

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of a committee meeting held at Hawkedon School on 9th June 2022.

Present: Members: Ryland Lee (RL), Chairman; John Adams (JA) Deputy Chairman; Martin Butler (MB) Secretary; John Kay (JK), Treasurer; Section Leaders (SLs): Paul Lyden (PL), Dave Allen (DA), Jeremy Jones (JJ).

Officers: Clive Waterman (CW), Musical Director; Chris Peck (CP) Health & Safety Officer; Steve Richardson (SR) Publicity; Andrew Evans (AE), Nigel Shaw (NS)

Minutes: Andy Sherwood.

Apologies: John Saverton, Dave Ewens

	Action
<p>13/22 Minutes: The minutes of the meeting on the 24th February 2022 were agreed to be an accurate record of the event.</p> <p>14/22 Matters arising from the minutes: John Madejski seen to be generally unresponsive to attempts to communicate by others so it was thought that it would be pointless to make an approach. The issue of a Patron will be parked for now.</p> <p>Bank account changes including Signatories all dealt with.</p> <p>Mayoral introduction to Anniversary programme complete.</p> <p>Around 70 people confirmed for September's social event.</p> <p>Covid testing before rehearsal no longer mandatory, but choristers should not attend events if they feel unwell.</p> <p>We need recruitment and retention processes.</p> <p>Abbey School choir to be with us for the 2nd July concert + two other guest artists.</p> <p>Expenditure for van hire for the Gwynn Arch memorial concert approved.</p> <p>Jeremy Logie approached to MC the Gala concert and has agreed to do so.</p> <p>Sponsorship for young singers in progress.</p> <p>New First aiders identified, Alan Crisp to lead training.</p> <p>Defibrillator at Hawkedon available for use by choir. (Note, School to be informed if used.)</p> <p>Some unused long service pins returned for re-use.</p>	

15/22 Chairman's report:

Rehearsals continue to be well supported by choristers with attendance now back to pre-pandemic levels. With the reintroduction of coffee breaks and raffles, there is now an improved social ambience to rehearsals with opportunities for more social interaction.

Recruitment is on-going and to date we have attracted three new members to date. We will need to drive this forward next term and set up open/bring a friend evenings. However, it is also important to note that our performances at concert and other social settings are a powerful recruitment 'tool' so we need to continually push our concert ticket sales. However, it is not sufficient to just recruit new members, we also need to retain them - so first impressions are very important. Potential new recruits need to feel welcomed and engaged during both singing and at break time. They need their own individual music copies - to this end we need to ensure that we have available folders with that evening's song list available which will be collected in at the end of the rehearsal (we don't always have advanced warning of attendance)

Concerts are now back on track. Despite the disappointment of cancellations at the start of the 2021 -22 season, we are now back in 'full swing' with seven concerts and a successful tour to Cornwall. RMVC also played a part in supporting the Ukraine appeal with over £3000 raised for that worthy cause. The culmination of this anniversary year will be our Gala concert on 2nd July.

16/22 Section leader's reports:

First Tenors

We currently have 16 active First Tenors with one potential new member, Bob Hill, who has attended one rehearsal and intends to return to the next one on 10th June. Clive Willey is now a fully paid up member who will be singing A Life Filled with Grace with us at the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations in Reading Abbey on 2nd June. He is not yet ready for full concerts, but we hope he will be soon. Frank Neale has now returned after the COVID lockdown. We have two members who have not returned to Choir so far, Keith Nee-Robinson and Andrew Searle. Whilst there is no certainty, at the moment, both have shown signs of wishing to return in September.

We had 12 First Tenors attend Cornwall with us, for the 4 day Cornwall festival. Everyone had a great time and enjoyed the singing and hospitality, which was outstandingly good. Because we did not enter the competition, I feel it allowed us to relax and have a good time. The organisation was outstanding throughout, mainly due to our Secretary, Martin Butler's hard work prior to and during our stay.

I have now been Section Leader for nearly Five years, allowing for the COVID period, so it is time for a change. I am currently looking for a suitable candidate to replace me.

Dave Allen

Second Tenors

There are no adverse issues to report only the good news like Geoffrey Million's prognosis and how well our newest recruit Ossie is doing.

We did have another new recruit, Ben Harnan. But his joining has been delayed by Covid.

Seventeen members of the section have now returned to rehearsals; only two have not done so.

Dave Ewens

Baritone No report.

Bass

Seven basses participated in the tour to Cornwall, and thought it was a great success, even if a bit of a strain on the vocal cords. Could Trelawny have been sung more slowly than at Porthleven?

I have indicated to the section that I am prepared to act as section leader for a fourth term.

Jeremy Jones.

