

## MALVERN FESTIVAL CHORUS

### Minutes of Annual General Meeting Held on the 13th September 2022 in St Edmunds Hall, College Road, Malvern and also on Zoom

The Chairman, Kevin Ilsley, opened the meeting and welcomed members. He also welcomed MFC President James Oxley. In thanking James for attending the meeting Kevin asked him if he would like to say a few words.

James' message was that we should all be aware of the power that live music and singing in particular, had on our sense of well-being. Singing made people feel *better*. We should enjoy it.

1. **Apologies** had been received from 6 members; there were 43 members present plus 3 on Zoom.
2. **The Minutes of the AGM** held on the 7th September 2021, were proposed for approval by Joy Black and seconded by Marion Couston. They were approved with no votes against.
3. **Matters Arising**. There were no matters arising.
4. **Committee Reports/Newsletter** had been circulated prior to the AGM.

**Music Director's Report.** Jonathan Brown said how good it was for the choir to be back together again. The last year had been concerned with rebuilding the choir. The coming year would be one of consolidation. Reflecting on the last year, he said that our last concert, the Come & Sing performance of Handel's *Messiah*, which had featured young soloists from the Birmingham Conservatoire, had been particularly memorable.

Jonathan said he was very grateful to Holy Trinity Church for providing the choir with a suitable rehearsal space last year when other venues weren't available. He hoped though that members would enjoy their return to St Edmunds. The space was more generous and allowed the choir to be arranged in a more suitable way for rehearsals. We also had the benefit of an excellent Steinway grand piano.

In his report, Jonathan outlined the programme for the coming year and also mentioned pieces that were under consideration for future seasons. There was probably enough material for several years, he said. He then thanked Penny and the Committee members particularly, for all they had done to keep the choir going through such difficult times. Members applauded this statement. Jonathan finished by saying that now we all had to look to the future.

**Chairman's report.** Kevin Ilsley said that it had been another challenging year; things that had once seemed so simple, such as gathering together for rehearsals, had become very complicated. In order to comply with Covid regulations, many precautions had had to be introduced in order to keep people safe from infection. Safety had become our watchword. Kevin was grateful particularly grateful to fellow committee members Joy Black, Alice Osmond, Jacqui Richardson and Bridget Corlett for all they had done to keep us safe. Measures included keeping accurate records of attendees, providing adequate hand-sanitising measures, setting chairs out at recommended distances apart, monitoring air quality with a CO2 meter and managing the safe distribution of music.

Kevin was also grateful to all the members who had kept faith with the choir, by paying their subs and attending rehearsals in person and on Zoom. He thanked all those who had returned in person for our new season. He said that while we had been unable to meet in person, we had tried to maintain a sense of belonging to the choir by organising on-line meetings via Zoom and

by issuing newsletters. He was particularly grateful to Bridget for all the work she had done to put the newsletters together.

Kevin said that the work of the Committee had continued throughout the difficult days of the pandemic. Committee members had been in regular phone contact with each other and had held meetings via the Zoom platform, which Kevin had subscribed to. This had proved to be an efficient way of dealing with the choir's business but it had only been possible to manage this because of Barbara's efficient organisational skills. He thanked her for all that she did in this regard.

The year had been financially challenging with no opportunities for fundraising. Kevin thanked Mike Tweedie for his astute financial management. Mike had continued discharge the Treasurers' responsibilities even though last year he had wanted to resign from the post.

Kevin asked members to remember members of the choir, who had died in the last year. He mentioned particularly Geoffrey Bradshaw, a previous Chairman of MFC, Mary Strood, and Kate Culling. Kate had been a member until last season and had created the beautiful artwork for The Armed Man concert.

Kevin expressed thanks to Jonathan for keeping the choir going with dedication, skill and enthusiasm. He also thanked Penny for her contribution.

**Secretary's Report.** Barbara Moss noted that each of the Officers' reports told the story of the choir's last year from a slightly different viewpoint. She hoped everyone had found time to read them. She had nothing further to add to her written report, other than to reiterate her thanks to Kevin for continuing to steer the Committee and choir through difficult times.

**Friends' Report.** Alice restated the benefits to the choir of getting people to become Friends of MFC. She encouraged people to contact her about becoming a Friend or to find out more about it.

5. **Treasurer's Report / Accounts.** A copy of the Accounts is filed with these Minutes. The Accounts had been issued with the AGM Notice and members had been asked to review them in advance of the meeting.

Mike Tweedie stated that the accounts had been prepared on a cash basis, i.e., income and expenditure within the financial year – and showed a loss of £619; however, the actual loss is increased by £2,808 because musicians' accounts for the "Come and Sing" were not received for payment until after 30th June, therefore the overall figure for the year was a loss of (£3,427).

