



# Minutes Wareham Choral Society AGM 2024

Monday 28<sup>th</sup>  
October 7pm at  
The Horse &  
Groom pub,  
Wareham

## 1) Welcome

Eve Baker, Maureen Bayliss, Rachel Cude, Nancy Gibson, Zoe Gover, Ian Grocott, Margaret Harris, Neil Hirst, Janet Jones, Teresa Larby, Ann Manning, Mary Mathers, Bob Newnham, Judith Price, Teresa Rekowska, Sarah Welton, Brian Wilkins.

## 2) Apologies for Absence

Hazel Carter, Gideon Daly, Matt Dietz, David Kemp, Christine Kemp, Mark Lapper, Hazel Ricketts

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

These were accepted as a true record.

In AOB, Matt Dietz had suggested we buy a bank card reader. We have done so, and we are using it.

## 4) Chairman's Report

Teresa read out her report as follows:

*WOW, I can't believe I have completed my second year as Chairman of Wareham Choral Society (henceforth referred to as the choir) and what an exciting year it has been for us!*

*My main focus for 2024 was on recruitment and retention and raising the profile of the choir and we certainly did that, especially with our very successful D-Day concert in June; more of that later.*

*We kicked off our Autumn 2023 term with our Remembrance concert on 4<sup>th</sup> November and, despite bad weather, we had a good and appreciative audience. This concert had a unique flavour with its silent moments of reflection as well as readings from our choir members about war and conflict. It resonated with current events and appealed to both a secular and religious audience. With the granting of £500 from the Talbot Trust, the concert broke even financially and therefore the committee felt it was an all-round success.*

*We were excited to perform our Christmas 2023 concert in a venue that was new to many of us; the beautiful St John the Baptist Church in Bere Regis. The concert's theme was the colours of Christmas and we offered free entry with a retiring collection for the Church. It was a fun and lively concert with some audience participation of the nation's favourite carols as well as our memorable rendition of 'Jingle Bells' including Christmas hats and bells.*

*Our Christmas celebrations continued with a small group of singers leading the singing at the 'Light up a Life' service in support of Weldmar Hospices at Homes for Gardens in Wareham.*

*This was followed on 16<sup>th</sup> December by a larger group singing Christmas Carols around the Christmas Tree at the Mayors Christmas sale in the Wareham Town Hall.*

*The majority of members and their partners ended our 2023 year by enjoying a lovely Christmas dinner at The Kings Arms Stoborough.*

*We started 2024 with good news. We had a grant of £500 from the Talbot Trust for our Easter concert and the Purbeck magazine 'Love it Local' agreed to sponsor the choir by offering free advertising in their quarterly magazine as well as on social media. We continue to enjoy ongoing sponsorship from The Kings Arms Stoborough.*

*We also introduced a social media Policy and appointed Sarah Welton as our Safeguarding Officer.*

*We were very happy to have 2 of our own singers, David Stewart and Matt Dietz, as soloists for our Easter concert Stainer's 'Crucifixion', and although we clashed with the Purbeck Arts choir concert on the same evening, we had a reasonable audience and managed to break even financially due to the Talbot Trust grant.*

*In April we started rehearsals for our D-Day concert, with a discounted subs of £40 for the term.*

*We were extremely sad that Hazel contracted shingles which unfortunately resulted in her having to temporarily stand down as MD for the rehearsals and the concert in June. However, we were very grateful to Paul Ellis who took up her baton and led us to the most wonderful and successful concert with performances from Lady St. Mary Church choir, Wareham Town Band, Grace Lovelass, Bovington Military Wives, Wareham hand bells group and the Church bell ringers. Our choir challenged ourselves with the unaccompanied Parry and several beautiful versions of 'For the Fallen'.*

*I worked closely with Carol Lewis, the Dorset Royal British Legion secretary, to include dignitaries and local members from the RBL and also a Chelsea Pensioner who used to live in Wareham. We advertised extensively across Dorset and were delighted with a full house. I was successful in gaining a £650 grant from Wareham Town Council and, as you can see from the financial report this concert was a financial success for us and also the RBL; retiring collection was £362.*

*Unfortunately, our Patron David Mellor has once again taken a back seat this year due to ongoing health issues.*

*We are delighted to welcome several new members and several returning members this term but I would ask every member to continue to encourage new members to join us to keep our subscription at our current fee.*

*Our committee continue to work tirelessly behind the scenes; from creating 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 and dedication that they give to the choir and for supporting me.*

*My special thanks to Rachel Cude, who is now standing down as committee member and social media manager. I would like to present her with this gift as a little token of our thanks for all her time and commitment. Her contributions will be greatly missed from the committee but thankfully she will continue to sing with us.*

*My thanks to Paul Ellis for his wonderful accompanying at all our rehearsals and concerts, especially for his efforts this summer term.*

*Big thanks to Hazel. I continue to enjoy working closely alongside her to ensure we have an interesting and challenging repertoire. We are still hoping to recruit a trainee/assistant conductor and have this year advertised right across Dorset, but unfortunately with no interest so far.*

