



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**MONDAY 6 September 2021 at 8.45pm**  
**Balfon Church**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Kirsty Allan, Ken Allen, Amy Anderson, Pat Ashworth, Joyce Begg, Colin Cameron, Catherine Davidson-Carr, Pamela Dymott, Mark Evans, Philip Gaskell, Richard Green, Victoria Glasse-Davies, Iain Howie, Ian James, Jeremy Jones, Mary Lawson, Sheena McLean, Judith Neil, Bill Noblett, Anne Parker, Fiona Renfrew, Isobel Shaw, John Smith, Jane White, José

1) Philip welcomed everybody, especially new members Jane White and Jeremy Jones. Apologies were received from Liz Brander, Caroline Carrick, Julia Cross, Catherine Frew, Madeleine Goreham, Peter Hunt, Jennifer Lunn, John McDonald, Moira McKendry, Carol Omand, Maggie Price, Annette Rogers, Hans Schutten, Molley Schutten, Heather Smith, Catriona Stewart, Max Taylor, Ewing Wallace. Phil also briefly ran through the COVID protection procedures.

2) **Minutes of AGM 14 September 2020.**

Since the minutes had not recently been sent out, it was agreed that AA would send out and they would be agreed upon at the next meeting. LATER: Minutes were sent out and at a rehearsal, proposed as correct by Judith Neil and seconded by Maggie Price.

3) **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### 4) **Chair's Report**

The cancellation of our planned Spring Concert for 29th March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic led to a radical rethink of how the choir might continue to meet. Choral singing in any form was one of the activities most severely hit by government restrictions. After a quiet summer, the Committee concluded that there was little likelihood of meeting for rehearsals before January 2021, and that a Christmas concert was not going to be possible.

Instead we decided to institute a Zoom programme for the Autumn term. The technology was new for many, but after a familiarisation session a regular attendance of some 30+ choir members each week was most gratifying. We held the AGM by Zoom on 14th September, at which a rise in both subscription fees and the Music Director's salary was approved. The programme for the term included warm-up sessions, work on specific pieces, and live interviews with the inspirational Ayoub Sisters in London and the composer Ola Gjeilo in New York. The term ended with a 3-week vocal workshop led by Eamon Dougan of The Sixteen. Our thanks go to former member Amanda MacLeod who set that up. The sight of us all mute-singing under Mark's direction took some getting used to, but everyone thoroughly enjoyed getting together again.

By then it was clear that a Spring 2021 concert was also out of the question, so in January we continued the weekly Zoom sessions. We also welcomed several guest singers who were missing their singing experience elsewhere, and it was great to have them to add to our numbers. Highlights of the term included an interview with Stuart Stratford, Music Director of Scottish Opera, entertainingly chaired by Phil Gaskell, and a workshop led by the acclaimed vocal performance coach, Wilma MacDougall. The term ended on a high with a guest appearance from Kim André Arnesen, composer of two of our favourite numbers: Flight Song and Cradle Hymn. He talked fascinatingly about his career and work, and introduced a surprise guest in Euan Tait, Scottish writer of the lyrics for Flight Song. Kim was in Trondheim, his agent Heather in Minnesota, and Euan in Wales - so there are advantages to Zoom!

Nevertheless, the choir is desperate to get back to some kind of choral normality, and there are hopes for live rehearsals and possibly even concerts

in the coming months. The thought of being able to perform the Northern Lights programme we rehearsed for March 2020 remains an ambition.

I have made the difficult decision to retire from the choir at this AGM, and I wish all success to the new Chair in driving the choir onward. I want to thank you all for the friendship and support you have shown me over the ten years I've sung with you. We are incredibly fortunate to have such an inspirational Music Director in the shape of Mark, and I have learned so much from him over the years. I would like to thank all those who have served with me on the Committee, particularly Bill as Treasurer, Ewing and Sheena as Librarian, and Judith and Amy as Secretary. The catering committee: first Kirsty and Moira, then John, Julia, Phil and Christine. And of course my very good friends that make up The Flabby Tubas – that was always a lot of fun! The coming year will be demanding on many fronts as we learn to live with Covid-19, but I know you will not let it defeat you, and that your love of singing will find an outlet for years to come. Long live the Strathendrick Singers! Colin Cameron, June 2021

#### **5) Treasurer's Report**

The financial report had previously been circulated. Bill commented that income from Gift Aid had increased; he wasn't sure how. Subscriptions had increased from £90 to £100 per season. We had 43 members last year, some of whom had paid just for part of the year. Thanks were given to Lock and Anne Parker for managing the Friends. Income had fallen slightly from them last year. Income from Easy Fundraising had been £26 and Bill reminded the choir they could fundraise by using Amazon Smile and selecting Strathendrick Singers as their chosen charity.

