



Minutes Wareham Choral Society AGM 2025

Monday 28th
October 7pm at
The Horse &
Groom pub,
Wareham

1) Welcome

Eve Baker, Maureen Bayliss, Paul Cady, Hazel Carter, Nancy Gibson, Zoe Gover, Ian Grocott, Neil Hirst, Janet Jones, Mark Lapper, John Lillington, Mary Mathers, Bob Newnham, Teresa Rekowska, Malcolm Selwood, Sarah Welton, Brian Wilkins.

2) Apologies for Absence

Sylvie Adler, Jane Bailey, Nicola Brooke, Rachel Cude, Gideon Daly, Debs Kelly, David & Christine Kemp, Ann Manning, Hazel Ricketts, Frances & Harriet Tomlinson-Mynors.

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

These were accepted as a true record.

4) Chairman's Report

Teresa read out her report as follows:

I can't believe I have now completed my third busy and enjoyable year as Chairman of Wareham Choral Society. We kicked off our Autumn 2024 term with rehearsals for our 'Ceremony of Carols' by Britten and also started looking at the Mozart Requiem which we were performing Easter 2025.

In November we organised The Armed Man Come & Sing workshop in Blandford church, led by Sam Ryall. It was a fun day with a good attendance of 55, but unfortunately we only broke even financially, mainly due to Sam asking for an accompanist drummer which cost us an extra £200.

For our Christmas 'Ceremony of Carols' concert on 7th December, we were fortunate and delighted to have Katy Salomon accompanying us on the Harp. Paul Ellis played 2 organ solos and luckily Mariah Beswick stepped in at the last minute to perform the solos alongside Hazel. However, due to bad weather, we had an audience of less than 100 and despite a grant of £200 from the Wareham town council, the concert made a loss.

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

The majority of our members and their partners celebrated the end of our year by enjoying a lovely Christmas dinner at The Kings Arms Stoborough in December after our Christmas concert.

We started 2025 with an exciting project of a joint concert with the Quayside choir from Poole. Hazel and Helen Brind, the Quayside choir MD, and I, worked closely together to bring off a very

successful venture of 2 concerts of Mozart's Requiem in 2 venues; Lady St Marys Church Wareham and St James Church in Poole.

There were rehearsals for both choirs a few weeks before the concerts in both venues which worked well. We were delighted to have our own Tenor Matt Dietz as Tenor soloist and were introduced to a talented young bass, Toby Ransome. We also had the added bonus of a trombonist for the Tuba Mirum.

In spite of being unsuccessful in our application for grants from the BH coastal lottery and the Neighbourhood funding programme, the concerts were a great success with large audiences and WCS only had a small financial deficit. The committee are excited to be discussing future projects with Helen and the Quayside choir..

The choir and Hazel then took a well-earned break after the Easter concerts. However, we were still proactive in networking across our community and attended 2 events in May.

On 8th May, a small group of us, organised by David Kemp, sang at a lovely VE celebration evening in Corfe Castle, and on 24th May we joined with 3 other local charities - The Wareham Rotary Cub, The Wareham Lions and 'Not Just Sundaes' community cafe in Wareham - for a 'Quizoke'.

This was a fundraising event; people singing Karaoke and then questions based on the song just sung, which was promoted by Paul Cady who at that time was Chairman of the Wareham Lions. This was held in Furzebrook village hall and was well attended with a small group of our members joining in the fun. It was also financially successful, I with each charity receiving a profit of £262.

Rehearsals resumed again in June for a short 6-week term to start rehearsing our co-commission 'A Season to Sing'. We are very excited to perform the Dorset premiere of this work in Wareham on 18 October. This has been co-commissioned by us and 54 choirs from around the world.

It had its debut in London this March and in the Sydney Opera house in May. It has drawn much interest from the classical world and has been endorsed by Gareth Malone and played on BBC Radio 4. I am delighted to tell you that I was successful in gaining a grant of £700 from the Dorset Community Foundation which will cover the cost of us hiring the professional string quartet to accompany this concert.

Unfortunately, our Patron David Mellor has once again taken a back seat this year due to ongoing health issues. However, Damian, the owner of the Kings Arms Stoborough, continues to sponsor our choir to the tune of £100 for every concert. Also, the Love It Local Purbeck magazine continues to sponsor us with free publicity.

We are delighted to welcome several new members this past year but are equally sad to say goodbye to several valued members; namely Matt Dietz who moved with the army to Sandhurst in Berkshire at the end of August, and the very sad passing of Judith Price just a few weeks ago. Judith was the WCS Chairman before me for 10 years and sang with our sopranos.

She was a formidable lady who contributed much to the Wareham community and she will be sadly missed.