*Last but not least I want to thank you, our members for your continued enthusiasm to sing with our choir. The committee encourage you to propose any future repertoire suggestions and I look forward to continuing our progress together towards a joyful and successful 2025.*

## 5) Music Director's Report

Teresa read Hazel's report, as follows:

*Last year's report finished by stating we had rehearsals in the summer term for a WCS concert in November 2023.*

*This concert was a Remembrance concert featuring The Armed Man Choral Suite, and Faure's Requiem. I'm grateful that we have a committee open to suggestions and that they will run with my ideas. Given our 'theme' I suggested that between the movements of the Armed Man (which isn't actually very long!) we have a reading or poetry, and a little silence for reflection. Given the escalating of events in Israel just a few weeks earlier and the news continually featuring the war in Ukraine, this turned out to be a very effective way of presenting this music.*

*Various of our members read, including Matt in army uniform, my teenage daughter, who read a poem written as if a young person looking towards the end of wartime. Not much bribery was needed to persuade her either!*

*The Faure is a work which complemented this reflective and highly emotive first half, and we were fortunate to source a very able soloist from our own ranks in David Stewart. The extra rehearsal time in the summer meant this concert was well prepared and a lot of musicality started coming through as well as right notes at right time! It was also a concert with which people 'connected' both in audience and choir and one that will stand in my mind for a long time because of this.*

*We had a short time to prepare a Christmas concert after this, and complications arose when we discovered a clash with other Christmas concerts in Wareham. Bere Regis church kindly invited us to give our concert there – but requested plenty of audience participation! In reality this ended up being somewhere between a Carol Concert and a Carol Service, but it was a good event! We tackled about 5 choir-only items, including the light hearted "Jingle Bells", and included many more carols for the audience to join in.*

*A few bible readings, and a wonderfully light-hearted reading/sketch seeing the Christmas story from the 'lighting engineers' perspective completed the evening. Concert dress changed to "Christmas jumpers", and despite some difficult logistics for choir/organ visibility etc it was another very well received evening.*

*Spring brought another very different work – "The Crucifixion" by Stainer. Once again the plan was for our own choir to provide both soloists and whilst Matt did a wonderful job of the tenor, unfortunately severe voice problems meant a late substitution for David. We were very fortunate to have Jonathan Prentice able to sing bass for us.*

*This is a familiar work to church choirs but new for many in WCS; and one known to have a marmite reaction – some love it, some hate it! For those in the latter category – THANK YOU for putting up with it!*

*Musically much of it is straightforward, and there is much repetition, but it is not without 'moments'. As I have found previously, choirs who don't regularly sing hymns also need time spent learning them properly, but as we'd not 'overloaded' our programme and rehearsal time, this was very possible. Our performance went very well indeed, once again with a lot of musicality in our singing, and my nagging about odd bits of technique, and conveying the meaning of the words really paid off! A performance which had great integrity.*

*Teresa suggested a long while ago that we should do a D-Day celebration in June and various other groups were contacted – I was very aware that we would only have a few weeks of rehearsal time, but with others taking part WCS only needed about 20 minutes of music. Given that the Town Band, Grace Lovelass, and Military Wives choir were likely to cover some of the more popular war time songs I felt it best WCS stick to things they do well – so looked for music (once again) more with a 'remembrance' feel to act as a foil to the lighter repertoire.*

Two versions of “For the fallen” seemed obvious to ‘bookend’ the concert, and I had already had a request for the Ukrainian prayer for peace – so with a couple of movements of The Armed Man and Parry’s wonderful motet “My soul there is a country”, we had our programme.

Unfortunately for me this was as far as it got as shingles struck me down. Until then I had NO IDEA it could be so debilitating! Thank heavens for Paul stepping into the breach, and a largely unaccompanied set of music! With the support of the parish church choir who joined WCS, and their leader Bill as well as Paul, you did yourselves proud! I have heard the stories about how hard Paul worked you, and how there was a threat of not doing the Parry – but, as you so often do, you pulled it out of the bag on the day.

To see the church so packed for the concert, and with such a good atmosphere, was a real pleasure. It was so good to be there (even if it felt very strange to be sitting in a pew!), and I was especially pleased to give the “thank yous” because Teresa, having given me a list of people to remember, of course didn’t include herself but she was the one who spearheaded it, and arguably did the lion’s share of the work.

Which leads me nicely now to my thank yous. Firstly to Paul as accompanist and deputy conductor when needed. So often I’m grateful to Paul not just for his very accurate note playing, but also just little observations and sharing of experience. And of course, last year he really did more than the job description states!

Our committee are a great bunch of people who simply get on with the considerable work behind the scenes. Last year I mentioned we were starting to grow in numbers again – this has continued this year, and it doesn’t happen by chance. It happens by hard work on the part of the committee seeing opportunities to promote the choir and draw new people to us. I’m always grateful for them listening to my sometimes slightly unusual ideas (like the readings in the Armed Man, or being part of a work many choirs are commissioning together... watch this space!), and they either keep me in check or, more often than not, go for it.

