Leighton Buzzard Festival Singers Season Report 2024-2025

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President

Mr Philip Stopford

Vice-presidents

We are grateful to the following for their continued support

as Vice-presidents during the 2023-2024 season

Mr P Dickens

Mr N Woolford

Mr R Watts

Annual General Meeting

To be held on Monday 29th September 2025

at 7.30pm at Barnabas Church

Agenda

1. To receive apologies for absence

2. To approve the minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting held on 23rd September 2024

3. To consider any matters arising from the above meeting

4. To note the appointment of Stephanie Mann as Secretary

5. To receive the Annual Report of the Trustees

6. To approve the accounts for the year ending 31st May, 2025

7. To consider subscriptions for the season 2025-2026

8. To note the resignation of the following trustees

   i. Kathryn Emerson

   ii. Valerie Fielder

9. To confirm as continuing Trustees:

   i. Miriam Juviler

   ii. Leanne Morga

   iii. Ros Mennie

10. To consider identifying and electing further Trustees

11. To note the following, in addition to the Trustees, as members of the Management Committee:

i. Angela Fensom

ii. Kathy Guess

12. To encourage additional members to the choir to volunteer for service on the Management Committee.

Please consider whether you may wish to put your name forward.

13. To confirm the re-election of the current President and the Vice-president

14. To appoint a responsible person to examine the accounts for 2024-2025

15. Any other business

16. Date, time and place of next AGM

Minutes of the annual general meeting held at St Barnabas Church

23rd September 2024

The meeting, the AGM for the year 2022-23 was held during the weekly rehearsal in St Barnabas Church, Linslade, attended by 36 members of the Festival Singers with Paul Dickens, the Chairman, in the Chair.

1. To receive apologies for absence

   Apologies were received from Anneke Amsden, Anne Chapman, Jacki Hillier, Graeme Lockhart, Margaret Oliver, Judith Watts, and Richard Watts, Janet Wearmouth.

2. To approve the minutes of the 2022-2023 Annual General Meeting held on 4th September, 2023

   The Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th September, 2023 were approved unanimously.

3. To consider any matters arising

   There were no matters arising that were not included in the Agenda

4. To receive the Annual Reports of the Trustees

   The Annual Report of Trustees was received and no questions were raised.

5. To approve, subject to receipt of a satisfactory report from the independent examiner, the accounts for the year ending May 31st 2023

   It was reported that Mary Hardy, as independent examiner, had provided a satisfactory report and it was:

   Proposed by: Kathy Guess

   Seconded by: Janet Miller

   And passed unanimously that the accounts be approved

The meeting also noted their thanks to Ros for her work on the accounts and as treasurer through the year.

6. To propose that Roger Chapman, Paul Dickens, Kathryn Emerson, Valerie Fielder, Jean Lawson, Leanne Morgan and Richard Watts, all of whom have indicated their willingness to continue in post, be re-elected as Trustees

   Proposed by: David Bannister

   Seconded by: Bridget Watson

   And passed unanimously

7. To consider electing further Trustees

   Kathy Guess offered to be a Trustee and the meeting voted in favour unanimously

8. To confirm the re-election of the current President and the Vice-presidents

   Proposed by: Kathy Guess

   Seconded by: Jean Lawson

   And passed unanimously

9. To appoint a responsible person to examine the accounts for 2023-2024

   It was reported that Mary Hardy was willing again to act as the independent person responsible for examining the accounts.

   The offer was accepted unanimously

10. To make members aware of the draft safeguarding policy

    Members were made aware that LBFS now has a safeguarding policy, which will be available on the website

11. Any other business

    Valerie Fielder reported that Margaret Oliver is very ill in hospital.

    Ros Mennie (Treasurer) reminded members that subs are now due - £150 for the year or £75 per term. She noted that bank transfers are now preferred, especially after 18th October as there will no longer be a bank branch in Leighton Buzzard. The secretary will send the bank details around in an email.

Leanne (Social Coordinator) asked if anyone would be prepared to bring some biscuits or cookies to have with the welcome tea and coffee on 23rd September at Come and Sing – please let her know if so.

Leanne also noted that some members would be going to the pub after the rehearsal, and that all were invited as a chance to socialise.

Bridget Watson asked if everyone could sign up to do the refreshments at one rehearsal – if everyone does, we should each only need to do one per term.

Roger Chapman (Membership Secretary) requested that members bring their name badges to wear to rehearsals, or ask for new one.

