

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of AGM held on 24th Sept 2014 at Nantwich Methodist Church.

Present: The Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Music Director & 62 members of the Society.

Apologies: Sheila Luke, Mike Moores, Gwyneth Rollins, Geraldine Leighton, Debbie Rowlands, An Ferguson, Marion Hay, Lucy Kibble, Marlene Flannery, Joyce Foster, Barbara Schultz, Jill Handford.

Elizabeth Lea took the chair & opened the meeting at 7.01pm

Minutes of the AGM held on 11th Sept 2013 had been distributed by e-mail/newsletter & adoption of these as an accurate record was proposed by Roger Boulton & 2nd by Ian Wells, all agreed.

Matters Arising – nil

Chairman's Report: Dr Elizabeth Lea

Nantwich Choral Society

Chairman's report 2013 - 2014

This is the Chairman's report of the Nantwich Choral Society for the 2013 – 2014 season.

Autumn term started in September 2013 quickly followed by the singing day on October 5th. 76 singers enjoyed a day of English Church Music at St. Oswald's Church, Malpas. On the 9th November we sang our autumn concert, Handel's *Israel in Egypt* with orchestra in St Mary's church Nantwich. The term ended with the annual Christmas carol concert also in St Mary's church in which we welcomed the children's choir, Nantwich Young Voices, under the direction of their conductor Victoria Palethorpe. On Christmas Eve 16 members sang Christmas carols 'a cappella' at Rookery Hall under the direction of Julie Barker. 2014 opened with singing for Sunday Morning service at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. On 11th January 170 fellow enthusiasts came to sing the very famous Brahms' *A German Requiem*. Sadly, later in January we sang at the funeral of Peter Nurse. Both he and his late wife, who had been a member of the choir, had been tremendous supporters of the society. The major concert of the spring term was held on a Sunday afternoon in Nantwich Civic Hall. We sang Elgar's, *From the Bavarian Highlands* and Coleridge Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. We then had the great pleasure of listening to our fabulous symphony orchestra playing all Elgar's Enigma Variations. In the summer term we rounded off the season and returned to St Mary's to perform highlights of English Church Music. Immediately after the end of

term the NCS was asked to join a mixed choir to sing for a summer wedding in Nantwich Church.

I will leave a more comprehensive account of our season's concerts to our music director. We ended the year with 108 members and we are blessed that so many of you offer to do so many of the jobs that make our society such a successful one. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you all for all the tasks that you take on and to extend my thanks to your family and friends, whom you recruit to help and to be the support team.

And to the committee, and to members who take on special roles, I thank you for your hard work, collective wisdom and wise council.

It is the custom of the choral society that the officers remain in post for three years. This is to ensure a healthy turnover of members as officers in these roles and to assure you that you are not in it for life. Diane Wheatley has served as treasurer for the last three years. It is quite an administrative role and she has kept the books in an exemplary fashion during this time. We thank you very much indeed. Roger Boulton has been my much valued vice chairman for the past two years. I said this time last year that becoming chairman had been quite a steep learning curve but Roger has helped me enormously during this time and I thank you most sincerely. The secretariat is spread between the general secretary, the membership secretary and the minute secretary who as their titles suggest generally organise most of the admin.

In order to put on any of our concerts, singing days or the come and sing we need music to be sourced by the librarian, a venue booked, the band fixed, rehearsals to take place and many of Eileen's lifters and shifters, movers and shakers to help on the day. Tickets will have been sold, posters put up, flyers given out and grants sought and ticket money banked. Publicity is a wide ranging role and now encompasses the web site, social media of facebook and twitter, press releases and attending the Nantwich societies fair.

We invite, host, entertain, collect and deliver a great array of visiting musicians, soloists and guests all of whom add to our mutual musical enjoyment. When we've done all of this we have a concert! You can only make a first impression once. Front of house do this admirably, they welcome the audience the auditorium quietens and the concerts begin.

Financially the NCS is in good shape and we remain financially in a good position.

Members' fees largely cover rehearsal costs, score hire and professional fees of conductor and accompanist. Ticket sales bring revenue for concerts. We are extremely grateful for the gift of sponsorship and grants. We have a very successful 200 club. We sell cards, make jewellery, run stalls and raffles all adding to our general funds and to our social fund from which we entertain guests and enjoy our after-concert parties.

Our policy on financial reserves is to hold £8,000 against unforeseen circumstances. We plan to keep the membership fee at £90 pounds per annum for this year which has been kept at this level for several years.

Looking forward towards next season the Singing day at Acton Church is almost upon us.

