

Mevagissey Male Choir Minutes of Committee Meeting

7-30pm 20th September 2016 Mevagissey Social Club

Present: - N. Nichols, D. Leeson, G. Hoskins, P. Bowker, M. Thompson, S. Lawday, B. Hocking, P. Vellenoweth, R. Mitchell, T. Scarratt.

Apologies: - S. Flavell M. Tate, C. Burnett, C Williams, H. Stobart,

Minutes of meeting held on 17th July, Proposed R. Mitchell, Seconded. M. Thompson

Matters arising :- £15 car parking charge in Mevagissey re Cyprus trip coach, Coach costs for travel to concerts to be bought up and decision made at AGM

HfC:- Email received from S. Flavell. In his absence this was read out by the Chairman:

'Hi Committee

Apologies but I cannot be with you on Tuesday evening due to health at the moment.

These are the points I would like to make and would be grateful if Chairman Nick could read them out:

1. I'm glad the Hfc concert went well and congratulations to all those who worked so hard on it to make it happen. I'm relieved we didn't make a loss on it and some profit is good - "all 's well that ends well"!
2. I agree there are some important lessons to be learned re. points like clarity at the time of booking, responsibility for whole project by a - - committee member and proper committee scrutiny. We "pulled it off" - but it had its worrying moments, didn't it?
3. "Style" of how we conduct ourselves and our discussions as a committee.

I didn't like the "pushy" way the decision to proceed with H.F.C. went through - it felt like being on the wrong end of a Donald Trump campaign - complete with "triumphalism" at the end. Meva Choir business has always been conducted in a friendly and consensual way and I think that is a tradition we should keep. I think we need to come to a decision about email voting procedure - remembering that not all committee members are always available instantly at the end of a computer. I thought the presentation of the final "vote" figures was a bit dodgy? I think Hfc deadlines were used to hurry along our need to make hurried email decisions.

There were probably six committee members who had genuine reservations about the HFC commitment - these included long-standing and experienced choir members whose views deserved respect.

I feel we are getting into the habit of working too much by email with great, long-winded reports and "papers" - particularly before committee meetings. Although well meant, do we really need twenty point letters after someone has "slept on it" or discussion papers on the legality of email voting?

Thanks

Steve'

A response from M Tate, who was also absent was also received by email:

'First, I don't understand what Steve means by the "pushy way" the decision to proceed with HfC went through, or what he means by "triumphalism". And it's particularly disappointing to hear Steve describe the "presentation of the final "vote" figures" as "a bit dodgy". To be honest, I think these amounts to a slur on one of our members (I'm sure unintended) and that Steve should withdraw it. (Please be clear – this is not an attack on Steve; just a defence of other committee members.) "There were probably six committee members who had genuine reservations about the HFC commitment, including long-standing and experienced choir members whose views deserved respect." There are FIFTEEN committee members in total. More importantly, the views of these members were aired, respected, and out-voted. 'Committee members are 'always available instantly at the end of a computer'. True, but neither are they available at a drop of a hat to turn up at the Social Club. The facts is that we live in a different world to the one in which the choir's constitution was drawn up. And it's a world that our audiences, suppliers, hosts and guests all inhabit. Like it or not, the way we all communicate has changed. Decisions are sometimes needed much faster. So it's true, HfC deadlines were used to 'hurry along our need to make email decisions', as Steve says. If you're given a deadline, you have to meet it! What's the alternative? Are we to turn opportunities

down because it takes us three weeks to come to a decision? Steve questions the use of reports and papers. But surely it's better if as many of us as possible, can be given as much information as possible, as early as possible. Isn't it better if we all have time to read and consider all the facts before forming our opinions, rather than having to make kneejerk, spontaneous decisions at a meeting when not all the facts may be available or properly aired? Email is a wonderful tool for doing this. We should embrace it, not dismiss it like Luddites. Voting by email is something else! Unfortunately, very occasionally, while not desirable, even this may be necessary in the modern world. My suggestion here is that, on the very rare occasions when it is necessary, perhaps the secretary could telephone those committee members who aren't 'always at their computer' to make them aware that a particular email needs their attention. Two brief final points. First, while I completely agree that the experience and advice of our longer-serving members are both invaluable and welcome, I think it's also important to recognise that we are living in 2016. Times, and methods of communication have moved on. It's right to be cautious but it's also essential that we move away from the 'we've never done it that way before' mind set. Second, I believe our decision to proceed has been shown to be right. We had a wonderful concert and we made a healthy profit. Yes, we could have come a cropper, as some predicted. But we didn't, thanks to the hard work and ingenuity of dedicated committee members, and others - and in the face of a less than helpful HfC. Yes, there are many lessons to be learned – and we've learned, or are learning, them. But we showed we could do it. To me, this demonstrates the strength, commitment and enthusiasm of this committee.

