

**Minutes of the St Mary's Music Association (SMMA) Annual General Meeting
held on Sunday 18 March 2018
in the Parish Room**

1 Bron confirmed that the meeting had been properly promulgated.

2 Apologies for absence had been received from Nell Bacon and Karen Goddard (Committee Members), as well as Jeremy Allen, Rosemary Fitz-Gibbons, Otilie le Fevre and Lesley Green.

3 Adoption of the Minutes of the previous AGM, held on 5 March 2017. The Minutes were approved with the following correction: "Carole Goulder" to be amended to "Caroline Goulder". The Minutes were adopted as proposed by Kate Beare and seconded by Caroline Goulder.

4 Matters arising: None.

5 Correspondence: None reported.

6 Chair's report: The Chair opened by saying that it had been, as always, a very busy year for the SMMA. The annual SMMA festal Evensong in June had welcomed as preacher a very early member of the choir, Philip Tarris, now Rev Tarris. This had been particularly appropriate as the occasion had served to mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the SMMA, and all five chairmen, Gordon Smith who had founded the association, Philip, Caroline Goulder, Lesley Green and Bron, had been present that evening.

The eight lunchtime concerts had been well received, with attendances uniformly higher than in the past. For the first time the concerts had happened at weekly intervals from the end of May through to mid-July, which may well have been a factor in encouraging regular attendance. The lunches had been ably organized by Gill Gibson, to whom Bron was most grateful, and had been served at the front of the church due to the building works. Bron added that the income from the lunchtime series was by far the largest income source for the SMMA and it was hoped that the upcoming series starting on 30 May would be equally successful.

Bron next mentioned a Saturday afternoon concert given by Oli and Kate Goatman, which had been well attended, and, with Kate's connections in the town, had brought in several people new to the church. In the past year there had been only one evening organ recital, given by the Master of the Music at Norwich Cathedral, Ashley Grote; Bron expressed thanks to Peter De Vile for arranging this.

The choir's residential visit to Llandaff Cathedral, end of July, immediately preceded by the memorial service for Lord Braybrooke at which most of the choir sang, had been a success. The cathedral staff had mostly been on holiday, but those present had welcomed the choir daily at services and offered prayer daily for our church here in Saffron Walden. It would soon be time to plan the choir's next cathedral residential visit ...

September had brought the now traditional informal concert given by the very talented Choral Scholars. Bron said that it was particularly good that Choral Scholar alumni took part, and a point was also made to include those very new to the role, thus integrating them into the life of the senior choir from the beginning. This event was organized by one of the senior scholars each year, ably supported by Kate Beare and Patrick Li who were brilliant at doing this. Bron expressed her thanks to both.

The Choral Scholars could number up to 16 and each year, Year 9 students from the Junior Choir were welcomed, as well as others wanting to join at this stage. – New members had also been welcomed into the Adult Choir during the year and once again the choir numbers were currently full. Bron explained

that, regarding numbers, the choir was limited by two factors: availability of music (currently 72 copies were needed of all sheet music) and robes and space (although a few chairs were often added as needed). It was a great position to be in, to have such strength in numbers. Particularly at Christmas it was good to have the choir represented in full strength. At this past Christmas, Joyful Noise and the Junior Choir had each sung at one of the two tree lighting services on Christmas Eve, while Midnight Mass and Christmas morning had seen many former Choral Scholars supporting the Adult Choir.

In January, Karen Goddard had organized a dinner for the Adult Choir, Choral Scholars and Brass Group at St Mark's. It had been a great evening enjoyed by all present. Bron's ambition would be to see more of the Brass Group there in future.

Regarding the Junior Choir, during the past year Alison Lawrence had been co-opted on to the Committee to oversee the Junior social activities – their regular Friday breaks and also trips out such as the recent trip to the Fitzwilliam. Bron commended Alison for a great job and said the recent outing had been enjoyed by all.

Bron next thanked the Committee for all their support and sheer hard work. In particular her thanks went to Karin Fischer-Buder for her work as Secretary over the past few years, a role from which she was now stepping down. Steve Cass was completing his first year as SMMA Treasurer and Bron thanked him. Jim had continued to produce posters and brochures of a wonderfully high quality. Gill and Alison had already been mentioned and thanked; but further thanks were due to Kate Beare for informing the Committee about the doings of Joyful Noise and the Brass Group, and Peter for planning organ recitals and (together with Caroline) the regular annual visit to sing evensong at a cathedral elsewhere. Thanks too to Karen Goddard, who, as well as organizing the dinner, had set up the SMMA Friends and Family Facebook page to include particularly Junior and Choral Scholar parents who may have less direct links in to the SMMA, but whose support work was vital.

Beyond the Committee, Bron particularly wanted to thank all those who, week in, week out, fulfilled the role of Responsible Adults in supporting the under-18s. If these people were not so generous with their time, very little could happen in terms of these age groups.

Finally, Bron expressed thanks to “the awesome duo at the top”! Jeremy, she said, remained one of the coolest and calmest people she had ever known. *The organ is broken? There is virtually no practice time for a visiting organist? (And what there is, is punctuated by loud crashes and bangs from workmen?)* Very little fazed our Jeremy! The choir and SMMA were very fortunate to have him with us at St Mary's, both playing and conducting.