There had been anonymous donations of £350 over the year. The Music Director had received an increase in their fee as this had been overdue, but there had been no accompanist fee for the last year. Within zoom rehearsal expenditures, costs were £450 for The Sixteen online workshops, £150 to Wilma McDougall, a gift to Stuart Stratford from Scottish Opera and £14.39 for a Zoom subscription shared with Balfron Community Council. Derek Townsend was paid a very reasonable £59.99 for looking after the website and technical support.

Catherine Davidson-Carr proposed the Treasurer's report and Fiona Renfrew seconded it.

## 6) Music Director's Report

After perhaps the strangest, most challenging year for me professionally, and for so many personally, I also find this a strange report to be giving.

I would like to thank everyone for their support over the past few months. It has been a huge learning curve for us all and moving to rehearse on Zoom was incredibly daunting, certainly for me. I am glad I was able to have the chance to cut my teeth with Zoom before we met, so that I was able, hopefully, to make your experience as rewarding as is possible on the platform.

With a fairly steady 25-30 singers on screen (including some visitors!), the routine of finishing dinner and returning to the computer, rather than jump in the car, very quickly became the norm. Just as with live rehearsals I looked forward to my Monday evenings, to seeing you all and again, as with in-person rehearsing, I left rehearsals with renewed energy and happy heart.

I had never thought it would have been the norm for so long however, and remember my – perhaps naïve – optimism that we would still be able to perform a concert at Easter!! Alas, that was not to be so, but I again remain optimistic that this is the beginning of us genuinely returning to what we knew as choir before.

The highlights of the past year, as well as being able to sustain our choir community included inviting some guests to our sessions:

The Ayoub Sisters

Eamon Dougan from the Sixteen

Ola Gjeilo (my own Claire called me a total fan-boy after this interview!)

Kim Arnesen

Stuart Stratford from Scottish Opera

Wilma MacDougall

Not only was this an opportunity to give you a break from looking at my face or listening to my voice, but allowed us to learn a great deal from all these

guests. I think I shall still hold Ola Gjeilo to his “promise” of coming to Scotland and accompanying us himself!!

We were able to look at quite a range of pieces over the year and I hope that you all enjoyed the selection. As I said earlier I wanted to start with some of these pieces to get us going and to allow us just to sing and we shall be able to use these in a Christmas concert. As far as a concert at Christmas, I have not planned a programme. The reason for this is that I wanted to see first how many singers I had in front of me, and the balance so that I can then decide on repertoire which is appropriate. All this on the assumption that a Christmas concert is indeed on the cards – we cannot predict the future and re-building an audience may need to be a focus for us, I don’t know. I know that many are desperate to see live performances again and the lack of Christmas concerts last year was sorely felt, I know. Who knows, by then we may have lots more wanting to come to the concert to make up for time lost!

For the same reason I just mentioned I have not any specific Easter concert in mind. I would like to gauge your reaction and thoughts on again pursuing the Baltic programme which I know so many loved rehearsing and worked so hard on but never had the chance to perform. The one big advantage may be that we would know the programme well and really do it justice in a concert.

It is lovely to have José with us again this evening and for the next few weeks and after that we need to find someone else. I have spoken to a few and have one person in particular in mind who can confirm in the next two weeks.

Over the months I have craved to be in the same room as a choir. I was fortunate to have a day with the NYCOS Training Choir at the end of August after which we performed a short concert to parents and friends and it was an incredibly emotional day. I was extremely nervous beforehand as this was my first time live with a choir for such a long time and I had real doubts as to whether I could still do it or not. To hear you all this evening has been equally emotional and a complete joy – thank you!

I believe singing is safe and am delighted to be back and making music with you again!

Thanks to the committee over the past year but especially to Colin who was a great help to me in many ways – and for some of the wee emails along the way to let me know how you were getting on with the rehearsals, I very much appreciated them too.

**7) Committee:**

As Colin had resigned from the choir, a new chairperson needed to be elected. Bill Proposed Philip Gaskell and he was seconded by Pat Ashworth. Bill Noblett remains as treasurer and Amy Anderson as secretary.

**8) The Way Ahead:**

Phil commented that the committee would meet soon to discuss the way ahead and said that he would phone round current but non-attending members just to keep in touch and hopefully build confidence.

**9) AOB**

Iain Howie asked where the COVID protection guidance was coming from. Was it from the government or music organisations? Phil replied that there were three arms: The Church of Scotland, the Scottish Government and Making Music, the latter having been particularly useful in interpreting Government advice, particularly for amateur groups. Mark commented that some of the Scottish Government guidance is not very clear so Making Music's interpretation has been valuable. Iain said that for theatres, the advice is unworkable but Ken noted that the RSNO chorus had been able to practice and will perform Haydn's Creation within their relevant guidance on 2nd October.