



Registered Charity No. 1051501

A Member's Handbook

**What it means to be a member of
Wellington Choral Society**

This Members' Handbook contains information about WCS, what we are, what we do, how we achieve our goals and how all members can play their part as well as the process of members joining the choir, rehearsals, concert etiquette, and the role of Voice Reps. This document forms the Rules and Regulations of the Society as allowed by our Constitution. Further information may be added and the Handbook will be regularly updated. We do hope you find it useful.

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1.1 Overview of the Society

Welcome to Wellington Choral Society

We are a friendly, non-auditioned choir of around eighty to ninety members incorporating a wide range of ages and abilities. We focus on largely church based choral singing with a repertoire ranging from the baroque and classical to the present day.

Our Values

- We are a local choir who welcome singers from a wide range of abilities who enjoy singing choral music.
- We offer a welcoming, friendly and enjoyable environment where we can sing together and also support other musical and charitable activities.
- We expect all choir members to attend as many of the weekly rehearsals as possible in order to be well prepared so we can provide concerts of a high standard. To aid this we will recommend rehearsal aids to help people with practice between rehearsals.

The main events

Our singing season commences in early September and generally ends in late March/early April. We aim to produce two main concerts in November and March, with professional orchestral accompaniment and soloists. Our main concerts currently take place in St John the Baptist Church in Wellington. We organise Workshops and Come and Sing events from time to time.

When and where?

We typically have ten rehearsals per main concert and these take place in Wellington Methodist Church from 7:30 to 9:30pm on Wednesday evenings. Further details and a map can be found on our website: www.wellingtonchoralsociety.org.uk There is normally a 15 minute refreshment break operated on a rota basis by members – please sign up. Additional rehearsals may be held prior to a concert at the discretion of the Musical Director.

How much?

Our current subscription rate can be found at Appendix A and on the website. This may be subject to change annually. Subscriptions are for the year (September to March), payable not later than 4 weeks from start of term. Payment of subscriptions by two instalments at the beginning of each term can be requested. Members joining in January pay for one term. Membership for under-19s is free! Please try and Gift Aid if at all possible – forms available from the Treasurer. Subscriptions may be reduced or waived in special circumstances, but there is no reduction by reason only that the member does not take part in the rehearsals or concerts. If you have problems in paying or you are off sick for a considerable time, please speak to the Chair or the Treasurer in confidence and see our Hardship Statement as part of our Equal Opportunities Policy.

How to pay

Please pay on time. You are strongly encouraged to pay your subscription by bank transfer. This is the most efficient payment method as it reduces our bank charges, reduces work for the Treasurer and the number of trips that have to be made to the bank.

Bank details: Account Name: Wellington Choral Society Sort Code: 40-46-05 Account No:21229664

Reference: SUBS Your Initial & Surname eg SUBS J Smith

Please email Treasurer when paid stating whether for 1 or 2 terms and/or 1 or more people + names.

Payment may also be made by cheque or cash.

Communication

General: WCS will always aim to use email to communicate with members. Items relating specifically to WCS will be marked as "Please Read"; all others as "For Interest". If email is impractical, members should advise the Secretary of how they wish to be contacted. Failure to notify any changes, especially to email addresses, will cause problems in our attempts to keep you informed. As a registered charity we have to keep available for members an up-to-date list of members and their addresses. Data Protection law means in practice that only names are made available. We never pass on your details to other organisations.

Comments and Suggestions: are always welcome; please share them with your Voice Rep or any Committee Member – full details of these available at Appendix A and on the website.

Membership

begins once the form is completed and the subscription is paid. Members will be issued with a Membership Card. If members wish to leave the Society they should inform the Secretary in writing (email acceptable) stating whether they wish to continue to be informed of events and concerts. Anyone who misses a term for which they have not paid will be deemed to have left the Society and be required to complete a new Membership form if they later return. Membership is terminated if subscriptions are not paid before the term's Concert. Hardship – see Policy on website. Membership can be terminated by the Trustees – see Clause 4.4 of Constitution for full details.

Complaints

You can view a copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure on the website or in the folder which is available at every rehearsal – ask the Secretary.

1.2 How the Society Operates and how you can play your part

This section of the Handbook gives you some background information about the organisation and running of the choir. You will see that there are lots of ways you can get involved, help the choir function, get to know your fellow singers better and feel part of a very friendly community. We do hope this gives you an understanding of the Society and some of the work involved. Perhaps you will see something here that you feel you can get involved with.

Wellington Choral Society needs volunteers; new faces are always welcome and our success depends on everyone playing their part.

Website

Full of useful information: www.wellingtonchoralsociety.org.uk this is updated regularly and we encourage members to visit the site for further information and to check details. We also have a Twitter account: @Wellychoral1

Constitution

Wellington Choral Society is a registered charity (Registered Charity No. 1051501) and is governed by a constitution amended in May 2017. Ultimate responsibility for the Society's governance lies with the Committee who all have the functions and duties of Charity Trustees as laid down by the Charity Commission.

