, was a joint effort between choreographers Kirsten Collins, Doug Comley, Julie Hobday, Stacey Panico and the dancers themselves: exploring the notion of community and the relationships experienced by those who share the same space.

The second piece, Falling Apart, choreographed by Doug Comley and Lara Ward, featured the older members of the company, all of whom will be leaving CYDC later this year to study dance at a higher level.

The last of the three works was, for my money, the best effective: entitled The Act of Courage and choreographed by Dave McKenna, it was a piece summed up in the programme notes as revolving around the notion of taking risks. "The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing2."

An interesting concept, but one which bore little, if any, relation to the on-stage action.

For all that, this was a very satisfying evening of dance.

Graham Williams

### Councillor to host surgery

KINGSBRIDGE councillor William Evans will be holding a surgery in a call centre can get stressful. Singing together as a group can work wonders."

Councillor Evans, a retired police officer, will hold the advice session in the Garden Village FC clubhouse on Saturday between 11.30am and 12.30pm. No appointment is necessary.

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