



Minutes Wareham Choral Society AGM 2020

October 2020
by email

1. Introduction

Because of restrictions imposed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, no formal face-to-face AGM was held this year. Instead, the MD's report and the Chairman's report were circulated by email, and email comments solicited from members.

2. Minutes – 2019

These were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Chairman's Report

Last September we parted sadly with John Radford our accompanist for the last 10 years. John explained that the journey to Wareham on Monday nights, especially in bad weather, was onerous and he was relieved to accept an invitation to become the accompanist to a choir situated near Romsey and closer to home. We presented John with a cheque to which members had contributed generously and thanked him for his unassuming but excellent supportive role as our accompanist. We were equally pleased to report that Paul Ellis, the organist at Sherborne and MD of Sherborne Choral Society had accepted our invitation to succeed John.

Elizabeth Read Wilson had highlighted the fact that choir members subscriptions were not covering the costs of rehearsals and that concert ticket sales did not meet concert costs. It was agreed that inputs to the choir accounts from the disbanding of the Dorset Guild of Singers and the expected receipt of back dated Gift Aid should be supported by a recruitment drive for new members. It was also agreed to encourage WCS to be more welcoming and friendly society; this to be achieved by each section of the choir appointing a member with responsibility for befriending new members and that at the start of each term there would be an opportunity to meet and greet new and returning members. It was also agreed to advertise the choir in the Wareham Advertiser. So, section of the choir should now have an appointed Section Leader to mentor new members and report back any concerns to Hazel.

The date for the Christmas concert 2019 was a Hobson's choice of Dec. 7th to avoid clashing with the Swanage PAC and the Broadstone choirs. The committee discussed ways in which we might attract an audience so early in December and Hazel proposed engaging reasonably priced but excellent soloists for the Vivaldi Gloria. Eve suggested inviting the children's choir 'Angel Voices' to perform. It was also proposed that we advertise the concert as a fund-raising event for the church finances which were currently stretched following payment for the re-construction of a medieval wall. The PCC accepted this arrangement whereby we guaranteed the hire cost but hoped to increase the donation by attracting a large audience from the church community. As the church was promoting the concert, we also avoided a Performing Rights contribution. The concert was a great success and the PCC received a cheque for £300.

Hazel is a member of the regional committee of the Royal School of Church Music, as is Michael Moorsom the MD of the Briantspuddle choir. The Committee was informed at the August Meeting that the RSCM had proposed supporting a liaison between BpS and WCS to organise a 'Come and Sing' of the Crucifixion In January led by Simon Lole, to be held in the URC Hall in Dorchester. This to be followed by a Spring concert in LSM when the joint choirs would perform RVW's 5 Mystical

Songs and The Crucifixion. The Come and Sing was a great success with Simon setting a high but achievable standard.

There was some concern regarding collaboration with BpS since it was known that they had lost members recently and that Michael Moorsom did not meet the expectations of some members. Consequently, Eve and I attended the BpS Christmas Concert in Blandford. We reported a delightful evening with the choir supported by students from Wells Cathedral Choir School including Michael Moorsom's daughter. We also recorded that BpS had a larger Bass and Tenor section than WCS but that WCS would contribute more Soprano and Alto numbers. Thus, conversations and meetings took place in January to discuss the logistics of mounting two choirs in LSM to perform a joint Spring Concert of the Crucifixion and RVW's Mystical Songs. It was with disappointment that Covid 19 plans scuppered this plan.

The Committee has discussed with Hazel the possibility of going forward as a rehearsal choir with reduced numbers which would facilitate safe spacing. Ventilation is a critical factor even under these circumstances. The Dance School achieves this by leaving open the URC front doors and opening the emergency doors at the back, but this would make the hall uncomfortably cold. The church management is reluctant to make the Sanctuary available for anything other than worship. If Covid is brought under control and the legislation changes Hazel has in mind Bob Chilcott's 'Little Jazz Mass' for performance or simply rehearsal but at the time of writing, this seems to be sometime off. The Committee would be grateful for your thoughts regarding the conditions under which you would consider participating in the future.

In the meantime, please keep safe and 'in-touch' – we would appreciate your thoughts!