As for the music boss ... well ... *mostly* calm and collected ... but always enthusiastic and inspirational, full of exciting ideas and projects: Bron expressed her heartfelt thanks to Oli for all he did for us – as ever.

[The Rector echoed his thanks to all who had been named and thanked Bron for her strong leadership.]

7 Treasurer's report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2017: In opening his first report as Treasurer, Steve (a) said that the accounts were prepared on a simple receipts and payments basis. (b) With regard to how much money the SMMA had, he referred the meeting to the consolidated figures in the Receipts and Payments Account showing the funds as at 31 December 2017 (£14,249.69) compared with those at 31 December 2016 (£16,190.00). Steve explained that almost the entire difference was accounted for by the £1,934 held over into 2017 for the Llandaff trip. Further, a large proportion of the reserves (£1,942 + £6,545 = £8,387), compared with £7,867 in 2016, was in the organ funds and reserved for major costs relating to the church organs. The increase in organ funds was from a generous donation of £500 from Susan Smith. There had been no other incomes or expenditure from these accounts other than the paltry amounts of interest paid. There was no other special

purpose fund at the moment. Current funds for general use were £5,836 (compared with £6,389 at the 2016 year end).

(c) Addressing some of the reasons for differences between the 2016 and 2017 year-end financial status, Steve mentioned a difference in income from concerts and lunchtime and organ recitals between the years, but pointed out the change in reporting between the years. This year, Gift Aid had been reported separately to highlight how important it was for people to be encouraged to put their concert contributions in a Gift Aid envelope. Steve further explained that the donations figure was down due to 2016's inclusion of £1,415 from the Justice Service collection.

(d) Steve told the meeting that the accounting records and accounts had been examined by David Birchall, the PCC Treasurer and a qualified accountant, and had also been audited along with the PCC accounts by the PCC's official auditors. Bentens, who had over recent years performed the function that David Birchall had performed this year, had been thanked for their kind honorary reviews for the SMMA in the past.

Finally, Steve thanked Christine Lawrence for her help in the early months, David Birchall for his assistance in getting the accounts ready this year, and the SMMA Committee for their help with banking moneys and organizing various administrative expenditures, sometimes claimed back and sometimes very generously not.

8 Director of Music's report: The Director of Music opened by saying that in summarizing the wealth of musical activities over the past year he would focus mainly on the groups rather than on the musical pieces item by item. The previous 12 months, he said, had been another action-packed year. Easter 2017 had featured an incredibly powerful rendition of Mozart's Requiem Mass in D, accompanied by an orchestra made up of musicians from the renowned East Anglia Chamber Orchestra and with soloists taken from the choir. The choir had risen splendidly to the occasion. The overall effect, to him, had been a myriad of emotions, including an intense feeling of awe and wonder at the choir and orchestra performing beneath the cross on the screen of St Mary's. It had been an incredibly powerful experience. Another highlight had been the Easter Day Eucharist with brass. Gordon Smith's arrangement of the Hallelujah chorus (arranged for the Brass Group, choir, congregation, and organ) was a *pièce de résistance* and one which he hoped would become a "tradition" for many years to come!

Another very big musical project had been undertaken in July when the adults and Choral Scholars had undertaken a week's residency at Llandaff Cathedral. He described the week as having consisted of two choirs – a very large choir on the weekend, and a smaller, much younger choir during the week. The sound they had brought had been very different but the musical standard had been similar and excellent throughout. The choir had worked hard, with good cheer, and had been highly responsive to the concentrated demand of a hefty musical turnover within the space of a week. In short, they had done this church proud. This was no mean feat, given the sheer quantity and difficulty of anthems, psalms, hymns, canticles, responses and mass settings requiring careful preparation – all the repertoire had been executed to an exemplary standard throughout. Bravo, Choir!

Joyful Noise continued to thrive, which was entirely due to Kate Beare who continued to drive this choir forward with her warm energy and enthusiasm. Oli said he was indebted to Kate for her vision and hard work. She had established Joyful Noise 6 years previously, thereby constituting a significant part of his initial development plan for music at St Mary's. Kate had pioneered this project with kindness, creativity, and a spirituality that children simply loved and instinctively engaged with. Very sadly, Kate would be stepping down from Joyful Noise during late 2018. Oli expressed his massive thanks to Kate, saying that the choir would miss her badly.

The Junior Choir were running well and numbers were healthy at present, though there was a definite need to maintain low-level targeted schools-based recruitment. The Junior Choir continued to sing with the Adult Choir, and also on their own at bimonthly family services and sometimes on other occasions too, such as in town, at crib services and weddings. Recently a plan had been implemented whereby the Juniors sang at local churches roughly twice a year. Oli extended a word of thanks to Alison Lawrence, for very kindly coordinating some of the Junior Choir social activities, a less publicized, though vital and enriching aspect of their church life.

