

# *Amersham Festival Society*

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022**

**Meeting held on Zoom on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 4.00 pm**

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Jane Partridge thanked all the Friends who had logged on to attend the Zoom AGM. She would be handing over to Jonathan Pegler to chair the meeting as she was officially stepping down as Chairman of the Amersham Festival Society and he is taking over. Jonathan informed the Friends that the meeting was being recorded. Friends could participate by writing in the chat box (which Jane would be monitoring) where questions relating to items 9 or 10 could be raised. Apologies were received from Christine Norton.

### **2. Minutes of the 2021 AGM (previously circulated by email link)**

There was one change to be made to the minutes regarding item 7. Christine Norton and Gill Walley's names needed to be reversed; the Friends' scheme was managed by Gill Walley and Bursary scheme by Christine Norton. Jonathan Pegler asked the Friends if they were content to approve the minutes. Jon Wallis proposed that the minutes be adopted and this was seconded by Graham Bowler. It was confirmed by a show of hands. The minutes were accepted as correct and signed as an accurate record.

### **3. Matters arising not on the agenda**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Chairman's Annual Report (previously circulated by email link)**

Jane Partridge wanted to minute her thanks to the committee for their support throughout her chairmanship. In addition she wished to thank two individuals who had not served on the committee: Jon Wallis who did a wonderful job with emailing Friends and dealing with GDPR regulations and Patrick Hudgell who has run the Festival website for some time. She thanked Iain Ledingham for all the wonderful music over the last ten years. It had been a privilege to be the chairman and a thoroughly enjoyable experience. It is now time to introduce new people and trustees with new interests and ideas. Jonathan invited questions. On behalf of everyone present, Elizabeth Howe congratulated Jane on her extraordinary chairmanship. Jane had taken the Festival to a new level which requires great leadership. The Friends gave a round of applause to show their appreciation. Jonathan also thanked Jane and said she was a great pleasure to work with. She had also undertaken many activities which were not part of the chairman's role.

### **5. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts to June 30th 2022 (previously circulated by email link)**

Jonathan said that he was technically still Treasurer which was why he was reporting on last year's activities. There was nothing else to add to his previously circulated report. It had been a year which was spent recovering from the effects of Covid and the report shows that. However, we are fortunate in having a substantial amount of money available to us for use in the future and we are looking at ways to build on what we have already been doing. He invited questions. He proposed a motion to approve the accounts and to re-appoint Richard Bolton as our independent Examiner whom he publicly thanked. Gill Hudgell proposed the adoption of the accounts and Richard Bolton's re-appointment. This was seconded by Lynda Weiss. The Friends then voted unanimously with a show of hands to approve the accounts.

### **6. Artistic Director's Report (previously circulated by email link)**

Iain Ledingham expressed his thanks to the committee for the huge amount of work they have undertaken, particularly after Covid. He particularly wanted to thank Jane; it had been a huge pleasure to work alongside her and he thanked her for her guidance and enthusiasm and the charming way she organised the committee. Jonathan invited questions from the Friends but there were none.

## **7. Friends' Activities and Bursary Report (previously circulated by email link)**

Christine Norton who runs the bursary scheme is currently away but her report had been previously submitted. Jonathan said that in the current year the number of applicants had been lower than we would have wished. We have a small working group which is taking a look at how the bursary scheme can be broadened. He invited questions from the Friends regarding the scheme. Elizabeth Howe asked how the scheme is publicised. Jane replied that over the past few years we have had strong ties with Amersham music centre and the county music service and we have sent the information out to them. Until two years ago application forms have been available at the music centre for people to pick up on Saturday mornings but it seems that the scheme is not reaching where it needs to be. Christine is very aware of this. Elizabeth Howe suggested two organisations which could be approached; Chiltern Music Academy and Amersham Band. Jane said that both those organisations gave concerts in the last Festival and she did announce the scheme to the audience then. Elizabeth Howe suggested emailing both organisations as a reminder – Fred Harrison at Amersham Band and Kate Venvell at Chiltern Music Academy. This information would be passed on to Christine.

Monica Sado said that there did not seem to be a mention of singers on the flyers. Jane said that singers are included on the application form.

