

# **Minutes of Wycliffe Choral Society Annual General Meeting**

## **7.45pm Tuesday 1st December 2015**

**Attendees:** Chris Swain (MD), Nigel Baldwin (Chairman), Rosemary Robinson (Secretary), John Cooper (Treasurer), Peter Hankins, Judith Morris, Richard Pryce, Pam Thorne, Sheelagh Witcombe and thirty-five fully paid members of 2015/16 choir season.

### **1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies.**

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

Apologies were received from Angela Scrivin and Bridget Fletcher

### **2. Minutes of the Sixth AGM held on 9th December 2014**

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. Reports**

#### **4.1 Musical Director's report.**

Chris Swain presented the attached report (Page4) to the meeting, and emphasised the thanks due to Fiona Henderson (tour soloist) Robin and Celia Harris (post tour party), John and Ann Cooper (posters and programmes), Sheelagh Witcombe (selling advertising), Nigel (publicity), Will Peart (accompanist, courtesy of Adrian Partington) Pat Bibby (transporting Will) and the committee.

#### **4.2 Chairman's Report.**

Nigel Baldwin presented the attached report (page 6) to the meeting.

#### **4.3 Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts**

John Cooper had circulated copies of the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts, the Profit and Loss Summary, Ticket Sales History and Financial Assets documents to members prior to the meeting. He gave the attached report (Page 8) to the meeting.

In answer to questions, John explained that there are differences on the totals for the Malta tour because costs were spread over two financial years. He confirmed that as orchestra members are not employees of the Choral Society, there is no tax or NI liability. The donation of 10p was an unidentified overpayment.

It was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by Robin Harris, and agreed by all present that the Accounts be approved.

## **5. Election of Officers and Ex-officio Committee members**

There were no new nominations.

It was proposed by Peter Hankins and seconded by John Cooper that Nigel Baldwin be re-elected Chairman. This was unanimously agreed.

Peter Holmes has resigned his post due to conflicting commitments. It was proposed by Robin Harris and seconded by Rosemary Robinson that the post of vice-chairman be decided at the first committee meeting of 2016. This was unanimously agreed.

It was proposed Robin Harris and seconded by Patrick Marks that the remaining officers Rosemary Robinson (Secretary) and John Cooper (treasurer) be re-elected. This was unanimously agreed

Chris Swain agreed to continue as Musical Director (ex-officio), and Gemma Russell has agreed to stand as Wycliffe College Liaison (ex-officio)

Sectional reps Celia Harris (Soprano), Patrick Marks (Bass) and Judith Morris (Alto) Julian Plested (Tenor) will continue in their roles.

Val Nesbitt and Roseanne Jamieson will continue as librarians.

## **6. Election of Committee members**

Pam Thorne has resigned from the committee.

Julian Plested was nominated by Rosemary Robinson, seconded by Peter Hankins, and unanimously elected. Thanks were expressed to Julian for his willingness to stand.

It was proposed by David Homer and seconded by Isobel Stanley that the existing Committee Members, Peter Hankins, Judith Morris, Richard Pryce, Sheelagh Witcombe and Bridget Fletcher be re-elected en bloc. This was unanimously agreed.

Nigel Baldwin proposed that a change to the constitution be made. At present the constitution states that there should be four officers and 6-8 other committee members. It is proposed that this should be four officers and 4-8 other members. This was seconded by Franklyn Bovey and was unanimously agreed.

As paragraph 14 of the Society's Constitution states that 14 days' notice should be given to members of the proposed change, the subject will be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

## **7. Appointment of Bankers.**

John Cooper, Treasurer, sought the approval of the meeting to continue with Lloyds Group and CAF Bank, with the proviso that it may be prudent to close the Lloyds Account when it is no longer active in any way. He explained that the CAF bank (owned by the Charities Aid Foundation) uses HSBC for paying-in and allows payments with dual signatories.

This was proposed by Pam Swain, seconded by Robin Harris and unanimously approved.

## **8. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts**

The Treasurer stated that Griffith Clarke, Chartered Accountants, Stonehouse, had again examined the accounts this year and had done so without charge. It was proposed by Pam Swain, seconded by Robin Harris and unanimously approved that Griffith Clarke remain as Account Inspectors.

## **9. Charity Commissioner's compliance**

Peter Hankins reported that the Annual Return would be submitted to the Charity Commissioners on line prior to the April deadline.

Peter explained that the Charity commissioner now advises that certain policies are in place, and this is likely to be mandatory in future. These policies only become important when problems arise. The committee have therefore drawn up the following policies, which were approved on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2015 and can be found on the website:

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Individuals
- Financial Management
- Volunteers
- Complaints
- Conflicts of Interest
- Data Protection
- Risk Assessment and Management

Feedback from choir members is welcome, and these policies may change in future to reflect their use.

## **10. Any Other Business**

The next Committee Meeting will be Thursday 14th January 2016 in Selsley West.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Rosemary Robinson, Secretary, Wycliffe Choral Society.

