

HARLESTON CHORAL SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on Monday 17th October 2022

at 7.30pm in The Church on London Road, Harleston

Stella welcomed Justin, Karen and choir members and declared the meeting open

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jenny Hyams, Heather Butcher, Tracy Jeffries, Mary Armstrong, Ivan Tammias, Angie Wilson, Kate Saltmont and Liz Ind

2. Minutes of the last AGM (18th October 2021)

On the proposal of Julia Awty, seconded by Caroline Rodbourne, the minutes were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Report by Music Director (formerly Musical Director – see below)

Justin delivered his report (see attached)

4. Report by Chair

Stella delivered her report (see attached)

In addition to her report:

Stella acknowledged the fact that people leave the committee for various reasons and that it's important to have new members with fresh ideas and outlooks. She, herself, had attended committee meetings in order to see what is involved before joining and she found this very useful. She invited choir members to do the same.

5. Report by Treasurer

Malcolm's report had been sent to members beforehand. (see attached)
Copies of the annual accounts were also sent out beforehand (a copy of these will be filed with the minutes)

6. Appointment of Auditor

On the proposal of Jo Curry, seconded by John Awty, Mr Robin Farrar was appointed as Auditor for the year.

7. Changes in the Constitution

On the proposal of Malcolm Butcher, seconded by Joan Cowell, the following changes to the Constitution were made:

- I. The title of Musical Director will be changed to Music Director
- II. We will no longer have a Patron

III. On dissolution of the society, it is the trustees, Julia Awty, Caroline Rodbourne and Jo Curry, who will take leadership.

8. Election of Committee members for the year 2022/23

Jenny Hyams had been co-opted as a member earlier in the year. And had confirmed that she would like to remain on the committee. It was proposed by Joanna Barfield, seconded by Carol Hammond, that she be elected.

Caroline Rodbourne, Julia Awty, Malcolm Butcher and John Awty had confirmed that they would like to remain on the committee and were re-elected on the proposal of Dorothy Frost, seconded by Pat Holton.

Date of next AGM: Autumn term 2023

MUSIC DIRECTOR REPORT – HARLESTON CHORAL SOCIETY

OCTOBER 2022

I was absolutely delighted to discover I was to become the new Music Director for HCS in March this year. From the evening when I did my audition, I can honestly say I felt very welcome and very much “at home”. Everything subsequently has borne this out. I do want to thank you all for making my first six months so enjoyable. I especially want to thank Stella and all the committee for their wonderful support and for the amazing amount of work that goes on behind the scenes. Every rehearsal feels like arriving on board a luxury liner, where everything has been thought of and everything has been taken care of – which makes for a fun evening of music making, with no added stresses!

I came on board (!) halfway through the spring term, so I must pay special tribute to Karen for having chosen such a lovely programme. The Faure Requiem is a real favourite of mine, and I was thrilled at the standard we achieved in the performance. I know from all the great feedback I received that the audience felt the same way and this could only have been achieved with all your hard work and dedication. I was delighted to have been introduced to a new composer – Eric Whitacre and his seal lullaby was a real highlight for me in the second half. I know that Karen was also responsible for the Christmas concert at the end of 2021 and I know you would all like me to thank her for the hard work she put into making that such a success.

Having done a piece from the end of the 19th century, we are now grappling with a really modern piece by Ronald Corp, written in 2007. This is a challenging work but I know we are going to wow the audience with this come December. It will I hope delight and surprise the audience with so many references to so many well known songs and carols, woven so skilfully into the five movements. Its always good I think to embark on new works for the choir and I can exclusively reveal the details of our concert on 1st July 2023. We are heading back into the 18th century this time, the first half of the concert will be Stabat Mater by Josef Haydn, the original 1767 orchestration. The second half will feature choruses, arias and ensembles from some of Mozart’s operas. Including The Magic Flute, Idomeneo, La clemenza di Tito and The abduction of the Serail. We are still working on completing the quartet of soloists, but I can announce this evening that they will include Laura Morgan and Aleksi Koponen, who were so great in the Faure Requiem. Looking further ahead, discussions are under way for our 25th anniversary in 2025, but more about that nearer the time.

