



MINUTES

Wareham Choral Society

AGM 2016

Monday
17th Oct 2016
7:15 pm at URC

1. Welcome

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from David Kemp, Christine Kemp and Mary Mathers

3. Minutes of last year's AGM

These had been distributed by email prior to the AGM

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising. The minutes were accepted.

5. Chairman's Report

Judith Price reported as follows:-

"It is with great pleasure and some relief that I am able to report on a year in which we have speculated on both the venue and content of our events and remained solvent. We are building a reputation for high quality, entertaining concerts. Our programmes are varied, offering choral, instrumental and solo items, readings, and dare I suggest, occupying a niche in the rich cultural life of Purbeck.

However, it is at Christmas in particular, that we aim to draw in the local community. We choose to occupy the first Saturday in December, because it suits Nigel, our concert is the first of the season and we have the benefit of an audience that is not carol weary. So, last year, Holly, Ivy and candles created a seasonal ambience and the Town Band provided some umph. Communication with the band was halting – my original thought was that they would provide a brass accompaniment to a processional Gaudete but neither the music nor suitable instruments were available. With the support of our Beckenham friends the Finzi went well and Talia and Susannah enriched the programme with their solos. The readers were accomplished and the link between music and words was enjoyed and commented on. Despite the expense of hiring and transporting an organ we made a small profit. We thought that the 'punters' had enjoyed the concert so much that they were reluctant to go, until we realised that they were not aware that the concert had ended – the programme was a little on the short side. More on this later.

The Christmas Party was an opportunity to present Jennifer Haworth with Honorary Membership of WCS, we thanked Talia for her contribution as a soloist in so many of our concerts, sang our favourite carols and enjoyed a delightful recitation by Nicky Hann. Members were invited to share their ideas on a number of Choir issues and mentioned especially the need to 'sign-off' at the end of concerts and to improve concert etiquette. All ideas have been logged and there will be an opportunity for you to say more under AOB.

The Purbeck Literary Festival evening was most enjoyable and it was good to hear other choirs. The Wareham Whalers produced a wonderfully authentic sound and it was always interesting to hear words enhanced by music as with David Fawcett and Eric's poetry. Many thanks to David Kemp and his team for the huge effort made to co-ordinate the event.

The Crucifixion 'Come and Sing' was well supported and much enjoyed. It was good to be joined by so many from BpS (especially those who kindly helped with clearing-up) and

gratifying that people travelled from as far as Beaminster, Blandford, and Swanage. The choice of work was well judged by Nigel to be a choral favourite. It was not intended that WCS would rehearse the work, but being well prepared was a plus and provided variety alongside the Guild Concert music. The occasion enabled us to 'flag-up' Nigel's expertise and 'fun' approach to singing which was clearly much appreciated. John was, as ever, an asset on the organ. We gained one new member which covered the small loss incurred and a list of 18 singers to whom we can advertise future events.

The Guild Concert

The concert was a success in performance despite the many, who doubted that the piano/harmonium accompaniment would provide sufficient support for the choir. The joint - rehearsals were productive and much enjoyed with Simon Lole managing as ever to walk the tight rope described as the art of the possible. The concert was a good sing but the audience was small and a debt of £2,000 was incurred. It is difficult to entice concert goers from inside let alone outside the constituent choirs and at the Lighthouse there is, in Nigel's football parlance, 'no home crowd'. As one of the founding choirs I would like to remind members that the Guild has an impressive history, and has offered over many years the opportunity for small choirs to sing in a large auditorium with an orchestra and professional soloists. I hope as many people as possible from WCS will attend the AGM on Saturday to support the organisation through a period of change as the Chairman, Secretary, and Publicity Manager retire.

The Summer Concert

In May, many hours of negotiation finally fell foul in our attempts to repeat last year's very successful Summer concert at the Tyneham Barn. Landmarc – the organisation that administers MOD property (not to be confused with the Landmark Trust) were unable to budge from the requirement to have personnel in attendance for the entire period we occupied the building. w/e remuneration is double-time and we were unable to go forward in the knowledge that we would incur an unacceptably high loss.

It was clear that the Tyneham venue was a significant factor in attracting the largest audience we have ever achieved so the search was on to find a similar replacement. Rollington Barn sprang to mind and having been viewed by Peter and Bob an expensive deal was struck. Importing chairs, staging, glasses, generator etc. involved a tremendous effort on the part of Bob, Peter, myself and our spouses. Chairs were transported from four venues before and after the event.

