

## FEDERATION OF RECORDED MUSIC SOCIETIES.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at The Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare, on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2019.

Michael Bass, Chairman of Weston-super-Mare Music Appreciation Society, gave a warm welcome to the Chairman, committee, delegates and friends who had travelled from near and far for the 83<sup>rd</sup> AGM. He said it was an honour to host this AGM in Weston society's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.

1. Chairman Allan Child welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. He said the Minutes Secretary, Mick Birchall, was unwell, and that Dianne Board from Weston had agreed to stand in. He ascertained from the Secretary that the meeting was quorate, 15 affiliates being represented, 14 in person and 1 by proxy.
2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** The Minutes Secretary reported that apologies had been received from the following committee members: Mick Birchall, Ron and Denise Beech; and a number of affiliates: Old Bridge Music Club, Godalming, Durham, Ramsbottom, West Wickham, Cromer, Norwich, Rees Page, Wolverhampton, Bognor Regis and Sheffield.
3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM** at Ilkley had been circulated to all affiliates. They were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record.
4. **MATTERS ARISING.** There were no matters arising.
5. **CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW.** Allan Child, (Jubilee Music Circle, Derby) reported that it had been an interesting year for the Federation. It was the first year for the new Secretary, Adele Wills, who had kept the committee informed, in order and had been very well organised. She had done a very good job succeeding Jim Bostwick. He said there hadn't been an issue of The Bulletin and the committee had been considering what to do after Paul Astell stepped down. They had reviewed The Bulletin as to whether it should continue in its original format. There had been difficulty with advertising and with revenue dropping it was no longer viable. The FRMS needed to keep in touch and two newsletters had been produced in January and September, and the committee was grateful to Simon Rawlings for taking on its production. It relied on contributions from societies and committee members. The newsletter had generally been welcomed. The Chairman concluded by congratulating Weston-super-Mare on their 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
6. **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND TREASURER'S REPORT.** Paul Corfield Godfrey said that PRS had a new system in place which relied on accurate figures being reported. This was not currently the case. He had asked the PRS to hold off until we had the current census report back, when it was anticipated that the amount paid by the FRMS would fall. It would appear that membership numbers have been in decline, although this seems to have halted. The FRMS management of the Ilkley music weekend was a risk but it was affordable, and he urged people to attend if they could.  
He paid tribute to the work of societies' Treasurers, and apologised if he was not always available for 'phone calls as he was busy composing. He thanked all of them for putting up with him, but would be grateful if anyone would like to take over as he has been seeking a replacement for some time. The books were not yet back from the auditors. Acceptance of his report was proposed by Jim Bostwick and seconded by George Steele. The Chairman thanked him for his report.
7. **SECRETARY'S REPORT.** Adele Wills said it was hard to believe that it had been two years ago that she started her year of shadowing Jim Bostwick, and a whole year since she actually had taken on the role. Already it was her first AGM!  
She thanked a number of people for their help and support during the first year and added

that any errors were exclusively her own. Picking up the reins from Jim Bostwick had been made much simpler by the fact that everything had been left in such pristine condition and it had made for a very smooth handover. Secondly thanks were due to her fellow committee members who had been very patient with her constant questions. Their four committee meetings a year at the Brunswick Inn in Derby had been interesting and enjoyable. Finally she was grateful that Weston-super-Mare Music Appreciation Society had responded with enthusiasm to her idea of hosting the AGM. Not only was it a fantastic setting but was only a 30 minute drive from her home so the organisational work for her first time had been much easier. She gave a huge thanks to the Weston committee – Chairman Michael Bass, Secretary Dianne Board, Edie Vernon Treasurer, and Simon Rawlings who had given his support at every stage and also serves on the national committee. It was the 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary for Weston and she had been honoured to have been involved in those celebrations.

The main issues of the year had been:

