

BEARSTED CHORAL SOCIETY
MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2009
AT BEARSTED METHODIST CHURCH

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Graham Mason, Roger Byard, Jean Bentley, Teresa Daley, Pat and George Moore and Marguerite Hart.

2. Minutes of 2008 AGM

Members were given the opportunity to read the minutes of the 2008 AGM.

3. Matters arising

Chris Goodey said that she had deleted Verve Magazine.

Catherine said that the discussed increase in subscriptions had not been minuted at last years' AGM. A motion was therefore put forward to increase subscriptions with effect from September 2010. The proposed cost would now be as follows:

£45 for the year

£17 for the term

£80 for the year for a joint membership

A full time student will pay half the termly fee

New members will get the first half term free

Catherine confirmed there would not be a discount for the termly rate.

Brian Shaw asked if there is a possibility of consolidating the cost of Wissant into the subscription and whether it could be linked into the membership cost. Peter said it is something that we should take on board as an overview. Anthony said we are trying to get charitable status for the choir which should offer some income from Gift Aid. This should help to offset the additional costs of the reciprocal arrangements with Wissant.

Anthony asked if everyone was in agreement with the proposal to raise subscriptions. Roger Barton voted to agree the proposal and Brian Shaw seconded the proposal.

4. Chairman's report

In the absence of Graham Mason, Anthony Bell chaired the meeting and delivered a report on behalf of the Chairman.

Anthony said that it had been a fabulous year and the choir had done some new things, such as visiting Wissant and had also done some new things with their voices. The decision to take on charitable status is quite a landmark and will allow us to expand. He commented on the continuing growing membership and on behalf of the Chairman thanked Peter Ashley and the choir for all their hard work.

5. Treasurer's report

Catherine said that although the circulated copies of the accounts were not signed they had been approved and signed by a qualified scrutineer. We managed to make a small profit for the year of £184.27. This was despite three unusual expenditures: buying a piano at a cost of £977.97, to give us more versatility in our performances and choice of venue; booking All Saints Church, Maidstone for the concert with Choral des 2 Caps at £400 (considerably more than our usual venue fees). Although the booking is for this year, the money came out of last years' financial account; £100 was donated to the British Heart Foundation in memory of our late Chairman, Bill Banfield. Expenditures were balanced by lower costs for the year's concerts by £1,400. The total concert expenditure was a little over £2,500. Our regular receipts were enhanced as follows: the choir sang at two weddings and three carol singing appointments. We received a generous donation from Faye Andrews in memory of our late choir member Ron Andrews and Roger Barton kindly donated £70 back to BCS from our payment for staging. We were given a grant from Bearsted & Thurnham Fayres Committee for concert staging of £165 and three of our soloists for the Pirates of Penzance declined the small honorarium offered and this amounted to £110. Catherine asked if there were any questions on the accounts from members. Mike Thresh referred to the table of Concert Attendance on the accounts sheet and asked whether the year 2003/04, when we had an audience total of over 400, had been when we sung at Leeds Church. Catherine replied; not at Leeds, but that year we sang some popular programmes, including Gilbert & Sullivan's HMS Pinafore. Catherine also said that the figure of 416 people for 2003/04 was a misprint – it should be 410 people. The accounts were approved by Rowena Carlton and Catherine Brown. Roger Barton thanked Catherine for her hard work.

6. Conductor's report

Peter Ashley gave the following report:

We started the year inspired by the memories of a wonderful experience in Wissant, France but also with the sad news of the death of our Chairman, Bill Banfield. We dedicated the winter programme to Bill and what a wonderful performance! Whilst the Magnificat by Rutter was demanding, everyone pulled together to make it a resounding success. We were ably supported by Emmi Tingey on the trumpet, our young performer for the evening. I was particularly pleased with the performance of the new works – Welcome Yule, What Sweeter Music and Glory to God in the Highest. Brian White joined us in a confident and secure performance of Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on Christmas Carols. Whilst the audience joined in on a number of carols it was commented on that they would have enjoyed more, so this year we will have to remedy this and as we are under some pressure, that's not bad idea.

Spring was a very enjoyable event with an ensemble of young performers found with the able support of Fraser Bowles. They gave such delight as individual soloists or ensemble, as well as supporting the chorus in Rutter's Requiem. Again this concert was dedicated to one of our founder members, Ron Andrews, who sadly passed away. For me the performance of Goreki's Totus Tuus was superb! The choir sustained an unblemished smooth vocal delivery from start to finish and it was a very effective performance. After the interval the combination of instrumental ensemble and chorus for the Requiem was truly divine. The balance was exceptional with a masterly performance by the young oboist Robert Haggart, whom I hope we can invite back another time.

Summer, what can I say! We were truly blessed with such an array of talent to choose from. The performance of Pirates of Penzance just had to be a winner! Performed in Leeds Parish Church, a venue we increasingly looking forward to, we were overwhelmed with a warm supportive audience who gave us such confidence to perform at our highest level. It was a delight to see such hamming up, particularly with the introduction of the dressing gown! We were very fortunate to have had a number of G & S performers in the chorus who I believe helped us to attain such a high performance. I believe it might mean a more regular visit to G & S is on the cards!