Our autumn concert is on the eve of Armistice Sunday at which we will sing Karl Jenkins' *The Peacemakers*. The Saturday before Christmas will be the evening of the Carol concert to which we invite Nantwich young voices. On Saturday January 10th our come and sing will be Rossini's *Petite Messe Solenne* and the spring concert will be Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*. In the summer term we will be hosting a German exchange choir, Ludenscheid Oratorio. We will sing Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* with them in

Germany in May and they will sing in Nantwich with us in June. Quiet a full programme.

We look forward again to welcoming the Northern Concordia Orchestra to some of our concerts. It is such a privilege to sing with them. How many amateur choirs have this wonderful opportunity of professional orchestra and soloists? They must surely lift our singing to a higher level and reveal our true potential. But orchestras are very expensive and we are so fortunate to enjoy the finest of instrumentalists and soloists that come to perform with us. I am mindful that audience numbers have fallen this year compared to the previous year and we will be following audience numbers very closely this season. We are a fantastic choir, we have a brilliant product. It is all on our door step. Come to Nantwich. You don't have to go to Bridgewater Hall or Liverpool Phil. How will people know this if we don't tell them, the publicity machine cannot do this alone. We the members, all 108 of us are our best publicity agents. In order to perform at this very high standard I urge all of you to spread the word.

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 their leadership, good humour and harmonious talents.

John is a joy to work with and contributes so much more to the society than just being our music director. I look forward to my final year very much indeed working with you again.

This year Simon has swapped his key boards, from computer ones to musical ones and we wish you every success in your professional music career.

To finish, this is the paragraph that you find in the welcome message for each of our concerts. 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 is 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

Chairman.

Nantwich Choral Society

September 24th 2014

Treasurer's Report: Diane Wheatley

Treasurer's Annual Report 24th September 2014

Introduction

This is my last report to you as treasurer and I want to keep it short and informative.

Treasurer's Report We e-mailed copies of the reports to you and I hope that you have had time to glance through them. There are a few paper copies if you don't have e-mail facilities and would like to look at

them now. As always I don't intend to provide a line by line description of the accounts but I shall look at specific points.

The report consists of 3 sections:-

- a) Concert Accounts – a detailed listing of income and expenditure for each concert
- b) Statement of Activities – a brief report of our finances compared to 2012-13
- 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	=	£25,563.25	
Closing balance with accruals	=	£18,753.17	(this figure includes the 200 Club income but not the Gift aid tax allowance)

We planned to put on special concerts and spend some of our excess monies, which we did, and we have still finished the year in sound financial health.

We are awaiting the Gift Aid tax allowance and this should add a further £1,650 to our bank balance (£20,403).

2. Concerts

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

This year we spent £24.8K on concerts.

Our total concert income was £13489 of which £12596 was ticket sales - both audience and performer tickets.

The two singing days did extremely well leaving us with good a profit compared to our planned budget. Israel in Egypt and the Carol concert balanced nicely with the budget. Hiawatha and the English Church Music concerts were over budget.

We budgeted for costs of -£9777 and finished the year with costs of -£11,352 giving us additional costs of -£1,575.

3. Grants

We received a total of £2000 in grants and sponsorship this year, thanks to all involved for negotiating these. They make our finances much more secure. Particular thanks to Christine English & the Harding Trust.

4. Gift Aid

The Gift Aid on subscriptions and donations should increase our funds by £1650 this year. This is a really vital part of our income.

The reorganisation last year was an essential part of updating the system but we are not yet fully up to date. I need copies of the declaration form for ALL of you both tax and non-tax payers. Please check whether or not I have a gift aid form for you and fill in the required form if I haven't.

5. Subscriptions

Our income from subscriptions was £8705. This is our most reliable form of income.

Even though we had a budget deficit this year, this was mostly planned, so the committee have recommended that subscriptions should stay the same for another 12 months. If you agree to this it will make

our finances more secure and make money available for concerts if I receive your payments as soon as possible.

6. Fundraising

We have an incredible team of people who raise money for the Society in so many different ways:- the 200 Club, the weekly raffle and refreshments, the sale of jewellery, cards, books and plants, the Christmas raffle with the matched funding, singing engagements (the carol singing at Rookery Hall and the wedding) and the end of year party. We also have people sponsoring events or attempting to persuade friends and relatives to sponsor events.

Very many thanks to everyone involved for all their hard work in raising funds for the society. A grand total of £2990 was raised (£4440 when the 200 club money is included). Thank you.

7. The New Season 2014-15

We have started this new year with reserves of £18,753.

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

8. Finally

As treasurer I want to thank everyone who has made this a successful year.

As retiring treasurer I want to thank you all for your help, encouragement and support throughout the last 3 years - so many people, in so many ways. Thank you all.