5. Music Director's Report

Hazel Ricketts reported as follows:-

Well – what a year! As always I have looked back at what I wrote last year – and I ended by “looking forward to not only this Christmas term, but beyond to the Spring term (when we have some exciting plans – some familiar and some new music!) and through to summer...”. I think it's fair to say that as I became more vague in my plans last year reflects exactly how it has turned out!

At the time of our last AGM we were just going through the process of appointing a new accompanist, and we were very fortunate to appoint Paul Ellis. He has proved to be excellent both musically and in terms of playing the right notes in the right order, as well as, once again, being a support to me and stepping in occasionally to take a rehearsal, or assist by taking a sectional. Thank you Paul.

However, let us look back a year to the with Christmas term and concert. It may seem an eternity ago but we sung Vivaldi's Gloria and a selection of Christmas carols. My choice of choir carols was intentionally unfamiliar musically with the aim that the overall programme was varied and seasonal, and it certainly presented some challenges for the choir – not least the unfamiliar harmonic language of the modern choir carols. However, you rose to the challenge, and there were some stunning moments in the concert. I remember goosebumps – and not from the cold! Most notable has to be the Leighton “Lully Lulla” with our soprano soloist Lucy Braga. I was later told that our performance was better than professional recordings heard online and I am inclined to agree. There was real music and feeling within it – to a level I haven't heard from Wareham Choral Society before. We were joined too by Cassy Dalby singing Mezzo Soprano/Alto in the Vivaldi Gloria. Our soloists were not only competent and musical, but their joy in being with us and making music together came through and helped to make a good performance! Once again, clearly the audience enjoyed this too – one member afterward telling me how ‘uplifting’ it had been. Another good performance of a work known to many, but not always as straightforward as some would suggest. Musically and for the choir I felt this has been a successful performance and concert, and also a successful term of rehearsals leading up to it. As I suggested last year – it takes a while for a choir and a new director to get used to each other and work at their best together and this concert showed that again, as well as the choir's willingness to be working on the technical aspects thrown into my warm ups! I should also mention again, Paul Ellis and his skills not only as accompanist for the term, but also his solos in the concert allowing us to hear his organ playing talents – much enjoyed.

Throughout the autumn term I had been having some meetings with Michael Moorsom from Briantspuddle singers who had suggested perhaps as neighbouring choirs to work together on something might be good. I already had in mind that I would like us to sing Vaughan Williams "5 Mystical Songs", which I felt would be achievable, and enjoyed, and slightly less common fare than some music (although interestingly it seems many choral societies thought this – I think about 3 other Wiltshire/Hampshire choirs were learning it at the same time!). However I had yet to formulate the other half of the programme. Briantspuddle Singers were at the same stage but with "The Crucifixion" planned – so it seemed a good plan to combine these, and our choirs, for a joint performance. We also tentatively suggested a 'come and sing' type event/joint rehearsal/workshop... at which point RSCM Wessex were also expressing a wish to run a similar event in the area and as the common denominator within these groups I suggested we all work together.

As a result between us a 'Workshop afternoon' on the Stainer "Crucifixion" was arranged with Simon Lole leading, for February. A hugely successful event both in terms of numbers, and musical content. Simon was the perfect person to lead this – with his gentle humour and great musicality, and clearly a work he knows well but still enjoys and understands. Much insight was given, and the music opened to us in new ways. Such an enjoyable afternoon for all concerned I think.

"The Crucifixion" is a very well known work, and as such most choir members had sung this. The notes are not too difficult, but to make it really effective much musicality is needed, as shown by Simon Lole. The Vaughan Williams is similar actually although in a very different style, and also needs a very reliable soloist. We were fortunate to secure two such soloists for the concert (Stainer needing tenor and bass), in a father and son team of Clement and Hugh Hetherington. In addition we selected 3 more short works to complement and fill out the programme – 2 of the Stanford "Three Motets" and Wood's "O thou the central orb". The latter well known, the former largely unknown but worthy of the time and work! I think it is fair to say that the Stanford is the most challenging repertoire tackled for the concert, but it was starting to come together nicely, and I was looking forward to the performance...

