



**Minutes of Wycliffe Choral Society Annual General Meeting
Held at pm Tuesday 28th November 2023
At Wycliffe Junior School**

Attendees: Chris Swain (MD), Nigel Baldwin (Chairman), John Cooper (Treasurer), Rosemary Robinson (Secretary) and 30 fully paid-up members of the Choral Society.

1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies

Nigel Baldwin welcomed everyone to the 15th annual general meeting of the Choral Society as an independent charitable society.

Apologies were received from John Gerrard and Val Nesbitt

2. Minutes of the fourteenth AGM held on 6th December 2022

The minutes had been circulated to all members and were approved by those members who had attended the meeting and signed with no amendments.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

4. Musical Director's Report

Chris Swain presented the attached report to the meeting

5. Chairman's Report

Nigel Baldwin presented the attached report to the meeting

6. Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts

6.1 John presented the attached report to the meeting.

6.2 John had previously circulated to all members copies of the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts, plus documents showing a profit and loss summary, historical and projected financial assets, historic membership numbers and ticket sales.

6.3 The Annual accounts being incomplete, it was proposed by Trevor Bartlett, seconded by Fiona Henderson and agreed by a show of hands that the Annual Report and Accounts be approved at an EGM early in the new year, once they are completed and inspected.

7. Election of Officers and Committee Members

7.1 Thanks were expressed to Nigel B and John Cooper who have resigned from the committee. The remaining committee members are willing to stand again.

7.2 It was proposed by Patrick Marks, seconded by Peter Hankins and passed by a show of hands that the following ex-officio members be re-elected, with thanks for the support they have already given the Society;

- Musical Director Chris Swain
- College liaison Gemma Russell
- Librarians Sharon Brown, Christine Brown and Suzanne Charlton

7.3 It was proposed by Pam Swain, seconded by Franklyn Bovey and passed by a show of hands that the following members be elected as Officers and Trustees:

- Rosemary Robinson Chair
- Alan Chambers Treasurer
- Sam Tolley Secretary
- Colin Rudall Vice Chair

7.4 it was proposed by Trevor Bartlett, seconded by Judith Morris and passed by a show of hands that the following members be elected as committee members:

- Katie Poole Assistant Treasurer, Membership Secretary
- Geoff Hudson Committee Member
- Gill Martin Committee Member
- Sharon Brown Committee Member

There is space on the committee for up to four more committee members who may be co-opted during the year.

8. Appointment of Bankers

John Cooper, Treasurer, sought the approval of the meeting to continue with CAF Bank on condition that they are able to continue to offer us a secure service. There are four authorized signatories - John Cooper, Nigel Baldwin, Katie Poole and Rosemary Robinson. John and Nigel will be removed and Alan and Sam will become authorized signatories

This was proposed by Angela Marks, seconded by Phil Goodwin, and agreed by a show of hands.

9. Appointment of Auditor or Certifying Accountant

Although there is no requirement to have the annual accounts inspected, the committee would like to continue with the practice of an independent inspection. It was proposed by Nigel Baldwin, seconded by Rosemary Robinson and approved by a show of hands that Trevor Bartlett continue to act as our Independent Examiner.

10. Charity Commissioner's compliance

Katie Poole, assistant treasurer, will submit the Charity Commissioner's Annual Return when it becomes due.

11. Any other business

Peter Hankins drew our attention to the fact that Pam Thorne, who sadly died this year, had been our social secretary. Peter is willing to assist in the arrangement of any social activities. He was thanked and assured that social events will feature in the plans for the coming year.

