

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of a committee meeting held at Hawkedon School on 30th November 2023

Present:

Members: Ryland Lee (RL), Chairman; John Carr (JC) Deputy Chairman;
Steve Richardson (SR) Secretary; John Kay (JK), Treasurer; Section Leaders (SLs): Arnie Howell (AH),
Mike Jearey (MJ); Andrew Evans (AE);

Officers: Christopher Peck (CP) Health & Safety Officer; Nigel Shaw (NS) Stage Manager

Minutes: Steve Andrewes

01/23 Apologies were received from MB (Concert Secretary) and PM, Section Leader Basses

02/23 Minutes

The previous meetings minutes have been amended to reflect that the Brass Band would be in attendance at the Minster Concert and not at Ascot Priory. Following this change the minutes were agreed as a correct record of the events which took place on 12th October 2023.

03/23 Matters arising from the minutes:

CP requested that the action point to speak to Paul Buckle regarding H&S matters be rolled over until the next meeting.

ACTION. CP to liaise with PB

RL to follow up action regarding support for KP re distribution of flyers

ACTION. RL to follow up

AE advised that wraparound adverts (possibly pull ups) could be used to good effect, e.g. displaying bar codes etc.

ACTION AE to discuss with MB

RL believes that RMVC can perform the annual Christmas Carol Service at the Minster without input from other choirs.

Action RL to discuss with CW

Section Leaders are reminded that they should be fully aware of any needs/issues that section members need which require consideration at concerts.

ACTION Section Leaders to take note

MB confirmed that a replacement for Aneesha had been booked for the Christmas dinner.

04/23 RMVC Chairman's Report

RMVC Chairman's Report: 30th November 2023

ACTION Section leaders to note

We are coming up to a very busy time in terms of concerts - four concerts in six weeks (counting Ascot as two concerts). I would ask Section Leaders to collate section numbers for all concerts and forward this information to Clive.

On the matter of concerts, I would remind Section Leaders of the need to produce a 'line up' plan for their section for each event. This plan should ensure that less experienced singers are supported eg. not placed next to another section, between more experienced singers etc. and all singers have a clear line of sight to Clive.

ACTION Section Leaders to note

The Gwyn Arch Young Singers' competition 2023-24 has now been launched. We need to encourage everyone to actively publicise the competition across Reading and surrounding areas using flyers, social media 'word of mouth' etc - we received 26 entries last year so we have a target!

Initial discussion has suggested that YS becomes a biennial event. So a question now is whether we want to develop another community/young singers' initiative to run in the 'non YS year' (the answer may be no). If the decision is made to proceed with another initiative we will need to decide what and begin to work on that in Spring 2024 so it will be ready to launch in September/October 2024.

One idea that has been briefly mentioned is a Bursary Award for Young Singers and a paper has been circulated outlining a rationale, process and timescale - this is covered later in the agenda.

05/23 Section leader's reports:

Tenor 1 Report

No developments to report from the T1s for this quarter.

All the T1s continue to attend rehearsals and perform at concerts except when prevented by health or other commitments.

Mike Jearey

Tenor 2 Report.

There have been no changes of personnel. Dave Moon did his first performance with us at the St Edmond Campion gig and enjoyed the experience. John Oversby has been in hospital again and has been unable to join us these last couple of weeks. Ossie Ravel appears to be back amongst us, although he will doubtless be further distracted by the repairs to his flat in Madrid and by work generally. Group strength is 16 right now, but with an "aging population" as all the best hacks call it, this could go down a bit in the coming year or two.

T.A.Howell

Section leader.

Baritone Report

Nothing to report

Bass Section Leader's Report

There have been no issues or changes since the last Committee Meeting

06/24 Treasurers report:

CURRENT BALANCES Here is where we stand financially as of 31st October 2023, and my projections for the year to 31 May 2024.

