

# AYLESBURY FESTIVAL CHOIR

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held at Bedgrove Junior School on 16th May 2019 at which 23 people were present

- 1 **Apologies for absence** had been received from Jim Salter, Liz Simms, Andrea Wearn, Brenda Horne and Helen Francis.
- 2 **Minutes of the previous meeting** held on 17 May 2018 had been distributed and no comments received. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Alan Hamilton and seconded by Kay Foote.

- 3 **Treasurer's report**

Viv Bailleux presented her report as follows:-

"So here I am to present my last report as Treasurer. Not an undertaking that I will miss at all!

I'll start with a comment on last year's accounts. We ended up with a surplus of £6,393 rather than £6,578 due to expenses for the AGM, accounting for the Come and Sing in June which made a loss of £40 and the cost of the new user-friendly website which we can now update ourselves.

As for this year's provisional accounts – as usual this is not complete as the financial year ends in August but I have included any definite figures that I know about and estimates of those I'm not sure about. We still have this AGM costs and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration event to be accounted for which will change the final figures.

We've had another good year and the bottom line is showing a profit of £2,913. This a bit skewed again because of the very generous donation in memory of David Tuer towards our spring concert. Many thanks to Jean for that.

It must be said, though, that even without the donations of the last 2 years we have made a profit each year which is very encouraging.

This year's concerts were different in every way. The Autumn concert was in our traditional style and didn't do badly in terms of ticket sales (£1,228) but it turned out to be quite expensive in bumpers as our numbers fell. It made a loss of £1,016. The Spring concert on the other hand did exceptionally well in ticket sales. In fact, our best since I've been Treasurer and probably before that. We sold just over 150 tickets and raised £2,170. Not only that but we had a standing ovation and have had glowing feedback.

We did lose a bit more on rehearsals this year. That was because our fees have increased.

Our fundraising income remains good at £1,562. The 100 Club as usual comprises most of that at £1,026. The rest comprised £150 for carol singing, down because we didn't do Tesco, £228 for rehearsal refreshments and £135 from singing Happy Birthday. The Quiz night raised £172 which is less than last year and possibly due to me not being as efficient as I might have been selling raffle tickets.

So, we are showing another good result but there is always room for improvement and I think our spring concert has shown us what it is that the punters want!"



MUSIC DIRECTOR  
Nick Austin

PRESIDENT  
Piers Maxim

**AYLESBURY FESTIVAL CHOIR**  
Financial Statement year ending 31 August 2018  
Income and Expenditure Account for the period ending 31 August 2018

**INCOME**

	Concert 1	Concert 2	2017/2018	2016/2017
	£	£	£	£
Concert Ticket Sales	957	1,399	2,356	2,690
Programme sales	38	64	103	148
Refreshments at concerts	59	99	157	171
Advertising	0	0	0	0
Workshops			804	0
Members subscriptions	4,350	1,359	5,709	5,744
Music Hire	149	107	256	471
Gift Aid			1,148	1,090
Interest			2	7
Fund Raising			1,830	1,314
AGM			55	0
Quiz Night			278	276
Donations			376	15
Grants			515	860
Staging hiring out			0	0
60th year celebrations			5,000	0
<b>Total Income</b>			<b>18,589</b>	<b>12,786</b>

**EXPENDITURE**

	Concert 1	Concert 2	2017/2018	2016/2017
	£	£	£	£
Concerts	2,516	1,771	4,287	3,029
Workshops			845	0
Rehearsals	2,792	2,945	5,737	5,522
Music hire	143	88	231	547
Making Music			130	130
Insurance			91	89
Staging storage			421	390
Secretarial			28	6
Equipment			62	0
Website			267	130
AGM			36	44
Other			61	137
Extraordinary expenses			0	72
60th year celebrations			0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>			<b>12,196</b>	<b>10,096</b>
<b>Net Surplus/Deficit</b>			<b>6,393</b>	<b>2,690</b>

Aylesbury Festival Choir is a Registered Charity (No.297856) supported by Aylesbury Vale Arts Council and is affiliated to Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies.  
Website: <http://www.aylesburyfestivalchoir.net>

**AYLESBURY FESTIVAL CHOIR**  
**Provisional Income and Expenditure Account year ending 31 August 2019**  
**for AGM 16 May 2019**