In conclusion ,and I know I speak on behalf of Karen and myself , I just want to say how enjoyable the Monday rehearsals are and I for one cant wait for our next performance!

Harleston Choral Society

AGM 17th October 2022

Chairman's Report

When I looked at last year's Chairman's report it hardly seems possible we have made so much progress in 12 months. This has been a year of really blossoming again as a society.

We started with our Christmas Concert under the direction of Karen. It was a real joy to sing choruses from "Messiah" along with other seasonal items and audience carols - an experience we thought we would never have again. And yes, we had an audience! Our very special thanks to Karen for all her work and persuasion.

Come the New Year and term we realised we ought to try to find a new MD. Karen had done a wonderful job getting us back on our feet but it is an exhausting task doing both conducting and accompanying, we advertised and put out feelers and eventually were able to interview two candidates. The rest, as they say, is history. I cannot believe Justin has only been with us for seven months. He has made it so easy to progress as a society and work together as a team. He has brought his expertise and experience to share with us and we are very grateful for it. Thank you Justin for saying "yes".

We had a trial run at a concert in May when we were invited to take part in the Town Jubilee concert. We presented "Fields of Gold" and "Look at the world" but the most wonderful aspect of the evening was our presentation. Julia, with a team of great sewers (persuaded by cake and coffee) had made amazing bow ties for the gentlemen and scarves for the ladies. I am sure we will find an excuse for wearing them again in the coming year. Thank you Julia and everyone who helped us look so professional.

On to our Summer concert. Faure's Requiem was the first half and we dedicated this to the people of Ukraine. We had been rehearsing for as long as the war in their country had been lasting. We had the added blessing of two wonderful soloists Laura Morgan and Alekski Koponen, and such a sensitive harpist Lucinda Pennick. A very appreciative audience came and added to our pleasure of performing this work. Everyone wore Ukranian ribbons including front of house. The second half included "O Magnum Mysterium" - a triumph for us to perform it as several singers I had mentioned it to from other societies said they hadn't been able to get beyond the first page!

Thanks again to Justin for taking on a concert for which he hadn't chosen the music, thank you to Caroline for looking after Alekski for the weekend and John Awty for ferrying him to Norwich on the Sunday morning to catch his coach back to London.

In July Caroline hosted a games evening in her garden. It was so hot and humid we didn't play many games but it was wonderful to be able to sit, relax, talk and eat very tasty nibbles.

A very enjoyable and well attended quiz night was held in August. We made a good profit and enjoyed wonderful food. Thank you to John Formston for the questions and Julia and her team for the great repast. It was a weird feeling to remember the Quiz night was the first evening to be cancelled at the start of the pandemic, just before lockdown.

This hasn't all come about without a great deal of hard work behind the scenes. First of all I would like to thank the Committee as a complete entity for their support and willingness to help whenever a challenge rears its ugly head. Justin did comment to me a few weeks ago that he had never worked with such a proactive Committee. Thank you to Joanna and Paul Cope, her partner for re-organising the website and keeping it up to date. Thank you to John Awty for all his hard work as Assistant Membership Secretary. He's the chap behind the reminders, helping with anything on computers. My grateful thanks to Julia for all her pristine organisation as Librarian (and to both of them for lending a listening ear when I get discouraged). A very big thank you to Malcolm for his continued management of our money. This year has been particularly difficult for him (as those who have read his report will have seen) trying to change our account over to a non-fee paying bank.

Thank you to Heather, for all her work with publicity, to Jenny for her invaluable experience and advice, to Jo for quietly working behind the scenes, especially when anything needs moving.