9. Any questions or comments?

Diane Wheatley – Treasurer

Notes:-

Subscriptions	£ 8,705	Gift Aid	£ 1,650 not yet received
Total Concert Expenditure	£ 24,841	Total Concert Income	£13,542
Ticket Income	£12,596	Grants/sponsorship	£ 2,000
200Club	£ 1,450	Xmas Draw / Matched funding,	£ 1,910
Singing engagements	£ 475		
Weekly sales – raffle, drinks, cards, jewellery, books, plants	£605		

Information :-

Gift Aid

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.

Subscriptions

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.

Elizabeth Lea thanked Diane for her report.

Music Director's Report: John Naylor

Music Director's Report – 2013 – 14 Season

I am very pleased to present my report to the Society in the 10th year which I have had the privilege of standing in front of you. (I had wondered about delivering it extempore like some political leaders, but I don't have the advantage of a tele-prompter and I don't want to leave anything out, so I'll refer to my script.)

If I'm honest, I had difficulty in remembering exactly what we have sung in the last twelve months: we seem to have covered such a lot of varied ground, so I had to trawl through my computer files to remind myself, especially the events earlier in the season.

We began last year with a well-attended Singing Day at Malpas on 5th October when we used a new OUP publication to study English Church Music. Highlights included long term favourites such as '*O Thou the central orb*', '*Blessed be the God and Father* and Howells '*Like as the Hart*'. An anthem by John Stainer – '*I saw the Lord*' , something of a Victorian curiosity which I remembered from my days as a cathedral chorister proved an interesting hit.

We were warmly welcomed by everyone at Malpas. Simon got their excellent and recently restored organ to sing, and we enjoyed exploring the comfortable surroundings and warm acoustics of the lovely church. A very satisfying day.

Our autumn concert saw a stunning performance of '*Israel in Egypt*' with the period instruments of the 18th Century Sinfonia. Formerly a standard item in any choral society's repertoire, it has latterly fallen somewhat into neglect, possibly because it's not the easiest of pieces, much of it for double chorus. Nevertheless, we gave a truly exciting account of it: the orchestra were on top form, the lice and locusts made their appearances, the flies duly buzzed, and the horse and his rider were duly despatched by all the performers into the enveloping waters of the Red Sea. It was all great fun, sung elegantly and confidently.

For our Christmas Concert we were once again joined by Nantwich Young Voices and a large audience enjoyed a performance of a old favourites and a new carol written for us by Andrew Mildinhal 'Kings come riding'. We especially enjoyed singing 'Sir Christemas' and John Rutter's '*What Sweeter music*' (it's his birthday today – 69).

In January we once again welcomed a very good turnout of visiting singers for *Brahms German Requiem* and enjoyed Graham Eccles lovely organ playing, and super solo singing from Chis Booth Jones and Cathy Benson, both making very welcome returns to Nantwich.

In March we enjoyed a real highlight –Coleridge Taylor's - *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, Elgar's *Songs from the Bavarian Highlands* – both super pieces. Hiawatha, another much neglected former choral society favourite entertained us all, and we sang it really well although perhaps the orchestra got a bit carried away by the excitement of the piece and despite my best endeavours were occasionally a little too prominent.

However they came into their own in Elgar's *Enigma Variations*: they all seemed to know it backwards and I was amazed to finish the rehearsal with everything properly prepared and 10 minutes to spare. Much of this was due to Andy Long, the distinguished

cheerful and supportive leader of the orchestra who will be with us again for our next concert.

In the summer we performed something very different, and went back to the volume of English Church Music for a performance of anthems of motets spanning the 16th – 21st century. There were many positive comments afterwards from members of the audience who seemed to appreciate the running commentaries which Simon and I gave about each of the pieces. I hope that one benefit of that concert will be that we will have some repertoire to draw upon in the future if an appropriate occasion arises.

So from a musical point of view, a very successful year. We performed quite a wide range of music, from the little miniatures of Tallis to the blockbusters of Handel, Brahms and Coleridge Taylor, from Full blown orchestral works to Capella motets. We have mourned at a funeral, rejoiced at a wedding, and enjoyed some convivial hospitality together at summer and winter parties. We even pre-empted the last night of the Proms with a performance of John Tavener's *Song for Athene*

In general as a Society I believe that we go from strength to strength and I am convinced that, all things taken into account, we must be one of the best choral societies in our region if not further afield. There are frequent positive comments from some of the orchestral musicians who work with us, and I can assure that they don't hand out compliments gratuitously.

