

# **ARNSIDE CHORAL SOCIETY**

## **MEMBER'S HANDBOOK**

### **Welcome**

Thank you for choosing Arnside Choral Society – we are delighted to welcome you, and will try to do everything possible to ensure that you have a happy and successful time with us. This handbook is designed to answer some of the questions you may have, and provide an insight into how the choir operates, the standards we aim to achieve, our expectations of you, and your commitment to the Society.

Becoming a member of ACS brings exciting opportunities and responsibilities. I hope together we can enjoy success, fun, friendship and fulfilment in the future.

Best wishes

Ian Allan  
MUSIC DIRECTOR

### **Handbook Contents**

#### **Things you will need to know**

1. Background
2. Rehearsals
3. Attendance
4. Part Representatives
5. Parking
6. Smoking
7. Mobile Phones
8. Music
9. Concerts & Events
10. Concert Dress
11. Management
12. Code of Conduct
13. Newsletter
14. Website
15. Comments & Suggestions

#### **Things you may need to know**

16. Membership
17. Membership Fees
18. Fundraising
19. Paid Professionals
20. Loss, Injury or Damage
21. Equal Opportunities
22. Data Protection Act
23. Disciplinary Procedure
24. Complaints Policy & Procedure
25. Emergency Evacuation Procedure
26. Constitution and Business Plan

## **1. Background**

Arnside Choral Society is a member of Making Music and a Registered Charity (No. 1049848). It was formed over 50 years ago and has established an excellent reputation for its standards of choral singing. The choir's 50+ members enjoy tackling exciting and ambitious repertoire in a lively and social environment, with three major performances each season.

## **2. Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are held at the WI Hall, Orchard Road, Arnside on Tuesdays from 7.30pm-9.30pm. There is normally a fifteen minute break during each rehearsal, when refreshments are available. The Coffee Bar is operated on a rota basis by the members, with all proceeds going towards Society funds.

Additional rehearsals take place immediately prior to each concert, Saturday afternoon.

Members are required to:

- bring a 2B pencil for marking music;
- bring a bottle of water for keeping vocal chords well lubricated whilst rehearsing; and
- listen attentively whilst rehearsals are in progress.

Notices are given during the break. PLEASE LISTEN CAREFULLY as these contain important and useful information. Other information may be posted on the noticeboard and in newsletters.

## **3. Attendance**

It is important that members are in their places by 7.25pm each week so that rehearsals may commence promptly at 7.30pm.

Members are expected to attend as many rehearsals as possible. If you plan to sing at the concerts, then you are expected to attend a minimum of 75% of rehearsals. If you have problems, please discuss these with your Part Representatives and/or the Music Director.

The additional rehearsals immediately preceding a concert are extremely important, as this is when seating is finalised and there is an opportunity to rehearse with the organ/ orchestra. These additional rehearsals are mandatory. The Music Director may refuse to allow members to sing in concerts if he considers that insufficient rehearsals have been attended.

## **4. Part Representatives**

There are Part Representatives for each section of the choir. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend a rehearsal, or know of any member who is unable to attend, please advise the relevant Part Representative.

## **5. Parking**

Parking space is limited at concert venues, and all members are asked to bring cars only if absolutely necessary. Car sharing, where possible, is encouraged. Vehicles are left at your risk.

## **6. Smoking**

The choir operates a no-smoking policy at all rehearsal and concert venues. All members are expected to adhere to this policy.

## **7. Mobile Phones**

Please keep all mobile phones switched off during rehearsals and events. They can be disruptive and an irritation to other people.

## **8. Music**

As a member you will be issued the music for each programme unless you already own a score, which may be used provided it is the correct edition. The Choral Librarian will make every effort to obtain sufficient copies. It is the responsibility of each member to ensure that any borrowed music is returned immediately following a performance.

Delays in returning scores to the Choral Librarian, or loss of music, will result in high library fines, for which you will be liable. If you wish to purchase vocal scores please consult the Choral Librarian.

Photocopied music is strictly forbidden. Copyright law is very strict, and large fines have been levied on Societies where this law has been broken.

## **9. Concerts & Events**

The Society performs three major concerts a year at venues in and around Arnside and beyond. These usually take place in December (Christmas Concert), March/April (Spring Concert) and June/July (Summer Concert).

