



# Wayfarer's AGM 2023 Minutes

Following the traditional rendition of 'The Old Songs', the 2023 AGM commenced with apologies for absence from Stuart Rawlings, Rick Walker and Garry Madeloso.

## Chairman's Report

2023 has been another difficult year for the chorus. Following the Covid pandemic, during which we were only able to meet via Zoom, there was a distinct change in people's behaviour, which resulted in a very badly attended 'Learn To Sing' course. The lack of attendance was also partly due to the collapse of the Champion newspaper at a critical time in our marketing of the course.

Thanks must be given to Barry Nowell, without whom it would have been very difficult to maintain the chorus over lockdown. Barry's Zoom sessions and Colin Wayte's 'remote' warm-ups were critical to our continued existence.

During 2023, the continued aftermath of Covid meant we only performed three sing-outs, one of which was notable for the chorus singing in the garden at Peacehaven, while the audience were nice and warm inside.

On a more positive note, 2023 also saw the return of Colin Wayte and Jeff Coligan to the risers. The chorus have benefitted greatly from their return, especially as they are both that rare breed – barbershop tenors!

Although we are yet to find a full time MD, Paul Smith has resumed his role of Assistant MD and is doing a superb job, assisted greatly by Colin Wayte and Eric Simpson, plus the overall support of the chorus.

During 2023, we saw an unfortunate situation in which a member was paying subs' even though they had not passed an audition. Ultimately, that person left the chorus, which was a great shame. The committee have committed that no future prospective members will be asked to pay subscriptions until they have been formally accepted.

There is one more person to thank by name. Although Carla didn't stay with us long, she brought a number of fresh ideas and when she came to watch Men In Black performances she always have constructive feedback.

In December, we have six performances booked and already have two enquiries for performances in 2024. This augurs well for the future.

Finally, the chorus as a whole deserve a massive thank-you. During covid and the upheaval resulting from this and other factors, members have remained loyal and flexible. That is greatly appreciated.



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## Music Director's Report

2023 has been a busy year, in which we have said goodbye to some much loved friends and welcomed some new faces.

After three amazing years, Barry Nowell stepped down in June, though he will remain a lifelong member of the Wayfarers family. It has been a privilege and something of a challenge to step into Barry's large shoes but I have been very lucky to have Eric and Colin to share the load and join me on this musical adventure.

As has been said, the LTS course was not the success we had hoped for. However, although the hard work put in was not rewarded with new members, the experience did help bond the chorus even tighter and gave us a focus for improvement.

Age is not on the side of our chorus and we must reflect on absent friends. This year we did not lose any current chorus members, but sadly Rick's wife, Rosie, together with ex member Tom Sinker, both passed away. We have also lost, through ill health, the talents of Barrie Morrissey and Jimmy McMullen.

Some thank yous are due from me - to Barry, Eric and Colin for their help, support and words of wisdom. To the chorus for their hard work and commitment. To the music team for their support. To Ian for all the website management and communications and to Gerry, Frank and all the committee for keeping everything going. And Bijou Cinema guys who not only provide us with a great venue for our rehearsals but are flexible and supportive of what we do. Apologies if I've missed anyone out.

As a chorus we have many strengths. We are relaxed/entertaining/energetic/ we have good focus (most of the time) and a strong dynamic range. There is also a strong sense of camaraderie which can produce something special in our live performances.

We can of course improve further in a number of ways – by correcting some 'old' errors, improving the accuracy of our singing and learning words more rigorously.

Similarly, we can take look at everything we do well and make it even better. All this means taking things a little more seriously and revising our words, notes and moves between rehearsals so that we are not going over old ground when we turn up on a Tuesday night.

Over the summer we held a session to ask members what they liked about rehearsals, what they didn't like and to share suggestions for making rehearsals even better. I'd like to thank the chorus for their honesty and contribution to this process. In response to this feedback you may have noticed that we have made a number of changes to Tuesday nights

We have:

- Increased the number of songs we focus on during rehearsals



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- Introduced more polecats and made polecats a regular feature of the night
- Re-introduced an octets/quartets spot every week both for fun and variety but also to build confidence in performance
- Run regular sessions where we focus on improving a problem section of a song
- Re-introduced moves to many of the repertoire songs
- Introduced a new Christmas song, Let it Snow
- Introduced regular new vocal exercises and physical activities to keep the “warm up” engaging and beneficial

Again, with your help, we have also carried out a full review of the repertoire. Over the summer we asked members to rate the repertoire songs in a Eurovision-style vote. Armed with this feedback, Colin, Eric and myself have come up with a plan which enables us to

- trim the repertoire to make it more manageable
- rotate selected songs that we can pick up and drop as necessary
- introduce two new numbers in 2024 – Michelle and God only Knows
- gradually bring some showstopping numbers back into the repertoire eg Do you hear the people sing

We hope that having a “dynamic” repertoire that is regularly refreshed will keep members interested and audiences even more captivated.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting programme of festive singouts starting in a matter of days. These concerts will end 2023 on a high and propel us into 2024 with renewed confidence and vigour. I can't wait to see what the new year brings.

## **Treasurer's Report**

During the 2022/2023 financial year, the chorus accounts showed a small surplus and at the moment our financial position is relatively healthy. However, due to a fall in the number of active/paying members, from 38 two years ago to 25 currently, we expect to end the current year with a deficit.

The committee is monitoring this situation and, at this time, need to give notice that we may need to increase subscriptions later on in the year. If an increase is required, the subscriptions will rise to £15 per month, from the current £10 per month. This will be the first increase in at least 10 years and we believe still represents good value.



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During 2023, we donated £500 to the 'Compassion Acts' charity, with whom Terry volunteers. For the next 12 months, our nominated charity will be the Southport based 'Spinal Unit Action Group', whose website you can see at <https://www.suag.co.uk/>.

## **Election of Officers**

There being no alternate nominations, the existing committee will continue in their roles.

A new role of 'Recruitment Secretary' has been created and Terry Williams has volunteered to perform that role. His nomination was accepted unanimously by the chorus.

The committee has asked for a volunteer to assist with organising our bookings. This role would involve diarising the performances, liaising with the venues and compiling a register of which members are available for each performance. No volunteers were forthcoming at the meeting, so the responsibility will remain within the committee until such time as a chorus member comes forward.

## **Barbershopper of the Year.**

It was with great pleasure that Eric Simpson was voted the 2023 Barbershopper of the Year. Although Eric has made it clear that he does not wish to be MD or Assistant MD, that has not stopped him from stepping in to help with conducting and tweaking a number of our songs.

## **A.O.B.**

There were no AOB items

## **Date of next AGM**

The 2024 AGM will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024