

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of AGM held on 11th Sept 2013 at Nantwich Methodist Church.

Present: The Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary. Musical Director & 64 members of the Society

Minutes of the AGM held on 26th Sept 2012 had been distributed by e-mail/newsletter & adoption of these as an accurate record was proposed by Wal Kaye & 2nd by Roger Boulton, all agreed.

Matters Arising – nil

Chairman's Report: Dr Elizabeth Lea

It is my very great pleasure to give my Chairman's report of the Nantwich Choral Society 2012 – 2013.

This year the society reached its 40th birthday, a splendid achievement of continuous singing and performing.

We started with our singing day of *Great Oratorio Choruses* held at Bunbury church.

The concert season started with our first major concert, the 40th Anniversary Concert, a rehearsed performance of Handel's *Messiah* with orchestra, specifically chosen to celebrate the very first public performance of the then choir formed in 1972. Four lady members from the original choir sang again in 2012 and three of them have had an unbroken record since then and they are still singing with us today.

Christmas term concluded with the annual Christmas concert of carols with organ accompaniment in Nantwich church together with the children of Nantwich Young Voices under the direction of their conductor Victoria Palethorpe.

Just before Christmas a small ensemble sang carols at Rookery Hall Hotel.

The New Year quickly ushered in our 'Come and Sing' in Nantwich church. A magnificent attendance of choristers, musicians and audience took part in or listened to Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man*, such that the choir filled the nave and the audience listened from the chancel.

In spring JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion* was sung in holy week at Chester Cathedral and gave many choral society members, Lydians and orchestra the opportunity to take part in a truly great work in an auspicious auditorium. On what must have been the coldest snowiest night of the year the baroque orchestra and choir performed magnificently despite the conditions.

Summer term brought a change of tempo with Puccini's setting of the Mass, his *Messe di Gloria* and some well-known opera choruses and duets.

Concerts have audiences and we welcomed many visitors and guests to our concerts this year. At our anniversary concert we also welcomed our past presidents, our past conductors, former soloists and former choir members. Throughout the year we were also able to welcome civic dignitaries and the newly appointed Rector of St Mary's church Nantwich.

These wonderful occasions don't just happen by themselves, they need people and funding.

Taking the latter first. Members' fees largely cover rehearsal costs, score hire and professional fees of conductor and accompanist. Ticket sales bring revenue for concerts. We enjoy the gift of

sponsorship and grants and the hard work was well rewarded this year with a substantial grant from the Arts Council, England, to permit us to stage the St Matthew passion in the cathedral. Many of you raise funds by doing other things. We have a very successful 200 club. We sell cards, make jewellery and run raffles all adding to our funds and from our social fund we enjoy our after concert parties and this year we celebrated by having a 40th birthday party.

The society is fortunate to have its officers and members of the committee, and members with special roles who contribute to the smooth running of the society. But there are many more of you that do a great variety of just little things which make the wheels go round so effortlessly. I would like to thank all members, a record 98 of you for your enthusiasm, support and commitment to the NCS. We enjoy an ambitious programme delivered with a fine quality of performance and give great enjoyment to each other and to our audience.

Looking forward

Nantwich Choral Society was handed over to me in good shape. We remain financially in a good position. Our policy on financial reserves is to hold £8,000 against unforeseen circumstances.

Next year we plan to sing *English Church Music* for our singing day in Malpas Church and Brahms *Requiem* for the 'come and sing' in Nantwich Church. Our usual Christmas concert will have a new carol by Andrew Mildinhall to be sung with Nantwich Young Voices. Handel's *Israel in Egypt* will be sung in the autumn term before departing to Nantwich Civic Hall for a Sunday afternoon spring concert to sing Elgar's choral songs, the *Bavarian Highlands* and Samuel Coleridge - Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. The season will round off with contemporary choral music in the summer.

I should like to thank.....