<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	<b>Autumn 2018</b>	<b>Spring 2019</b>	<b>2018/2019</b>	<b>2017/2018</b>
Concert Ticket Sales	1,229	2,092	3,320	2,356
Programme sales	55	64	119	103
Refreshments at concerts	74	111	185	157
Advertising	0	0	0	0
Donations	0	2,000	2,000	0
Carol concert			255	0
Workshops			0	804
Members subscriptions	2,658	2,928	5,585	5,709
Music Hire	154	380	534	256
Gift Aid			2,712	1,148
Interest			0	2
Fund Raising			1,562	1,830
AGM			0	55
Quiz Night			173	278
Donations			31	376
Grants			0	515
Staging hiring out			0	0
60th year celebrations			175	5,000
			<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Income			16,651	18,589
			<hr/>	<hr/>
<b><u>EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>Autumn 2018</b>	<b>Spring 2019</b>	<b>2018/2019</b>	<b>2017/2018</b>
Concerts	2,374	2,086	4,460	4,287
Carol concert			332	0
Workshops			0	845
Rehearsals	2,963	3,079	6,042	5,737
Music hire	120	321	441	231
Making Music			200	130
Insurance			91	91
Staging storage			515	421
Secretarial			0	28
Equipment			0	62
Website			45	267
AGM			105	36
Other			186	61
Extraordinary expenses			0	0
60th year celebrations			250	0
			<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Expenditure			12,667	12,196
			<hr/>	<hr/>
Net Surplus/Deficit			3,984	6,393
			<hr/>	<hr/>
		Net figures		
Concerts		-1,016	2,181	
Rehearsals		-271	-93	

## 5. Chairman's Report

Mike Elliott, Chairman, reported as follows:

"So that was our 60th Anniversary Year. It's rather sobering to think that I was only 10 when Aylesbury Festival choir was founded! As you'll see when we publish our revised logo (we can't go on saying "Celebrating 60 years" for ever, after all), we can proudly claim to have been singing continuously ever since.

We planned for the two concerts in this year to be of very different natures. In December, we performed the Brahms *Requiem* – a piece completely new to me, possibly making me unique in AFC, and one which took me months to actually like – and made a pretty good job of it. There were sections which I personally found extremely difficult, and I was quite glad when we had finished the performance. That concert was therefore well within our traditional "sacred" format.

Then, for our Spring term and concert, we undertook an experiment. We gave in to Nick's urging, and took on "the musicals" - right outside our comfort zone. I know that not everyone was pleased with this, but as a body the choir responded wonderfully, and the concert itself was a fantastic success. Not only immense fun, but an immense audience, at over 150 tickets sold – the highest figure that I can remember. And this happened even though we had raised our ticket price to £15, with no "early bird" discounts any more. At the end, we had a standing ovation – not a normal experience for AFC. I'd like to mention particularly the wonderful performance Rowena gave as our accompanist in this concert; it was perfect, and drew many compliments from our audience.

In recognition of the 60th anniversary (of what was then the December Festival Choir), we re-introduced our Christmas Carol Concert, in a modified form. It was informal, relaxed – and turned out to be both a popular and a happy evening. We plan to repeat this experiment this coming December, and may make it a regular event if its popularity continues.

I will leave it to Nick to add his own comments on our concert performances. Are we possibly as good as his waistcoats?

Other events to celebrate our 60 years have met with mixed success. In June we ran a "Come & Sing" day, concentrating on the Rutter *Requiem*. Support from within our own membership was very low, and it was only through a lot – and I mean, a lot, as it left me exhausted – a lot of hard work by the Committee, with heavy plugging from Nick to other choirs, that we avoided an embarrassing cancellation. The day itself was fun, of course, but if our members do not support the idea, it is unlikely we will try such an event again. I'd be interested to hear your views on this, maybe later this evening.

We also tried – twice! - to arrange an away-day to Malvern, which would have given us an opportunity for a singing experience under the leadership of Piers Maxim, our President, to take place in Malvern Priory, and with the inclusion of a tour of Malvern for accompanying friends and family. The support from our members for this event was so low that we had to cancel on both occasions. This was quite surprising, as the idea came from some members in the first place. The Committee have tried to think of reasons for this low support, and here's what we came up with. Maybe members in general:

- Don't really know who Piers is;
- Are not free at weekends due to childcare or other family duties;
- Are not keen on a minibus trip anyway;
- Are not interested in Malvern;
- Don't have an interest in AFC beyond our rehearsals and concerts.
- You may have other reasons!