A choir like this is really only as strong as its committee and I’d encourage you to think if being on it -might be for you? If it is an incentive, our committee meetings are held in the pub....! Seriously though, do consider joining this group. I dread the day Bob says he’s retiring but if/when that comes we will be looking for someone to do all the ‘behind the scenes’ things like posters, like programmes, librarianship of music, sourcing scores, the website, etc that Bob does for which we are extremely grateful – thank you Bob!

And finally a thank you to Teresa. I suspect it isn’t obvious to many how much time and energy she spends on our choir. The number of emails about ideas, chats, phone calls or WhatsApps to get things running smoothly behind the scenes and getting people on board for helping with concerts, publicity etc etc... We are all fortunate to have her - so my final thanks is to Teresa... for all you do for the choir.

## 6) Treasurer’s Report

Eve presented the financial report below.

### Wareham Choral Society receipts and payments for year ended 31st August 2024

	2024	2023
<b>Receipts</b>		
Subs	3389	3510
Ticket sales	3341	2423
Donations received	890	206
Gift aid	459	
Grants received	1650	
Sponsorship	300	250

Advertising sales	0	
Sales	155	
Refreshments & programmes	499	252
Interest received	80	31
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>10763</b>	<b>6672</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
MD fee & Accompanist's fee	5475	5028
Composer's fee	0	0
Soloists' fees	1150	1180
Music Hire	132	258
Church Hire	1360	1440
Advertising	886	848
Insurance	104	99
Refreshments	297	197
Printing etc	161	149
Charitable donations	50	20
Misc expenses	147	217
PRS licence	50	63
Making Music	109	98
Finance charges	37	0
Purchases for resale	155	
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>10113</b>	<b>9597</b>
<b>Surplus/-Deficit for the year</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>-2925</b>
<b>Opening balance at bank 1 Sep</b>	<b>6043</b>	<b>8968</b>
Surplus/-Deficit for the year	650	-2925
<b>Closing balance at bank 31 Aug</b>	<b>6693</b>	<b>6043</b>

Eve reported that we had made a surplus this year largely due to grants from the Talbot Village Trust and Wareham Town Council. The rebate from HRMC from gift aid on our membership fees is also significant.

## 7) Election of Officers

Teresa Rekowska is prepared to stand again as Chairman. Bob Newnham is prepared to continue as Secretary and Eve Baker as Treasurer. No other nominations had been received in advance, and none were proposed from the floor. The officers were duly re-elected nem con.

## 8) Election of Committee Members

Of the other committee members, Sarah Welton and Maureen Bayliss are happy to continue, but Rachel Cude is standing down because of other commitments.

There were no other nominations, so the other members were returned unopposed.

Teresa asked choir members to consider helping the committee in any way they could, not necessarily as a full committee member.

## 9) A.O.B.

Bob reminded the meeting about the rules for claiming Gift Aid. Gift Aid can be claimed on membership subscriptions. It is the responsibility of individual members to decide whether they wish to gift aid their subscription and whether they are eligible to do so. To be eligible, the total tax claimed back from all your gift aid claims to all organisations (including WCS) must be less than the total income tax you pay. The membership form each member fills in when they first join allows them to indicate whether they wish to claim gift aid or not. Please inform the Secretary if your tax situation changes and necessitates a change to your gift aid status.

It had been suggested that we might start rehearsals earlier than 7:30 on winter evenings in order to finish earlier. Teresa had consulted Hazel and Paul (who travel the furthest), and they could accommodate starting at 7:15 (finishing at 9:15pm), but no earlier. A show of hands indicated that all the members were in favour of this change. Teresa would raise the matter at the next rehearsal for the benefit of the members not present at the AGM.

Teresa proposed that we hold a Christmas social dinner at the King's Arms, Stoborough, as we had done for the past two years. They are offering a 2-course meal for £23. The meeting was in favour. Full details will be emailed to members soon.

Teresa announced that WCS had co-commissioned the work "A Season to Sing" by Joanna L'Estrange. We will begin to rehearse this after Easter and perform it at a concert in LSM in October 2025. More details will follow. Committee reassured members that the work was conventionally melodic and singable, addressing some concerns raised by members.

Ian Grocott noted that the D-Day concert had been particularly successful, and had made money!. This was perhaps due to the fact that the programme was out of the ordinary, and the occasion was very special.

Wareham Town Council had provided a grant for this concert, and Zoe Gover (a member of the Council) suggested that we should submit grant applications for both our Christmas concert, highlighting our use of a harpist, and for our concert with the Quayside Choir featuring Mozart's Requiem. The deadline for applications was only a few days away. Teresa and Eve will draft grant submissions post haste!

Ian Grocott also recalled a conversation he had with Simon (the rector) after our concert of Stainer's Crucifixion, which they both thought was our best performance they could recall (in fact "we nailed it!").

Bob Newnham 07/11/24