However before we wallow in a paroxysm of mutual admiration there are always aspects in any organisation which could be improved. I firmly believe from many years' experience that the best choirs continually reinvent themselves, and so should we. Here are a few things that we need to do:

Ladies: we could really do with a few more, especially sopranos – we seem to have lost some of our firepower in the recent past. I think some of you are a bit reticent or inhibited – occasionally it might be good to loosen your musical stays, throw caution to the wind and just let it all rip! Can I encourage you really to go for it when the occasion demands?

Gents: we are blessed, and by no means afflicted with a strong tenor section. However we could definitely do with some more basses (not just 1st basses). When one or two key members happen to be away, the difference is very noticeable. Ladies – please go out and grab some more men!

Tuning overall has improved markedly in recent years, but I remain cautious about letting you all loose on extended passages of unaccompanied singing. We still have work to do on breathing properly to support phrases properly and pitching whole tone intervals.

From an on organisational point of view, I am convinced that we don't always get the audiences that we deserve. We give great performances with invariably excellent orchestral accompaniment and very good soloists and our publicity machine gets better and better, but the fact remains in almost every choir that I know, the best people to ensure a good audience are the choir members themselves. Some people say that their family, friends and acquaintances aren't interested in the sort of music that we perform. My standard response is that they are interested in you and what you do: I can think of so many examples of people who first came to a choral concert out of a sense of loyalty to a friend or relation who was a performer and who have continued to come because they found, perhaps to their surprise, that they liked it. Please, please do try to encourage more and more people to come to our excellent concerts. If each of us brought two people, our audiences would be so much healthier.

My personal thanks are due to all the committee and those members with special responsibilities. I am sometimes asked why we are so successful overall as a Society, and my standard response is that we are very fortunate that we have many members who undertake a wide variety of tasks with the result that, unlike some organisations, the burden does not fall heavily on a very few people.

I continue to be profoundly grateful to my colleague Simon Russell for his support as our accompanist throughout the year. Now that he has returned to music as a full time occupation, Simon's more ebullient characteristics have come more to the fore: we have relished some of his more lively interjections; some of them have left us almost lost for years!

I have been very fortunate to work with three previous excellent chairmen of the Society and our present Chairman Elizabeth is no exception to this tradition. I am sure that we are all grateful for her energy, support and wise advice as she guides the Society through each of its seasons. I really hope she enjoys her last year in office.

We can confidently expect another exciting year in 2014 / 15. I am especially looking forward to the Singing Day next week because the repertoire contains some of my favourite pieces which I am looking forward to introducing to those of you who don't know them. The Peacemakers promises to be a great occasion: Karl Jenkins seems to have the knack of composing music which at first sight appears almost commonplace but in the event has the power to capture the spirit of the occasion at which it is directed. There's another new carol for Christmas with children's choir and bells, and in January we will invite our regular visitors and hopefully some new people too to come and sing Rossini's Petite Messe Solonelle, which you will recall is neither small in scale nor particularly solemn.

Judas Maccabeus which is scheduled for March was written by Handel to celebrate the English victory over the scots at the battle of Culloden. Whilst the result of the recent referendum should either be regarded as a victory for all of us or perhaps even better for none, but I am bound to say that if the Yes side had won we might have to have been persuaded to change the programme.

In the summer we have exchange concerts, home and away, with prospective friends in Ludenscheid in Germany when the principal item will be Haydn's wonderful 1802 Harmoniemesse. I've met them, I've sung with them and I can assure you that it will be a great musical and social experience.

So I hope that you look forward as I do to another exciting year of making music together. Each year I say, and I really do mean that it is a genuine pleasure and privilege to be entrusted with the musical direction of this Society. Thank you for your hard work, your friendship and your support. Please enjoy your singing in the season ahead.

JTN

24th September 2014

Election of Officers;

Chairman – Elizabeth Lea - proposed by Patrick Hay, 2nd by Maire Pedder

Vice-Chairman – Kay Foster – proposed by Elizabeth Lea, 2nd by Anne Barnard

Treasurer – Roger Boulton – proposed by Liz McCrone, 2nd by Ester Harries
Secretary – Rosemary Jones - proposed by Simon Russell, 2nd by Rita Davies
Committee members Ester Harries)
Bob Pugh) Reappointed en bloc
Eileen Robertson) - proposed by Wal Kaye
Rachel Pentecost) 2nd by Jenny Naylor
Tony Powell)
Sarah Worth)
Ian Wells)
Diane Wheatley)

The committee is at full strength. Many members with special roles are invited to attend committee meetings when relevant – Elizabeth thanked all those involved.

Janet Geeson thanked Ron Kelley for all the work he puts into the newsletters which are much appreciated.

Elizabeth Lea thanked the Society for their attendance & support.

The meeting closed at 7.42pm

Rachel Pentecost (Minute secretary)