My fellow vice chairmen who have been invaluable to me on the steep learning curve of unexpected chairmanship. Three secretaries who look after general correspondence, all bookings, membership details and meetings. The treasurer who keeps the books up to speed and ensures that the finances run smoothly. No choir can perform without its music sourced by the librarian, nor can it put on a performance without its concert manager and team of scene changers and front of house. After a successful concert ticket revenue and costs are reconciled. We want as many people as possible to know how good we are. Publicity is wide reaching. We the members of the society are our best publicity agents, posters and flyers are designed, printed and distributed and tickets sold. We also enjoyed several press releases in local publications and air time with radio Stoke. Thanks too to those members who offer their services for special roles. Application for grants, organising the 'come and sing' and singing days, looking after the web site, maintaining our presence on Making Music, attending the Societies day for Nantwich Town Council and joining us up to the modern media networking world of Facebook and twitter. And thanks to all members who invite, host, collect and deliver a great array of visiting musicians, soloists and guests all of whom add to our mutual enjoyment.

We have a good bye to say this year. Ron Kelly has decided, sadly, that after 13 years the time has come for him to step down from the committee. We hope it will only be a sabbatical absence. He has given long and valuable service to the society. He was largely responsible for recruiting John Naylor to become our music director. He has been a chairman, vice chairman and a general committee member and has masterminded several concerts in Chester Cathedral. He brought much knowledge, wise council and attention to detail for which the society is enormously grateful.

There are two people of whom I leave mention to the end of my report; they are of course our music director and accompanist. We thank John Naylor and Simon Russell for leadership, good humour and their harmonious talents.

I wrote the following paragraph as the welcome message for the St Matthew passion. It seems a fitting way to close this report.

‘Under the inspirational guiding baton of our highly respected Music Director, John Naylor, and our accomplished accompanist Simon Russell, we strive to keep the choral tradition alive by singing great choral works and by having a varied and expanding repertoire of music, some familiar and some less so. We enjoy a fine choral reputation and excellent critique of our performances in Nantwich, the wider Cheshire area and in Chester Cathedral.’

Long may we continue to do so.

Elizabeth Lea

September 2013

Treasurer’s Annual Report 11th September 2013

Introduction

I want to keep this evening’s report short and informative. You have copies of the documents to peruse at your leisure so I don’t intend to provide a line by line description of the accounts.

I will talk about specific points.

As last year I must start by thanking everyone who has helped and supported me throughout the year – so many people, in so many ways. I’m sure you know who you are. Thank you.

Treasurer’s Report This consists of 2 pages (3 sides)

- a) Statement of Activities – a brief report of our finances compared to 2011-12
- b) Concert Accounts – a detailed listing of income and expenditure for each concert
- c) Treasurer’s Report of Accounts – a full listing of accounts with bank balances and accruals

Comments on Report

1. Bank Balances Once again it is possible to report a financially successful year.

Starting balance = £20,482.35

Closing balance = £26,002.31 with accruals £26,060.72

This is remarkable considering the special concerts performed this year.

So for our anniversary year we have finished the year in sound financial health.

2. Concerts

The details of our concerts are shown on the Concert Accounts page.

Last year I told you that we had spent over £20K on concerts. For our anniversary year this year this figure has risen to £31,146.

Our total concert income was £29,078 of which only £14,435 was ticket sales. The weather played against us for our big concert in Chester but our budget losses were reduced by the generous Arts Council Grant. We also made a small loss on our last concert (Puccini). The other concerts were above budget with the Carol Concert being the star thanks to the raffle and the matched funding from Barclays.

We budgeted for costs of -£5777.00 but finished the year with costs of -£2109.58 giving us a surplus of £3667.42.

3. Grants

We received a grand total of £10,824 in grants and sponsorship this year, thanks especially to Martin Jones for his hard work negotiating these grants. There were times in the year when we wouldn’t have survived without these grants.

4. Gift Aid

The Gift Aid on subscriptions and donations has increased our funds by £1902 this year and is a vital part of our income.

I need to reorganise the Gift Aid system this year and would like all of you to fill in a declaration form – included with the financial reports.

