

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of EGM prior to AGM held on 29th Sept 2010 at Nantwich Methodist Church.

Present: The Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary. Musical Director & 56 members of the Society.

Apologies: Anne Nicol, Grace & David Johnston, Anne Barnard, Jean Atkin, Brenda Midgley, Margaret Whitehurst, Elizabeth Lea, Lucy Kibble, Jan Whiteman, Rita Davies, Joyce Foster.

EGM called to ratify changes to the constitution.

Roger Boulton opened the meeting at 7.04pm & welcomed all those present & asked Ron Kelley to explain the proposed changes to the constitution following feedback from the Charities Commission.

Ron Kelley detailed the 2 areas of change :-

1. Clause 6.10 which defines who are the Trustees of the society.
2. Clauses 9.9 – 9.11 which deal with financial regulation of payment to members of the Society & committee for services to the Society.

Ron Kelley proposed acceptance of these amendments, Roger Boulton seconded the motion & all present were in favour of acceptance.

Roger Boulton closed the EGM at 7.16pm

Minutes of AGM

Minutes of the AGM held on 30th Sept 2009 had been distributed by e-mail/newsletter & adoption of these as an accurate record was proposed by Roger Boulton & 2nd by Ron Kelley, all agreed.

Matters Arising – nil

Chairman's Report by Roger Boulton.

This is the Trustee's report at the end of my first year as chairman. I am acutely aware I was absent for half the year and thank you for your forbearance. But my special thanks go to Anne Barnard and Ron Kelley for stepping in to cover chairmanship duties in my absence.

It's been another good year: Our programme started with an outstanding performance of Elgar's Dream of Gerontius in Chester Cathedral. We were joined by Romsey Choral Society, Lydian Singers & The Border Singers, and the following Saturday many of us joined in with a repeat performance in Romsey Abbey. Best of all was the camaraderie shown between the choirs. That was followed by our Christmas Carol Concert. In the New Year we enjoyed a Messiah come-and-sing and a Singing day. Spring concert of Mendelssohn's St. Paul and in the summer something different in an Opera and Swing concert. Details are contained in the Music Director's report.

Audience numbers are buoyant with the best attendance at Dream of Gerontius. Audiences at other concerts could and should be better. We are looking at our publicity and advertising but the front line on ticket sales quite rightly remains with you, the choir members.

Also during the year we have sung at several weddings and\ events helping to bring in much needed funds. Other fund raising activities have included raffles, 200 Club, grant applications and sponsorship. I encourage you all to support these activities and thanks to the choir members who have led these.

The Society enjoys a healthy financial situation. Our policy on financial reserves is to hold an amount of £8,000 against unforeseen circumstances. This amount is currently held in an interest bearing account with Standard Life. The Treasurer's Report gives details of other monies.

Our accompanist, Andrew Mildenhall left us for pastures new. We held a leaving do, kindly hosted by Rachel Pentecost. There we had fun, frivolity, presentations and speeches. We thought him a hard act to follow, but we have found just the person in Simon Russell. May we welcome him as our new accompanist. He is already making his mark with his expertise and humour and I know he will be a great support for John Naylor.

Ron Kelley also stepped in when Eileen Robertson, concert manager was absent for a spell, more thanks. Our secretary and membership secretary, Kath & Graham Wilks also were away for a prolonged spell and thanks to Rachel Pentecost & Ester Harries for stepping in to fill the gap. We are looking for a new person to fill the vacant secretary's position. Indeed thanks to all the committee, new members and re-elected ones for all their help and support and flexibility, not forgetting choir members whose valuable contribution we cannot do without, raffles, after concert parties, fund raising, sponsorship, staging, logistics.....too many to mention by name. All makes a successful year happen.

Looking ahead: We notice that the choir attendance is variable, especially so for the summer concert. To this end we have conducted a survey amongst the membership to help the committee plan ahead. The programme for this 2010/2011 season is set out in the published leaflet and is on our website. It starts with a Singing day this coming weekend, studying 'Masterpieces of German Choral Music'. Following that 'An Evening with Mr Handel' and the usual Carol concert. Next term, another come-and-sing Messiah and the Spring concert. Faure Requiem and the Premiere of Andrew Mildenhall's specially composed requiem 'Even So is Time'. This concert is sponsored by Louise Fordham's legacy. In the summer we will perform the Rossini Petite Messe Solonelle. Further ahead, 2012 marks the Society's 40th anniversary and we plan a couple of special concerts. We have had a positive response to our invitation to Macon to join us in the summer of 2012 and the suggestion is that we do the Mozart Mass. Hopefully we will be able to arrange a return match. For the November concert 2012 we plan a performance of the Messiah, this time with an orchestra.