Musical director

The Musical Director (MD) is a paid position, appointed by the Committee. His role is to guide and tutor the choir to reach the highest possible musical standards. He takes weekly rehearsals of the choir and conducts performances. In consultation with the Committee, he chooses the musical programmes and appoints the soloists, musicians and other performers for concerts and workshops. The MD is not a member of the Committee but is invited to attend as necessary. Details of our current MD can be found at Appendix A and biographical details are available on the website.

Accompanist

Is a vital part of the WCS team and together with the MD ensures that rehearsals run as smoothly as possible. Appendix A gives the name of our current Accompanist and our website gives biographical details. The Accompanist is paid for their services and is not a member of the Committee.

Committee

The management of the Society is delegated to the Committee, whose members are elected at an AGM and are all Trustees of the charity Wellington Choral Society. Committee members are responsible for planning and reviewing events; raising and spending money; discussing choice of music for our concerts; planning social events and making decisions that arise from time to time. Our MD may attend some Committee meetings but is not a member of the Committee. Below are some notes on some of our Committee roles. Perhaps you could volunteer to join one of the small teams or take over a job when it becomes vacant. Please see the website for current vacancies.

Publicity: the Publicity Team deals with advertising our concerts with press releases, posters and fliers. They produce the copy for all the various promotions, write press releases and write notes for the concert programmes. The team are always on the lookout for ways to advertise our concerts and are keen to hear about possible sponsors. They also advertise recruitment drives and workshops and keep our website up-to-date. All this work helps to ensure we maintain a vibrant profile and attract good audiences to all our concerts.

Programme editor: the Editor prepares or co-ordinates the content of the concert programmes: what we are singing; translations of what we are singing; notes about the music and artists; up-to-date information about the choir; acknowledgement of sponsorship; notice of future concerts, and advertisements.

Concert Secretary: leads the team of real heroes who prepare our concert venues. The staging is robust and sturdy and it takes a team to unload the trailer, assemble it in the church and then, after the concert dismantle it and load

the trailer and take it back to storage. In addition to the stage building, there are always plenty of other essential jobs at concert time and we always need lots of volunteers to help. Do take the opportunity to join in the fun of preparing and clearing up! We always put out a call for help and offer a sign-up sheet a couple of weeks before each concert. Many hands ...

Ticket sales are co-ordinated by the Concert Secretary and/or Secretary for concerts. Tickets are sold directly, on-line via the WCS website and by local ticket offices– see Appendix A for details. Most of our tickets are sold through members of WCS and therefore it is important that we all play our part. Taking your share of the responsibility of selling tickets is really important (see also below). Tickets for Social events are sold by the Social Liaison.

Librarian: orders all the musical scores after discussion with the MD, the Chair and the committee; organises the hiring of scores and the return of hired scores. This involves forward planning and patience. Maybe you could offer help issuing new scores when we start a new work at the beginning of each term. This is always quite a hectic evening. Most importantly, ensure you return your hired scores after erasing all your markings. Late returns cost the Society money so be sure to return on time.

1.3 What you can tell a prospective new member

Have you got what it takes?

Don't worry. Unlike some societies, we do not require an audition, although an ability to read music is helpful. You should also be prepared to commit to at least 80% of rehearsals; to practising at home every week between choir practices; to strive to improve your singing and to have fun. Come along, sing and enjoy yourself. You will find us to be a friendly bunch. All you really need is a joy for the music. If you know someone who would like to join, please ask them to contact the Secretary

New Members: the **Secretary** plays a crucial role as s/he is often the first person in the Society a potential member speaks to. All who wish to join WCS need to contact the Secretary. We are always in the business of recruiting tenor and bass singers in order to build a balanced choir. If you have friends who are interested in joining, especially men or female tenors, do encourage them to contact the Secretary.

Non-Committee

Minute Secretary: Attends Committee Meetings and records the discussion and decisions of the meeting; types up the Minutes and passes to the Secretary/Chair for accuracy before on-ward transmission to all Trustees.

Voice Reps (VRs): each vocal section has one representative whose task is to relay the ideas and comments from singers in their section to the committee and/or to the MD. From time to time the VRs may seek opinions on a specific topic and report back to the committee. Please be sure to respond to their requests. VPs are crucial in keeping good communications going within the choir and are the first port of call for queries.

Newsletter Editor: elicits, edits and produces a yearly, fun newsletter for the choir, past and present and friends of WCS. A short Christmas version is also issued. Please consider providing material, drawings, cartoons, jokes, articles or photographs.