Balance at the end of	May 23	31 Oct 23	May 24
	Actual	Actual	Projected
Account	£	£	£
Assets	18	18	18
Debtors	-	-	-
Metro Bank Current Account	9,478	13,445	5167
Metro Bank Reserve Account	17,554	17,631	17,631
Cash & Cheques	0	1083	0
Creditors	-	-	-
TOTAL	27050	32177	22798
Reserves (net current assets)	27032	32159	22780

The balance as at the end of May 2023 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. In November 2022, the Committee agreed to increase our long-term Reserves target to £17,500. In addition, the Committee agreed to set aside £2,500 'protected funds' to ensure the continuation of the Gwyn Arch Young Singers competition in future years. In addition to the above, currently, the choir is holding £5,056 of members funds allocated to the upcoming trip to Builth Wells and Christmas Dinner

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24

I have taken £2,500 out of the budget for YS Sponsorship. This initiative made a surplus of £2,425 last year and we don't expect any further sponsorship this year. Consequently, the revised forecast for the financial year is that Expenditure will exceed Income by £4,252. This compares with budgeted deficit, approved by the AGM, of £1,949. Net Core Expenditure would be £2,558 and net non-core expenditure would be £1,694. Our Reserves would reduce to £22,780 which is about £3,880 above our long-term target of £18,900 (£17,500 at 2022 prices). Bear in mind that included in the Reserves is c. £2,500 attributed to the YS programme.

Subscriptions: All subscriptions have now been paid apart from 1 member to whom I have spoken, and payment has been promised soon.

Staged payments for the trip to Bulth Wells next Spring are being received.

Since my report in October: - The concert held at St Edmund Campion RC Church on 18th October raised £1,100 net for the charities. The Choir is expected to net £255.

Please let me know if you have any questions. John Kay 26th November 2023

JK advised that, in view of there being no guaranteed sponsorship for the Young Singers Competition, the forecast Budget deficit needs to be increased from £2,000 to £4,500. Funds relating to Young Singers are ring-fenced.

JK requested that Section Leaders are aware of the required payment dates for Bulth Wells Trip.

SR to include this information in his regular update.

ACTION SR to include Bulth payment requirements in update

JC enquired about payment for flyers as it is difficult to estimate numbers required. JK confirmed that these costs are born by the hosts.

It was considered that RMVC Registered Charity Number should appear on all flyers.

AE to arrange for Reg Charity number to appear on flyers.

SR requested JK to advise him of details of approaching Long Service Awards

ACTION JK to advise SR

MUSICAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT NOVEMBER 2023

After a Long spell of rehearsals at last, we have completed our first concert of the season and below is a brief account of the event:-

ST EDMUND CAMPION

Our first concert of the season has been a long time coming, but it was worth the wait! My thanks to you all for all the help and support that was very evident from the moment I turned up. We had to be sensitive to the fact that there was going to be a mass right at the time we were setting up. The Church was full for this as well! In the end this was no problem, and all went very smoothly thanks to the co-operation from all sides.

I was a little concerned about the fact that I knew there was another big concert event being held locally in Maidenhead, but I needn't have worried – we had a great audience thanks to the efforts all involved. The concert was another friendly, enjoyable and successful event at which the Choir sang really well. They were all geared up and ready for it, having waited patiently these past weeks. The acoustics of the Church were much better than I remembered. This enabled them all to just ease into the singing and enjoy the results. The opening (Come All Who Thirst) worked very well I thought, and 'Let There Be Light' was very dramatic. Ave Maria was very well sung – the fine acoustics were just right for this piece. From that moment I knew we were going to have a great evening!

I am sorry that the beginning of the Benedictus was a little 'mucky' – I suddenly found that the volume controls on the keyboard were not responding as they should, and I had to reset the volumes manually

as we went along. That piece is tricky enough under normal circumstances! We all held it together – the mark of a good team!

The only other problems occurred in 'This Little Light Of Mine' – the same section that I focused on at an earlier rehearsal – the Choir gets excited and speeds up and the timing goes astray! I will go over this to ensure an enthusiastic yet more measured performance of this at Ascot!

All in all, a great start to the season which now heralds a very busy period! My thanks to all of you for your efforts and co-operation throughout!

So begins an intense period of events, which will be upon us in no time. Rehearsals have gone well, and the Choir should be well prepared.