I look forward to this concert season working with John Naylor, our exceptional Music Director and Simon Russel, our new accompanist, to bring an outstanding programme to our audiences. I know I have the whole committee and choir's support to do just that.

Treasurer's Report by Adrian Percy

This year has seen some extremes as far as the finances of the society are concerned. On the one hand we have had some expensive concerts, yet on the other hand we have received some generous donations and grants which have resulted in us ending the 2009/10 financial year with a healthy increase in our accumulated funds. I don't imagine anyone thought that in a year when we performed the Dream of Gerontius in Chester Cathedral, at a cost of nearly £11,000, we would end the year with more money in the bank than when the year started.

So in simple terms, according to the first sheet of the report (attached), we now have £25,065 in our reserves, £24,662 in the bank, an increase of £5730 over last year's accumulated fund.

Statement of Financial Activities: - There are some items of note on the second page of the report which may require comment.

First, in income we have the substantial donation of £5,000 from the estate of Louise Fordham. We have also had a substantial increase in grants awarded to us this year – over £4,000.

The line pertaining to Tax Relief (gift aid) remains empty for this year. This doesn't mean we haven't claimed anything, indeed we reckon about £1,800 is due to us. It is just that as yet we haven't received the figure. It will appear in the next year's report.

However it does highlight the financial benefit of gift aiding your subscriptions, should you be a tax payer. It costs you nothing and we certainly benefit.

Concert income has been higher, mainly because of the higher ticket prices and larger number of tickets sold for the Dream of Gerontius, albeit that these were rapidly offset by the higher costs.

Having said that, and on the subject of expenditure, our overall concert costs have remained static, despite Gerontius. Therefore to an extent the rest of our repertoire for the remainder of the year has been done more cheaply than usual. It is also the case that some of the incidental costs have been allocated to committee expenses and thus appear in the Printing, Postage and Sundries line. That is not to say that the big increases in that, publicity and promotions are due only to such committee expenses. That line was used to buy in the St. Paul CDs which were later sold to society members, and also the production costs of the Christmas CD. Against this we have venue, recording, conductor and accompanist costs. There are also some social costs which have been absorbed into the sundries as part of general committee expenses, but no doubt the auditor will advise me if he thinks things should be reported differently. The main thing is the bottom line reflects our overall income and expenditure for the year.

Concert Accounts: We made a profit on only 2 concerts amounting to £850, definitely not offsetting the loss on the other concerts of some £7,300. So without subscriptions of ~ £8,000pa, we couldn't reliably support our current level of musical activity. In the current climate, whilst it is very encouraging to receive donations and grants, I don't think we should rely on them. And as for ticket sales, we have had a couple of poor attendances, namely for the St Paul and the summer opera concert. Obviously these don't appeal to so many of our usual audience. However whilst not suggesting we should actively sell

tickets, we shouldn't only have to consider performing concerts which have a public appeal. We can afford to indulge ourselves occasionally.

This next year: We have £24,662 in the bank. This totally covers our annual expenditure on concerts, so our programme for this year is protected and there is no financial reason why we should have to alter the programme which we have already publicised. This is an enviable position to be in and one which we can justify to the Charity Commission in respect of our Accumulated funds and how we propose to use them for our stated charitable purposes of 'educating the public in the arts and sciences of music, through the presentation of concerts and other activities'. If that situation can be maintained, then we can continue to look towards equally challenging programmes in the future.

On a final note, consider that the 40th Anniversary of this Society will soon be here. I am sure John has plans on how to celebrate it. One thing of which I am sure is that we will be able to afford it.

Adoption of the accounts subject to audit was proposed by Bob Pugh & 2nd by Liz McCrone. All agreed

Subscriptions to remain at £90pa proposed by Adrian Percy, 2nd by Jo Watson, all agreed.

Music Director's Report: John Naylor

Overview – 5 major concerts + weddings & sadly some funerals, supported by high calibre professional musicians. Mostly well attended by choir & audiences. Musical standards generally very high leading to good reviews & audience responses. The management team have worked well together & all concerts have been produced within agreed budgets. There is still work to be done to continue to improve our performance standards from the usually good to always excellent but all in all a successful year.