As a result of these experiences, the Committee have agreed that, as other requirements on us as trustees of the choir must take precedence, we cannot again take on the organisation of social activities, other than our few well-established ones. Such activities will need to come from within the membership, and we will be very pleased to support any member who volunteers try something.

Looking forward briefly, there is one more social event celebrating our 60 years which *is*

going ahead, with a much better level of support. On the 22nd June, we will be having a Buffet Lunch Party, with food provided and the odd bit of alcohol available. I hope you are all planning to come!

Before I move on, can I add a huge vote of gratitude to Pat for her hard work on both the Malvern front, and the Buffet Lunch. She has provided much financial support for this celebration year – and has also remained very hands-on in the organisation. Thank you, Pat!

As Viv has mentioned, we are in a very good place financially. This is partly due, I feel:

- to the Committee's careful management
- to Nick's preparedness to remain within our concert budget guidelines
- to higher-than-usual ticket sales through the year
- but most significantly, to the generous donations from Pat for our anniversary year, and from Jean for the April concert, given in memory of David.

This is the case even though the Guarantee Against Loss facility from AVAC has been discontinued. Actually, I would argue that we could be seen as *too* well off. Consequently, we have decided that, for Spring and Autumn next year at least, we will loosen the purse-strings and allow Nick to spend more on our concerts. We will have a chamber orchestra for both concerts, and it's been a while since we could do that. I hope that this will give you, our members, more pleasure in performing, and also be more attractive to audiences. Of course, we will keep careful watch on the finances thereafter.

I've already mentioned how successful the April concert was. Opinion in the Committee is quite divided on how to respond to this success. Views range from "Why can't we sing Andrew Lloyd Webber" to "I'll be glad to get back to our usual sort of music". I have to assume this split reflects opinion in our membership. It may also relate to the opinion amongst our audience. As a personal anecdote, I have had several people now tell me that their support for our normal concerts is out of loyalty, either to us collectively or to me personally, whereas this concert was just what they wanted – and was fun! So, I've concluded that it's time to survey our members again (you will recall we did this several years back). We'll do so at the start of next term, to maximise our coverage of members, but, before memories fade, I'd like to run the exercise tonight with you. There are forms available, and pencils to use. The survey is quite simple, and should be self-explanatory. Please take time to complete it, and put your completed form in the box. You'll also be able to do the survey again next term, as we don't plan to add the results together.

I mentioned the previous survey, from which we established the important fact that members wanted variety, and coverage of both secular and sacred music. We have tried to implement that wish, and Nick has been very supportive and indeed creative in putting together programmes for us. You will realise that we have to plan ahead, in order to secure accompanists, soloists and indeed the music. As a result, therefore, Nick has been asked to keep an updated 2-year plan. Changing what we do, therefore, takes time.

This means that we have plans for the next 4 concerts, through to Spring 2021. Next AFC year, i.e. starting in September, we will perform:

- In November, a concert of "Choral Classics", such as *Locus Iste* and *Blest Pair of Sirens*; very much back in our "normal operating zone". Strictly speaking, we are not adhering fully to the concert title, as we will also perform a piece composed especially for us by Nick – not a classic – yet! This is entitled *Gloria*, and I have had the privilege of hearing the opening lines. You are in for a treat! Our soloist for this concert will be Felicity Davies, who is taking on her real love as a singer. A local girl as well; maybe she will bring an adoring band of followers into our audience!
- Then, in April, we will perform the Vivaldi *Gloria* and the Haydn *Little Organ Mass*. This will be the first of our two concerts with a chamber orchestra – the Keats Ensemble – so the concert will also offer non-choral diversion in the form of the Albinoni *Trumpet Concerto in B-flat*. I already have concerns about how we fit all performers into the Methodist Church...

