

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of a committee meeting held at Hawkedon School on 11 December 2025

Present:

Members: John Kay, (JK), Chairman; John Carr (JC) Deputy Chairman; Mike Jearey (MJ) Treasurer; Steve Richardson (SR) (Secretary); Section Leaders (SLs): Steve Andrewes (SA), Andrew Evans (AE)

Officers: Martin Butler (MB) Concert Secretary; Christopher Peck (CP) Health & Safety Officer, Nigel Shaw (NS) (Stage Manager)

Minutes: John Painter

Musical Director Clive Waterman (CW)

1) Apologies

Bob Hill (Section Leader 1st Tenors), Paul Moir (Section Leader Basses), Jon Saverton (Social Secretary),

2) Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2025 were agreed by the Committee.

3) Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Minute 5(2) – Young Singers’ Competition 2026

JK had discussed with Berkshire Maestros, who also run a competition and therefore could not commit to help with venues, but would continue to support and promote.

(see also Minute 4 below)

Minute 11(10) – MD’s Report

The care home where the choir sang was Abbeycrest in Sonning Common.

4) Chairman’s Report

JK submitted a report covering the following matters:

Recent Concerts and Activities

The September Maidenhead concert with Mevagissey MC had raised £3,500 and the October Newbury concert £3,800. Both had been well attended, as had the December concert with the Salvation Army. Rehearsals and social events had continued to enjoy strong member support.

Thanks were recorded to JC and the team at St Edmund Campion church, Maidenhead, for organising and promoting the Mevagissey concert, to a full house.

JC noted that the choir responded positively and performed well to a full house. Future concert bookings should take into consideration the ability and willingness of partner charities to sell their concert themselves; and the location and size of proposed venues: in this regard it was noted that singing at a small but full venue was more satisfying. JC, with MB, had set up a group of members to review concert planning and to agree a checklist for venues, which would be reporting back later in the year.

AGREED: JC to report back on concert planning to the June Committee meeting.

ACTION: JC

Membership and Recruitment

The September recruitment evening had not been as successful as hoped for, but the choir had had four new recruits since the start of the autumn term.

Stage Presence

This had been raised with the choir, and Robin John had done an audit of trousers by Section. Choristers should be aware that, when in uniform, they were being watched by the audience and should temper their behaviour accordingly. Chatting and individual movements when on stage should be avoided.

AGREED: SLs to keep an eye on their Sections at future concerts.

ACTION: SLs

Young Singers' Competition

This had been launched at the end of September, with flyers and emails sent to all local schools during October and early November. Ten applications received so far. Ryland Lee would be doing a second circulation to schools in early January in advance of the closing date of 31 January. All Choir members encouraged to promote take up.

Auditions on 28 March, and Winners' Concert on 27 June 2026, both at The Abbey School.

Music Advisory Team

MAT had met in September, and the repertoire for the 2025-26 season was enclosed: 43 items including five new songs. The T2s had requested addition of 'Let it be Me' to repertoire.

5) Section Leaders' Reports

Brief written reports were received from all four SLs. Updates on the health of individual members were given. The death of Fred Holloway (T2), the Choir's longest-serving member, was noted with sadness: the Choir had sung at his funeral to a full church.

Four new choristers had joined during the autumn. **JK requested that he and CW be told in advance when new men appeared, so that they could welcome them.**

ACTION: SLs

6) Treasurer's Report

MJ submitted a report setting out current balances, income and expenditure 2025/6, and Updates since September. He appended the budget report comparing expenditure and income to 8 December 2025, with the agreed 2025/26 estimates.

At 30 November 2025 the choir had a balance on its current Metro Bank account of £12,226, compared with £6,613 at 31 May; and a balance on its Reserve Account of £18,004, compared with £17,927 at 31 May. Including assets and cash / cheques, the choir had total balances at 30 November of £32,164, compared with £24,576 at 31 May, and a projected outturn of £24,449 at 31 May 2026, which was above the long-term target of £18,900. These figures included the £2,500 'protected funds' for the 2026 Young Singers' Competition, as agreed by the Committee.

With regard to income and expenditure on the 2025/26 budget:

- All expected members' subscriptions for 2025/26 had been received, from an active membership of 59 men: there was an under-recovery of membership subscriptions compared with estimate which in turn would reduce the Choir's grant-aid claim, with an impact of -£561.
- There was a surplus to date of £511 on social events (not including the Christmas Dinner)

- The end-of-year forecast included the grant-aid of £1,890 from the Earley Charity; and the increased payment to the Deputy Musical Director
- There had been one death (Fred Holloway) and one resignation from the Choir (Dennis Bredelet), and one member was on 'leave of absence' for health reasons; two new members had paid to join.
- End of year net core expenditure was forecast to be balanced by net non-core expenditure, with a predicted small surplus of £757.