Paul Dickens (Chairman) welcomed the new singers who were trying the choir this evening.

The meeting was closed by the chairman at 7.50pm.

LBFS Members 2025

Anneke Amsden
Neve Atkinson
Jo Ayres
Brian Bainbridge
Dan-Adrian Baluta
David Bannister
Jill Brace
Roger Chapman
Anne Chapman
Rhoda Crickmay
Paul Dickens
Madeline Dyson-Jest
Barbara Ellis
Helen Elves
Kathryn Emerson
Helen Ewles
Angela Fensom
Valerie Fielder
Edmund Flach
Dorothy Fletcher
Kathy Guess
Jaqueline (Jacki) Hillier
Sam Huston
Liz Inglis
Veronica Jackson
Sally Johnston
Miriam Juviler
Jean Lawson
Stuart Lay
Irene Leach
Anna Lloyd
Gracie Longworth
Pauline Lyon
Stephanie Mann
Sarah Marsh
Janet Miller
Tom Moore
Leanne Morgan
Peter Mundy
Christine Oliver
Margaret Oliver
Simon Pagden
Linda Plowright-Pepper
Saffron Pughe
John Ralph
Emma Rouse
Martin Shrubsole
Anne Smart
Faye Smithson
Philip Stopford
Gillian Tarbox
Clare Thompson
Philip Titcombe
Peter Wade
Bridget Watson
Judith Watts
Richard Watts
Janice Wearmouth

Rosalind Mennie

Trustees' Annual Report

2024-2025

Trustees holding office during the year

Paul Dickens
Kathryn Emerson
Valerie Fielder
Miriam Juviler
Ros Mennie
Leanne Morgan
Richard Watts

Members of the Management Committee

Angela Fensom
Kathy Guess
Jean Lawson

Musical Director's report

This year, we have largely kept the same format as the 2023-24 Season: two large-scale concerts, a lighter summer concert and a performance at the Leighton Linslade May Fayre.

Our Christmas Concert at St. Barnabas was based around Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* and two works by our President, Philip Stopford. It also featured shorter pieces by Cecilia McDowall, Lucy Walker and others. The excellent MK Brass joined us again for this concert, and our guest harpist, Anneke Hodnett, was exceptional.

I understand from the choir survey that the Britten was somewhat polarising; it was quite tricky, but I'm glad that we managed to perform it to a good standard. I still believe that the choir's repertoire should balance old favourites with more demanding works.

In the Spring, we performed Bach's *Christ lag in Todesbanden* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* alongside the Alina Orchestra. In this concert, I thought that the choir sang as well as it has during my time as MD, and the performance seemed to be well-received.

On a wider note, I was a little disappointed with the audience size – I misjudged how popular these pieces would be. If anyone has friends or family who came to the concert, then I would be interested to know what they made of it. I was also a little frustrated with the Alina Orchestra, who were expensive to hire in, and only one or two of them had looked at their music or the schedule ahead of the rehearsal, which made for very slow going at times.

Our performance at the Leighton Linslade May Fayre was good fun again, but I'm not convinced that we should continue to do it going forward. We only had about 20 singers at the rehearsal and performance, and I'm not sure that it does much to showcase the choir at its best. If anyone feels strongly about this either way, then please let me know!

In contrast, I was very pleased with the format of the summer concert again this year. It was a little tight learning the music in time (some of which was tricky), but I think it was a good exercise for the choir to sing some different repertoire. I also very much enjoyed the concert day itself, with many members of the choir, friends and family hanging around afterwards.

My preference would be not to do the May Fayre in 2026, and then to have another summer concert with a cathedral visit later on in the summer, perhaps in collaboration with another choir. Again, if you have strong feelings about this, then please let me know.

I’m also very pleased that we’ve had Tom playing for us since January: he’s been doing a great job at the keyboard, and I’m thrilled that he’s agreed to stay on with the choir for the foreseeable future.

Looking ahead to the 2025/26 Season, in response to feedback from the choir, I’ve put together a programme based around two sizeable works: Rossini’s *Petite messe solennelle* in the Autumn and then Karl Jenkins’ *The Armed Man* in the Spring.

We’re in a reasonable position, but more singers would always help: we need to try to get to around 60 members in the medium term. Please keep spreading the word and encouraging friends to join. And if you’d like a greater say in how we run things, do consider joining the committee: I know that members come from a wide variety of backgrounds, so it’s always good to get a range of opinions and experience in the room when we make key decisions.