Gerontius – probably our most ambitious concert – excellent singing by all 4 choirs, outstanding soloists (especially Peter Auty), brilliant orchestral playing – remember the wonderful horns & the £1.25m violin? Chester Cathedral as a venue worked satisfactorily but a big management effort.

Carols – emphasis on 'Family'. Very good audience, good to have childrens choir. Another convincing performance of Andrew Mildenhall's 'The Night Before Christmas'. A light hearted but very well sung programme of Christmas music. Messiah – a memorable performance. Very well attended from far & wide despite the weather. Light accurate choral singing, good soloists and audience. An enjoyable evening raising a considerable sum for St. Mary's Appeal.

St. Paul – a work which has fallen out of favour & after some initial doubts, we all enjoyed it. A BIG sing, excellent soloists, more heroic organ playing by Andrew & a good audience.

Summer Serenade – a programme of Opera Choruses and 'In The Mood' items by popular request – choir numbers reduced (all for apparently good reasons!) Soloists very good, audience surprisingly good. A very happy & enjoyable concert & Andrew's last appearance.

Over the summer – an enjoyable 'extra' practice, singing for fun & 2 weddings.

The new season – Singing Day next Saturday, An Evening with Mr Handel in Coppenhall, a repertoire with popular appeal accompanied by the 18th Century Concert Orchestra, Family Carols with Nantwich Young Voices, Messiah in January, Faure Requiem & the premiere of ‘Even so is Time’, Andrew Mildenhall’s new Requiem with the Northern Concordia Orchestra, Rossini Petite Messe Solonelle.

The Good things in 2009/10 –

- Sense of phrasing & word emphasis getting better & better.
- Some really moving & accurate singing in Gerontius & St. Paul.
- Gerontius a triumph – bravos all round!
- Children’s choir gets better & better. Christmas concert becoming a family occasion – early start time seems good.
- Early January Messiah performance becoming an annual fixture.
- Social activity – especially drinks after concerts.

Less Good things in 2009/10 –

- The weather in January
- Reduced choir numbers for the summer concert – but the quality of singing was great!
- Some NCS members still reticent about selling tickets
- Can’t think of much more!

2011/12 Season – Anniversary performance of Messiah with orchestra in St. Mary’s

- Sunday afternoon performance in March 2012 in the Civic Hall of Vaughan Williams Sea Symphony + The Lark Ascending

- Joint summer performance with Arpege Choral de Macon of Mozart Mass in C minor + orchestra in St. Mary’s

Summary of the Season – Concerts of a high standard with Gerontius a really memorable high point.

- All concerts well received by our audiences
- Membership increasing, audiences about the same.
- All concert costs within budget & funds in good shape
- Planning for the future well in hand.
- I detect that generally, a good time was had by all.

End of Year Reports!

- Alto – real improvement in tuning, sometimes need to sing with more confidence – You can do it!
- Tenor – great work generally and accurate sound.
- Bass – thank you for another year of diligent contribution. We need more of you!
- Soprano –also more confidence & more 1st sops needed.

Last Year’s Observations – standing up & sitting down much improved!

- Timekeeping for rehearsals a bit better!

Ticket sales – we still need to have more confidence in selling ourselves.

A major target – we must build on our core audience in Nantwich using the lovely venue of St. Mary's especially since we can now accommodate an orchestra of a reasonable size.

Some thanks – enthusiastic & hard working committee – you are very fortunate to have them looking after your interests.

Special thanks to Roger in his 1st year as Chairman.

Thank you to so many other members who helped in many different ways to make the season such a success.

Thank you for all your efforts to keep the Society's funding on a sound basis: We can plan exciting programmes with confidence.

Warm welcome to Simon who is already showing us what he can do!

Thank you to all members for your commitment, enthusiasm, skill & support

I look forward to continuing to make great music together with you.

Election of Officers;

Chairman – Roger Boulton)
Vice-Chairman – Anne Barnard) reappointed
Treasurer – Adrian Percy)
Secretary – vacant

Committee members – Fiona Field)
Ester Harries)
Ron Kelley) reappointed
Bob Pugh)
Eileen Robertson)
Rachel Pentecost)

RB proposed election en bloc – all agreed

The meeting closed at 7.48pm

Rachel Pentecost (Minute secretary)