Finally, on your behalf, I'd like to thank some people who, as a team, have provided great support to me:

1. Nick, for his constant good humour, fund of stories, ability to get stuck into everything we do as a Committee – and his stream of “interesting” new pieces for me to listen to on Spotify
2. Rowena, for her supportive and sympathetic accompaniment, and constant smile
3. Lynda – not just our Secretary in the formal sense, but who also carries out so much admin – including the thankless task of liaising with Aylesbury Methodist Church for concert arrangements
4. Our retiring Treasurer, Viv – for the promptness in updating our accounts and for the details she has built into our financial reporting. Viv is standing down tonight, after years (feels like a lifetime she might say!) on the Committee. I would like to thank her, on behalf of the Committee and also on behalf of all singers for her hard work. We will miss you Viv!
5. Our Concert Manager, Pat – who makes sure we have a stage and chairs to sit on, and that people actually turn up to sing. Pat is also in the position to give important advice to me and the Committee, coming from many years’ experience in music – and AFC!
6. Sheila, our Membership Secretary - who keeps a watchful eye on who turns up for rehearsal – and who does not – she knows where you live! Also, for introducing colour into the mundane world of registration.
7. Our Press & Publicity department – by which I mean Barbara – for getting about quite a lot leading up to concerts, getting quite cross with some local publications, and haranguing you all to distribute posters and flyers.
8. And lastly – because someone has to be – Kate, our Music Librarian – for not only getting our music on time for the start of rehearsals, and retrieving it from you all, but keeping up with Nick’s insistence on particular editions, and much photocopying.

Thank you all for coming tonight, to support the choir.

## 5 **Music Director’s report**

Nick Austin presented his report as follows:-

Well – another year has passed and what a varied one it has been!

Our first concert, in December, was the musically and emotionally challenging Brahms Requiem, paired with Mendelssohn’s Hear my Prayer.

The Brahms is a challenge, too, from a stamina point of view but we all survived! The concert was a huge success with a very exciting sound from the choir and crystal-clear text throughout.

We had superb soloists in Susanna & Jack and stunning accompaniment from Neil Kelley.

We had a few ‘bumpers’ but they were really only there to BALANCE the sound – from all other points of view, AFC could have performed this without any outside support.

Putting a Christmas Concert together in minimal time is something I’m very used to although, as it was the first one with AFC, there was a little trepidation. Totally unfounded as everyone seemed to know pretty much everything already! The audience thoroughly enjoyed the variety of audience carols, offerings from AFC, fabulous Recorder playing from the Galliard Band and some silly readings.

I have to confess to not being the Recorder’s number 1 fan – despite having the opportunity to work with some of the best back in music college days. The Galliard Band have ALMOST converted me! Jack has been having Recorder lessons for half a term now and I long for the day when he can play something recognisable!

The last concert, a month ago, was nothing short of extraordinary. You all, after only a little persuasion, totally got behind this, often unfamiliar, genre. It showed just what a versatile group AFC are, and we enjoyed some incredible audience reactions. Rowena’s playing was amazing and she and Robin made a brilliant team. Sophie seemed to have the audience in the palm of her hand during her solos and, despite nursing a cold, was perfect for this style of music. Of course, as her father, I’m bound to say that – but I hope you’ll agree!

Comments from the large audience were many but the ones that pleased me most related, again, to clarity of text and how much AFC seemed to be enjoying themselves.

I continue to be most impressed with AFC's 'relearn time'. You may be a small-ish group but confidence in all parts has grown hugely over the past year or so and the time saved in rehearsals by NOT doing too much 'note-bashing' means that we can deal with more musical matters: phrase shape, dynamic contrast, engaging the audience etc. All this is certainly paying off!

So, next season...Choral Classics in the Autumn will be an enjoyable, contrasting, set of pieces with some very popular chorister & audience-pleasing pieces. Another Christmas Concert, much along the lines of last year and then, in the Spring a chance to perform with a small orchestra (The Keats Ensemble) in Vivaldi's Gloria, Haydn's Little Organ Mass and Telemann's rarely performed Laudate Jehovam. All very exciting!

There is one issue that does puzzle, and slightly disappoint me, and that is the more social side of AFC life. All my other choirs have an active social life outside rehearsals – going to concerts or musicals, playing golf, rambling, Christmas meals, weekends away, first of the month bar nights...the list is extensive. Although it's not really a matter for discussion here, I'd dearly love to know why we've had so much difficulty just organising a simple trip to Malvern just to enjoy music making. Also, why it was such a struggle to get more members to attend a Rutter Requiem Workshop – which was very successful! Please do talk to me about this as I really want to understand the issues although, I suspect, they are all busy lifestyle related! I do know that in a large choir it's obviously going to be easier to get viable numbers for these things – Bracknell Choral have a weekend away planned for February next year and 72 members have signed up to this! However, their membership is around 120! With smaller numbers the commitment, inevitably, has to be greater.

