

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of AGM held on 23rd Sept 2015 at Nantwich Methodist Church.

Present: The Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Music Director & 68 members of the Society.

Apologies: Anne Barnard, Martin Jones, Bob Pugh, Lena Hogben, Steph & Adrian Percy, Jenny Brown, Jane Tyre.

Elizabeth Lea took the chair & opened the meeting at 7.03pm

Minutes of the AGM held on 24th Sept 2014 had been distributed by e-mail/newsletter & adoption of these as an accurate record was proposed by Roger Boulton & 2nd by Diane Wheatley, all agreed.

Matters Arising – nil

Chairman's Report: Dr Elizabeth Lea

Nantwich Choral Society

Chairman's report for the AGM, 23rd September 2015

This is the Chairman's report for the Nantwich Choral Society 2014 – 2015

It has been a busy and impressive year, enjoyable and rewarding.

This season we sang three major concerts, invited Nantwich Young Voices to join us for the Christmas Carol concert, and hosted the educational singing day and the come and sing, both events being open to all singers. Additional singing engagements were carols at Rookery Hall, sung Eucharist at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and the exchange visit with Ludenscheid Oratorio in Germany.

Significantly we were able to engage orchestras for all three major concerts. We are especially grateful for a kind and most generous donation which allowed the society to engage an extra orchestra to perform '*Judas Maccabeus*'.

We welcomed a number of guests to our concerts this year. The Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, the High Sheriff of Cheshire, The Mayor of Nantwich Town Council, our local Member of Parliament and representatives from the Royal British Legion, the clergy and local Councils.

A new venture this season was the introduction of the theory of music course enthusiastically master-minded and delivered by Simon Russell and equally enthusiastically received and studied by 17 members.

The membership remains strong at 104 members.

Our policy on financial reserves is to hold £8,000 against unforeseen circumstances. We plan to keep the membership fee at £90 per annum for the forthcoming year.

Looking forward to next year's season we will be having our singing day in October at St Mary's Acton. The November concert will be Duruflé's '*Requiem*' and motets and Fauré's '*Cantique de Jean Racine*'. The Christmas Family Carol Concert will be in

December followed by the come and sing performing Haydn's 'Creation' in January. The spring concert in Holy week will be Bach's 'St John Passion'. The summer concert will be Todd's 'Mass in Blue'.

Sadly one of our longest serving members who did so much for the society Joyce Clegg died this year and some members were able to attend her funeral.

The society was handed over to me three years ago in very good shape and I am happy to be able to do the same for my successor. I have enjoyed very much being your chairman. Many hands make light work. Your committee is enthusiastic, knowledgeable, committed and hard working. Members with extended roles do them with quiet efficiency and good grace. I would like to thank all members 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. My report cannot be complete without special mention to our Music Director John Naylor and accompanist Simon Russell whom we thank for their fine leadership, good humour and musical talent.

I wrote the following paragraph as the welcome message for the St Matthew passion which was my first concert as Chairman. 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
Chairman
23rd September 2015

Treasurer's Report: Roger Boulton

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Treasurer's Annual Report 23rd September 2015

End of year accounts have been circulated, viz:

- 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 2013-14
- c) Balance sheet as at 31st August 2015

Balance sheet

Another financially stable year, we budgeted to run down our reserves a little. However we received an exceedingly generous donation to spend on concerts. Accordingly we were able to have an orchestra for Judas Maccabeus rather than the planned organ accompaniment. The balance gave us a year-end surplus of

£3k, which we will hold over to finance the orchestra for St John's Passion planned for the spring concert next year and then Elijah the year after in the Civic Hall.

We have a bank balance of £21,828.36. Of that £8,000 is held as a reserve to protect the trustees against unforeseen circumstances.

We also have outstanding monies due from Gift Aid scheme from HMG: two years due totalling an estimated £3750!

Concert Accounts

There was a budgeted loss of nearly £15k on concerts. The spring and summer concert audience figures remain disappointing; we must do better to sell more tickets. Exceptions were the Peacemakers concert and Carol concert.

The committee decided to raise the price of tickets by 50p to £12.50

Financial Activity

The concert account figures are carried over onto this.

Some Highlights:

Excellent work on fundraising particularly 200 Club which raised £1500 and the 'stalls' raising £800. Christmas raffle raised £1250 boosted another £1000 from Barclays matched funding

Grants did particularly well especially £1750 from Cheshire East and £500 from Nantwich Town Council

On expenditure we have a new line, "education". This demonstrates our commitment to the education part of our constitutional objectives. We supported Simon's course by funding the room hire.