17/22 Treasurers report:

CURRENT BALANCES

Here is where we stand financially as of 31st May 2022, and my projections for the year to 31 May 2023.

Balance at the end of:	May 21 Actual	31 May 22 Actual	May 23 Projected
Account:	£	£	£
Assets	18	18	18
Debtors	-	-	-
Metro Bank Current Account	25,878	27,070	25,675
NatWest current account	0	0	0
NatWest Reserve	229	0	0
Metro Bank Reserve	0	229	229
Cash and cheques	10	-	-
Creditors	-	-	-
TOTAL	26,135	27,317	25,922
RESERVES (net current assets)	26,117	27,299	25,904

The balance as at the end of May 2021 is as in the Annual Report and Accounts. Reserves are as defined by the Charities Commission. They are represented in our accounts by the subtotal Net Current Assets. Since we write down our fixed assets to nominal values, in most years our total balances only slightly exceed our reserves.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2021/22

The Choir resumed face-to-face rehearsals, post COVID, in September 2021 and have performed in 7 concerts including 2 pro bono concerts for Ukraine, 2 concerts and 2 daytime singing appearances during our participation in the Cornwall International Festival. Only two concerts have been 'fee earning'. We participated in Gwyn Arch's successful Celebration Concert which resulted in a net cost of £209 to the choir.

Although our accounts are currently showing a surplus for the year of £1,182, bear in mind that we are currently holding £1,650 in accrued payments for the 50th Anniversary Dinner and we expect to pay c. £1,000 for the hire of Hawkedon School. In addition, we have already received £400 sponsorship for the Gwyn Arch Young Singer initiative. We have yet to receive a further £752 net payments for our Cornwall trip. Consequently, taking these factors into account, the outturn for the year would be a net expenditure of c. £-1,300 compared to net expenditure of £-500 as reported to the AGM last year. Net Core expenditure was £-1,864 and Net Non-Core income was £3,046. These results are subject to examination by our Independent Examiner, scheduled for 30th June.

Main variance -v- budget were as follows:

Income: £2,728 under budget in subscriptions arising from a membership total of 64 paying members -v- 71 anticipated in the budget. This also resulted in £249 shortfall in our Gift Aid refund. Total sponsorship received was £800 (£400 specified for the Gwyn Arch Young Singers project). Concert fees and tickets were £1,436 below budget due to cancelled concerts during the year. 2

Expenditure: £1,835 below budget expenditure on hiring the rehearsal hall – full hire charge for the year has not yet been invoiced; Administration expenditure was £857 over budget due to unbudgeted costs relating to Service Awards, Zoom Subscription, Making Music subscription, the purchase of a Sum Up Card Reader and a repayment of £440 to a member who had made a payment to RMVC in error.

PROPOSED BUDGET 2022/23

I have attached a draft budget for the year to 31st May 2023 for approval by the Committee and subsequently the AGM. You will see that this proposes a budget deficit for 2022/3 with a projected outturn that expenditure will exceed income by £1,395. Bear in mind that this is offset by 2022 income included £1,650 accrued payments for the 50th Anniversary Dinner which will be paid for during the budget period.

Significant assumptions in this budget:

- We will perform 8 fee paying concerts at £400 each in addition to our Anniversary Concert in July which I have assumed will be self-funding.
- Subscriptions will increase by 8% to £130.00 full and £90.00 concession, both including a tuition fee of £20
- We will launch the Gwyn Arch Young Singer Competition this year and will receive a further £4,100 in sponsorship (already pledged).

At this level, our Reserves would reduce to £25,904, about £13,415 above our long-term target of £12,489 (£10,000 at 2017 prices). Net Core expenditure would be £-1320 net non-Core income would be £2,715.

POSSIBLE BUDGET 2023/24

I have attempted to develop a possible budget for the year ending 31st May 2024 – see attached. You will see that this budget would deliver a further deficit of £2,042.

Significant assumptions in this possible budget:

We will perform 8 fee paying concerts during the year and that our fees will remain at £400.

Subscriptions would increase to £136.00 including £20.00 Tuition. Concession rates would increase to £94.

No further significant expenditure is anticipated in this financial year.

At this level, our Reserves would decrease to £23,862, about £11,373 above our long-term target of £12,489 (£10,000 at 2017 prices). Net Core expenditure would be £1,179 net non-Core expenditure would be £863.

We have choices in how we deal with our reserve situation. Unfortunately, the reserve cannot reasonably be used to subsidise subscriptions, as this would result in an even steeper rise in the same at the point at which the reserves run out, the alternative being that the Choir ceases to exist.

We do however need to reduce reserves to the level of a single year's expenditure to provide for any unforeseen events that would involve the choir not operating for a year but still having to pay the normal outgoings.