I would like to thank our sterling accompanists who continue to support the society, rehearsal accompanist Maggie Bloor and concert pianist/organist Martin Hogben. Also, I would like to thank Roger Barton for his dedication and time in extending our concert platform at Holy Cross Church.

Finally, thank you for what has been an enjoyable journey through some memorable music and as ever a significant degree of support and dedication from you all. I really think we have grown together in confidence and we can build on our successful partnership with Wissant, develop further our choral sound and we can optimise on our entertaining performances of G & S.

39th season – look out, here we come!

Anthony thanked Peter on behalf of the Chairman and the choir. He said that input and skill makes such a difference and that we hope to continue working with Peter successfully year on year.

7. Publicity Officer's Report

Christine thanked Sue Dance for her work as Assistant Publicity Officer and gave the following report:

WEBSITE – We have been receiving regular invitations to participate in Choir Festivals, mostly in Europe but occasionally further afield. Christine said that she had been forwarding these by email to all committee members and recently started printing them and bringing them so that we can all see what is being offered.

COMPUTER SHOP ON BEARSTED GREEN – Last year at this time Christine had just made contact with EJ Computers and it looked hopeful that the owner would agree to sell tickets for us in exchange for free publicity. This was subsequently agreed. The shop changed ownership about 4 months ago and is now called Computer Solutions. The staff are continuing to be very pleasant and helpful and sold eight tickets for our Pirates of Penzance concert. Sharon Music in the High Street, Maidstone continues to sell tickets for us.

EDITOR OF LEEDS & BROOMFIELD PARISH MAGAZINE – Judi Taylor. Christine said that she made contact with her for the first time for our Pirates of Penzance concert at Leeds Church. She was very helpful and put a half page notice of the concert in the magazine every month from March, expanding it for July when Christine was able to give her the soloists' names.

MAAC LEAFLETS – Christine explained that we take 100 of these because that is the minimum number. Our mailing list is currently 50 so the other 50 are available for the choir to spread around their friends and colleagues and they are brought at the same time as those for our mailings. Christine said please ask her if anyone would like more. The print run is 5000 and they are spread round Libraries and Tourist Information Points around Kent.

Christine said that the publicity is influential – Editors of other publications pick up on it without necessarily contacting us. Our Bleriot Centenary Concert has been made the star event in the current leaflet so please spread the word around.

REPORTS OF CONCERTS – Christine explained that she has found it best to write these herself and submit them to Editors to be sure that they will accurately reflect our concerts, rather than just giving the facts to a reporter.

There is an art to conveying the atmosphere, musical content, mentioning soloists, our own three professional musicians and the facts of date, place and website address and keep it all to 200 words. It is surprisingly time consuming. Christine said if anyone else would like to have a go, she would be very pleased to hear from them.

Anthony thanked Christine on behalf of the committee, choir and the Chairman for all the hard work that she does behind the scenes.

8. Election of Committee

Anthony explained that all the current committee members were happy to continue, unless there were any other nominations. There were no nominations for election.

Roger Barton and Sue Byard voted the current committee members into office en block. Members agreed by a show of hands.

9. Any Other Business

Roger Barton said lots of other societies publish their dates a long way ahead and he asked if it is possible to have a calendar of events. Peter said he was sorry, but he thought it was widely know. Anthony said it will be redressed and he thought that a notice could be put on the notice board and the website. Brian Shaw said he thought it was not unreasonable for members to have a copy each. He thought it would also help Peter.

Carole Brooks said she thought the programme for concerts should have the next two concert dates printed on it. Peter Daone said that in the past we have had to change dates because of Maidstone Choral Union. Peter Ashley said two or three years ago we did have a circulated schedule but he has fallen behind recently and he apologised. He said this is partly because KCC had stopped giving term dates this far ahead. Peter said there was no give and take on the anti-clash diary and the main reason for it is to ensure that other societies do not book their concerts on the same dates as certain larger organisations.

David Freed said he would like a copy. Roger Barton felt that two years to eighteen months worth of dates would be alright. Peter said he will add Easter and summer concert dates to the next programme.

Sue Dance said she had received complaints about rehearsals starting late. Anthony confirmed that we would like to start rehearsing at 7.30 pm. We can then have our break at the right time and get everything done.

Chris Dodds added an item on behalf of Marguerite Hart who wanted to register her disappointment in our inability to take part in the Choirs' Festival in All Saints Church, Maidstone this year.

She thought the event could be our "shop window" and provided we take note of the date (July) and prepare something effective, but fairly easy to sing, we should do our best to be involved. She suggested 'Only You', 'El Condor Pasa' and 'Arise Shine'. Marguerite said that these three are a joy to sing and show off our versatility and voices. Anthony said we do attempt to make it, but they had changed the date which made it difficult for us to do. Daphne Lewis said having a repertoire may help. Peter said some of the other societies have done their performances and are therefore able to do something additional. Peter also said that we have had to cancel twice because of lack of members' participation. Daphne Lewis suggested we could add this date to the list of forthcoming concerts. Peter said when Wissant comes to us in June 2011 and 2-yearly thereafter, that will be our only summer concert, so we could consider choosing something different to sing at the Choirs' Festival in July. Otherwise we need to sing from the concert repertoire that we are rehearsing.

Anthony said he will get these minutes, and Peter's report on the web so that people can see them well in advance of the AGM.

Anthony closed the meeting at 8.30 pm.

