

Brockham Choral Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 6 September 2022

Chairperson: Estelle Earnshaw

Present: 34

1. Apologies for Absence: Nick Hands-Clarke, Romey Criswick, Bridget Doughty, Michael Doughty, Victoria Harding-Rolls, Fred Harrison, Annie Hind, Alison Jesson, Robin Luff, Sandy Luff, Rob Potter, Sue Saxby-Smith, Jean Scott, Eiluned Slot, Mary Suckling, Peter White.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 7 September 2021. The adoption of the minutes was proposed by Moira Sinden and seconded by Maureen Jones; the minutes were agreed with no objections or abstentions and signed as correct.

3. Matters Arising There were none.

4. Chairperson's Report The Report had been sent out in advance, to which Estelle made some additional remarks, starting by highlighting points made in that Report. As well as thanking all those members who had worked so hard for the choir, she thanked members for attending when they could in difficult circumstances, and it was good to see Phil and Ann Slack back with us. She also thanked Cole Bendall in particular for dealing with the difficult circumstances, his encouragement, availability and musical knowledge and for directing us so well over the whole season, and invited members to thank him. She also thanked Marion for her commitment and gift of playing. She also highlighted all the hard work put in by everyone behind the scenes, particularly Ed Criswick and Mick Rance. As Ed was stepping down from the Secretary role and Anne Mitchell from the Committee – thanking Anne for her many years of hard work – it was important that more people – another 3 – to come forward to join the Committee. Estelle had now completed the 3 years she agreed to as Chairperson, and although she had agreed to stand again for re-election, this would be for only one term, 'retiring' at the end of December.

But there was much to look forward to including the Nelson Mass and the 5 Mystical Songs. And whilst thanking Tortie and Robin and all those who had helped to put up and dismantle the staging over the years, it was great news that we were now getting new staging – we would be fundraising for this with the 'Buy a Board' scheme as well as a fundraising event on 19 November. There would also be a Workshop in St Paul's on 8 October which would be a chance for new members to try us out. Of course we need to keep looking out for new members – and it was particularly sad that Fred Harrison was retiring from the choir – he will be much missed, although he will continue to support us. But the important thing is that we keep getting together to sing.

5. Annual Financial Report and Accounts These had been circulated previously. The Treasurer (Mick Rance) explained that the main figures were on page 4 – this showed income of £29,958, expenditure of £32,196 and a deficit of £2,238. Current funds stood at £17,642. Some items of income and expenditure had been assigned to the following financial year as they were relevant to that year, for example the deposit on Ferring Village Hall and paying for a licence to print music for the choir

Awayday, receipt of grant funding for the staging, and pre-paid programme adverts. Page 7 showed the finances for our two concerts; there were good ticket sales for Messiah which was a sell out concert but the orchestra cost was high, whilst for the summer concert the ticket sales and orchestra costs were lower but the soloist costs were high. However, the actual deficit on the two concerts of £10,432 matched the concert budget of £9,800 well. Page 8 showed Fundraising finances – there was a general income of £393, with net income reduced by the cost of workshops. In addition the Mole Valley Community Lottery had replaced the 100 Club and had raised £748 – half the ticket sales came to the choir – compared with £460 from the 100 Club which involved a lot more work. Mick also introduced his Financial Summary document which summarised income and expenditure, with £10,757 from subscriptions, £2,090 from Gift Aid, generous levels of donations from members and Friends, and £3,000 in grants thanks to Sue Tanton’s efforts.. Expenditure included MD, accompanist and venue hire costs, and admin which included insurance, subscriptions and storage of the staging trailer. Sue had also succeeded in getting two grants towards the costs of the staging, and would be applying for our normal Humphrey Richardson Taylor grant – the choir applauded Sue for her work on the grants. Mick also drew attention to the additional information for the pre-Covid years to help comparisons.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Anne Mitchell and seconded by Neil Williams; the accounts were adopted with no objections or abstentions.

6. Nomination of Examiner Mick reported that David Sinden had agreed to be nominated again as Examiner; he was nominated by Sue Tanton, seconded by Jackie Rance and approved unanimously.

7. Subscriptions Estelle explained that as the subscriptions had been raised to £150 last year there were no proposals to raise the fees this year despite inflation. Jackie asked about costs of school venue. Ed explained he had sent in a booking form and assumed the rate was as previously but had not heard back yet. As the school had been generous to us and not increased the rate since we had started with them, it would not be unreasonable for them to increase the cost now.

8. Musical Director’s Report The MD’s report is attached to these minutes.

9. Election of Chairperson Estelle handed over the chairmanship to Ed, who invited nominations. Moira Sinden nominated Estelle, seconded by Diane Unwin. There being no further nominations, the election of Estelle was passed unanimously. Estelle commented that she did enjoy being chairperson and loved the challenges, and was only standing down because of time and family and health issues, but recommended it as a fun thing to do. Anne Mitchell declared that Estelle’s leadership of the choir had been outstanding and the meeting applauded her enthusiastically. Estelle resumed chairing the meeting.

