



Minutes Wareham Choral Society AGM 2023

Monday 6th
November 7:30pm
at The Horse &
Groom pub,
Wareham

1) Welcome

Those present were:

Eve Baker, Maureen Bayliss, Rachel Cude, Matt Dietz, Nancy Gibson, Ian Grocott, Mike Hampton, Margaret Harris, Neil Hirst, Yvonne Hunter, Janet Jones, Mark Lapper, Teresa Larby, Mary Mathers, Lenka Myroniukova, Bob Newnham, Judith Price, Teresa Rekowska, Sarah Welton, Brian Wilkins.

2) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Carol Madgwick, David Kemp, Jill Maidment, Hazel Ricketts and David Stewart..

3) Minutes of last year's AGM and matters arising

The minutes of last year's meeting had been circulated, and were accepted as a true record. There were no matters arising.

4) Chairman's Report

Teresa Rekowska reported as follows:

My first year as Chairman of Wareham Choral Society (henceforth referred to as the choir) has been busy and exciting, if not challenging. The pandemic lockdown affected our choir numbers and the choir were not covering our running costs from subscriptions, nor covering our concert outgoings with low audience numbers. Therefore, my main focus was on recruitment and retention and raising the profile of the choir.

Thus, we kicked off our September 2022 term with a fun Taster workshop that was free to all comers. This was led and accompanied by Hazel, and did attract 6 new singers. Continuing the recruitment effort, we then held a Come & Sing Day of The Armed Man led and accompanied by the talented Sam Ryall. This was an extremely successful day with 55 attendees making a reasonable profit and attracted several new and talented singers to the choir.

Focusing on our dwindling funds, I personally visited over 50 local businesses to attract some sponsors. It was no surprise when the majority of them said that the pandemic had also hit them hard and no-one had any 'spare' cash. However, I did have one successful meeting with Damian, the owner of the Kings Arms pub in Stoborough, who agreed to be our sponsor donating £100 for each concert.

Realising the importance of not only recruiting members but keeping them happy, the committee put together a member's questionnaire to ask for their views and to plan for our future. An action plan was drawn up and communicated to members in January of this year. I am pleased to say the vast majority of members were happy, with just a few suggestions for improvements. These were to give consideration to members repertoire suggestions, which

we now actively encourage and to include a social time, which we have now introduced meeting at the pub after rehearsals on the first Monday of each month. I have also introduced a Christmas meal for members and their partners.

Our Christmas 'Magnificat' concert, including soloist Lucy Braga, was joyful & was attended by the Mayor & Deputy Mayor and our patron David Mellor. However, ticket sales were down due to a clash with a major football match. Corbin fencing sponsored this concert for £50 as well as our ongoing sponsors the Kings Arms Stoborough. We concluded 2022 with 13 members singing Christmas carols for the residents of the Wareham day care centre accompanied by Eve. This was an emotional and rewarding afternoon.

2023 had a difficult start after the Briantspuddle choir pulled out of our joint Spring concert 'Mozart Coronation Mass'. However, Hazel and the committee were confident we could continue on our own and this concert was a success and well attended. Unfortunately, we did make a loss, mainly due to the 4 soloists fees of a total of £1,000. At the end of 2022 I had applied to 4 different trust funds for grants to cover the soloist's fees but we were not successful in gaining any grants before the Spring concert.

However, I am pleased to report that the Talbot Trust fund have NOW granted us £1,000 which will be split equally between our Remembrance and Easter 2024 concerts. Unfortunately, our Patron David Mellor has taken a back seat this year due to ongoing health issues.

"We continued rehearsing through the summer term with a 'fun' secular repertoire to be performed at the Wareham community day and to give us a head start with The Armed Man and Faure's Requiem. Unfortunately, the community day was cancelled but we hope to resurrect the secular repertoire at a future time.

Personally, I have been working hard to raise the profile of our choir. I attended a training course on 'How to influence your town council' organised by the Making Music organisation and I met with the Mayor of Wareham, Carol Turner, offering to work with Wareham Town council on future music events. I also met with the Chairman of the Purbeck arts choir Liz Roberts to share best practise. I have joined the 'Community Arts Network' and attended their Dorset AGM and networking event in September and I continue to receive useful information from them regarding funding and local events.