Signed as a true record of the meeting..... Chairman

## Music Director's Report for AGM 1st December 2015

I think we have to begin by congratulating ourselves on Sunday's concert – I was very pleased with how it went, as I hope you were. I remember saying last year in connection with the St John Passion, that there is no such thing as an easy piece of Bach, and if you were in any doubt then, I'm quite certain that you won't be any longer. The Magnificat lasts just half an hour of which the choruses total only about 10 minutes, but it didn't take long to realise that brevity and simplicity don't necessarily go hand in hand. The sopranos had the worst of it as they had to divide themselves into two, but you all had to cope with lots of semiquavers at break neck speed, which is all very exciting, but if you switch off for a mere moment and lose your place, it's almost impossible to get started again before the chorus is over - especially when there are some very exposed moments such as a very short '*superbos*' followed by a rest. I have to confess that there were times early on when I began to wonder if we'd bitten off more than we could chew, but after our Half Term break, it gradually became clear that all those sectionals and time spent listening to the Choral line CD's had paid off. Once again we had risen to the challenge, and the very fact that many of us felt that we had been well and truly stretched, I hope made the sense of achievement on Sunday all the more satisfying. Nonetheless I did sense a collective sense of relief when we got to the Haydn, as compared with the Magnificat, the Nelson Mass was a stroll in the park, and clearly one we greatly enjoyed, so well done everyone – I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. We were well served by our soloists, of course, Hannah, Lucy, Anne, Roland and Martin, and indeed our orchestra, so that overall, I think it was a very successful and enjoyable evening.

It seems a very long time ago but some of you may remember that earlier in the year we rehearsed Beethoven's *Mass in C* and Poulenc's *Gloria*, not obvious bedfellows perhaps, but I certainly enjoyed the contrast as I'm sure many of you did. They went well in performance with even that opening phrase of the *Gloria* which, as you may remember, gave the basses a few issues in rehearsal, going all right on the night, and Mary Morgan gave a memorable performance as our soprano soloist. A couple of weeks later 50 of us including a small number of partners flew to Malta, where we gave three further performances with organ accompaniment provided by Joe Laming. Joe did a fantastic job for us, as did our 4 soloists Mary Morgan, Roland Kitchen, Andrew Hopwood and not least, of course, our very own Fiona Henderson, and I would like to record our special thanks to Fiona for her considerable contribution to the success of the tour. I think we all found Malta and Gozo very interesting and enjoyable places to visit and I would like to thank Celia and Robin Harris for kindly hosting the post tour party and for guaranteeing a warm summer's evening.

There's much more involved in putting on successful concerts than the music, of course, and I would like to thank John and Ann for producing such first class posters and programmes, Sheila for collecting all those Adverts and Nigel for looking after the publicity. We are also indebted to those who organized and helped with the front of house, selling tickets, car parking, moving furniture etc. - some of them partners, who are not here this evening - please pass on our thanks. I would also like to thank the small band of folk who spent 3 hours cleaning up scores this morning - we must clearly do more to encourage people to volunteer next time.

I would also like to thank Will Peart, who unfortunately can't be here tonight as he is in London in preparation for an audition tomorrow morning, both for his accompanying and taking the sectional rehearsals, and Adrian Partington, the Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral, whose cooperation enables this arrangement to continue to our great benefit.

When we resume on January 5<sup>th</sup> we have a particularly enjoyable programme to look forward to, *Zimbe! Come sings the songs of Africa*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*. Do encourage anyone whom you think might be suitable and interested to come and join us – everyone is going to love Zimbe! I can promise you. I have not made any definite decisions for the 2016 – 17 season as yet, but if we are to think about another tour in 2017, we would have to

do a programme that will work with organ accompaniment for our May concert, and I'm wondering about the Rutter *Requiem* and Vaughan Williams *Mystical songs* neither of which we have done since 2004, and possibly *Elijah* in November. If anyone has comments on these, or suggestions of other works we should consider, please do have a word with me.

My final thanks go to our Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and all members of the committee, who have given of their time and expertise so tirelessly and generously to ensure that we have had another successful and enjoyable year. I would ask you to join me in showing our appreciation to Nigel, Rosemary, John, and all members of the committee in the usual way.

# Chairman's Report for AGM 1st December 2015

## Introduction

After Chris's descriptions of our musical achievements over the last year and of our future programme, there is no need for me to repeat the story so let me just say how much I, and I hope all of you, enjoyed singing the Bach and Haydn 2 days ago. To immerse yourself into Bach and singing so close to the orchestral players gives a wonderful feeling and sometimes high emotion. Bach would have written his Magnificat for a very small choir and not many instrumentalists - I wonder what he would have thought of our performance!

## Other activities throughout the year

One of the most attractive aspects of our choir is that we don't just create two worthwhile concerts a year. We try to encourage the social aspects of belonging to such a group of fairly like-minded people by organizing trips to the opera, to sing with others and, using the initiative of members, several other activities. Our chief organizer, Peter Hankins, began the year by introducing many of us to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's massed choirs singing of Mozart's *Requiem* under their inspiring choir director Simon Halsey. It was a most extraordinarily satisfying day so, as you know, many of us are going to repeat the experience - this time Haydn's *Creation*, at Symphony Hall on Sunday 24 January. Just wait for the moment early on in the Book of Genesis when Haydn produces such a sound to mark the moment when suddenly **light** appears on the scene. At the first performance in Vienna in 1798, the orchestra was so shattered, it had to stop for several minutes to recover. Anyway, back to us.....