Choral Scholar numbers and commitment remained strong and numbers were good. Thanks were due to Sophie Faith in her absence, for her work in training the Choral Scholars and also assisting with the Junior Choir. The Adult Choir, he said, were versatile and in a good place in terms of confidence, with a “professional attitude”. He mentioned that the choir was short in the bass department, so an extra bass singer would be a very welcome addition.

Brass group numbers remained stable, with some comings and goings. Massive thanks were due, in his absence, to Graham Cottam. The group had played at a number of events and services during the year, and was still on the lookout for a tuba player. (He added that the instrument would be provided!)

Looking forward, Oli said the SMMA were thrilled to be re-establishing the organ scholarship which was to be called the “Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholarship”. This was a joint venture between St Mary’s PCC, the Wendens Ambo PCC and the SMMA. He was looking forward to giving it a massive drive and he hoped that there would be a concert to mark the scholarship once a scholar had been found.

Lastly, Oli extended his gratitude to a number of individuals: the SMMA, for their support and commitment in working tirelessly together to support the music in this church; Graham Cottam, for his continued dedication to the administration of the Brass Group; and Peter De Vile who continued to take care of St Mary’s magnificent pipe organ, a task that should never be underestimated. The instrument had to work hard and required ever-increasing maintenance. Oli further thanked the choir librarians Margaret Jacobs and Hilary Parry-Jones, who put in many hours ensuring that the sizeable and sometimes disorganized choir always had the right music. He said there were times in the year when up to four sung services in a week were sung – each with entirely different music. Oli next thanked Jeremy Allen for his continued support. As well as having innate accompaniment skills and a wonderfully dry sense of humour, the Assistant Organist was also a fountain of wisdom. Another person to be thanked was Bron Ferland, who gave a huge amount of time every week undertaking the considerable administrative tasks for the choirs. She remained fantastically supportive and dedicated to all that was undertaken here – without her dedication much would simply not be possible. Lastly, the Director of Music extended warm thanks to David Tomlinson, for remaining a hugely insightful and perceptive colleague and for all his fantastic support.

9 Elections: The positions to be elected were: Secretary (3-year term); two ordinary Committee Members (3-year term); and one ordinary Committee Member (2-year term). Karen Goddard was elected Secretary (proposed: Nell Bacon; seconded: Bron Ferland). Peter De Vile was elected Committee Member (3 years) (proposed: Karin Fischer-Buder; seconded: Sue Sylvester-Bradley) and so also was Gill Gibson (proposed: Karin Fischer-Buder; seconded: Steve Cass). Otilie Sefton was elected Committee Member (2 years) (proposed: Karin Fischer-Buder; seconded: Sue Sylvester-Bradley). [Bron clarified that the 2-year position had come up as Karen Goddard, elected in 2017 to a 3-year term as Committee Member, was now starting a new 3-year term as Secretary, with 2 years remaining of her post as ordinary Committee Member.]

10 President’s remarks: The Rector opened by expressing his thanks to Oli, Bron and the SMMA for all they did. He said he knew there was a lot of hard work that went on between services throughout the year,

so a huge thank you was due to all for all the work done to enrich our life together. The Choir was outstanding and exceptional, and matched up to the grandeur of the building, which was “cathedralesque”. He mentioned the large numbers of singers and separately the different sections of the choir – Joyful Noise, the Juniors and Choral Scholars and the Adult Choir – saying that this was special.

He next mentioned new developments, both in the choir and in the church’s life: the launching of the Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholarship, which, he said, was a great development. We all missed Michael and this was a great way of honouring his memory. The second development was the building project whose first phase, the servery, was already completed and running. The second phase was currently happening in the corner behind all the boards. The third phase would involve changes to the clergy vestry and choir vestry, including moving the tomb to a more appropriate setting. There would be adequate storage and more space for the singers – a “permanent home” would be provided for the choir.

David then turned to the topic of worship. We were always looking, in what we offered in worship, to be led and guided by the Spirit, he said; and the prayer at the beginning of a service reminded us of our dependence on God as we came to worship: “Oh Lord, open our lips.” So the Lord opened our lips and then we were able to sing God’s praises. In the same way, the Eucharistic prayer began with “The Lord is here; His spirit is with us,” and then we could give thanks. The Spirit was there to inspire and to lead our worship, and so we were always looking for a deeper dependence on the Spirit.

The other feature of worship that should be highlighted, which featured in the prayers at the beginning and the end of the worship, was the emphasis on being Eucharistic. He said we celebrated the Eucharist to be Eucharistic in our lives. Our lives together should be characterized by thanksgiving; and this event, the AGM, had involved much thanksgiving, offered to people for making their contribution. Likewise, every Sunday, we rounded off our worship with emphasis on thanksgiving.

This topic led him nicely on, in closing, to thank some individuals and echo thanks given already during the meeting: particularly to Bron, for her sheer hard work and immense dedication; to Jeremy, for being easy-going and lovely to work with, as well as diligent and highly skilled; to Kate, for her inspiration and all she had given; and to Oli, who was great to work with, a wonderful colleague and partner who was serious about his work but at the same time was fun – inspired and inspirational.