Other jobs for us all

Preparing for the refreshment break on a rota basis, checking that the hall, kitchen and Church are left clean and tidy, helping with the washing up at the break, ensuring lights are off are also jobs that are done every week. As we approach concerts, help is needed to distribute leaflets, put up posters and most importantly, to sell tickets. We also provide refreshments at workshops. Perhaps you could help with this. **There are always lots of tasks to be done and everyone is expected to contribute.**

Selling Tickets: Every concert costs WCS money but ticket sales do not cover the full cost of putting on concerts. This is also true for large professional music makers in well-known venues. It is important that we all play our part in selling as many tickets as possible. If you like to sing in concerts, and of course we all do, then you are expected to take your share of the responsibility of selling tickets. It is important that every choir member sells at least 2 tickets. A good way to do this is to make sure your friends, relatives, work colleagues and neighbours know the date of our concerts well in advance.

All dates are on our website and published in the Summer Newsletter so you can give your friends and relatives plenty of notice of all concerts. It is up to you to enthuse about the music and invite friends and family to write the dates in their diaries and reserve a ticket. We have had concerts that have been a sell-out. It would be wonderful if this could always be the case!

Advertisements: We are always grateful to local businesses and others who support us by advertising in our concert programmes. We can all help by asking suitable friends and acquaintances if they might advertise their businesses in our programme. The programme editor and the publicity team have the job of contacting and following up potential advertisers on behalf of WCS.

Social Events: From time to time we have social events. All the events require a team of helpers to ensure that everything goes with a swing. If you have an idea for a social event or fundraising, do talk to your voice rep or any member of the Committee. Do join in our social events and help build a truly collegiate atmosphere.

Other Support: neither our ticket sales nor our annual subscription, on their own, cover the cost of our concerts and we are always looking for local business or professionals to support the choir. If you have an idea, talk to a member of the Committee about possibilities

1.4 Rehearsal Etiquette

The purpose of each rehearsal is to create the best possible musical sound from the choir as a whole. Whilst it is necessary for the majority of members to hear their individual part played to them during rehearsal this then diminishes the time available to sing together as a choir. It is, therefore, in the interests of the Society that each member dedicates time at home to learn their musical line in the same manner that a member of a Dramatic Society would spend time away from rehearsals learning their lines. The Members' page on the website directs members to recordings and rehearsal aids. Having a recording of the work will speed up the learning process; having the knowledge of what the choir is aiming to achieve is very powerful!

Before each rehearsal starts

- Please sign the Voice Registers as this ensures: we have a full record of those present for Health and Safety purposes; an accurate record of attendance **and** completing ASAP the CONCERT date box to indicate your Intention to Sing ensures: your name appears in the concert programme and we can plan the staging seating
- Please sort out music, check notices and collect any handouts on arrival to help speed up administrative matters.
- Try to position yourself so that you can face the conductor without turning your head. It is good to get used to sitting in different parts of the section and next to different people!
- Always bring and use a pencil (*not pen*) and an eraser to mark up your score.
- Mobile phones must be off or on silent mode.
- Rehearsals start promptly at 7.30pm. Please arrive in good time to deal with business and socialising in advance and be in your seat by 7.29 at the latest in time for the warm up!

During each rehearsal

- There is a warm-up at the beginning of each rehearsal. This incorporates elements of vocal technique to encourage healthy singing.
- Please do not talk unless to ask the Musical Director a question about the music. If the conductor is dealing with a particular section of the choir, other sections should pay attention and be aware of what is being rehearsed and the musical points arising from it.
- It is very important to make (2B) pencil markings in your score to remind you of all the conductor's directions. You should mark in where you are told to breathe (or not), changes to printed dynamics, indications as to the colour of sound required, and helpful tips about vocal technique for specific passages.
- The break will be between 10 and 15 minutes, which includes choir notices, chatting and anything not done before the rehearsal. If you have any non-WCS matters you would like to bring to the attention to the choir, you are welcome to hand out information at the end of the rehearsal but please do not use the break – there is simply not enough time!

After the rehearsal

- Members occasionally go to a local pub – the Iron Duke in the High St. Listen out for an announcement. Don't be shy –do join us – you will be sure of a warm welcome!

Before the next rehearsal

- You will be told what will be covered at the next rehearsal and are expected to spend time on practice and preparation. These details will also be placed on the website. Our aim above all is to sing as well as we can - you will find the music is much more 'within you' and rehearsals are more productive and enjoyable if you put in some practice time. Should you miss a rehearsal it is your responsibility to catch-up.
- People learn at different rates but you should probably allow for, on average, at least one hour practice a week. It is important that you try to practise regularly.

- We learn and grow together so consistent attendance is important. Please contact the Secretary if you know there is a rehearsal you cannot attend/and or mark the Register. If you have missed more than 20% of rehearsals in a term you may wish to consider whether you should take part in the Concert unless you've performed the work before.
- Feel free to contact a Committee Member or the Musical Director if you have any queries or feedback on anything related to the music - we welcome your feedback!