Although we have increased our membership from last year we are still running at a loss. We currently have 26 members but do need more to cover our termly running costs. Therefore I would ask every member to encourage new members to join us.

The committee work tirelessly behind the scenes; from creating, printing and advertising to finances and social media to name just a few of their responsibilities and tasks. I want to thank them all, especially Bob and Eve, for their continued generous time free of charge, hard work and dedication that they give to the choir and for supporting me through my challenging first year. This year the committee also introduced 2 new policies; 'Safeguarding' with Sarah Welton becoming our Safeguarding officer and 'Social Media' with Rachel Cude becoming our Social Media manager.

My thanks to Paul Ellis for his wonderful accompanying at all our rehearsals and concerts and his continued patience with the 'off key' piano.

I want to say a special thanks to Hazel. It has been great to get to know her and to work closely alongside her to ensure we have an interesting and challenging repertoire. Hazel and I have also worked closely this year to recruit for a trainee/assistant conductor and have advertised right across Dorset.

Last but not least, I want to thank you the members for your continued enthusiasm to sing with our choir and I look forward to continuing our progress together towards a joyful and successful year ahead."

5) Music Director's Report

In Hazel's absence, Teresa read out the following:

Whenever I write these reports I look back at the previous year's and it can make an interesting contrast.

Summer 2022 was worrying for WCS for several reasons – Judith's ill health, low choir numbers, and finances. However last year can be described as one of slow recovery – thankfully for Judith as well as the choir! A choir needs a 'core number' of singers – not just for finances but musically to retain and build on work week by week. Summer 2022 we didn't really have this but through the following year it has grown until now I feel we do.

We are fortunate that Teresa was willing to step up as chair last year and she's proved to be energetic and full of new ideas for promoting and growing the choir, as well as ensuring that contracts and policies etc are all up to date in this ever changing world – thank you Teresa!

Our year from September 2022 was a full one. We re-started rehearsals, now permanently in Lady St Mary's Church, for our Christmas Concert entitled "Magnificat". The first half consisted of Magnificats of various styles & periods of music history. In hindsight, the first half was a little long, and the decision to cut down the Durant/Pergolesi Magnificat was undoubtedly the right one.

The second half was our normal mix of choral Christmas music with Vaughan Williams beautiful "Fantasia on Christmas Carols" as the main 'big' piece. I initially had some other pieces in mind too, requiring a mezzo soprano Soloist, so as a result we had our regular soloist Lucy Braga with us again even though the Vaughan Williams is scored for a baritone solo! Using a mezzo added a different dimension to the work which I personally liked.

Our audience were able to join in 6 carols – all, as ever, ably accompanied by Paul Ellis on the organ. Again, a good musical offering enjoyed by the audience, but the feedback that the concert was too long was fair. Once again the choir tackled a long a fairly complex programme well and with enthusiasm for a great range of styles even with still depleted numbers.

We had an 'open choir rehearsal' within the autumn term –our accompanist was taken ill that day, meaning I took and accompanied the rehearsal! However good humour abounded and it was a worthwhile evening, despite feeling 'on the hoof' to me!

November saw a very successful 'Come and Sing' day led by Sam Ryall on "The Armed Man". This was the full version and Sam both led with a light touch, and accompanied. We had many new faces at this event and it was an enjoyable musical day! It also led us to decide to programme this popular work for our November concert this year.

Spring term was a mixed bag! Our plan was a joint concert with Briantspuddle Singers of Mozart's "Coronation Mass" and a Requiem by Michael Haydn. Unfortunately the scores for the latter were not available so a hasty change of plan meant Schubert Mass in G was programmed instead.

We will gloss over the 'fun' of completely different editions of the Schubert with different texts and much photocopying and 'editorial' decisions by myself but those who were there will remember it! An unfortunate series of events and misunderstandings also led to Briantspuddle Singers withdrawing from the concert.

However, we continued and were fortunate that our choir numbers were growing and we were reaching that 'core number' again as well as the Mozart being more familiar and the Schubert relatively straightforward. We had Paul at the organ, and our four soloists, Richard and Abigail Hooper, Cassie Dalby, and Ed Lambert made a very reliable team. Although Cassie was not required for the Schubert she contributed solo items to the concert too.