The increase of subscriptions by 8% may well be contentious for some but members should be aware that our subscription levels are way below that of comparable choirs (around £150) and any member experiencing difficulties in payment is welcome to discuss the issue with the Treasurer.

We pay well below the market rate for Clive and Hayley, around 50%. So, there is a massive justification for increasing their earnings from the choir by 8%.

Suggestions for using the reserve surplus include ring-fencing some for the Young singers competition, purchase of staging, purchase of a trailer for transporting staging, improvements to uniform, replacement of Roland (keyboard), replacement of sheet music.

18/22 Musical directors report:

Our first full concert was at Trinity Church in late February.

Closely followed by one at Christchurch, Woodley. A further concert at St Edmund Campion in support of the Ukrainian Aid Appeal these last two concerts raised a sum in excess of £5,500.

The Gwyn Arch Celebration Concert was the next major event in which we participated.

For the first time, we performed at the Walkers Memorial Service in Reading Minster. Then came our Cornwall trip with the Choir performing on four occasions.

Only a short time later we were performing in Christchurch Henley where our Soprano soloist was beautifully accompanied by our own Hayley Tull.

Then came our performance at the lighting of Reading's Beacon in celebration of the Queens Jubilee where we had to perform the special song composed for the occasion.

The very next morning we were performing once again, this time for the public in Broad Street Mall.

So now we begin to focus on the final preparations for our 50th Anniversary Concert in Reading Town Hall. Here we are joined by Simon Mayor & Hilary James, together with the Abbey School Junior Choir.

We have gone from a very slow start to the year to the most involved, most condensed and most demanding past few months that I can remember, where events have come thick and fast. I am very conscious of the demands that this has made on the Choir who have responded so positively and so well to each and every event. The dedication and commitment has been there for all to see and I commend each and every one for their efforts.

The choir's repertoire will be looked at over the break, ideas from members are always welcome. Section leaders will be contacting members for contributions.

19/22 Secretary's report:

After a busy few months, we come to almost the end of the season.

Since the end of covid restrictions we have had successful concerts in Lower Earley, Woodley, Maidenhead, Henley on Thames and trip to Cornwall. Also, part of Gwyn's celebration in Reading. Add to this the events around the jubilee in Abbey Ruins and Broad Street Mall all leading up to the final concert – our 50th Gala concert on 2nd July. This has definitely been an extremely busy 5 months which after the disappointments of the previous 2 years to Covid, a challenge which all the choir have taken on board.

As reported in the annual report financially this has proved very good for the charities we have supported and 2 concerts supporting Ukraine, which as free concerts were well attended and financially raised a lot for Ukraine.

Cornwall Festival was a great success, and everyone that attended both choir members and partners found the trip and enjoyable time with about the right balance of performance and free time. The hotel also seemed popular and accommodating to us all as was the coach company as always.

Covid has played a large part of our time in recent months. This has seen some members affected with Covid and in total 50% (34) of our choir have at some point had Covid. Choir members have remaining fairly static in the last 2 years despite covid and people moving away, with a very few number of members not returned. There are currently 64 members (16 Top Tenor, 16 Second Tenor, 15 Baritones, 17 Basses) plus Clive and Hayley. 2 of which are new members for this season 1 top tenor and 1 second tenor. Weekly updates and where possible mid-week update have continued throughout to ensure everyone is kept informed at all times.