- the number of society closures had continued to increase, the reasons usually being very similar – an ageing membership, the inability to fill committee roles, and dwindling finances. Since taking over she had received notification of eight closures as well as the end of regional groups in Surrey, and Yorkshire and the North West. They had had only one application for affiliation, in Southwold. The closure of the Yorkshire and North West group could have meant the end of the Ilkley Music Weekend had this not been brought under Federation auspices. However, the Treasurer had reported encouraging signs in terms of membership numbers for those societies that continue to operate, so we could only hope that the decline in societies will start to slow. There had been many discussions about this at national committee level drawing a number of conclusions: there is a massive cultural change in the way people are accessing music; the type of music being consumed has changed; and, ironically, our social media world has actually created less group sociability and more individual isolation. All of those reasons seemed to strike at the very foundations of our Federation, particularly the wonderful camaraderie of shared listening. Or, perhaps we have just been eclipsed by the success of the U3A movement? The U3A music advisor, Roderick Winfield, would be at dinner, and we know that music groups within that movement are thriving. It was some consolation to know that music groups such as that continued to exist.
- The decline in affiliated societies was also reflected in the Federation's own national committee. As at the AGM, there are four committee vacancies and the FRMS remains unable to recruit a Bulletin Editor. The Bulletin has been replaced with a Newsletter which was co-ordinated by Simon Rawlings. The first of the new model newsletters had been sent out in September and there had been many positive comments. The newsletter had given us an opportunity to respond to questions and queries that arose from societies: so, for instance, the last issue had given detailed advice on electrical PA Testing and the vexed question of streaming services. Given our current resources, that was the best we could offer, and, whilst many regretted the loss of the Bulletin, the new look newsletter was a worthy replacement. Three of the main officer posts - Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer - remained stable (although the Treasurer has indicated a desire to step down), but Ron Beech had decided to resign as Vice Chairman and his role would now be taken by George Steele who was also our Webmaster. With four vacancies remaining, there was little slack on the national committee. If any of the delegates could help, or know of anyone who might be interested, she urged them to get in touch for an informal discussion.

- Officially, Mrs Wills could report that all the duly signed and supported Nominations for Officers and Committee to serve in 2019/2020 were available for inspection.
- the General Data Protection Regulation continued to take up time and energy. Delegates may recall that the Federation was legally obliged to seek permission from its affiliates to hold information about them - just as affiliate societies should seek permission from their own members. We had responded to the new Regulation by sending out consent forms for affiliates to sign and return as well as questions about our use of information on the Federation website. Following our first mailing, when Jim was still Secretary, we had had something like a 50% return, so the recent AGM mailing had provided an opportunity to send reminders to societies that hadn't yet responded. This had been very successful and we were now much closer to a 100% return rate. She thanked everyone who had responded and helped with what had been somewhat of a thankless task. One society had responded with a plea for less bureaucracy, a plea for which she had great sympathy, but we know that we operate within a legal framework that imposed many duties on the committee - not only data protection, but health and safety, insurance and performance rights - and she reassured everyone that the committee worked hard to keep any bureaucracy to a minimum.
- The Secretary concluded by saying that the real pleasure of having been Secretary that year had been her personal interactions with so many individual societies. She was in the fortunate position of being a member of two groups: her closest, which was Street and Glastonbury, as well as the Weston-super-Mare Group. Recently she had enjoyed a wonderful evening at the Bradford-on-Avon society, and was looking forward to visiting Ilminster next year. She had previously been a member of groups in Solihull and Southport. This year we wanted to spend some time celebrating our individual societies through a new website initiative being co-ordinated by Webmaster George Steele. The idea was to create a bi-monthly focus on an individual society and to post something about that society's history on the website. George had started the ball rolling with his own society, Rochdale, and we hoped to have more volunteers thereafter. We also wanted to post information about important anniversaries on the website, something that would previously have been published in The Bulletin. All this served to remind us of the importance and value of our Federation. Every evening that she had attended had given similar benefits: the opportunity to listen properly to music in a relaxed and comfortable environment without interruption; reminders of pieces loved; introductions to new pieces; an open-minded and intellectual curiosity about music in all its forms; interesting discussions and recommendations; like-minded companionship; refreshments that usually involve some form of cake. We must all work together to ensure that this is not lost.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for her work and a comprehensive report.

8. **CONFIRMATION OF THE COMMITTEE.** Nominations had been received as follows:

- Allan Child Chairman
- George Steele Vice-Chairman and Webmaster
- Adele Wills Secretary
- Paul Corfield Godfrey Treasurer
- Mick Birchall Minutes Secretary
- Committee members: Ron Mitchell, Simon Rawlings and David Wherrell.

The election of the committee for 2019/2020 was proposed by Michael Bass, seconded by Tony Baines and unanimously approved.

This left four vacancies on the committee and the Chairman commented that the FRMS would appreciate some new blood.

The President of the FRMS was Professor Julian Lloyd Webber, and Vice Presidents were Tony Baines and John Davies. The latter is unwell and had sent his best wishes.

Best wishes and thanks were sent to committee members resigning this year: Philip Ashton and Ron and Denise Beech.

**9. APPROVAL OF THE ACCOUNT EXAMINERS.** The Treasurer, Paul Corfield Godfrey, reported that Ruth Williams and David Brooke were willing to serve and suitably qualified. Their reappointment was unanimously approved.

10. There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 14.39.