In addition, the Society will take part in the Mary Wakefield Festival which takes place every other year. This will alternate with the Spring Concert

The Society also contributes to the Christmas On The Green festivities in Milnthorpe. This has generated a good deal of positive publicity for the Society.

## **10. Concert Dress**

All choir members participating in public performances are required to wear the agreed concert dress:

Ladies: Plain black top, long black skirt or trousers, black shoes and discreet jewellery.

Gentlemen: Open-necked plain black shirt, black trousers and black shoes.

Music is held in plain black folders. Protocol for all public events is under the direction of an appointed member of the Society.

## **11. Management**

The management structure of the Society is set out in the Constitution, copies of which may be obtained as indicated later in this handbook. Members are encouraged to participate in the running of the Society. If you have skills that would be of use to the Society, please advise a member of the Management Committee.

## **12. Code of Conduct**

We want the Society to be enjoyable, successful, friendly and fulfilling. In order to achieve this we ask for a commitment from you to take responsibility for the Society by:

- attending regularly and punctually;
- working to the best of your ability;
- asking for help if required;
- treating all members, staff and visitors with courtesy and respect;
- following Society policies and procedures;
- respecting the Society's environment, property and facilities;
- keeping noise to a reasonable level and using acceptable and appropriate language;
- ensuring the health and safety of self and others and reporting any dangers, hazards and accidents;
- ensuring no hazardous or illegal substance or articles are brought into the Society environment;
- taking care of your own property and the property of others; and
- notifying the Membership Secretary of any change of address or other contact details.

The Society's Disciplinary Procedure exists to ensure that serious breaches of these guidelines are dealt with quickly and effectively for the benefit of the Society as a whole.

### **13. Newsletter**

A newsletter is usually produced each term and distributed at rehearsals. If you have any news or content, please contact the editor (see current edition).

### **14. Website**

Notices, rehearsal tracks and general information can be found at [www.arnsidechoralsociety.co.uk](http://www.arnsidechoralsociety.co.uk). Please refer to this regularly and advertise its existence as widely as possible.

### **15. Comments / Suggestions**

It is the aim of the Society to provide you with the best quality experience we can. This means knowing what you want from us, what you think of your Society, and how you find the environment as a whole. From time to time you may be asked to participate in a discussion / consultation exercise, or fill in a questionnaire. You do not have to give your name, but this will obviously help us to address any individual problems or concerns. Any information collected will be used to improve the Society and benefit you and future members.

All comments, suggestions, proposals, criticisms and complaints are taken seriously, and should be communicated via your Part Representative or a member of the Management Committee.

### **16. Membership**

Membership is open to all. There are no auditions (though voices are heard by the Music Director to ensure a proper balance is maintained), and no preconditions or requirements for membership, other than enthusiasm, dedication and a willingness to learn and attend rehearsals regularly. Some degree of musical literacy is preferred ie. being able to sing in tune, but the ability to read music or to sing from sight is not mandatory.

New members are always welcome throughout the year, though there is obviously greater advantage in joining at or near the beginning of September or January. Potential new members are invited to come and sing with the choir for two to three weeks before making a decision.

If the Music Director feels that the balance of the choir would be adversely affected, or there is some other musical reason to do so, he may recommend that the Management Committee disallow or revoke membership.

### **17. Membership Fees**

The annual membership fee is set from year to year by the Management Committee. Tax-paying members are requested to complete the relevant section of the membership application form so that the tax may be reclaimed by the Society – a vital part of its income.

Membership fees cover rehearsal costs only. In order to maintain sufficient income to stage concerts and cover general running costs, the Management Committee works hard to establish and develop sources of external income as well as demonstrating, with the help of the membership, that the Society is both willing and able to generate funds through self-help. Any donation you are able to make in addition to your membership fee will be gratefully received.

### **18. Fundraising**

The Management Committee and membership work hard to raise funds to meet the cost of concerts and events. Sponsorship, grants and financial support are always required. Does your employer sponsor events or operate a Grants Scheme? Many companies support their staff's activities and will contribute to funds. Do try to find out if your employer has such funding – your personal approach is likely to be the most successful.