10. Election of committee Estelle invited nominations for new members of the committee, saying that committee meetings were fun; Cole confirmed the outstanding camaraderie on the committee and encouraged others to help support the choir in this way. Estelle said that Ed Criswick, Nick Hands-Clarke, Val Harden, Mick Rance, Phil Slack, Jane Stride and Reuben Suckling had agreed to stand again. Ed pointed out that we did need to keep having new people coming forward

and have fresh blood on the committee, and in a way it wasn't fair to expect the existing members to keep doing the work, the responsibilities needed to be shared and passed on among the members. Eventually the existing members would step down and would need to be replaced, and you didn't need to be special - anyone could step in and do the jobs. Jackie wondered if people would see the jobs as too much to deal with; Estelle said that not all the jobs were large or onerous, we choose the jobs that work best for us, the essential thing was that different points of view could be put forward which was important for the development of the choir. Maureen Edwards asked if Ed's job could be divided; Estelle said this was being looked at, for example Val could receive all the emails from members to decide who should deal with them rather than all of them going to Ed or herself, and Jane did the minutes side of the job. There being no further nominations, Maureen Jones proposed and Sue Tanton seconded the nominations, who were elected unanimously. Sue Tanton asked if there could be co-options onto the committee and Estelle confirmed this.

11. Amendments to the Constitution The proposed amendments had already been circulated. Ed explained that these arose from prompting by Making Music. During the pandemic we had held committee meetings via phone calls and Zoom, and in 2020 we had held our AGM via Zoom – however, there was nothing in our constitution which allowed this and the Charity Commission had given a dispensation to allow charities to do this. However, this dispensation had now expired and so we needed to make sure we were covered under the constitution if ever we needed to do something similar in the future. So the amendments were designed to enable committee meetings to be held via 'electronic communication' or for someone to join in a meeting via 'electronic communication', and for AGM's to be held via 'electronic communication'. The form of wording derived from recommendations from Making Music and the Charity Commission. There being no questions, Ed proposed adopting the changes to the constitution and this was seconded by Anne Slack, and agreed unanimously.

12. Any Other Business

a) New Staging Ed said he had distributed an explanatory note about the new staging and the 'Buy a Board' scheme to help pay for it. The choir was very grateful to Bill Mackay for providing our amazing bespoke staging many years ago which rose to 9 tiers and went over the choir stalls, but it was becoming increasingly evident that we could do better. Although we couldn't find a system that did exactly what our existing one did, we had found one that was much much easier to manage and needed no tools. We sought quotations and ended up with a system which, although not bespoke, will meet our needs. It has 6 tiers and consists of metal frames and carpeted boards. The frames and boards will stack on trolleys in the trailer and can be wheeled into the church for assembling the staging, and afterwards the parts can be put back on the trolleys and wheeled back to the trailer. Sue had done an amazing job in getting grants for us, and although the cost is £13,822 we have got nearly half the money in grants and we are good at fundraising so it isn't too daunting. We can raise funds through our existing means such as Easyfundraising, Amazon Smile and the Mole Valley Community Lottery, but the main method would be via our Buy a Board scheme. People won't actually buy a board, but they can pay £25 (perhaps jointly with someone else) to buy a board; they can buy more than one board, and could perhaps buy a board a month. For

this they would get a certificate. We aimed to sell 200 boards which would raise £5,000 and which we hope to do this autumn. Reuben explained the current problem was to get rid of the existing staging to make way for the new. Ideally we would sell it as staging but if not it would have to be sold as scrap; he invited members to spread the word to attract buyers. Jenny Bartholomew asked about the stability of the existing staging; Reuben explained that much work had gone into overhauling it two years ago, but essentially it just took too much work to assemble and take down. He also said that we needed to find somewhere – a level surface – where we could take delivery of the new staging, and also somewhere – preferably under cover – where we could do a trial assembly; he welcomed any ideas or suggestions for this. The school was proposed for the trial assembly. Finally, Ed asked for volunteers to help run the ‘Buy a Board’ scheme; Jackie Rance kindly volunteered.

b) Tour Jane Stride explained that she and Ed had been looking at options and had found a company called Rayburn, who offered a tour to Normandy on 12-16 July. She had produced a flyer with basic details; partners would be welcome, accommodation would be in double rooms with singles sharing, there would be 3 concerts and other activities, meals not provided apart from breakfasts and one group meal. Payments can be in instalments. Rayburn would be holding the quotation until 4 October. In response to a question about obtaining audiences, Jane said that Rayburn took responsibility for this, and Cole said that in his experience Rayburn were excellent at working with local contacts to get audiences. Rayburn had quoted for 50 tourists, if there were more we could have a bigger coach, if less then it would cost a little more per person.

c) Music Selection Committee Jenny asked about the MSC meeting again. Estelle pointed out this was mentioned in her report, but the next meeting was likely to be in January.

d) Social Media David John asked whether our Facebook and Twitter efforts were effective. Tony Earnshaw explained that he handled this on behalf of the choir, he confirmed that our profile was going up but couldn't confirm if it had any effect on ticket sales etc. Cole felt this activity was important in sharing the profile of the choir with local residents – who could be looking for a choir to sing with - and taps into audience, soloists, orchestras and music fans. He accepted that personal contact with family and friends was the most effective form of contact for recruitment etc, but there had for example been very good responses to postings about Messiah. He **asked members** to put forward material that could be used, such as funny stories, photos, remarks, etc.

13. Date of Next Meeting 5 September 2023.