Overall it went well especially given the programme was devised expecting two choirs to sing, and once again we had good feedback from both soloists and audience members. A better length concert and an accessible programme. The only pity was that we made a considerably loss – in part due to anticipating a larger audience from a combined choir.

Given three bank holidays on Mondays during May we decided not to meet for rehearsals. Rather than a summer concert we had decided that our next concert would be in November

2023 – our Remembrance concert. The choral suite version of “The Armed Man” and the Faure Requiem would be on the programme.

We had 6 weeks of rehearsals in the summer term with myself accompanying the ‘note bashing’ on these two works – both of which are fairly well known but have tricky corners! We are fortunate that numbers have continued to grow including being able to source our baritone soloist from our own members.

2022 – 2023 has been a year of growth for WCS, or maybe just recovery and revival post covid. I know a fair few choirs have not survived this period, and I am very grateful that I can concentrate on the musical aspects with our strong committee taking on everything from poster design, to drinks at concerts, to asking for a piano to be repaired! Thank you to all – and an especial mention, as ever, to Bob who quietly gets on with so much ‘behind the scenes’. I’m equally grateful to Paul for his support week in, week out. Thank you all. But most of all thank you to YOU – the choir. Your hard work, good humour, and music making are what makes this choir, and my Monday evenings, one of the highlights of my week.

Treasurer’s Report

Eve Baker reported the following:

Wareham Choral Society receipts and payments for year ended 31st August 2023

(Figures for 2022 given for comparison)

	2023	2022
Receipts		
Subs	3510	3275
Ticket sales	2423	2268
Donations received	206	
Gift Aid		422
Sponsorship	250	
Advertising sales		20
Refreshments and programmes	252	38
Interest received	31	2
Total Receipts	6672	6025
Payments		
MD fee & accompanist fee	5028	5080
Composer’s fee		1350
Soloists’ fees	1180	550
Music hire	258	150
Church hire	1440	1485
Advertising	848	706
Insurance	99	95
Refreshments	197	20
Printing etc	149	541
Charitable donations	20	20
Misc expenses	217	30
PRS licence	63	0
Making Music	98	98
Finance charges		7
Total payments	9597	10137
Deficit for the year	-2925	-4112
Opening balance at bank	8968	
1 Sep 22		

Deficit for year -2925

Closing balance at bank 6043
31 Aug 23

6) Election of Officers

Our Chairman Teresa Rekowska was prepared to stand again. Bob Newnham and Eve Baker were prepared to stand again. No other nominations for any position were received prior to or at the AGM, and no-one opposed the re-election of the current officers, who therefore continue in office.

7) Election of Committee Members

Other members Maureen Bayliss, Rachel Cude and Sarah Welton are prepared to continue on the committee. There were no other nominations so they were re-elected unopposed.

8) A.O.B.

During informal discussions prior to the formal opening of the meeting, several relevant comments and helpful suggestions were made. These are summarised below;

It was generally agreed that our performance at the Remembrance concert was the best we had sung for some years.

Ian Grocott felt that this was because of the choice of music: the pieces were familiar, at least to many choir members, and resonated with both singers and audience. They also had some topical global relevance, given the ongoing fighting across the world.

On a practical level, Nancy Gibson felt that the 6 weeks of rehearsal in summer had helped.

Brian Wilkins expressed the choir's thanks to Teresa for her hard work in obtaining sponsorship.

Matt Dietz had sung with Dorchester Choral Society, and recommended their approach to ticket pricing. They kept admission prices low, but announced that, if people had enjoyed the concert, they might wish to make a further donation as they left. They had a card reader on hand so people could choose to pay electronically as well as by cash.

DCS's experience was that many people were happy to donate, and he felt that WCS should try this. It had the advantage that those unable to afford higher ticket prices (eg students) need not make an extra donation, so effectively had a discounted admission fee.

We should also make it easy for people to donate at any other time, perhaps via a link on our website.

Matt also suggested that next year we take advantage of the fact that the remembrance service at Bovington on 9/11/2024 would leave 700 chairs in situ for the following day or two and we could use the opportunity to hold a workshop for the Armed Man, involving the military wives choir.

These are ideas which the committee will pursue.

Bob Newnham 26/11/2023