12. There being no other business the meeting closed at 2015hrs.

Music Director's Report for AGM 28th November 2023

I'd like to begin with a big thank you to those who sang in the Messiah on Sunday – we sang 20 choruses, and apart from one dodgy start they all went splendidly, with a good range of dynamics and some really moving moments. It was only when I was planning the timings for the afternoon rehearsal that I fully realised what a challenge we had taken on, but with our brilliant orchestra and soloists, I was confident that we would get away with it, and so we did, so thank you for all your hard work. It was pleasing that we had a good audience too, and I hope that the feedback from your guests was positive – congratulations to Peter Hankins who I gather from Colin, once again sold the most tickets. We can certainly look forward to our Painswick performance with confidence, and am very grateful to Peter Holmes for arranging the soloists for us, all members of Gloucester Choral Society – I rehearsed with the soprano and contralto a week or so ago, and this morning with the bass Gerry Walshe and the tenor, none other than Peter himself, all of whom are jolly good. Our accompanist James MacDowall Scott is the organist – he did a great job on the harpsichord on Sunday, so we can be assured that we will be in safe hands. I hope that you won't be too sorry to hear that I am proposing to shorten the performance a little, so that even with a generous interval, during which mulled wine and mince pies will be available, we will be finished by no later than 5pm. Do encourage family and friends to come – it's a 2.30 start which we thought would be particularly appealing, for those who prefer not to go out on winter evenings. We're rehearsing in St Mary's next Tuesday at 7.30, and we will send out info about parking etc nearer the time.

Our May concert seems like a very long time ago, but many of you will remember, that we performed an all-Mozart programme – the *Requiem* and *Coronation Mass*, with the orchestra contributing the *Linz symphony*. I hope that you enjoyed rehearsing two very different pieces by the same composer as much as I did, and we were again brilliantly served by our orchestra. George Ewart our regular leader was unavailable as he was playing for the Longborough opera season, so I was very grateful to Matt Denton of the Carducci Quartet for stepping into his shoes.

There's a lot more to putting on a concert than the music of course, and I'd like to thank those who help move furniture before and after our rehearsals and concerts in Chapel, those who volunteer to act as stewards, car park attendants and ticket sellers on the night, some of them not here this evening – not the most glamorous of tasks, but essential for the safe and efficient running of our concerts. We are also greatly indebted to Angela and Patrick Marks, who produced the splendid posters and programmes for both our *Messiah* and Mozart concerts, and to Colin Rudall for taking on the selling of tickets to members. Thanks also to our librarians, Sharon Brown, Christine Brown, and Sue Charlton, who are a model of efficiency, and to those who turn up to erase all those markings – as you know, the erasing party is in the Canal Trust Bookshop a week today and it would be good to have rather more people than last next time please – it's always a convivial occasion and rumour has it that there might be a little refreshment on offer this time. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Lorna Everett at Gloucester Music Library, for her continuing cooperation, and for her efficiency in sourcing our vocal scores and orchestral parts wherever possible. These are not easy times for libraries, and, not surprisingly, the borrowing costs have gone up markedly in recent years, but remain much cheaper than hiring directly from the publisher.

I would like to thank our accompanist, James MacDowall Scott – we are very lucky to have him and he is a real pleasure to work with. Also of course Julian Elloway, for taking rehearsals in my absence, as well as playing for a couple of recent rehearsals, one at very short notice when James was unwell. We should also record our thanks to Wycliffe College, who provide our rehearsal and performance facilities at no charge.

As you know our Society was founded in 1983, and many of us enjoyed a splendid dinner in Wycliffe Hall on April Fool's Day. It was a great pleasure to welcome a number of former members, who for age, health or other reasons, have had to stop singing with us, but who have fond memories of their time in the choir, particularly those who came on one or more of our overseas tours. Andrew Hopwood kindly provided some vocal entertainment for us, and I was surprised and delighted to be presented with a bespoke WCS weather vane, which now looks splendid on our garage. Thank you. The dinner was not a fund-raising event, but a number of those who attended and some here tonight, have kindly contributed to our Sponsor, Patron and Friends scheme, for which we are most appreciative, as we are to those who pay a little extra on top of their subscription. Putting on concerts is expensive, and although we raised our sub to £100 this season, it is still lower than most similar societies, and very much lower than some, and our current financial situation means that what we perform, is still very much determined by the size of the orchestra. We had the smallest possible orchestra for *Messiah*, just 16 players, which cost us about £1800, plus nearly £1000 for the soloists, totalling a relatively modest £2800, whereas if we were to do one of the great 19th century works such as Verdi's *Requiem*, we would need about 40 players which would cost around £4000, plus at least another £1200 for the soloists, totalling about £5200. John will give us a full account of where we stand financially at the moment shortly, but I have no doubt that he will agree, that we need to keep building our reserves, before we can plan on concerts costing £5000 plus.

For this reason, in the New Year, we will again be encouraging existing sponsors, patrons and friends to renew their commitment, and inviting others to join, or to top up their sub with a one-off donation.