Thank you to Fiona for her work with the bonus Ball. It has raised enough money in the summer to pay for the harpist and since then enough to cover the cost of music for next summer.

We have welcomed 20 new members over the year and welcomed back several former members bringing our total to over 50. However, a Society does not rest on quantity alone but quality. May I suggest that during the next year everyone tries to speak to another member in a different voicepart during the evening. We have great concerts to prepare for over the next year when we will be giving and experiencing the joy of music.

I am still proud to be your Chairman

Stella Brownsea

17th October 2022

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TREASURERS REPORT

We commenced the year without a Music Director, but thankfully, Karen stepped in and performed miracles and everybody enjoyed having her as both conductor and accompanist. Membership was building up following the Covid period and for the term up to Christmas 2021 we had a membership of 40. We performed our first concert since December 2019 under Karen's direction. Karen continued her double role until Easter. Membership grew in that period up to 46. In April Justin became Music Director and Karen returned to being accompanist. The next concert was performed in June this year, under Justin's direction. The membership was 47 and has remained in that position more or less since then. So subscriptions have increased accordingly and we now receive around £1,800 per term, which we hope will top £2000 per term with the increasing membership which we have had since the Summer.

We are now at the beginning of a period of increased overhead costs and so it is important that we retain our numbers and thereby our income from subscriptions and for those who are in a position to sign up for gift aid this is also to be encouraged and really helps increase our income. Last financial year the subscriptions were £5,220 and the gift aid income was £1,080, plus a further input from a donation kindly donated by our departing Patron.

The major cost increase is the London Road Church increasing the rent from £9 per hour to £11.50 from 1st August and to £13.50 from 1st December. So this is a huge 50% increase on our hire costs. This is £13.50 extra every Monday and around £500 per year. We have also had to pay considerably more to hire St. John's for concerts. We had only been paying £100 for probably the last 10 years so it was high time their costs were reviewed, but it was £168 in December and £247 in June.

Concert income for the two concerts was £1,480 and the costs amounted to £3,825. This is fairly consistent as we have not had

large orchestra numbers, but obviously if we do then the costs will multiply while the income does not increase very much because the number that we can fit into the church is restricted. Also, if we charge too much then people probably may not attend.

Fundraising and bonus ball net income was £645 in the year. With regard to bonus ball the income was £186 which means 372 people paid £1 each in the year, averaging about £10 per Monday evening. Seeing that largely the same people contribute most of the time it would be good if some others did the same so that this will then bolster the funds.

Most of you will know that we have been trying to change banks because the HSBC are now charging us, a Charity, £5 every month for maintenance, 40 pence for each cheque paid in and out plus 40 pence for £100 drawn out and paid in, in cash. The Co-operative bank are an ethical bank who, so far, do not charge these fees.

It has taken from January to now, however, to try and get this transfer made. They took 5 months to respond initially and since then we have had problems, dealing with some of the issues that they identified, such as getting all committee members to comply with signatures and personal details, adding more signatories to authorise cheques and complications with the constitution with regard to the Charity Commission. We are now in a position to go forward if we choose to.

The bank charges cost us about £100 per year which is a disadvantage. The advantages are that the bank is local, in Diss, at the moment and so it is easy to access. The advantage with the Co-operative bank is that there are no charges. The disadvantage is that there are no branches locally and all transactions will have to be done at a local post-office. So a decision will need to be made shortly.

We were lucky to receive £2723 donations in the financial year and this has been the main reason why we have improved our bank balance from £7768 to £10,411 in the year. So this a strong position for the Choral Society and so we should be able to have a couple of good concerts, but we must always be aware of the rising costs of the overheads, largely brought about through the rising energy costs which is why our rental costs have risen and may still rise further. If we take off the benefit from the donations the accounts will show that we have broken even in the year. We can't guarantee that we will

get further windfalls and so we need to be prudent with our expenditure.

I hope we all have a successful and enjoyable year.