A possible start would be forming a small social committee to propose and organise a few events. These would have to be people outside the current committee – just 2 or 3 really. If there is anyone who feels they could head up this venture, please come and have a chat with me. The choir that plays together, stays together. Corny, but true!

My sincere thanks to all the committee, who do SO much on behalf of us all, and all those others who work so hard behind the scenes to make concert days go smoothly.

Lastly, my thanks to Rowena for her unfailing support and superb accompanying. I know she gets embarrassed by the compliments I send her way – but I'm going to keep sending them until she believes them!

Here's to another fabulous season ahead!

Thank you.

## 6 Election of Officers and Committee Members

Lynda reminded everyone that under our Constitution Committee members, who are also Trustees, serve for a 3-year period, subject to the proviso that one third of the Committee resign each year. Committee members may then offer themselves for re-election. This year it was the turn of Mike, Lynda and Viv to resign. Jean was also resigning.

The composition of the committee therefore currently stood as below:

### Composition of Committee

Chairman	Resigned	Mike Elliott
Secretary	Resigned	Lynda Phipps
Treasurer	Resigned	Viv Bailleux
Membership Secretary	Remaining in post	Sheila Page
Asst. Press & Publicity	Remaining in post	Barbara Venables

Press & Publicity	Resigned	Jean Tuer
Music Librarian	Remaining in post	Kate Atherton
Concert Manager	Remaining in post	Pat Aylett

Both Mike and Lynda had offered to stand for re-election. Mike's re-election was proposed by Bob Shellard and seconded by Kate Atherton. Lynda's re-election was proposed by Sheila Hill and seconded by Frankie Wells.

Viv was resigning but Lyn Williams put his name forward to join the committee and Jean had indicated her willingness to re-join. Lyn's nomination was proposed by Pat Aylett and seconded by Joan Woodward. Jean's nomination was proposed by Barbara Venables and seconded by Viv Bailleux.

No nominations had been received for the vacant post of Asst. Concert Manager.

## 7 **Any Other Business**

Pat Aylett said she wished to thank Mike on behalf of the rest of the committee for everything he had done this year - music being the least of his worries!

Kate presented Viv with flowers & a card from the committee.

Viv said we have talked in the past about singing beyond our Easter concert but she wanted to raise the issue again. Would it be possible to meet at BJS to sing for fun rather than towards a concert if enough people were interested?

Bob Shellard said he was aware ACS perform a charity gig once every 3 years for which singers pay £30 which covers the cost of rehearsal space, the idea being idea to keep people involved during the summer. Might it be possible to 'adopt' a church and perform for the congregation?

It would seem a good idea to carry on to prevent people going elsewhere.

Rowena said she would also be in favour of continuing as not to do so directly affects her income.

Nick said he would be happy with a full 3-term model. One possibility would be to do something like AMCHOR – 45 min concert on 4 rehearsals, earmarking 6 rehearsals in early June with a concert at the end of that. His concern would be if people are reluctant to do things outside of normal choir time. We would need a balanced choir to make it work - virtually the whole choir.

Viv asked if we could get around the problem by singing in unison. Nick was not in favour.

Mike asked those present if there was any opposition to the suggestion of a third term. No-one opposed the idea so Mike said that gave the committee the authority to go away and discuss further.

Joan Woodward said that some AFC singers also belong to other choirs and she would worry about the standard being high enough when some people can't read music.

Nick replied that half of AMCHOR cannot read music. The trick is to choose a popular programme. Nick read out AMCHOR's next programme – we had already sung most of the items. He said it was not a concern, he would find rehearsal tracks.

Rowena asked if we might sing something lighter in the summer. Nick said this was entirely possible – but he drew the line at Abba, Andrew Lloyd-Webber and country & western! Nick has the availability on Thursday evenings at the moment for 2020.

Bob Shellard said ACS are busy this summer but he wondered if they might join with us next year, not necessarily to have a concert but just for fun.

Rupert Nixon said he would appreciate some sessions on singing technique. He was in favour of not having a concert at the end of the day.

Alan Hamilton pointed out that having a concert does concentrate people's minds.

Bob Shellard raised the point that if singers know there is no concert to work towards, they might not bother to come to rehearsal each week. He would, however, rather have sessions without a concert than no sessions at all.

Viv pointed out we lose money on concerts so it would be better not to have one.

Rowena wanted to thank everyone, saying she plays for several societies each week and AFC is the most enjoyable one to play for.

The AGM closed at 8.00 pm followed by wine and nibbles.