My final thanks are to all the members of our committee, for all they do to ensure the smooth running of the society, and particularly our 3 principal officers, who are standing down this evening after many years of outstanding service. John

has been treasurer, since the founding of the society as an independent charity in 2008, an astonishing 15 years, and has looked after our finances with meticulous attention to detail ever since, dealing not only with subscriptions, payments to orchestra, soloists and suppliers of posters, tickets etc, but also all the finances involved in special events, such as dinners and tours. John has played a huge part in the successful running of the society and we owe him a very big thank you. I would also ask John to pass on our thanks to Ann, who gave tirelessly of her time and expertise over many years, to produce our brilliant posters and programmes, setting a very high bar for us to try to follow.

And now Rosemary, who has been our exemplary secretary for the last 8 years, and has brought her wide experience in many spheres to the role. Her minutes have always been accurate and succinct, but she has done a great deal more than provide minutes, not least of course the newsletters which keep us informed, not only of what's going on in the society, but also of events of interest in and around the area. During Covid she set up regular committee meetings via Zoom, which not only keep us in touch, but also lifted our spirits hugely - we have so much to thank her for.

And last but not least Nigel, who has had the task of trying to keep us all under control for the last 10 years, sometimes in challenging times, especially during Covid, and has done this unstintingly and brilliantly. There is much more to being chairman than chairing meetings, of course, as one is always aware that ultimately the buck stops with you, and Nigel has had some tricky issues to deal with over the years, which he has always handled with sensitivity and care. The committee and society have greatly benefited from his wisdom and experience, and I am personally enormously grateful for all the support and advice he has given me throughout his time as chairman. Thank you. Please show your appreciation to all the committee, and especially Nigel, Rosemary and John in the usual way.

We resume rehearsals back in here on Tuesday 9th January when we will start rehearsing the programme we gave in May 2016, and I'm particularly excited about it, as we will be involving pupils from both Wycliffe College and the Prep School in *Zimbe! Come sing the songs of Africa*. If you weren't with us in 2016, I can promise you that it is great fun, and we will combine this with two 20th century masterpieces, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*. Looking beyond this season, if you have works that you would love us to sing in our 2024-25 season, please do send me an email.

Do also tell friends, family and acquaintances that we would love them to join us in January, especially if they can sing, and are altos, as our alto section seems to have shrunk somewhat of late. I am sure that it is going to be another rewarding term, and in the meantime, for those not singing in Painswick, I wish you all the best for Christmas and the New Year, and look forward to seeing you in January.

Chairman's Report for AGM 28th November 2023

Welcome to you all. Chris has just given us an excellent summary of what we have been doing recently and not least emphasizing the success of last Sunday's *Messiah*. You may not realize how much effort he puts in finding and contracting the right number of excellent musicians for the orchestra and, of course, the hugely talented soloists. That is before the effort he has to consistently put in to turn us into a competent choir. So, thank you Chris. You can feel immensely satisfied and you should know how much we appreciate your good and conscientious work.

While giving thanks, let me also thank everybody for helping to make the recent concert go so well and not least by drumming up ticket sales. In particular, I would like to thank those of you who helped mount the concert by dealing with ticket sales before the concert, manning the entrances, handling ticket sales at the door, directing the car parking, setting out the chapel the day before and clearing up after the concert.

Our Treasurer John will give us some detail shortly about income for the concert and where we stand financially but I suspect he will say that we have got to continue to look at our finances quite carefully. You may recall that about a year ago we felt we needed a bit of financial reinforcement and some of you were generous enough to make a 'special one-off contribution of, sometimes, £100. We also increased the

annual subscription to £100 with effect from 1 Sep so that has helped considerably. Your committee will take stock again when we have analyzed this last concert and expected expenses next spring. While mentioning finance, I would also like to thank

Trevor Bartlett who does a lot of work as our Independent Financial Examiner. At no charge I should say which helps us of course.

Further thanks must go to Angela and Patrick Marks who took on the task of producing both the art work and the production of the adverts, tickets, flyers and, magnificently, the programmes for the *Messiah*. You will have noticed that this time programmes were issued free at the door. Again, the Committee will need to discuss that issue before the next concert.

Not surprisingly, concert costs are our major expenditure - the best part of £2600 for the soloists and orchestra for the recent concert. We are very fortunate that, unlike many similar choirs, we are not charged for the use of the Preparatory School and the Chapel. I continue to get supportive and appreciative messages from Mr. Nick Gregory, the College Head. Chris and I are very conscious about keeping him and his Head of Music Gemma Russell on our side. Similarly with our relationship with the Head of the Preparatory School.