Our committee are all volunteers and continue to work tirelessly behind the scenes; from creating posters to sorting our finances, to name just a few of their responsibilities and tasks. We have introduced 'Safeguarding' to our committee meetings, always keeping in mind the safety and well-being of our members during rehearsals and concerts.

I want to thank all our committee, but especially Bob and Eve, for their continued generous time and dedication that they give to the choir and for supporting me.

My thanks also to Paul Ellis for his wonderful accompanying at all our rehearsals and concerts and for standing in for Hazel at the beginning of this Autumn term.

My Huge thanks to Hazel. I continue to enjoy working closely with her to ensure we have an interesting and challenging repertoire. I especially want to thank her for her commitment this year as it has been a particularly challenging and emotional time in her personal life.

Finally, 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.

The future of WCS relies on the commitment and efforts of all its members. This means committing to rehearsals throughout the term and to the concert date as soon as it is booked. It is also important to rehearse in your own time between rehearsals, be it listening to recordings in the car, whilst cooking etc. or at your laptop with a rehearsal aid and score. We make such a joyful sound together when we are all in attendance and give it our full commitment. I look forward to continuing our progress together towards a joyful and successful 2026.

5) Music Director's Report

Teresa read Hazel's report, as follows:

So this report covers autumn 2024 – 2025. I'm not going to dwell too long on the concerts that we did as feedback was provided afterwards anyway! But in brief our Christmas concert included the quite challenging Britten 'Ceremony of Carols' and other Christmas pieces with Katie Salomon playing harp with us and was a very successful concert musically.

Spring brought the collaboration with Quayside Singers and Helen Brind with Mozart Requiem on the programme. Two concerts, two conductors, soloists Lucy Braga, Mariah Beswick, our own Matthew Dietz and introducing young bass, Toby Ransome. A very successful collaboration and concerts once again. Both concerts had our talented and supportive Paul Ellis at the organ. I felt that both Autumn and Spring terms were very successful musically.

Our short summer term this June and July was primarily starting to 'note bash' with me at the piano, and prepare for the October 2025 concert. I approached the committee some months before having seen an opportunity to be involved with "co-commissioning" a work through the RSCM, by the composer Joanna Forbes L'Estrange. As you know, this is her 'reimagining' of Vivaldi's famous violin concerto as a choral piece. I was very pleased that the committee were supportive of this suggestion and that this means we are one of the first choirs to perform this. I think it has been very well received by the choir. The right mix of something 'new' and something 'familiar' all in one work!

As Musical Director my job entails both assisting with repertoire choice and planning of rehearsals etc. It is actually this side I choose to look at in this report, as I need your help and support! We are generally planning at least a year ahead – I hope at our next committee meeting concerts will be decided until the end of 2026, and this is simply to assist with everyone's diaries! We often consider repertoire when looking at date – for example the Remembrance tide concert in 2024. This is where my job can be very difficult. When pieces

are suggested I have to assume that I will have a certain number of singers at both rehearsals and concerts.

Obviously we understand that we can't anticipate illness and the odd clash with, for example, an important family celebration but we do assume holidays won't impact concerts. I have to decide how long it will take the choir to learn a piece, and how much music we can cover in rehearsals and we programme accordingly. (Only then can we get onto soloists, budgets, applying for grants etc.)

At times I have made very detailed written plans of what I intend to cover in every rehearsal but you know that this hasn't been the case recently. Rehearsals are always planned, whether on paper or in my head (or a combination of both!), but it very quickly becomes a waste of my time planning a term's rehearsals when I have many people missing each week. Sometimes it is simply not worth doing a section if I know it will need to be redone on another occasion as there are only half of a voice part there. Or I end up repeating something that has been covered previously which takes time I had allocated to something else. Obviously planning to cover everything twice is an option but limits the music we can get through! Likewise, 'homework' is important! I do try to find practice tracks etc, but if you're having difficulty with the ones suggested let me know what you need and I will see what else I can find! We all learn and retain music differently and finding what works for you as an individual is key. I know someone who gets a recorder from school days out and plays their notes through as that is what works for them!

Committee meetings recently have involved the discussion of these points, alongside finances and it has struck me that these are all relevant to what I want to say. It is simply that this is YOUR choir. You are the members - you are the singers! Yes, Paul and I are here to help you through that music, and to learn it and to lead it but we do it for YOU. And I would ask you to think about that when planning holidays, planning to see friends (or taking on other commitments) on Monday evenings. We are asking simply that you commit to rehearsals, and especially concerts, so that (illness etc aside) we expect to largely have the same singers all term, and for the concert.

And my final thoughts for you are that we, you the singers, and myself the MD are very fortunate to have a very active committee who work very hard behind the scenes. Do consider joining them, meetings are only about 4 times a year and we leave feeling we have achieved something. They're even quite fun! Teresa's energy is infectious and she works especially hard with publicity and fundraising – thank you Teresa. Likewise, a special thank you to Eve and Bob for their roles as Treasurer and "Secretary" - although Bob does a huge amount more than the job title!