7) Musical Director's Report

CW submitted a report highlighting the Choir's activities over the autumn term, as follows:

- Megavissey MC visit 26-27 September
- Concert at St John the Evangelist, Newbury, 1 November
- Fred Holloway's memorial service, 7 November
- Choir social outing to the theatre in London, 26 November
- Christmas singing at Abbeycrest care home, 27 November
- Broad Street Mall singing, 6 December
- Salvation Army concert, 6 December
- Annual Reading Minster concert, 20 December

8) Secretary's Report

SR submitted a report on the first matter below, and raised the following two matters:

Joy Marketplace

Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) had contacted the Choir to promote the Joy Marketplace, a service linking local health and wellbeing professionals to local charities through a new Joy App which would enable community prescribers to refer patients to potentially beneficial contacts. RVA were offering 'Intro to Joy' online sessions to explain how the new App would work.

The Committee following discussion **AGREED the principle of the Choir linking itself to the Joy App, subject to SR and MJ attending an 'Intro to Joy' session.**

ACTION: SR MJ

Hawkedon School

The school's winter term disco would take place on Friday 20 March, not 27 March as previously advised. The rehearsal for Friday 20 March would therefore move to Christ Church Woodley.

Christmas Charity

The Committee **AGREED that the 2025 charity for donations in lieu of sending Christmas cards would be the RBH Elderly Care Appeal.**

ACTION: MB to send details of the charity to SR and JK

9) Concert Secretary's Report

MB submitted a report updating the Choir's projected concert and singing programme for 2025/26 and into 2026/27, including the sums of money raised for charity at the three concerts held to date (totalling £7,664). He drew particular attention to the following future concerts:

- 25 April 2026 – Parkinson’s Concert in Summertown, Oxford – no guest act yet identified.
- 6 June 2026 - Concert at Sindlesham Court – no guest act yet identified
- 27 June 2026 - Gala Concert for Young Singers – no children’s choir identified
- 3 October 2026 – joint concert with Builth MVC, All Saints Downshire Square, for the Headway charity, with an Afterglow held in the church hall.

On guest acts, MB advised that he would be approaching Elle Stevens to check her availability to cover one of them. Hawkedon School choir had expressed interest in singing at the Gala Concert.

The Committee noted that one objective of the Young Singers’ competition was to identify future guest artists and **AGREED that MB should give consideration to approaching past winners.**

ACTION: MB

On the Oxford concert, the Committee **AGREED:**

- 1) **that MB should visit to inspect the church beforehand**
- 2) **that MB and MJ should explore the costs of hiring a coach on the day of the concert.**

ACTION: MB, MJ

On the Builth MVC concert, the Committee noted that All Saints was a large venue that had not always generated good audiences, and that proactivity would be required from the Headway charity to promote and sell tickets.

The report also reviewed three options for overseas trips in 2027 as follows:

- Drumagabee, Co. Down (guests of the local MVC) – awaiting invitation
- Dusseldorf – celebration of the 80th anniversary of the 1947 town-twinning with Reading - no response to emails to date.
- Alta Pusteria International Choir Festival, Italy (Sudtiro) – awaiting dates for 2027 Festival.

9) **Health & Safety**

CP reported that the annual staging inspection and PAT testing of electrical equipment had taken place on Saturday 13 September. Minor issues had been identified which were being addressed.

CP had briefed the choir about the fire drill arrangements at Hawkedon School on 12 September.

The contents of the first aid box had been checked, and a rota for first aiders at concerts agreed for 2025-26. The concert information sheet now included details of local defibrillators.

There had been no accident reports. There had been stumbles or falls due to infirmity, and **SLs should ensure that any chorister likely to need assistance should have an allocated buddy at concert venues.**

ACTION: SLs

10) **Social Media and Website**

AE reported that Chris Carr was now running the website.

Videos of past winners of the Young Singers’ competition being placed on Facebook and Instagram.

The Choir had 950 followers on Facebook. After each concert a review was posted with videos and images.

10) **Any Other Business**

- a) Extension of Creative Tax Relief to Choirs

As part of a campaign promoted by Making Music, MJ had written to local MPs in October to campaign for creative tax relief to be extended to choirs in the November budget. Positive responses received from three MPs.

b) Stage Management

NS noted that he would be out of the country from January to April inclusive. Geoff Gale would be covering his duties as stage manager for concerts over this period, with Jon Saverton deputising.

c) Support for Musical Director

CW expressed his ongoing thanks to the committee and all other choristers who support and assist him at rehearsals and concerts.

11) Dates of Future Meetings

Thursdays 19 March and 18 June 2026, with the AGM on Friday 3 July 2026.

The meeting, which started at 7.30pm, ended at 9.03pm.