1.5 Concert Etiquette

Concert etiquette is important. Our appearance and behaviour at a concert creates a powerful impression.

It is important to look and act as professional as we actually are – and it's easy, too!

Standard dress codes

- Concert dress for men consists of:
Dinner jacket with appropriate trousers, white dress shirt and black bow tie, black socks, black shoes
- Concert dress for women consists of a black outfit:
either a top and smart trousers or long skirt or full-length dress, black hosiery and shoes. Tops and dresses should have sleeves and look smart, discreet and professional. Please, not too much flesh or 'bling' on show. A discreet, dark-coloured handbag may be taken on stage but this should be as small as possible. There is a danger of a bag slipping between the staging so do try to manage without. Our Society Scarf will be handed to you before the concert by the Wardrobe Mistress who will explain how it is to be worn
- Please stick to the code and ask your voice rep if you are uncertain. If you don't have an item, discuss with your voice rep – it might be possible to borrow it.

Folders

- Unless told otherwise, for a concert your music should be in a black folder or suitably wrapped in black. You will be reminded of the need for this as a concert comes up.

Entering and leaving the stage

- The choir will line up off stage and then file onto the platform, row by row, as directed. When in place you should hold your folders close to your chest. Members in each row should stand until the whole choir is on stage, then all sit down together. The choir stands and opens its folders as the conductor comes onto the stage. At the end of the concert, the choir will sit down as the conductor leaves the stage. The procedure for coming onto the stage is reversed for leaving. Be prepared for the conductor to ask the choir to stand for the curtain calls.
- Don't worry! Entering and leaving and sitting and standing during the performance will be covered at the final rehearsal.

While on stage

- Please don't: talk, fidget, wave to friends and relatives in the audience, eat or drink (this includes water – professional singers manage without water on stage – so should we), or rub out your pencil markings!
- Be sure not to flick over to the next page at the end of a movement, or be tempted to turn pages unnecessarily. Do not move until the conductor lowers his hands. You can be seen!
- The choir should stand to acknowledge applause but only applaud orchestra, soloists etc. when seated.

Interval

- During the interval, members may socialise with the audience but should return in good time to line up for the second half of the concert – there is often a bell.

Music

- If you have hired music you will be told as a concert approaches what the arrangements are for returning it. Please return hired music on time and with all markings removed, otherwise WCS is charged for its loss.

Above all

- Relax, enjoy it, keep your eyes fixed on the conductor and give it your all! The audience has paid to come and see a performance and we owe it to them and to ourselves to deliver one. And we all love singing!

1.6 Policies

The Trustees will endeavour to ensure that we provide relevant policies on all matters considered legally required and any others that we deem to be advantageous to members or WCS.

A full list of current Policies can be found at Appendix A.

Full copies are held on our website and in Part Four of the Operations Manual. If you are unable to access the internet, then a copy can always be viewed at rehearsals or one can be requested from the Secretary.

Trustees

Appointment of: Clause 7 Sub clauses (1) and (2): of the WCS Constitution sets out that Members must elect trustees at an AGM and allows for two possible approaches for electing officers.

Either:

- a) the membership may appoint someone directly to an officer role on the committee – i.e. the membership elect a chair, treasurer etc. (we can have as many officers as we wish)

Or:

- b) the membership appoint committee members – the committee then decide which committee members will fill which officer roles

But:

- c) A combination of both could be used – i.e. members elect the chair (for example) directly but other officer roles are decided by the committee from those elected to the committee.

The Trustees of WCS have decided to operate as of c) above – meaning that members will elect some specific officer posts but that other posts can be decided by the elected Committee. This gives the Committee the greatest flexibility.

NB Any co-opted Trustee who joins the Committee during the year has to stand for election at the AGM

Terms of Office: each Trustee is appointed for a three-year-term of office. The Trustees have decided that the maximum number of terms of office a Trustee may serve is three. At the end of their three-year term of office a Trustee may stand for re-election (subject to the maximum term rule) in the normal way.

Finance

Clause 13 Sub clause (3) of the Constitution reflects charity law requirements that income and property of the charity must be applied solely towards promoting the objects as detailed in Clause 2 (objects) and not to benefit the members and trustees. The trustees have a duty to ensure that the funds are used correctly and applied in accordance with the principle.

Property

WCS purchased its own (used) staging in Spring 2017 and with reserves and local Grants has been able to finance alterations suitable for its concert venue. The next stage of development will be the purchase of stadium seats. We currently have a buy/lease arrangement for a box trailer for storage/transport and there is a hope that we will be able to hire out this equipment to other societies in the future. WCS also owns 100 pashmina style scarves for use by the female members of the Society at Concerts.