A few days after that, at Mary Matthew's initiative, several of us will be going to Slimbridge in the evening to watch the Bewick swans being fed, and then have supper together. Recently, Peter Hankins, now a fully qualified Gloucester Cathedral guide, complete with badge, which he tells me he pins to his pyjamas at night, gave some of us a fascinating afternoon touring the Cathedral. In late September, Chris organized a walk around Painswick one sunny Saturday morning. So several activities which all go to make membership of our choir so satisfying.

On a sad note, a month or so ago about 30 of us represented the choir at the funeral of long time choir member, the late Geoff Lewis.

Perhaps the most challenging external event during 2015 was the tour in late May to Malta. Chris, using all of his long experience of organizing such tours, pulled out the stops. 50 of us thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and we owe you, Chris, a big thank you for all the time and effort you put into the planning and subsequent execution. And I would like to thank his wife Pam too who helped him enormously behind the scenes to make the tour such a success not least by keeping a close eye on those who are no longer fleet of foot.

In thanking Chris specifically, thank you too Peter and Mary for all your efforts. They make our choir bigger than the sum of its parts - we are very grateful.

A brief mention of activities with other local choirs: Rosemary, Chris and I continue to represent us in meetings of the South Cotswold Choral Group (SCCG) - made up of Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale and ourselves - as the latter works towards singing Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in the Cathedral on Saturday 11 June next year; and, much further ahead - on Saturday 14 July 2018 - singing Berlioz's *Requiem* again in the Cathedral this time with the City of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Finally, let me turn to Chris and to the Committee and to thank them for all the conscientious work they do to keep this show alive. I thank you all on the Committee - ex-officio members too - for your conscientious, enthusiastic and hard work. A lot goes on behind the scenes from selling and fixing ticket sales, advertising, car parking ('special thank you here for David Scrivin and Brian Witcombe who will have spent a miserable hour or so out in the wet on Sunday evening), library functions, constructing the programme, (and here I must thank John and Ann Cooper and Chris for creating our marvellous programmes, and also with Chris creating our first "Members Handbook"). I would like to thank Sheelagh too for getting us so much advertising. Others helped to organize outings and walks, set out chairs, man the entrance at concerts, create a Christmas tree in St Laurence's church, and not least work so hard to make our after concert and this evening's parties so convivial (Judith, I look to you especially) - and then clearing up afterwards, and putting the Chapel back together late at night when everybody is exhausted. And not to forget this morning's "rubbing out" party - 10 of whom turned up - we could do with more help next time.

Also, thinking back to our rehearsals, we should all appreciate Pat Bibby's willingness to bring our accompanist Will Peart from Gloucester every Tuesday evening.

It has been a privilege to have been your Chairman over the last year - you are a pleasure to work with. Thank you everybody.

# Treasurer's Report for AGM 1st December 2015

## Introduction

Good evening. I will begin with 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 year, even though some of those transactions relate to events occurring in the preceding or following financial years. Although the accounts are broken down under various headings, again 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 hoped for 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. I have also prepared a chart and table of ticket sales for our main concerts

## The actual figures

We had reasonably satisfactory year financially. Those who were here last year may remember me reporting that for the previous year, like the one before it, we had budgeted for a deficit, in this case of £1300 and that the final outcome was a deficit for the year's events of over £1600.

When planning for last year, we were yet again faced with rising costs as well as the fact that we were already running at a loss. We decided that, although we still had substantial reserves, it would be prudent to at least try and reduce the deficit. We had held subscriptions unchanged for the first six years of our existence as an independent society and, following a consultation with the members, we increased the subscription rate. There was a drop in membership for the year, but it was small, from 105 to 97, which is about our normal level. The final deficit for the year's events was £805, against an original forecast of £440.

As usual, our turnover was distorted by overseas tour payments. Although technically part of our turnover, for most of the tour payments we are effectively agents of the tour company, just collecting travel and accommodation payments from members and passing them on to the company.

I do not propose to go through the figures in detail, but will be happy to answer any questions at the end.

### **This year**

When planning the year from last July to next June, although we were still running a deficit, we decided to keep our subscription and ticket prices unchanged. We felt able to do this as we still have substantial reserves, although we sought to reduce losses to some extent by changing the programme for our recent concert, from one requiring a large orchestra, to one needing a much smaller and thus less costly ensemble.

We budgeted for unchanged membership numbers and ticket sales, but have unfortunately been disappointed on both counts. Membership is down by about 10 (a shortfall of about £600) and ticket sales at the recent concert were (provisionally) about 150, against a budget of 230; that is a shortfall of £800. I believe that the Society offers excellent value for the subscription we charge and I think we should all consider what we can do, both individually and together, to encourage more people to join us. Similarly, we need to work out how to increase our ticket receipts.

I am sorry to finish on an unhappy note, but we have recovered from poor sales before and I am sure that we can do so again.