If you are **a tax payer** and wish to help increase our funds with no extra cost to yourself please fill the whole form in and **sign and date it**.

If you **aren't a tax payer** or don't wish to Gift Aid your subscription please fill in your details and put a large cross in the box at the top of the page but please **DO NOT SIGN** the form.

5. Subscriptions

Our income from subscriptions was £8585 – our most reliable form of income.

As we have finished the year in profit the committee have agreed that subscriptions should stay the same for another 12 months. As last year it will make our finances more secure and make money available for concerts if I receive the money sooner rather than later. Can those of you who pay the full sum please pay as soon as possible. Those who pay by instalments need to pay in two instalments – one now and the second in January.

Full subscription = £90.00 to be paid as soon as possible

Full subscription in 2 instalments = £45.00 now and £45.00 in January

New members get their first term free with subs of £60 in January.

6. Fundraising

We have an incredible team of people who raise money for the Society in so many different ways. We have the 200 Club / the weekly raffle and refreshments / the sale of jewellery, cards, books and plants / the Christmas raffle with the matched funding / the carol singing at Rookery Hall / and finally our anniversary party. Have I forgotten anything?

Very many thanks to everyone involved for all their hard work in raising funds for the society. A grand total of £6994 was raised. Thank you.

7. The Party

This was a great evening which surprisingly gave us a small profit of £171. A good time was had by all.

8. The New Season 2012-13

We have started the new year with reserves of £26.060 of which £26,002 is in the bank.

With our current balance, your subscriptions and Gift Aid plus any grants available to us we can cover the planned programme. We need to sell lots of tickets and support all fundraising activities and we can have another enjoyable and successful year.

9. Finally

Thanks again to everyone who has made this year so successful. Any questions or comments?

Diane Wheatley – Treasurer

Notes:-

Subscriptions	£8,585	Gift Aid	£1,902
Total Concert Expenditure	£31,146	Total Concert Income	£29,078
Ticket Income	£14,435		
Grants/sponsorship	£10,574		
Fundraising - 200Club	£2,500	Matched funding, Rookery Hall	£1,025
Weekly raffle and drink sales, cards, jewellery, books, party			£3,469

Elizabeth Lea thanked Diane for her report.

Music Director's Report: John Naylor

Rather than duplicate the contents of our Chairman's report which included a summary of our concerts during the last season I thought it might be helpful to touch on a few points rather than repeat what has already been said.

Singing Days

I always enjoy our Singing days – they give us an opportunity to explore different repertoire without stress and without being too serious about it. We have built up a loyal band of regular attenders, many of who can't sing with us regularly because they live too far away or have other commitments on Wednesday evenings. When these combine with our own members we usually have great fun singing some excellent music in different and invariably lovely places.

Importantly, the teaching element involved helps to underpin our charitable status and an important aspect is the possibility of recruiting new members who can find out how we do things without becoming committed in advance. I hope as many of you as possible will come to this year's event in the lovely Parish Church at Malpas on October 5th.

Messiah

This was a truly stunning performance: we were able to polish up those tricky passages which can (and often) do go slightly awry and so everyone was able to sing with great confidence and truly to enjoy the occasion. There were many warm and positive comments about the choir's performance afterwards.

The orchestra were great as always – they always seem to lift our performance and never more so than on that occasion. Our soloists were excellent: Linda Richardson, Harriet Goodwin and Stephen Newlove were all on fine form. I hope you remember Dingle Yandell. I can honestly say that in all the performances of Messiah I have been involved with over the years (and there have been many, including professional, recorded and broadcast performances) I have never heard a bass sing 'Why do the heathen so furiously rage together' so spectacularly: it was a real highlight.

Carols

We had a good audience for our annual family carol concert: I emphasise the family aspect because the formula we have recently developed seems to be well received. It's a real joy to work with Victoria and Nantwich Young voices on these occasions and especially encouraging to see how the children have grown in number and in proficiency over the years that they have sung with us.