We were fortunate in engaging excellent soloists, Kate Milek the charming lutenist, the impressive young tenor Daniel Bell, and the delightful Francesca who will join us again for the Faure. Equally entertaining was our own talent in Talia, Paul, Hilary, and the readers, including Liz, who vowed she would never use the term 'cuckold' and then repeated it several times; David and Gideon in their delivery of Brush-up your Shakespeare, flowers from Jane Yard and last, but not least our erudite, wordsmith/poetess in residence Marje Heath who composed and recited the Shakespeare puzzle – It was a tribute to us, and especially Nigel, that the audience would have liked to hear more from the choir. The barn acoustic was amazingly clear, the food provided by the ladies was delicious and much appreciated, the men rallied around the serving of the wine, purchased by Jennifer and the atmosphere buzzed with warmth and friendliness. I would like to thank Nigel for his unfailing good humour. This is the second time he has arrived in deepest Dorset to draw our efforts together, to greet and work with soloists' unknown to him and even when John our other hero arrived late, to remain un-fazed.

As the Chair I seek your views on two issues.

The first concerns expenditure/speculation on soloists, accompaniment, venues. But for an anonymous donor the summer concert would have incurred a loss. I expect Peter as Treasurer to counsel caution but he never thwarts ambition. Although we should not erode hard won reserves, as a choir we exist to sing and perform. Engaging soloists encourages us to up our game, to attract audience members who attend voluntarily, and not as pressed family and friends.

This evening is an opportunity for you to share with us your views.

Secondly, learning a variety of songs from different periods is always more testing than rehearsing a single work and Nigel is painstakingly encouraging. I recently witnessed him

working with a group of singers; he was able to achieve more because of their concentration and attentiveness.

Now we are in the choir for relaxation, fellowship, and enjoyment but that should not preclude having pencils at the ready to mark-up our music. I mentioned at the beginning the question, of 'warm-ups', the voice is an instrument and many of us sing not from Monday to Monday and breathing is the power house for the voice: the harnessing of that power needs practice. There is also the question of mixing parts to encourage independence and blending, some personal preparation between rehearsals can make performance more enjoyable. We should not rely on our more musically accomplished members. Please share your ideas on what works for you.

Finally, I will bravely risk admonition by Bob for referring to his contribution to the running of this choir. As Secretary, his minutes are impeccable and a valuable resource, As Librarian, his energy in exploring and obtaining music, counting it out and back, saves us money and we are never without something to sing. As a prime mover on posters etc. his efforts are amazing. The photograph of the West window on our latest poster is remarkable.

Peter similarly is assiduous in keeping our accounts and offering sage advice without clipping our wings and he is always on-hand to help with all other matters. Eve has helped enormously with our on-line advertising and Jennifer as a long-standing member adds perspective. David takes his role as the member's member seriously and with efficiency. I have often found his word in my ear most helpful. Hilary Goodinge retired during the year in consequence of her busy life as a councillor. We do need someone to take her place – we will not burden you with responsibility that is beyond what you feel able to contribute.

I am not quite in awe of Nigel but I frequently have to pinch myself to remember that it is our great good fortune to have such a talented and approachable musician as our Conductor

My perception of WCS is of an increasingly friendly, cohesive group of people with a great sense of fun, love of singing, and willingness to play a part beside attendance. I look forward to the coming year."

6. **Music Director's Report**

Nigel Groome reported as follows:

"May I begin by simply thanking you all for the tremendous hard work undertaken in the past year – musically and in any other way too – to everyone who has prepared food and drink, and moved chairs around to set up for Monday evening – to the major overhaul of a barn for a summer concert! It is very easy to take this sort of thing for granted – but I don't, so thank you all.

Our Christmas concert in LSM church last year was well-attended, and we gave ourselves a pretty demanding challenge with the Finzi work In Terra Pax – and we rose to it – the Glory to God in the Highest section was especially difficult – but we all went for it big time – and it began and ended together – and ended with smiling faces of relief!

It was lovely for me to have Susannah singing the soprano solo with our friend from Beckenham, the bass Mathew Graham. And again a sincere a sincere thank you for making them feel so welcome and at home with us. It doesn't go unnoticed!

I was not directly involved in the Spring concert as it was the Guild performance of the Rossini, but it was a fine piece to rehearse with you. I don't think I have conducted so many Amens before.

The rewarding event in the Spring was the Stainer Crucifixion, a work which is frowned upon by many musical purists, but one which I happen to enjoy -as clearly so do many other people. The Come-and-Sing was very well-attended and clearly folk enjoyed the opportunity to come and sing it, and in such a marvellous setting as Bere Regis church.

Francesca will be with us again for the Faure Come-and-Sing, as will Martin Weston, who sang at Tyneham. I hope that most of you will support that event. It is a real opportunity to profile WCS. My ideal is for this event to be a WCS concert where we happen to be joined by some visitors. It is also a recruiting opportunity. We need to work hard at bringing in some more men, especially tenors. They are a rare breed these days. Please let me know if you know any of the breed who we might approach or target. It really needs to be a priority for us.

My personal thanks to Judith for everything she has done for us all. She works incredibly hard behind the scenes and has so much energy and enthusiasm, and so many creative ideas.

Thanks also to Bob for keeping me in touch with news of everything, and for last-minute photocopying. And thanks especially to Peter for paying me!

The committee we have here is a brilliant one and they all contribute so much to the success of WCS, especially for the summer concert. We turn up on the Saturday and sing – they had to set it up for us and get an audience.