And then... lockdown. The weekend of 14th March is not one I will forget! I spent a train journey to London in discussion with WCS committee members about whether we should cancel both forthcoming rehearsals, concerts and meetings – of course we did. And we haven't been able to meet in person since. I think we all agree that a vital part of our week is missing without Wareham Choral Society, but your committee members have been in touch with one another, and guidelines are being kept up to date with, and we will return in due course when it is viable to do so in as safe a manner as possible. Obviously this will not be this side of Christmas, and quite how this all works for our choir is something being investigated. Likewise 'planning' for future events is very much 'wait and see' at the moment as to what is viable and safe as well as permitted! As ever I need to express thanks to the committee for their hard work 'behind the scenes' not only over the last year, but as we have to make increasingly complex decisions moving forwards and dealing with the restrictions, guidelines, and practicalities involved with our 'new normal' as we explore and plan to restart in due course. In these ever shifting sands do rest assured though that Wareham Choral is still alive and kicking, and I personally am so much looking forward to music making again with you when we can, but in the meantime the most important thing is to keep safe and well.

6. Treasurer's Report

The financial report for the year is shown below.

Receipts and payments for year ended 31st August

Receipts

Subscriptions	3375
Ticket sales	1290
DGS distribution	7000
Gift Aid receipts	3461
Concert Refreshments receipts (net)	68

Donations received	20	
Interest received	11	
Stainer workshop receipts (50%)	222	
Total Receipts		15447

Less Payments

MD fees	2320	
Accompanist's fees	1045	
Soloists' fees	495	
Venue cost	337	
Posters, programmes etc	127	
Music Hire	116	
Advertising	253	
Rehearsal space hire	330	
Making Music membership	326	
Choir folders	348	
Donations	20	
Gifts, expenses etc	44	
Total payments		(5,761)

Net receipts for the year **9,686**

Current Account opening balance	1523
Deposit Account opening balance	2286
Total	3809
Net receipts for the year	9686

Current Account closing balance	1235
Deposit Account closing balance	12260
Accumulated fund	13495

7. Election of Officers

Chairman, Judith Price, Secretary, Bob Newnham, and Treasurer Eve Baker are willing to continue in office.

9. Election of Committee Members

Elizabeth Read Wilson no longer wants to be a committee member. The committee thanks her for all her hard work on WCS's behalf over the past two years.

Jennifer Haworth has also decided to stand down after serving some 20 years on the committee, many of them as Treasurer. We owe Jennifer a big vote of thanks, If this had been a normal AGM we would have given her a round of applause.

Sarah Welton, formerly the Guild representative on our committee, is prepared to continue on the committee. This is an appropriate moment for WCS to record its thanks to Sarah for her work for WCS many years.

So the committee now is:-

Chairman	Judith Price
Secretary	Bob Newnham
Treasurer	Eve Baker
Members	David Edgington, Sarah Welton

10. Members' Comments

David Kemp sent the following comment:

As to a Covid-secure environment, we are aware that the URC can be chilly at the best of times, before opening all the doors and windows! The Committee might be interested to know that Corfe Castle Village Hall has been open for business since August, subject to users' compliance with a clearly defined set of conditions and the submission of a Risk Assessment. Maximum numbers in the main hall are currently 40 as a general rule, though the VH Trustees admit it is an arbitrary figure. The local drama group Double Act has a regular Monday evening booking, but in the first 6 or 7 months of the year it is monthly, and would be in one of the smaller rooms anyway. If Double Act puts on a production next November (2021) the main hall would be required from September, but that is a long way off in the uncertain future! In terms of costs, regular bookings made by locals (we qualify!) for the main hall could be as low as £25, or £40 for a one-off event, although we expect the Trustees to review charges in the aftermath of extensive improvements to the hall and its facilities and the loss of income through much of this year. There is a keyboard available, which is the original Ball & Socket instrument, but Paul might prefer to use the Society's machine.

The hall does not have wifi yet, but we understand it is to be installed (if that's what you do!) in the near future, so by the New Year it might be possible to combine live and virtual singing there.

David Kemp also noted that BSC had started rehearsing again in a socially-distanced way using Blandford Parish Church.

Note from the Committee: We are currently investigating the use of Lady St Mary Church as a rehearsal venue.

John Astley asked whether, now that the Dorset Guild is no longer in existence, the Society's subscription would stay the same or be reduced.

10. A.O.B.

None