I have to say that this caught me out: I had programmed exactly the same number of choir and audience pieces as in previous years, but because the children wanted to sing more and for longer, the concert ended up finishing rather later than would have been desirable, so this year I'll do some more careful planning.

This brings me neatly to the post-concert parties: for the first couple of years as your conductor I was rather puzzled at the way in which we all enjoyed singing Christmas music and carols together and then trudged off separately into a cold December night, all going our separate ways. It's much more satisfactory to wind down together and have a good chat with our audience friends over a glass of something refreshing: many thanks to those who organise these events. (I was recently reading a biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams and it was really interesting to read the many interesting anecdotes reported from the post-performance parties after concerts of his works.)

Come and Sing

It was with some trepidation that we broke away from the short pattern we had established of singing Messiah at the beginning of a new calendar year. You will recall that in 2011 Mozart's Requiem was very successful and after that, as I stood at the door to thank those who had come asking them what they'd like to sing next time, quite a few mentioned 'The Armed Man'

We took a bit of a risk and booked a full professional instrumental ensemble at some expense - not something we'd normally do for a come and sing event. You can probably remember that an amazing 250 people turned up: apparently you could hear the Charge! and the other thrilling choruses way out in the market square. There were many messages afterwards full of congratulation and support from visitors (singers and audience) who had all really enjoyed such an enterprising day. Our reputation was, I think significantly enhanced.

My view is quite firmly that it is our responsibility as a major choral society to sing as much of the mainstream choral repertoire as we can: How many of us listened to the first night of the Proms this year with the added satisfaction of listening to The Sea Symphony and knowing that we had given a very good account of it not long before? Of the repertoire on the Last Night, The Chichester Psalms, The Lark Ascending and the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves have all featured in our recent repertoire.

In this spirit, singing Bach's St Matthew Passion is something every aspiring choral singer must do at least once in their career. (Until late in his life, Vaughan Williams conducted annual amateur performers of the Passions for many years.)

However, singing Bach is something never to be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, and so after the excitement of the Armed Man we embarked on rehearsals for this monumental work. You all worked extremely hard, and the result was a wonderfully inspiring choral sound and a very convincing performance of that great work, broader in scope and yet more reflective than the St John Passion.

From a logistical point of view St Matthew Passion is quite a challenge to organise: double choir, double orchestra, six principal soloists and six soloists with cameo roles. I'm sure that you don't need to be reminded about how cold it was, about Sue Marrs falling ill the night before and my hunt around for a replacement (thank you so much Harriet), the worry whether the Evangelist would catch his flight from Amsterdam on that Saturday morning, the disaster of the chamber organ around which everything pivots getting trapped in a motorway pile up, and the rapid substitution of a harpsichord (thank you David Francis) , three of the orchestra unable to come because of the snow, and a run in at the beginning of the day (which most of you missed) with a confirmation party practising in our rehearsal space.

After much hard work by Martin supported by Roger and me, we had managed to get an Arts Council grant of £8000 towards the performance so any thoughts of cancellation because of the weather were quickly dismissed. It was a great performance of a difficult and complex work and just a bit of a pity that on an evening when all the other cultural activities in Chester were cancelled, the weather clearly deterred some people from being present. M&S sold out of thermal underwear that afternoon, don't enquire what some of the orchestra were wearing under their concert dress and never has a hot toddy been more welcome than afterwards. BUT many thanks to everyone involved in organising and singing in such a memorable performance. Incidentally, whilst we had some outstanding players in our orchestra, not least the internationally famous David Hatcher who played the viola da gamba, watch out for Ellie Laugharne the soprano: she has the potential to emerge as a real star.

A few years ago Roger Boulton suggested Puccini's 'Messe di Gloria', and what an agreeable work it turned out to be. We had time to learn it properly in the summer term, and it was really interesting how many of us had the tunes firmly rooted in our heads in the lead up to the concert and afterwards. It's certainly not an easy work to perform properly, but it is very tuneful and enjoyable to listen to. In the second half we were able to enjoy some opera choruses and to be entertained by Alexander Wall and especially Mark Holland who, as is his wont, almost brought the house down!