And of course, an enormous thank you to John, everyone's right-hand man, for his accompanying, help with note-bashing and dry sense of humour!

I started with thank you – and I want to end with thank you – to you all for the support and encouragement that you give me, and for your friendship – and for occasionally laughing at my jokes!

Thank you all!"

7. Treasurer's Report

Peter Davenport presented the Financial Statement. This is given below.

Financial year 1st September 2015 to 30th August 2016.

Two concerts and participation in Dorset Guild of Singers Concert at The Lighthouse. Summer Concert in Rollington Barn.

Income:

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Subscriptions: | Autumn 2015 | £2200 |
| | Spring 2016 | £1775 |
| | Summer 2016 | £1950 |
| | Come and Sing April 2016 | £760 |
| Ticket Sales: | Christmas 2015 | £1500 |
| | Summer 2016 | £1402 |
| Other: | Wine sales at Christmas | £96.86 |
| | Sale of CD's | £50.00 |
| | Bank Interest | £0.50 |
| Total | | £9734.36 |

Expenditure:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Insurance and Making Music sub. | | £364.73 | |
| Dorset Guild of Singers sub | | £660 | |
| Rehearsals: | Hire of Hall | £450 | |
| | Musical Director | £2240 | |
| | Accompanist | £1000 (some invoices outstanding) | |
| | Music Hire | £305.40 | |
| Concerts: | Printing and publicity | £490.85 | |
| | Soloists | £830.00 | |
| | MD and Accomp | £858.60 | |
| | Miscellaneous expenses | £399.95 | |
| | Venues | £756.00 | |
| | (reduced by anonymous contribution of £200) | | |
| | Total: | | £8,355.53 |

Balance for year:

£1,378.83 (surplus)

| | 2015/16 | 2014/15 | 2013/4 |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Deposit A/c | £4,011.20 | £3997.50 | £4009.20 |
| Current A/c | £3,067.41 | £1352.66 | £1207.65 |
| total | £7078.61 | £5350.16 | £5216.85 |
| Increase/decrease | £1,728.45 | £133.75 | |

Assets:

Debtors: Accompanist is due to remit his invoice for the second half of 2016 (about £500).

Notes: Some of surplus due to increased choir numbers in the Summer Term and the reduction by two in the number of rehearsals in the Summer Term.

Brain Wilkins moved that the report be accepted, Alan Green seconded and the meeting agreed.

8. **Election of Officers**

JP was pleased to report that all the executive officers were prepared to stand again, as were the other committee members. No new nominations for any post had been tabled prior to the AGM, and none were received from the floor.

Consequently the existing committee's re-election was approved en bloc by the meeting.

9. **Election of Committee Members**

Hilary Goodinge had left the committee during the because of her commitments as a local councillor. We desperately needed a replacement. JP asked for volunteers. None were forthcoming at the meeting. JP asked members to consider seriously standing and to contact any committee member if they felt they could contribute. It isn't onerous!

10. **Future Events**

JP noted that the choir had been formed in 1947, so next year is our 70th anniversary. We would mark this in some way. It was too short notice to commission a new work in time for concerts next year. We will be holding a concert in the Spring (March 24th), and we will hold another summer concert in early July (venue and exact date to be decided) and we will market these concerts as celebrations of our anniversary year.

The content of these concerts had been discussed at the committee meeting last week.

NG planned a Handel Chandos anthem and an organ piece for the first half of the spring concert, with the choir singing Malcolm Archer's Requiem in the second half. We would also invite the Hamig String Quartet.

The summer concert would have a nautical theme – it might include Rowley's *A Sailor's Garland*, *Arethusa*, *Tom Bowling*, *Songs of the Fleet*, etc. Choir members are invited to suggest other suitable works.

BN had looked at the choir archive. He noted that the earliest concert for which there is a playlist is from 1958, when the choir sang *A Sailor's Garland*!

11. **A.O.B.**

JP asked the meeting for its thoughts on how we should honour retiring choir members who had been members for many years or who had made outstanding contributions during their membership, with particular reference to Betty Sealey, who had been a member since 1988 and now felt that she (regrettably) had to give up. The meeting endorsed the decision of the committee to award her honorary membership. A certificate will be presented (at the Christmas party, if she is able to come).

Gideon Daly thought we should investigate possible joint concerts with Purbeck School. He is a governor there. They have an enthusiastic Head of Performance, Nicky Budd, who we should contact. Sarah Welton pointed out that in the past when Robin Longman was our MD, we had mounted joint concerts, since Robin was a teacher at the school.

NG remarked that he had a manuscript copy of a yet-unpublished piece for String Quartet and voices called St George by Malcolm Archer, who would be happy for us to sing it – a world premiere! This would be suitable material for a joint concert.

Obviously there might be problems with co-ordination and logistics, and the school Hall was reported to have a very poor acoustic. However, this is an idea worth pursuing.

Bob Newnham 4/11/16