Lynda Weiss mentioned that we used to have young musicians during the April Festival, particularly if they were bursary holders and asked if this could happen again. Jonathan replied that in next year's Festival there will be two concerts with young musicians – one from Amersham Music Centre and the other is a group of young musicians who are based in Wendover. They gave a wonderful concert in aid of Ukraine and they will be performing for us. Over the past ten years we have broadened the young person's concert, partly due to Jane's background in education but we have discovered that we attract larger audiences with bigger groups performing. When we had Chiltern Music Academy they brought a large audience with them. We are hoping that at least one of our bursary holders will perform in one of our April concerts.

Jonathan said that the Friends' report had already been circulated and invited questions. He said that we are concerned how the Friends' scheme operates – how to attract new Friends and whether the scheme provides what Friends want. We are aware that the reception in the church rooms which followed the October concert (upstairs, late at night) for practical reasons is probably not something that most Friends now like to go to. He asked whether there were any suggestions for the small group which is meeting to look at the Friends' scheme. Monica Sado asked if it would be possible to hold the reception after the 4.00 concert as it would suit those who don't like coming out at night. Jonathan said that this is already being considered and is a good idea. Lynda Weiss agreed but thought it was a shame that we no longer have the AGM in St Mary's, followed by a short concert and reception. Jonathan replied that in recent years fewer and fewer people had been attending and during Covid there was no alternative to having a Zoom AGM. It can be relatively expensive to hold an 'in person' AGM as we have to hire the church for the evening. Graham Bowler suggested hosting an on-line, pre-recorded concert on Zoom (perhaps with Iain accompanying a young artist) following the AGM. Lynda remarked that for people on their own, getting together with other people is very important. Jonathan appreciated these comments and said that they will all be taken into account when the group meets to discuss the scheme. All the Friends will be canvassed for their suggestions.

## **8. Election of Officers and Committee for 2021/2022**

Jonathan announced that this is the point in the meeting when Jane Partridge would formally stand down as Chairman. According to our constitution we are only required to re-appoint or appoint trustees but traditionally we have voted on the re-appointment of the committee. Jane is the only current member of the committee and trustee standing down. The trustees have appointed two new trustees this year, Nick Kirkbride and Claire Jenkin. Under the constitution they are the two trustees who will need to be re-elected formally at the AGM. Jane Partridge proposed and Tony Burkhardt seconded the re-appointment of the committee and Nick and Claire as trustees. This was unanimously agreed by a show of hands. Earlier in the year we appointed a third new trustee (Stephen Box) but for personal reasons he was unable to stay for more than two months. We are hoping that we will be able to welcome him back in the future.

## **9. Discussion and questions from the floor**

There were no more questions from the floor.

## **10. Any other business**

Jon Wallis had to leave the meeting.

Nick Kirkbride said that as Treasurer it was a privilege to inherit such well-organised files.

Jonathan said with Nick and Claire and the existing team of trustees we now have a lot of expertise and it is therefore a good time to be looking at how we do things in the future. The main strands to our charitable activity are the bursary scheme supporting young musicians; the Festival that happens in April (similar to others around the country) and thirdly our wonderful orchestra and the concerts which Iain is able to provide in the winter and as part of the Festival. We are looking at how we use our financial resources to promote these in the coming years and further into the future and how we should organise ourselves in due course to support what we think we should be doing. This will require resources, not in the form of money but people willing to help.

Graham Bowler asked whether there was a clear trend with audience numbers. Jonathan replied that audience numbers are declining, not only for orchestral concerts but also for the jazz concert. However, last year was probably not typical as people were still a little nervous about coming out to concerts and large gatherings. When Jonathan first became treasurer audiences were over 300 in St Mary's at the New Year concert and now it is around 200-220 split over the two concerts. Audience numbers have been lower at the more recent concerts than in previous years. Jane said the other trend is that people book much more last minute than in the past which seems to have occurred since the pandemic. Jonathan added that the orchestra and the concerts Iain produces are very unusual; having a regular orchestra of that quality is not something which happens elsewhere. We need to look at how we make something of this – perhaps through trying to attract critics from London. One of our working groups is looking at publicity and Lesley Mathieson is very much involved in this. We tried advertising on social media last year. Whilst raising our on-line presence it does not seem to have added much to our audience numbers. In retrospect, it appears that the sort of people who attend our orchestral concerts are not very likely to engage with social media. However, social media may have a part to play in publicity for the April Festival. We do know that we need to try and improve attendance figures.

Jonathan concluded by thanking everyone for attending and those people working behind the scenes: the concert ushers, Hilary Thomas and Jacqueline Skepper who run the Box Office, and Graham Bowler for his meticulous organisation of all the technical aspects of this meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.38