Samuel Huston

Chairman’s report

We started our 2024/25 season in late November 2024 with lovely performances, in the first half, of Cecelia McDowall’s “A Fancy of Folksongs” and Britten’s well-known “A Ceremony of Carols”. The second half featured two works by our president, Philip Stopford, “Festival Benedicite” and “The Star of Kings”, both arranged for choir, harp, brass, organ. We also sang a number of carols, some with audience participation. A particular favourite of mine was a setting of “In the bleak mid-winter” by Lucy Walker, a friend of our Musical Director, Sam Huston. The church was full to overflowing and there were, deservedly, many complimentary comments from a knowledgeable audience.

Our Spring 2025 concert, at St Barnabas Linslade, featured a Bach Cantata (“Christ lag in Todes Banden”) and Purcell’s “Dido and Aeneas”. As our Musical Director, Sam Huston, said in pre-concert publicity it’s almost impossible to believe that these two very different works could have been composed only a few decades apart. Again, the choir sang superbly well under Sam’s excellent leadership, accompanied sensitively by members of our local Alina Orchestra.

We sang again in the High Street for May Day and our Summer concert on July 13 featured a selection of folksongs which went down well with a good-sized audience.

Our new accompanist, Becky Holt, worked with us until Christmas when she announced that she was leaving us, for perfectly understandable reasons. She was replaced by Tom Moore at the beginning of 2025 who has proved to be a great find. We thank Becky and Tom for their hard work.

Our membership has continued to increase (slightly) over the year, and we look forward to our next season with confidence that the choir continues to go from strength to strength.

With my eternal thanks to our Musical Director, Sam, and to the many who take on volunteer roles for the choir.

Paul Dickens

Chairman

Membership secretary's report

The singing membership of the Choir at the end of June 2025 was 55 (soprano 17, alto 25, tenor 7, bass 6), an increase of 3 over the previous 12 months. There has been a very welcome number of expressions of interest in the choir, most of which have translated into membership. However, recruitment is central to the future success, both musical and financial, of the choir, especially if we are to perform much of the standard choral repertoire and the Management Committee will continue to look for opportunities of promoting the choir and all members are encouraged to look out for potential recruits. During the Spring and Summer term, the choir noticed a reduced number of Tenor and Bass members.

Leanne Morgan

Treasurer's report for year 2024-2025

Unfortunately this year the choir's financial situation has taken a turn for the worse with a loss of £2610. We had sufficient money in the bank to cope with this, and could do so for another two years, but this money will not last indefinitely.

Although the summer 2024 concert was run at a loss (as there was no income) and the April concert had a loss of £1800, overall the concert deficits were almost covered by the grants we received. We are therefore very grateful for these grants (500 from Leighton Linslade Arts Forum, £1000 from Osborne, Morris and Morgan and £1000 from the Wixamtree Trust)

The financial loss, in my opinion comes from the rehearsals. In the past it has been a rule of thumb that subscriptions cover the cost of rehearsals. However the subscription has remained at £150 for at least the last ten years whereas the cost of running a single rehearsal has gone up from £170 to £230 (£250 with extra winter heating) since 2020. Whilst we had a steady increase in membership numbers this was not too much of a problem but now numbers have stagnated it is.

We do get a substantial amount of income from gift aid – this year it was £733. Most of the choir have filled in gift aid declarations. If any tax-payer has not done so, the form is available on the members page of the web site and should be filled in and handed to me.

This year shows how easy it is to go from a successful year with a good excess of income over expenditure to a bad one. The choir now needs to make an effort to turn this around again or the future of the choir will once again be in doubt.

Ros Mennie

LEIGHTON BUZZARD FESTIVAL SINGERS
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2025