In addition to seeking funding from outside organisations, the Society arranges events throughout the year by way of social activities and fundraising. If you have ideas for social or fundraising events, please advise a member of the Management Committee.

## **19. Paid Professionals**

The Music Director and Accompanist are paid professionals engaged by the Society. Other paid professionals are engaged from time to time (i.e. for concerts and events). All other officials are voluntary.

## **20. Loss, Injury or Damage**

If you find anything which you believe has been lost, you should hand it to a member of the Management Committee. If you have lost anything, these are also the people you should ask. If you think your property has been stolen, please contact the police, and make a note of the police crime number. Contact your bank immediately if any bank or credit cards are lost.

Remember to look after your belongings, and do not leave valuable items unattended. The Society does not accept any responsibility for injury, damage or loss incurred in connection with Society activities.

## **21. Equal Opportunities**

The Society's policy is to ensure that no member, staff, visitor or other person, with whom it may come into contact, receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, colour, religion, sexual orientation or political affiliation.

By becoming a member you agree to abide by this policy.

## **22. Data Protection Act**

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you have a general right of access to personal data held about you, and, where appropriate, to have it corrected or deleted. These rights are known as "subject access rights". Any enquiries in this regard should be directed to the Membership Secretary.

## **23. Disciplinary Procedure**

The Disciplinary Procedure applies to all forms of misconduct, and is based on the following principles:

- to ensure a safe and appropriate environment;
- to be simple and transparent; and
- to be fair and impartial.

### **Informal discussions**

Before taking formal disciplinary action, the Part Representative or the Chairman will make every effort to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the member concerned. Only where this fails to bring about the desired improvement should the formal disciplinary procedure be implemented.

### **Written warning**

If informal discussions do not resolve the issue, and conduct or performance remains unsatisfactory, the member will be given a written warning from the Chairman, setting out the allegation and the basis for it. The member will be informed that termination of membership may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change.

### **Termination of membership**

If there is no improvement, or a further offence occurs, the Management Committee may, by unanimous vote, terminate membership, subject to the member's right to be heard by the Management Committee, accompanied by a friend if desired, before a final decision is made.

For matters of serious misconduct the Management Committee may, at their discretion, go directly to any stage of the Disciplinary Procedures, or invoke a period of suspension pending investigation. This will depend upon the nature and level of misconduct.

On termination of membership, the membership fee will be refunded pro rata.

## **24. Complaints Policy and Procedure**

It is the Society's intention to put members first. We aim to do our best to ensure that all members have a successful and enjoyable experience. We are committed to continuous improvement.

We recognise, however, that sometimes mistakes can occur and things may not be done as well as they should. We are committed to ensuring that any complaints made by members are dealt with fairly and effectively to the best of our ability and within our resources. We recognise that constructive complaints can be used actively to improve performance.

If you have a complaint, first raise the matter with your Part Representative, who will do his or her best to resolve the issue. If your Part Representative is unable to deal with the matter to your satisfaction, he or she will inform the Management Committee, and the issue will be dealt with as a formal complaint. If you are unwilling to discuss the issue with your Part Representative, you should address your complaint directly to the Chairman in writing.

Complaints will be reported to the Management Committee for analysis.

## **25. Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

Please ensure you read the specific details at each rehearsal venue, familiarise yourself with the use of appropriate emergency equipment and the nearest means of escape, and remain vigilant at all times.

- When an alarm is sounded / raised all members, where able, must leave the building by the nearest emergency exit and proceed to a designated assembly point, informing any other members of any specific hazards on the way.
- Emergency exits are identified with green signs.
- Any person with limited mobility, or otherwise impaired, should be assisted via the nearest and safest exit.
- Re-entry to the building is prohibited until the ALL CLEAR has been given by the Emergency Services Officer or an authorised member of the Management Committee.

## **26. Constitution**

These may be obtained from the Secretary but should be issued upon payment of membership fees.

### **Disclaimer**

The information contained in this document is, to the best of our knowledge, correct at the time of going to press. However, no liability can be accepted for any errors or omissions, which may occur within it.

**Music Director**  
Ian Allan  
Registered Charity  
No 1049848

**President**  
Wynford Evans  
**Chairperson**  
Sue Payne