The principal source of income had been membership subscriptions, of which there were 62, plus Gift Aid, which adds 25% to subs. Ticket income for events had been very low because of the particular restricted circumstances we found ourselves in. Not much other income had been generated but the weekly raffle had been reintroduced and happily some social events had restarted – the Garden Party being an example of this.

Mike said that the overall position was that subscriptions from the present membership support only the cost of rehearsals and administration – there was little or no surplus for contribution to the cost of performances, which lost money last Season and were likely to continue doing so (-£6,900 projected for 2022-23). He said that we will continue to make a loss unless we raise membership subscriptions, increase membership numbers, sell more concert tickets and/or generate sponsorship. This must be an urgent focus for all.

Mike thanked John Connell for acting as an Independent Examiner in reviewing and approving the accounts. He then asked for any comments or questions. Mary Whitehouse pointed out that the costs of rehearsals were missing from page 2. Mike confirmed that this detail was missing and stated that in making an amendment there would be no change to the overall position.

The Accounts were therefore proposed for approval (subject to Mary Whitehouse's amendment) by Mary Whitehouse, seconded Loo Ilsley. They were approved unanimously

6. **Appointment of Independent Examiner.** Mike Tweedie stated in his report that John Connell was willing to continue in this role. John's appointment was proposed by Mike Tweedie and seconded by Kevin Ilsley. The appointment was approved unanimously by the meeting. John was thanked for agreeing to continue doing this.

Kevin drew attention to the fact that this was the last season that Mike would act as Treasurer. He thanked Mike formally for his professionalism and for the years of sterling support he had given MFC.

Marion Couston commented that it had been a very difficult two years and members owed the Committee a debt of gratitude for keeping the choir going.

7. **Election of Officers.** Ian Thomas was nominated for the Committee and to take up the Office of Treasurer. Proposed Mike Tweedie and seconded Jacqui Richardson. He was voted nem con.
8. **Election of Committee.** Mary Whitehouse was nominated for membership of the Committee. The meeting was told that she had also agreed to take on the role of Concert Manager. Her election was proposed by Barbara Moss and seconded by Alice Osmond. The vote in favour was unanimous.

Alice Osmond was standing for election to the Committee for a further 3-year term. Her nomination was proposed by Keith Jones and seconded by Marion Couston. She was also nominated to continue in the position of Friends' Secretary, proposed by Bridget Corlett and seconded by Val Tweedie. The vote in favour of her election was unanimous.

Louise Rosomon had resigned as a Committee member during the year. Kevin thanked her for her contribution to the committee and in particular for taking on the responsibilities of Safeguarding Officer.

Kevin listed the names of Officers and Committee members, including those newly-elected. These are as follows:

Kevin Ilsley	Chairman
<i>Vacant</i>	Vice Chairman
Barbara Moss	Secretary
Ian Thomas	Treasurer
Bridget Corlett	Music Librarian
Joy Black	Membership Secretary
Alice Osmond	Friends' Secretary & acting Alto Voice Rep
<i>Vacant</i>	Safeguarding Officer
Mary Whitehouse	Concert Manager
Edwina Ward	Soprano Voice Rep
Jacqui Richardson	Tenor Voice Rep
Chris Little	Bass Voice Rep
Mike Tweedie	
Jonathan Brown	Musical Director (ex officio, non-voting member)
Penny Vere	Accompanist (ex officio, non-voting member)

The Vice Chairman is appointed from within the Committee

There are vacancies for Safeguarding Officer and Alto voice Rep. Kevin asked anyone who feels they could contribute to the running of the choir by taking on one of these roles to please let a member of the Committee know. Members can be co-opted onto the Committee during the season. They would be made to feel most welcome.

9. **Subscriptions** Kevin announced that Subscriptions would remain at £110.00, recognising that it will be a difficult year financially for all. He reminded members that a contingency fund exists for those who have genuine difficulty paying their subs and that people should approach the Treasurer about this in confidence.

Anyone feeling they are able to donate extra could do so and the additional funds would be most welcome.

10. **Any other business.**

Penny Vere said that MFC had continued to exist thanks to members, to Kevin for working so hard on our behalf and to Jonathan for being an inspirational conductor.

Chris Little asked whether there was a “rule” about the number of rehearsals that members have to attend to take part in concerts. Kevin replied, commenting that in these difficult times the rules regarding attendance had not been enforced. The Rules of the Choir state that members can miss no more than three rehearsals a term if they wish to sing in a concert and that they must attend the last rehearsal before a concert. However, members were now advised against attending rehearsals if they felt unwell, which might mean that they would miss more than three rehearsals. It was currently a matter for an individual conscience, for members to decide if they were adequately prepared to sing in a concert and not to do so if they weren't. Should members be unable to attend rehearsals in person, they should make every effort to join rehearsals on Zoom. Kevin reiterated that members should not come to rehearsals with any cold-like symptoms. He urged members to get vaccinated against Covid, if possible.

Kevin thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.35 pm.