In a bid to make both this Christmas and future Christmases far more manageable, I have been allowed to purchase 4 ring binder files for each chorister. This will enable me to change and adapt items far more easily and provide uniformity and a certain smartness to the way the Choir looks when performing with music. These files should only be needed when performing these special events, **not at normal concerts!** I suggest we collect these files in after the minster concert in order to keep them in good condition!

As planned, Occasions are to join our rehearsal this coming Thursday to experience the joint items that feature in our next two concerts - at Ascot Priory, and Reading Minster.

Once this condensed period of festive commitments is over, the new year will see us back to learning new music to extend our repertoire still further.

The Choir appears to be in good spirits and is enjoying the material we are learning together. It is also good to see our newest members being actively involved in all we do.

My thanks to Hayley and indeed everyone on the Committee for all the support shown throughout this intense period!

Lastly, it is good to know that 'Young Singers' is up and running once more. My personal view is that this should be an annual event – but I am guided by you all!

Clive

08/23 Secretary's report:

Business as usual, nothing to report

Steve Richardson

9/23 Concert Secretaries Report

Reading Male Voice Choir 2023 – 2024 season

Tuesday 12 th December 2023 (Clive to enquire on numbers attending)

Oddfellows, Oxford Rd - 2.00pm

Informal singing for oddfellows members.

Saturday 16 th December 2023

Christmas Concert - Reading Minster 5.00pm

Raising funds for Reading Minster Music outreach programme.

Plans are currently underway as to ways to make this another concert to remember. with Occasions singers + brass quintet tickets £7.50

Thursday 14 th December 2023

RMVC Xmas dinner – Sonning Golf Club 7.30pm

3 rd February 2024

Concert Christchurch Woodley - 7.00pm

Raising funds for Parkinsons (Reading)

Guest artists – The Barberettes

As with other years one of best supported concerts raising funds for Parkinsons. This year the Barberettes will be joining us as they too have members with Parkinsons or relatives with so is a very very apt combination for us to again sing with them

Tickets cost £12 and on sale already on ticketsource

Saturday 9 th March 2024

Young singers auditions Abbey school 9.00-5.00pm

RMVC members and ladies support will be required to make this a success again.

Saturday 20 th April 2024

Walkers Memorial Service, Reading Minster 4.00pm

To be Confirmed

Thursday 25 th April until Sunday 28 th April 2024

Trip to Builth, Wales 2 concerts

Hotel and Coach is now booked and further details for payments will come when required. Expectation to leave on the morning of 25 th and back late afternoon on 28 th .

Friday 26 th April - Lunchtime concert @ 1pm in Brecon Cathedral

Saturday 27 th April- Evening concert Holy Trinity Church Llandrindod Wells

Saturday 8 th June 2024

Concert Trinity Church Lower earley 7.00pm

Raising funds for Trinity Church funds.

Currently in discussion with Ma Bessie who has offered to sing with us for free at one of our concerts in 2024 (from Walkers memorial service 2023)

Saturday 6 th July 2024

Gala Concert for Young Singers Abbey school 7.00pm

celebrations concert of Young singers competition winners and others guests

Reading Male Voice Choir 2024 – 2025 season

RMVC visit to Cornwall

Thursday 24 th – Sunday 27 th April 2025

2 concerts lined up for the friday evening and saturday evening at the moment. (this is the weekend after easter)

Friday evening in concert with Truro MVC in church next to cathedral, I have met with the Chairman to discuss and they are happy to host.

Saturday evening in concert with Mevagissey choir in the church they rehearse in, Have met with all the church and chairman and musical Director and they would love for us to visit them as a return.

2025 – young singers competition is not in the plans for this season (Ryland)

Possible other concerts contacts for interest for 2025.

Aldershot military wives choir

Mixed voice choir that Bob Hill belongs to.

PACT – charity still interested in booking

Charity in Wokingham (clive) see if interested for 12 th october concert

Avenue accapella would like to sing with RMVC again

Taplow court

RNLI for concert of 200 th celebration

NO concerts have been booked yet for 2024/2025 season.

Charities/churches are not wanting to commit financially.....