SL's/ All

<p>Plans are in place for concerts for next season 2022- 2023 (see below)</p> <p>Saturday 3rd September 2022 7.30pm, 50th anniversary Choir Meal, Sindlesham Court</p> <p>Saturday 22nd October 2022 @ 7.30pm (Rebooked from this season), St Edmund Campion Church, Maidenhead (for church funds)</p> <p>Tuesday 8th November 2022 @ 2pm (informal event), Oddfellows, Oxford Rd Reading</p> <p>Saturday 17th December 2022 @5pm, Three Choir's concert, Christmas at Reading Minster (for sanctuary)</p> <p>January 2023 / February 2023 TBC</p> <p>Saturday 25th March 2023 @ 7.30pm (rebooked from this season), St Mary's Church Purley on Thames (for church funds)</p> <p>22nd April 2023 7.30pm, All Saints Church, Downshire Square, Reading</p> <p>Saturday 20th May 2023 7.30pm (rebooked from this season), Christchurch, Christchurch Rd Reading (for church funds)</p> <p>Saturday 10th or 17th June 2023 7.30pm (Gala Concert for young singers) TBC, Venue TBC, but cannot be Greyfriars due to re-plastering work.</p> <p>The Saturday 12th November 2022 concert at Greyfriars Church for RMVC to be cancelled due to the presence of scaffolding on stage. Alternative venue to be found.</p> <p>A discussion with Charities is needed to ensure that 1 They are not paying too much for our services, and 2) are being pro-active in promoting concerts and selling tickets.</p> <p>Money (£40 a month) from Co-op Community Lottery coming in, and there have been some wins for Choir members.</p> <p>20/22 Health and Safety report:</p> <p><u>Choir First Aid Incidents:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trinity Church, Lower Earley – 26 February 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One chorister tripped and fell on an unmarked step while moving onto the stage during the first number after the interval – Action for future: inspect routes and identify potential trip hazards, mark or avoid; designate guides to assist people onto the stage and staging. • Gwyn Arch Memorial Concert at Town Hall – 9 April 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There were two incidents caused by sitting or standing still for long periods and then standing or moving. For the future, we need to try to ensure that we have an able-bodied person to assist next door to any chorister who may need help. Try to make use of handrails etc to steady people when climbing or descending stairs. • Christ Church, Henley – 21 May 2022 	<p>MB</p> <p>RL/MB/JK</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was one near miss. One person half fell and was caught as they were climbing onto the staging during the first number. Part of the cause was the length of time everyone had been standing during the rehearsal beforehand, we need to build in breaks. We also need to ensure that people climbing onto the staging use the handrails at the side of the staging (not easy to do on this occasion) and have guides; or reposition vulnerable choristers at the front at ground level. 	
<p><u>Other issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Could we bring the conductors platform into each rehearsal, so that we avoid the temptation to climb on chairs, and thus prevent a serious fall? ● Could we investigate the use of a trolley to carry the urn and the refreshment boxes from the container store to the rehearsal room in order to prevent a trip or fall? 	<p>CW/SR</p> <p>SR</p>
<p><u>Health and Safety Documentation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documents approved at February meeting, waiting to be uploaded to new website. 	<p>AE</p>
<p>21/22 Young Singers competition:</p> <p>Planning group in place and holding meetings. Dedicated page on website with branding Sponsorship money being raised. Launch will be at the 50th Anniversary gala concert. Lots of interest being shown in local schools. Solo's or duets only, no choirs or groups. Age groups are 10-13, 14-16, 16-21.</p>	
<p>22/22 RMVC 50th Anniversary:</p> <p>Venue visited and performer changing areas settled, RMVC on level area with stage, no stairs but steps to stage.</p> <p>Lift hire arranged. People need to be on-site for installation and to learn how it operates.</p> <p>Around a quarter of tickets have been sold. Flyers need to be posted both physically and digitally on social media. All tickets need to be sold to break even.</p> <p>Transportation and setting up need to be arranged.</p>	<p>MB</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>MB/ Martin Deaves/ Geoff Crabbe.</p>
<p>Young singers flyers to be made available.</p>	<p>AE</p>
<p>No CD sales, probably no raffle.</p>	

<p>Biographies for Lori and Simon & Hilary received, nothing from Abbey school.</p> <p>Programmes to be £4 each, 350 to 400 copies to be printed.</p> <p>Photo of choir to be arranged and made, full uniform.</p> <p>Presentations to be made at end of concert. Wine, no flowers.</p> <p>RMVC to be present on stage at start, no walk-on.</p> <p>Simon & Hilary to perform with Abbey, but not enough room on stage for two choirs.</p> <p>23/22 Recruitment and retention. Not discussed due to lack of time. Deferred to next meeting.</p> <p>24/22 AGM The AGM's core purpose is to discuss the Treasurers report and to vote on Nominations. Reports made for this meeting will usually suffice for the AGM. Nominations list to be distributed.</p> <p>No longer a webmaster role on list, job done by a team.</p> <p>Section leader's proposer and seconder need to be from within relevant sections.</p> <p>There are some vacancies to be filled, all positions are available.</p> <p>Any unfilled positions will not be covered by other trustees/officers and will remain vacant.</p> <p>25/22 Long service awards: List of those eligible to be compiled, some awards to be made at start of next season rather than at the AGM, on request. Some awards will be made at the AGM but earlier than they would usually be made due to the 50th Anniversary.</p> <p>26/22 Social media and website: Not discussed.</p> <p>26/22 Proposed meeting dates: These are now finalised as: 29th September changed from original proposal, PLEASE UPDATE YOUR RECORDS; 24th November as proposed; 23rd February as proposed; 8th June changed from original proposal, PLEASE UPDATE YOUR RECORDS; AGM 7th July changed from original proposal, PLEASE UPDATE YOUR RECORDS;.</p> <p>2/22 Any other business: None</p>	<p>AE</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>AS</p> <p>RL/AS</p> <p>MB</p>
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Date of Next Meetings: See Above.