My final thank you is to Paul, who besides being a brilliant accompanist and score reader, offers so much musical support and shares his experience of our pieces with me, as well as always being willing to step in to take a rehearsal if needed. Thank you Paul.

6) Treasurer's Report

Eve presented the financial report below.

Wareham Choral Society receipts and payments for year ended 31st August 2025

	2025	2024
Receipts		
Subs	3930	3389
Ticket sales	2730	3341

Donations received	310	890
Gift aid	373	459
Grants received	900	1650
Sponsorship	200	300
Advertising sales		0
Sales	323	155
Refreshments & programmes	214	499
Interest received	74	80
Net receipts from Quizoke	262	
Total receipts	9316	10763

Payments

MD fee & Accompanist's fee	5460	5475
Composer's fee		0
Soloists' fees	1295	1150
Concert Venue Hire	670	520
Music Hire	152	132
Church Hire (rehearsals)	930	840
Advertising	805	886
Insurance	107	104
Refreshments	177	297
Printing etc		161
Charitable donations		50
Misc expenses	108	147
PRS licence	160	50
Making Music	163	109
Finance charges	6	37
Purchases for resale	225	155

Total payments	10258	10413
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Surplus/-Deficit for the year	-942	350
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Opening balance at bank 1 Sep 2024	6328
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Surplus/-Deficit for the year	-942
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Closing balance at bank 31 Aug 2025	5386
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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,. 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.

Paul Cady volunteered to join the committee as Social and Fund-Raising Secretary. Paul brings us many years' experience as Chairman of the Wareham Lions and membership of many committees. We welcome Paul to our team!

9) New Subscription Proposal.

WCS have consistently had a deficit for subscriptions (subs) over several years. Subs should cover our weekly rehearsal running costs, i.e. MD, accompanist and church hire fees. At the present deficit level, if we do not increase the subs, we will no longer be viable after 2 years.

Our committee proposes an increase of our annual subscription to £200 as from January 2026. This is an increase of £3.67 per month and overall equates to a fee of £3.33 per hour.

There will be 2 ways to pay subs, either:

1. £200 paid in full at the start of the Spring term, or
2. monthly bank standing order £17 per month, which totals £204 per annum.

We would still offer a discount to new members; their first 2 months free.

This would still leave us with a small deficit, but hopefully we will continue to increase our membership and we plan to continue with fundraising events and grant applications each year.

Members were in agreement that this proposal be accepted. We would also be prepared to discuss individual cases of hardship which this might cause.

10) 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 which each member fills in when they first join allows them to indicate whether they wish to claim gift aid or not. The forms have been archived. However, since some members joined years ago, it is worth revalidating everyone's status by means of a new form.

Bob will organise this.

Paul Cady suggested we might like to look at purchasing Polo & Sweatshirts with our WCS Logo. Paul got a good deal for the Lions - £27 for both a poloshirt & sweatshirt. Members agreed this is a good idea, especially when fundraising and at secular events. Paul will get quotes and look at possible local sponsors to reduce our costs.

. There was much discussion re 'A Season to Sing' concert. General opinion was that we felt under rehearsed, and could have done with another 2 or 3 week's rehearsal. We should take this on board when planning future concerts. Do not overload with too much new material to learn and also do not plan 2 concerts in one term. Hindsight is a wonderful thing!! It was stated by several members last night that they enjoyed the concert despite of our errors, we

did our best, and everyone recognised how difficult it was for you to conduct the strings as well as our choir and you had a round of applause. Everyone was delighted that Joanna Forbes L'Estrange was able to join us. Everyone agreed we felt the Gloria went well and we made a 'joyful noise'!

A member asked about Spring term's repertoire and I confirmed Elgar's The Music Makers. We sang this about 10 years ago and a few members remember singing it then. For most singers, however, it is new. Teresa has applied to Wareham Town council for a small grant to cover our budgeted deficit (£260) which should cover our soloist.

Teresa will be contacting Grace Lovelass, mezzo-soprano, as our preferred soloist as she is local, brings in her own audience and has a wonderful operatic voice suited to this work. This was well received.

A member said that 'young' Matthew Lewis has served his apprenticeship in the basses and has now been accepted into the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus. We would should be proud to have assisted in a young local choir member who started with us as a novice and has now developed into a confident young performer. We wish him well.

Recruitment was discussed; this is every member's duty to try to recruit new members. Brian Wilkins said a lady approached him after the concert interested in joining the altos, with previous choir experience. Eve & Bob know who she is and we have an email address for her. Teresa will make contact.

Bob Newnham 22/10/25