So I think we can look back on 2012 / 13 as more than satisfactory both musically and financially.

But there's more than that: it's not easy in a bigger choir like ours to achieve a friendly and mutually supportive atmosphere but I do genuinely believe that we do far better in this aspect than

many choirs I know or hear about. Whether you are one of our honoured founder members or whether you have joined only recently, you can be confident that everyone has an equal place amongst us and a valuable and valued contribution to make to what we do.

Of course this doesn't happen by accident: so many of you work so hard to support this choir (which incidentally means that many hands make lighter work for those involved in administration and organisation) and by putting much in, I suspect that the return we each receive is multiplied many times in the satisfaction we gain from doing what we do.

You are truly blessed in having an active and hard working committee – not only those who are elected, but also those amongst you who cheerfully and enthusiastically throw themselves into the duties entrusted to them.

I am very grateful indeed to my colleague, our accompanist Simon Russell who is so supportive and a true delight to work with. His playing each week inspires us all to do better and better, and I am truly in awe of his ability to pick through complex passages of music and find the notes that really do have to be played to support the choir during the learning process. His amusing and sometimes irreverent comments behind my back keep us all amused and focussed at the same time.

And lastly, and by no means least many thanks are due to Elizabeth our Chairman. I know she thought long and hard before taking on the chairmanship and I am sure I know why – it's because she's the sort of person who, if she's going to take on a job, she wants to do it devotedly and properly. She has chaired our committee meetings with great aplomb and brought a greater focus onto our PR and promotional activities which must continue to bear fruit for the future. I personally am most grateful for her advice and support.

In my report last year, I said that *“as I stand before you at the Annual General Meeting of this Society I reflect that we have had such a wonderfully successful year of making music together in the past year, that the challenge for the year to come seems even greater if we are to continue our upward trajectory both musically and organisationally.”*

And yet we do seem to continue to go from strength to strength, and just like the previous year, 2012 / 2013 was no exception.

Let me end with an anecdote reported by Ron who this evening is 7,500 miles away in India. Ron was at a Summer School in August somewhere in the Home Counties and apparently some of the participants were bemoaning the rather lacklustre spirit and general lackadaisical organisation pervading the event.

Not knowing who Ron is, one of the professional musicians engaged for the course remarked *“This event is a complete contrast to Nantwich Choral Society: **they** are really professional in what they do and the members always are enthusiastic, have done their homework in learning the music and genuinely welcome us when we go: that's why we like playing for them”*. Ron reported that he felt quite pleased to be able to reveal that he is a member and past Chairman on NCS!

I have also said this each year, and I have no hesitation in repeating it again: it is an absolute privilege and enormous pleasure to be entrusted by you with the direction of The Society's musical activities. Although Verdi's Requiem is still on my radar, I personally really don't mind what we perform whether it's Mahler's Symphony of 1000, or Vivaldi's Gloria – Britten's War Requiem or Stainer's crucifixion: the main thing is that we bring the same levels of commitment, camaraderie and ambition for the best musical standards we can achieve together.

I leave you with those thoughts and my very grateful thanks for all your support combined with an eager anticipation of yet another exciting season ahead of us.

Thank you all so much.

John Naylor

Sept. 2013

Election of Officers;

Chairman Elizabeth Lea - proposed by Roger Boulton, 2nd by Ron Kelley

Vice-Chairman Ian Wells – proposed by Elizabeth Lea, 2nd by Roger Boulton

Roger Boulton) proposed en bloc by Rachel Pentecost,

Treasurer – Diane Wheatley) 2nd by Wal Kaye

Secretary – Rosemary Jones)

Committee members Ester Harries)

Bob Pugh) Reappointed en bloc

Eileen Robertson) proposed by Roger Boulton

Rachel Pentecost) 2nd by Jenny Naylor

Elizabeth Lea thanked the Society for their attendance & support.

The meeting closed at 7.54pm

Rachel Pentecost (Minute secretary)