We continue to be involved with the South Cotswold Big Sing Group (SCBSG) - now made up of Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale, and ourselves. The next major project will be a performance of Holst's *Hymn of Jesus* and Poulenc's *Gloria* in Gloucester Cathedral on Friday 12 July next year as part of the Cheltenham Music Festival rehearsals starting here on Tuesday 18 June. There will be a preliminary workshop on Saturday 20 April at The Crypt School in Gloucester. If you have participated before in such a venture, you should have received information recently. If not, I am sure Rosemary can send you the appropriate explanatory letter (dated 13 Nov 23) so that you can sign up for the 20 April workshop.

Finally, let me turn to Chris and to all of you on the Committee to thank you for all the conscientious work you do to keep our choir afloat.

In passing, we only managed to get a few advertisements in the last programme; we should try to improve that for the next concert.

Thank you too to Judith and Trish for working so hard to make this evening so enjoyable by organizing the drinks and mince pies we are about to consume.

Shortly we will turn to appointing a new Chairman (my 10-year stint is coming rapidly to an end), a new Secretary and a new Treasurer. Both Rosemary and John have served a long time and they really deserve some relief. I will cover each of those appointments shortly and also hopefully to be able to appoint some refreshment.

Finally, I thank you for the privilege of being your chairman for the last decade. It is about time someone took over from me but it has been a pleasure to continue to work with my splendid and hard-working Committee and with the other choir members who help to make our Society hum along. Thank you everybody.

Treasurer's Report for AGM 28th November 2023

Introduction

I must start by explaining that I was not able to prepare the accounts in time for them to be inspected, so what I have produced is provisional. However, although there may be small differences in the final versions, I am sure that they do substantially represent the Society's true position.

I will now give a few explanations, which will be much the same as for previous years. Many of you will have heard them before, but they are needed for those who are new (or have forgotten).

In their reports, Chris and Nigel have talked mainly of the calendar year now ending. However, the accounts I am presenting are for the financial year which began at the start of July last year and closed at the end of June this year. The accounts themselves have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis, which means that they record all transactions taking place during the financial year, even though some of these transactions relate to events occurring in the preceding or following financial years.

Although the accounts are broken down under various headings, there is no breakdown by event. So that you can see how the various events turned out I have also provided a Profit and Loss Summary for the year. This includes all transactions relating to particular events during the year, whether those transactions were in the financial year or not. It shows, under original forecast, what we planned at the beginning of the year and under Current, how things actually turned out.

Since the accounts themselves do not show clearly the Society's total assets at the year end, I have provided a table that does and that also shows the history to date.

The Actual Figures

Last year, I had to report an unsatisfactory year financially as we ended the financial year with a substantial decrease in the financial reserve. This year, I am pleased to report a much better year, although there was still a small deficit. The two areas making the greatest differences were members' subscriptions and donations. The membership subscription for the year was increased, but while that did not cause a reduction in membership, the actual number of members continued at the same lower level than that achieved several years ago. At the beginning of the year, we resolved to make great efforts to attract donations to the Society, both from members and others; the result saved us from another bad year, so thanks are due to all those who donated.

You may notice that, while the accounts show a small deficit for the year, the profit and loss show a small surplus. This is partly because receipts and payments for an event may actually occur in the preceding or following financial year (and appear in its accounts), but also because the anniversary dinner shows a substantial surplus and I think that some of its expenses may not be included there at the moment. Please remember that the accounts show the Society's actual position; I provide the profit and loss as guidance and cannot guarantee its absolute accuracy.

The Current Year

When planning the year, the forecasts we made would result in a significant loss for the year. The three main unknowns we have to deal with are the income from members' subscriptions and the ticket receipts for the two main concerts. Our guesses were not over-optimistic, but we hoped to be better in each case. Also, we did not make any estimate for donations. The actual performance so far on subscriptions is much as forecast and we will shortly see how we did on ticket sales for last Sunday's concert. Donations so far are considerably less than last year, so the actual ticket sales will determine whether there is a need to try harder now for donations. Hopefully, as the chapel seemed full, sales will have been good.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for putting up with me for all these years and leave you in the hands of my successor who, I am sure, will do an excellent job.