	Note	2024-25 Unrestricted Funds	2024-25 Restricted Funds	2024-25 Total Funds	2023-24 Unrestricted Funds	2023-24 Restricted Funds	2023-24 Total Funds
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Incoming Resources							
Subscriptions and donations							
Subscriptions from Members		5,875	-	5,875	5,975	-	5,975
Donations		75	-	75	1,040	-	1,040
Fundraising Events		0	-	0	22	-	22
Grants and Gift Aid	2	3,234	-	3,234	3,048	-	3,048
Concert tickets, programmes & other receip		4,684	-	4,684	7,357	-	7,357
Music Hire		40	0	40	0	0	0
Total Incoming Resources		**13908**	**0**	**13908**	**17943**	**0**	**17943**
Resources Expended							
Hire of halls & rehearsal facilities		2,395	-	2,395	2,416	-	2,416
Prior Year Hall Hire written back		0	-	0	0	-	0
Music Hire and Purchase		334	-	334	554	-	554
Orchestra & Soloists		4,299	-	4,299	4,009	-	4,009
Musical Director		5,100	-	5,100	4,875	-	4,875
Rehearsal Accompanist		2,725	-	2,725	2,150	-	2,150
Insurance & Subscriptions		560	-	560	488	-	488
Sundry Concert Expenses	4	398	-	398	357	-	357
Postage & Printing		438	-	438	369	-	369
Fundraising Events		0	-	0	0	-	0
Other	3	269		269	1,141		1,141
Total Resources Expended		**16518**	**0**	**16518**	**16359**	**0**	**16359**
NET INCOMING RESOURCES		**-2610**	**0**	**-2610**	**1584**	**0**	**1584**

Note 1
Accounting Policies
The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the society's financial statements
Basis of accounts: The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention
Note 2
Grants were received from Wixamtree Foundation, Leighton-Linslade Arts Forum and OMM Solicitors
Note 3
Other expenditure includes depreciation; choir refreshments

GHTON BUZZARD FESTIVAL SI
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THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 20

Incoming Resources			
Subscriptions and donations			
Subscriptions from Members			
Donations			
Fundraising Events			
Grants and Gift Aid			
Concert tickets, programmes & o			
Music Hire			
Total Incoming Resources			
Resources Expended			
Hire of halls & rehearsal facilities			
Prior Year Hall Hire written back			
Music Hire and Purchase			
Orchestra & Soloists			
Musical Director			
Rehearsal Accompanist			
Insurance & Subscriptions			
Sundry Concert Expenses			
Postage & Printing			
Fundraising Events			
Other			
Total Resources Expended			
NET INCOMING RESOURCES			

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THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 202

Incoming Resources

Subscriptions and donations
Subscriptions from Members
Donations
Fundraising Events
Grants and Gift Aid
Concert tickets, programmes & o
Music Hire

Total Incoming Resources

Resources Expended

Hire of halls & rehearsal facilities
Prior Year Hall Hire written back
Music Hire and Purchase
Orchestra & Soloists
Musical Director
Rehearsal Accompanist
Insurance & Subscriptions
Sundry Concert Expenses
Postage & Printing
Fundraising Events
Other

Total Resources Expended

NET INCOMING RESOURCES

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THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 20

Incoming Resources

Subscriptions and donations
Subscriptions from Members
Donations
Fundraising Events
Grants and Gift Aid
Concert tickets, programmes & o
Music Hire

Total Incoming Resources

Resources Expended

Hire of halls & rehearsal facilities
Prior Year Hall Hire written back
Music Hire and Purchase
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Musical Director
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Other

Total Resources Expended

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LEIGHTON BUZZARD FESTIVAL SINGERS
BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MAY 2025

	Note	2025			**2024**		
CURRENT ASSETS							
Music Stocks valued by officers			**523**			**581**	
Debtors & Prepayments			**38**			**0**	
Cash in hand and at bank			**6,038**			**8,524**	
				6,699			**9,105**
CURRENT LIABILITIES							
Creditors & Accrued Income			**420**			**420**	
				-420			**-420**
ASSETS				**6,279**			**8,685**

GENERAL FUND	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	**Total**	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	**Total**
Balance 1 June 2023	8,790		**8,790**	7,195		**7,195**
Balance of Income over Expenditure	-2,611	0	**-2,611**	1,594	0	**1,594**
Balance 31st May 2024	6,179	0	**6,179**	8,790	0	**8,790**

GHTON BUZZARD FESTIVAL SINGE
LANCE SHEET
AT 31 MAY 2025

CURRENT ASSETS												
Music Stocks valued by officers												
Debtors & Prepayments												
Cash in hand and at bank												
CURRENT LIABILITIES												
Creditors & Accrued Income												
ASSETS												
GENERAL FUND												
Balance 1 June 2023												
Balance of Income over Expenditure												
Balance 31st May 2024												

GHTON BUZZARD FESTIVAL SINGE
LANCE SHEET
AT 31 MAY 2025

CURRENT ASSETS											
Music Stocks valued by officers											
Debtors & Prepayments											
Cash in hand and at bank											
CURRENT LIABILITIES											
Creditors & Accrued Income											
ASSETS											
GENERAL FUND											
Balance 1 June 2023											
Balance of Income over Expenditure											
Balance 31st May 2024											