There was a long discussion and other points of view expressed, facts put forward and suggestions made.

R Mitchell and P Vellenoweth expressed their unhappiness at the time scale, pressure and the e-voting which, as a concept had to be taken to an AGM. Also the problems generated by emails not sent to 'ALL' the committee.

D. Leeson produced spread sheet with income and expenditure showing a net profit from the concert of £2,629.53. £400 donation to PMWC voted on and passed leaving £2,229.53 for choir funds.

N Nichols stated that many of the difficulties we had experienced came from our inexperience, but that both HfC and the organisation of the PMWC left much to be desired; also that contrary to worries in the early days that, he noted with interest, it was the most expensive premium seats that had sold first at HfC in preference to the cheaper ones.

P Bowker said that despite all difficulties, many of which were not of our own making, that everybody had enjoyed a truly wonderful evening and that we should look forward another concert at HfC.

R Mitchell noted that the sound quality and format of HfC were so very much better than it had been previously and that his fears on that score had not materialised, also that GW had been 'smiling' when he listened from the auditorium so from that moment on everything went well.

G Hoskins said he was delighted that the MMC had put on such a good concert in the 'biggest stage' in the county, in marked contrast to some of the uninspiring venues the choir had used when he first joined. He said this was invaluable for the enjoyment, prestige and confidence of the Choir; he also mentioned the recent possible invitation from the London Welsh MVC to be their guests at the Royal Albert Hall and pointed out that one never knew where things might lead when we seize opportunities.

M Thompson said he thought some of the experiences relating to the MMC HfC concert and the trip to Cyprus have revealed a number of areas that need attention and changes in the way the MMC conducts its business and suggested that two matters in particular be addressed in the near future:

1. Contracts

- (a) MMC to produce/update its own contract template for use when joint ventures are contemplated and there are significant costs or obligations involved.

- (b) Contracts from other organisations must be obtained in a timely manner and made available to all committee members for scrutiny and response. Where the fulfilment of a contractual obligation depends upon sub-contractors, binding agreements with the latter should be put in place before the MMC takes on a major commitment (1) (2).

2. Committee Responsibility and Oversight

(a) Every engagement taken on by the Choir should be overseen by a member of the committee who will be appointed by the committee and will be responsible for keeping the committee fully informed. For major projects several channels of communications between the MMC and other choir or venues may be desirable, e.g between equivalent officers. ('Engagements' to include 'afterglows' and other social events as well as concerts.)

(b) Where a non-committee member has been responsible for originating the engagement, the committee may seek to co-opt (3) the member on to the committee. Alternatively, the duly appointed committee member may be instructed to work with the originator.

(c) All the general arrangements must be made available to the committee and be easily viewable by all (website) which might include more specific information and detail scanned or copied from other documents.

(d) While the experience, initiatives and volunteer support from other members of the MMC and their wives/partners is most valued and greatly welcomed, all aspects of every engagement must be under the control of, and understood to be the responsibility of the committee or a delegated member (4).

This must be the case for members of the committee to accept their responsibility as trustees of the charity.

(1)E.g. Was the document sent by PMWC to our secretary sufficient to enter into the agreement with HfC?

(2) Clearly this depends on the scale of the undertaking.

(3) Co-opted members do not have the responsibilities or obligations of the Trustees.

(4) Selling opportunities were lost and other difficulties arose at HfC because this is not the case at present.

Thanks to Peter and two Mikes for work carried out on HfC concert making it the success it was

Chairman: - nothing to report.

Secretary: - Email received from Sally Adams thanking Choir for their singing on the Quay she heard us while walking the SW coastal path, bought a CD and listens to it all the time in her flat in London. Hearing the choir was the highlight of her holiday.

Treasurer:-July seems a long way away now, but had its significant occurrences. We paid the final instalment for our trip to Cyprus, and I drew £5k from our reserves to make sure we could cover it, though, as things transpired we actually had a margin of more than £400.00. I also sent, following the discussion at our last meeting, a cheque for £1,575.00 to MIND, in memory of Robin, with a covering letter, of which I have put a copy on the notice board. I have received an acknowledgement, which, I regret to say, I have temporarily misplaced! CD sales for the month totalled a healthy £322, but most of the rest of our income was either towards Cyprus or our Joint Concert with the Military Wives. If there are any questions about any transactions in July, it would probably be best to deal with them now. August was a very profitable month for us! Our income from Quay Concerts exceeded £1,600 and CD sales at the concerts totalled £740.00, with a further £72.00 from the Fountain. Total CD income for the month was £955.00! It was a good time to fund the production of our Christmas CD, which cost just over £1k. Interest on our so-called High Interest account gave us £36.88 and a warning that the Interest Rate is now halved to 0.5%. So, saving to accumulate is not an option in the present climate, though profligacy may leave us exposed to unexpected future demands. Our Spending Plan will look a little happier when the proceeds of this month's joint concert are taken into account. I am awaiting the forms to complete an application for Gift Aid on a subscription and Quay Concert income totalling £4.5k, which should yield £1,125.00 in tax refund. Those two items should bring our results much closer to our expected deficit for the year, and we should be able to replenish our reserves back to £15k, which I think is a reasonable buffer. I am beginning