The social fund expenditure represents hosting the Ludenscheid Choir visit

We have a turnover in excess of £40k

Proposal

1. I therefore recommend these accounts to you and ask for their adoption, subject to amendments, to send for audit.
2. Next year's budget assumes subscriptions for this coming year remain at £90.00 and ask you to accept that recommendation

Wal Kaye queried the names of our donors – RB stated that most are anonymous & donations fall within Charity Commission rules.

Summer concert receipts were down ? because content wasn't so appealing – Generally have a lighter theme in the summer – 2016 Will Todd's Jazz mass.

Formal acceptance of the accounts requested by Roger Boulton – Proposed by Diane Wheatley, 2nd by Elizabeth Lea, unanimous decision to accept.

Elizabeth Lea thanked Roger for his report & work over the year.

Music Director's Report: John Naylor

2014 / 15 was yet another great season for Nantwich Choral Society.

Once again, it seems to me a very long time ago since the beginning of last September – so much water has flowed under the bridge.

We started out with a slightly different Singing Day – based on the Blue Encore book. Much of what we sang was more humorous than our normal fare: some were a bit apprehensive when they saw that the menu included *The teddy bears picnic*, *I do like to be beside the seaside*, and *Old MacDonald had a Farm*. However there were some more serious items and even the spoken *Geographical Fugue*. I suppose the lesson we all learned was that even humorous and lighter music needs to be performed with skill as well as style. There was a good turnout on the day – it was great to welcome many of our attendees, and we had a most enjoyable day of singing together.

At our November concert we commemorated the beginning of the 1914-18 World war with a concert in which the principal work was Karl Jenkins *The Peacemakers*.

After a special arrangement of The National Anthem the concert began with a beautiful rendering by The Northern Concordia Orchestra of Elgar's achingly poignant *Sospiri*: what a wonderful sound they made, led by Andy Long. *The Peacemakers* is generally less familiar than 'the Armed Man' but it turned out to be just as moving and entirely appropriate for the occasion. We were all intrigued by the extensive percussion section, the four different flutes played by our flautist (not all at once), and a special novelty – the fretless (but amplified) bass guitar.

There was a very good audience for our Family Carol concert in December. As is usual we were joined by Nantwich Young Voices who seem to get better and better each year. We were delighted to have the bell ringers with us – they help to provide a special Christmas Sound, and Andrew Mildinhall wrote yet another lovely carol for us which included choir, children and bell ringers. A real highlight was the opening Chorus of Bach's Christmas Oratorio (sung in German). The whole work – difficult though it is – is on our target list for the future.

Some of us fitted in a quick side trip to Liverpool Cathedral to sing a Sunday morning service, masquerading as the Northern CONCORDIA Singers. However, No sooner was Christmas over than we were almost straight into our customary Come and sing Day – this time Rossini's *Petite Messe Solonelle*. (which as we all know is neither Small in scale nor is it solemn). As accompanists we had the St Mary's home team of Tony Metcalfe and Simon Russell, an excellent group of young soloists and a great time was had by all.

After that, it was straight into rehearsals for *Judas Maccabeus*. Most of us knew about this work's existence – (How could we not when 'See the conquering hero features in it') but few of us had actually sung the entire oratorio before. It turned out to have some choruses that we could get our teeth into, and some stunning solo arias – not least the tenor 'sound an alarm' and the wonderful bass arias sung by Jonathan Hyde who will be back with us next March.

Thanks to the very generous donation which we received, we were able to have our orchestra with us once again and their playing made all the difference to a musically very successful event.

We didn't have long after that to learn Haydn's Harmoniemesse for our visit to Ludenscheid. As has been reported elsewhere, this was a great success in every respect. We were able to contribute good number of singers to the combined choir and their tenor section (only two of them) was very grateful for the assistance. A lovely time of music making and making new friends. (The Mozart Pan pipe concerto was quite spectacular, not least the soloists calisthenics.)

The return match led our new German friends from Ludenscheid to Nantwich where we added the Missa in tempore Belli to make a double Haydn mass programme. What a thrill that was!

It's very difficult after such great amount of music in the season to pick out any highlights, and I'm sure we'll all have our favourite moments. If I was pressed, I might mention your very moving singing in The Peacemakers, The opening chorus of The Christmas Oratorio, and especially the Harmoniemesse in the June concert.

I should mention that each of our principal concerts had orchestral accompaniment: rather unusual, of course quite expensive, but my – much the better for each work, different though each of them were.

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 distinguished orchestral musicians who work with us, and I can assure that they don't hand out compliments gratuitously.