Reading Male Voice Choir 2025 – 2026 season

Mevagissey Male Voice Choir visit to Reading

Friday 26 th – Sunday 28 th September 2025

was orgonally for oct 2024, Unfortunately because of sea faring events

taking place in late september early ocotber 2024 the choir cannot commit

to the dates for 2024. So instead we will reverse and visit Cornwall first and Mevagissey return visit at beginning

MB now has his own website and viewers can click on to buy his CD.

The idea of using this process for RMVC was discussed and it was considered that downloads would be preferable to CDs in the current climate.

ACTION AE to speak to Web hosts

In view of the increasing difficulties for choirs to obtain bookings the question 'are we too expensive to book' was raised, and various cost models were suggested.

Also is our current aide memoire suitable for customers to project plan their event.

We should also consider whether we should be targeting larger structured charities, where we may be able to offer free concerts and agree percentage of ticket sale funds.

**ACTION JC to speak to MB re aide memoire
JK to calculate cost model.
Also, RK to liaise with MB re Committee agreement to individual event costs.**

10/23 Young Singers competition/concert

RL reported that we already have 6 entries and intend to repeat the e-shot in January.

11/23 Health and safety update

Annual maintenance:

☑ PAT testing of electrical equipment is complete.

☑ Staging equipment inspection was completed on 21 October. There were no concerns regarding its condition.

☑ Two new bags have been purchased in which to keep the conductor's podium and the legs (as the cardboard boxes are disintegrating).

Choir Accidents and First Aid Incidents:

☑ An incident involving a spilt drink and slip hazard created at a rehearsal in early September has been investigated. The availability of cleaning equipment checked at Hawkedon School, and advice issued to all choir members, via the Secretary's weekly news email.

☑ No further accidents or incidents reported.

First Aid

☑ At each concert venue, could the Concert Secretary or Stage Manager check on the availability of a Defibrillator. (Kevin Boyle located 2 defibs at the Maidenhead Concert)

Christopher Peck (Health & Safety Officer), 25 Nov 2023

We should be checking whether our host building has a defibrillator available.

ACTION. CP and NS to check

There is some confusion regarding under 16s tickets for the Minster concert. Do under 16s require ticket to enable the venue to check attendance levels

ACTION RL to check with CW

It was confirmed that RMVC have adequate insurance at venues, as incidents beyond our control are the responsibility of the hosts.

12/23 Social Media/Website

Nothing to report

13/23 Bursary Award Proposal

Dear All,

This message may seem somewhat premature but all will become clearer as you read the message below and the attachment. This message is based on the following assumptions:

- the Young Singers' competition will become a biennial event
- an alternative community based initiative focusing on supporting young singers be run in the intervening years

If none of the above assumptions are correct then there is no need for further discussion.

I am aware that my tenure as Chairman comes to an end in July 2024 and it is not my intention to move forward with an initiative that a future Chairman and committee would not want to pursue. However, if an alternative initiative is to be considered, processes and procedures will need to be developed and in place for Spring/Summer 2024 for a September/October 2024 start. I would also emphasise that I would be more than happy (with the help of a planning) group to organise and manage the continuation of the YS competition and any other initiative designed to support the advancement of young singers.

One initiative that has been briefly mentioned in past committee meetings has been a Bursary Award for Young Singers. I managed such a programme for Hart MVC for some years and it was successful in both raising the profile of the choir and supporting young singers. I attach a copy of the initial proposal developed for Hart for your perusal.

If you think that this idea (or indeed any other suggestion) merits further discussion I will add it to the agenda for the 30th November committee meeting.

Regards

Ryland

The above suggestion was fully discussed and it was decided that we should postpone a decision until we have seen the outcome of the second Young Singers Award next summer.

14. A.o B

The spread of dates for next year's committee meetings was raised, and it was considered that our first meeting after the summer break should be earlier, to avoid 2 meetings in a few weeks. As it is prudent to meet early in the season we should consider a date in, say, mid September.

ACTION Secretary to review dates prior to next meeting

15/23 Proposed meeting dates for 2023/24

22nd February 2024, 6th June 2024, AGM 5th July 2024