to sense that the era of the CD may be on the wane, and whether we shall be able to increase sales of our tracks from our website to compensate for falling demand on the high street, even if not at concerts, is going to need watching carefully if we are to avoid holding large stocks of unwanted CDs. I am very hopeful that our latest Christmas CD will not be similarly affected, at least in the short term. I think the only other point I would like to make in this report is that as this committee is positively buzzing with energy and initiative and I, frankly, am struggling to service it as quickly and effectively as it deserves, I have decided it is time for me to hand over to someone who can. I have loved doing the job, enjoyed our meetings and am immensely proud of what the Choir has achieved in its short history, and I don't want to get in the way! So thanks for all the fun, and hard work which you are all putting in, but confident in the belief that no one is indispensable, I've decided to get off at the next stop.

David's resignation was received with sadness but he was thanked by our Chairman and all members of the committee for his hard work.

Concert Secretary: - Concert requests proposed to take to Choir. Maesteg Gleemen on the 2nd September 2017, London Welsh October 2017 at the Albert hall return in 2018, Newchurch MVC June 2017,

Publicity: - Pieces about HfC in Guardian, West Briton, Voice, Tower & Spire, and others, with pics. Broadcasts on Radio Cornwall and Radio St Austell Bay. Stories now sent to all about Cyprus, although I discovered by accident that this had already been done by Graham Rundle. News & Views have asked for a piece on our return, and so have Radio Cornwall. Radio Cornwall will also publicise our CD, but not until November. I have attached the latest press release. As I mentioned, I discovered, by accident, that Graham was submitting items to the media without my knowledge. I think I now have his agreement that he will notify me, in advance, of his future intentions. (Although I had to suffer some pretty unpleasant abuse even though I believe my request was courteous, but we'll let that go now). There are two points here. One is that, as your publicity officer, I have a strategy for feeding stuff to the media – Minack, HfC, new CD, Cyprus are all good stories but need to be publicised one at a time for maximum benefit. If someone else is sending something to the Guardian on Cyprus while I'm trying to get them to write about HfC, it's confusing for the media and counter-productive for us. The second point is that, in my view, the committee should anyway always be aware of what is being said to the media on the choir's behalf. It comes back to the general concerns that some of us have about accountability.

Plus press release for Cyprus tour presented to committee.

Webmaster: - trying to find a way of getting downloads out on Webpage. Business cards would be of a great advantage to distribute to visitors etc, voted on and passed G. Hoskins to look into wording to be used on cards.

Fund Raising: - £390 raised at BBQ at Barley sheaf. Thanks offered to Simon and Peter.

Total raised so far £4100. Well done Peter.

Social Secretary: - very successful BBQ. Need to confirm Choirs Christmas Dinner for 14th January different music to be tried. Phil Vellenoweth to contact a band near where he lives.

Almoner: - in contact with Ivor seems a bit brighter, Steve spoken to seems chipper. Bernard had decided not to seek re-election at the AGM, so a new member is required for this work.

1st Tenor nothing more to add other than what Bernard has reported?

2nd Tenor new member Paul Houseman

Baritones no report

Bass' no report

CDs and downloads:- R. Mitchell moving some through shops £156 paid in , Christmas CD going very well

Harvest of the Sea: - G. Hoskins to check provisions cups plates etc. Chairman confirmed that a beer barrel has been organised from the Fountain. Choristers to be asked to provide food as in other years

AOB P. Bowker - rails on risers need changing to make them more stable possible outriggers needed all in hand, Vice Chairman to be brought up at AGM also librarian, Treasurer, Secretary and Almoner.

P Bowker - In future, when music is purchased, we must get written confirmation from the publisher that it can be performed by Choir in public with no additional licence or cost.

M. Thompson suggested alternative marshalling in future. It would be easier if the choir walked on the broad, flat floor to their position in front of the risers and then stepped up rather than stepping up onto the risers and navigating along a narrow platform. Some people had a problem walking on narrow risers making it slow to get on and off of the staging.

G. Rundell to be invited to act as Chairman in Cyprus because neither the Chairman or his deputy are attending.

Polgooth Inn sing needs to be a balanced set of singers preferably in casual choir uniform.

Date of next meeting 11th October

Meeting closed 22-04

Signed Chairman

Date