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: I said last year that we could really do with a few more, especially sopranos – although we seem to have regained some of our firepower over the last year and we are delighted to welcome some excellent new members. I still think some of you are vocally a bit reticent or inhibited: Can I continue to 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 still do with some more basses (not just 1st basses). When one or two key members happen to be away, the difference is very noticeable. So Ladies the request still stands - please go out and grab some more men!

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. 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.

One of the key challenges we face is how we fit into and arrange ourselves in St Mary's. To be honest, we didn't get the arrangement quite right for the March concert, and I accept responsibility for that. Of course for the summer concert we had the additional singers from Ludenscheid, so some ladies ended up standing for a very long time. I'm

very grateful to Eileen and Tony for all the work they do on planning the layout of our concerts. In its current configuration, St Mary's - beautiful though it is, is not an easy place to accommodate a large choir and orchestra. We will continue to work on this problem.

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. His music theory course turned out to be a great success and I'm certain that the choir as a whole has benefited from the enhanced skills of those who took part in it. We continue to relish some (if not all) of Simon's more lively interjections and we continue to wonder at his formidable renderings each week of even the trickiest orchestral accompaniments.

I have been very fortunate to work with three previous excellent chairmen of the Society and our outgoing 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 has guided the Society through her term of office. I am really looking forward to working with Kay. Amongst her many skills, it's reassuring to me when I go into wordsmith mode that she has an eagle eye for solecisms!

We can confidently expect another exciting year in 2015 / 16. I am especially looking forward to the Singing Day because the repertoire, very different to last year, has a unified theme of many composers' settings of 'Ave verum corpus'. I think you will be fascinated at the many different styles which we'll be exploring.

The Durufle and Faure pieces for our November concert are quite challenging – especially the Requiem, but on the evidence so far I'm sure they'll be a great success. A few years ago I might have avoided the motets, but I'm confident that, the way in which you are all singing now, we'll do them full justice. There's another new carol for Christmas, Nantwich Young Voices will join us once again and in January we will invite our regular visitors and hopefully some new people too to come and sing the ever popular Creation by Haydn.

I am really looking forward to Bach St John Passion here in St Mary's next March. It contains such a thrilling account of the Passion narrative and to be performing it with some outstanding soloists on our home territory will be something really to look forward to.

In the summer we have a complete change of gear – Will Todd's Mass in blue, so throughout the year there'll be quite a variety of types and styles of music to enjoy performing.

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.

Election of Officers;

Chairman – Kay Foster – proposed by Elizabeth Lea, 2nd by Roger Boulbee
Vice-Chairman – Elizabeth Lea – proposed by Roger Boulbee, 2nd by Ester Harries
Roger Boulbee – proposed by Elizabeth Lea, 2nd by Eileen Robertson
Treasurer – Tina Jones – proposed by Roger Boulbee, 2nd by Diane Wheatley
Secretary – Carol Seed – proposed by Rosemary Jones, 2nd by Rachel Pentecost
Committee members Ester Harries)
Bob Pugh) Reappointed en bloc
Eileen Robertson) - proposed by Grace Johnson
Rachel Pentecost) 2nd by Maire Pedder
Tony Powell) All agreed
Sarah Worth)
Ian Wells)
Diane Wheatley)

Elizabeth Lea said how much she had enjoyed being ‘Chair’ & thoroughly enjoyed the fantastic music & concerts we’ve performed. She appreciated the wise counsel & attention to detail of her Vice-chairs – Ron Kelley, Roger Boulbee & Kay Foster & is sure Kay will be an excellent ‘chair’. Elizabeth thanked Rosemary Jones for her 3 years as Secretary & her treasurers, Diane Wheatley, Roger Boulbee & Liz McCrone.

A huge thanks to - Eileen Robertson without whom concerts wouldn’t happen & her assistant Tony Powell

- to all ‘lifters & shifters’.

Bob Pugh – she can recommend helping him!

Ester Harries

Rachel Pentecost

Ian Wells who masterminded the exchange (& his sub-committee)

FoH – 1st impressions are only made once

Martin Jones for his success with grant applications

Anne Barnard who looks after guests on concert day

Sue Leadbetter – publicity – will need more help since she’s moved

Nick Smith – webmaster – always an excellent read.

David Jones who looks after the technical side of new website

Grace & David Johnson for the success of the 200 club

Fiona Field for the post concert parties

Ron Kelley for the newsletter

John Naylor & Simon Russell who are a joy to work with

Elizabeth wished Kay as much pleasure & enjoyment in the role as she had & was sure she could count on the Committee’s support.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm

Rachel Pentecost (Minute secretary)