



Attendees: Chris Swain (MD), Nigel Baldwin (Chairman), John Cooper (Treasurer), Katie Poole, Jennifer Lindop and 21 fully paid up members of the Choral Society.

1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies

Nigel Baldwin welcomed everyone to the 12th annual general meeting of the Choral Society as an independent charitable society.

Apologies were received from Drusilla Fairgreave, Alice Adams, Mike and Bev Doherty, Pam Thorne and Peter Holmes.

2. Minutes of the eleventh AGM held on 3rd December 2019

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. Chairman's Report

Nigel Baldwin presented the attached report to the meeting

5. Musical Director's Report

Chris Swain presented the attached report to the meeting

6. Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts

6.1 John Cooper reported that as not much has happened in the last 12 months the reports appear a little different. The Autumn concert made a loss, but as there was no Spring concert, and the Burn's night social raised a small profit, the year was more profitable than usual.

6.2 John had previously circulated to all members copies of the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts, the Profit and Loss Summary, and Financial Assets documents to members prior to the meeting. The accounts had not yet been inspected by the accountants and so could not be adopted at the AGM. It was agreed that a Special General Meeting will be opened in January 2021 for approval of the accounts once inspected.

6.2 It was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by Patrick Marks and agreed by a show of hands that the accounts be approved subject to inspection.

7. Election of Officers and Committee Members

7.1 Thanks were expressed to Donna Burns who has resigned from the committee, but will continue to help with front-of-house and Soprano rep. There were no new nominations; the remaining committee members are willing to stand. Members are encouraged to consider standing for co-option when the choir returns to normal functioning.

7.2 It was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by Patrick Marks and agreed by a show of hands that the remaining officers and committee members be re-elected:

Nigel Baldwin (Chairman)
John Cooper (Treasurer)
Rosemary Robinson (Secretary)
Jennifer Lindop (Vice Chair)

Katie Poole
Richard Pryce
Pam Thorne
Jennifer Thorne

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

7.4 Val Nesbitt and Rosanne Jamieson have resigned and were thanked for their valuable contribution over the past ten years. They are training Sharon Brown to take over when we re-convene in 2021. Sharon will need an assistant.

7.5 Sectional representatives Donna Burns (soprano), Caroline Segelov (alto), Richard Pryce (Tenor), and Patrick Marks (bass) agreed to continue in their roles.

8. Appointment of Bankers

John Cooper, Treasurer, sought the approval of the meeting to continue with CAF Bank. There are four authorised signatories - John Cooper, Nigel Baldwin, Katie Poole and Rosemary Robinson.

This was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by Roseanne Jamieson, and agreed by a show of hands.

9. Appointment of Auditor or Certifying Accountant

The Treasurer stated that GCSD Chartered Accountants, Stonehouse, had agreed to examine the accounts this year without charge. It was proposed by David Homer, seconded by Jenny Lindop and approved that GCSD remain as Account Inspectors.

10. Charity Commissioner's compliance

Katie Poole confirmed that we are compliant with the Charity Commission and she will submit the Charity Commissioner's Annual Return when it becomes due.

11. Any other business

11.1 South Cotswold Big Sing Group Rosemary reported that as with everything else, nothing is yet set in stone regarding performance of the Mahler. At present Cheltenham Festival feels that the safest option is to proceed cautiously and work on the assumption that social distancing will still be in place through next summer. Naturally, this makes the Mahler impossible to stage and it is expected to be postponed until 2022 – we are waiting to hear possible dates for the Cathedral. The SCBSG workshop scheduled for April 7th 2021 will also probably be cancelled

11.2 Mary Matthews reported that she has been told by Brough Girling that Stroud Choral have been singing in Minchinhampton Church, which holds up to 40 singers. She asked if there was a chance that WCS could meet there to sing. It was discussed that there would be a cost to this, and some members of the choir would not want to meet until the vaccine is rolled out, by which time we may be able to meet at the college, but the Committee will discuss this possibility at their next meeting.

11.3 Peter Hankins asked that the committee do more to keep in touch with the membership and let them know what is happening. Nigel said that all members will receive the minutes of this AGM and Rosemary will continue to send out newsletters.

11.4 Val Nesbitt thanked all members who had helped her and Rosanne with erasing copies, and for the prompt return of copies.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.20pm

Chairman's Report for AGM 8th December 2020

From my point of view as Chairman, there is not much to report. I am grateful especially to our Secretary Rosemary Robinson for continuing to keep us all informed during the year with her regular newsletters; and to John Cooper for keeping our accounts under control. And, of course, to Chris Swain for constantly thinking about when and how we might go ahead and what we might do as soon as we get the chance.

You will realise that the critical path for next year will be the availability of the Prep School for rehearsals and for the Chapel for concerts. Chris is our key contact there with the College and Prep School. He will tell us more shortly.

When the light begins to shine, your Committee, probably via Zoom, will decide our way ahead progressively and Rosemary will keep you constantly in the picture.

Music Directors Report for AGM 8th December 2020

This time last year as you may remember, we were celebrating a successful and enjoyable performance of Haydn's *Creation* and I also thanked those who sang choruses from *Messiah* and a few from *Creation* at the Methodist Church concert on the previous Sunday evening, and Sue Alexander for organising it – all was seemingly well with the world – little did we know what lay ahead. We reconvened in January full of optimism, and perhaps a little trepidation, to take on the challenge of Beethoven's mighty *Missa Solemnis*, for the first time in our 36-year-old history, in celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. I said that the *Missa Solemnis* is regarded as one of the greatest and most thrilling of all choral works, and that it should be on all choral singers' bucket lists, as opportunities to sing it do not come round all that often. What I didn't say of course, was that at least part of the reason for this, is that it is jolly difficult, as we soon discovered. There were 6 Tuesday rehearsals remaining, when sadly we had to stop rehearsing in March, just as we were beginning to reap the fruits of all our hard work, and hopefully, starting to enjoy preparing for the concert. I think that we had all been finding it challenging, and I was aware that some thought that it was a step too far, but I was looking forward to the performance and was increasingly confident that we would, as always, give a good account of ourselves. Attendance at rehearsals had been consistently good, and I was most grateful to everyone for your hard work and patience during several weeks of sectionals, and for the homework that members put in, which expedited our progress. I would particularly like to record out thanks to Mary Pan, for taking the sopranos and altos so effectively, and for her accompanying – I can't think of another work which is more difficult to score read. I was also grateful to those who joined us especially to sing the *Missa Solemnis* and they certainly made a difference.

After all this hard work, it would have been a great pity if we were unable to perform it, and during the summer, I was still hoping that we might be able to resume rehearsals, in time to prepare for a performance in the Autumn, which would still have been during the Beethoven 250th anniversary year. Our soloists and orchestra had all confirmed that they were available on November 29th, so there would need to have been very few changes, to the splendid poster, which Ann and John had produced for us. Sadly, it was not to be of course, and as you know, we have now collected in the copies, and the librarians and I are most grateful to everyone, for how smoothly that process worked. We only had to replace one copy, and I'd like to thank Rosanne Jamieson and Val Nesbit, for checking and sorting them all, and getting them back to the Library. Rosanne and Val are stepping down, after performing their role with impressive efficiency and cheerfulness for many years, and I'd like to thank them on behalf of us all. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Lorna Everett at Gloucester Music Library for her cooperation and support during what has been a very difficult time for her and all library staff.

I was very grateful to those who responded to the rehearsal survey, sent out at the end of August, which was a great help to the committee in deciding how best to proceed, and I'm sorry that those who were hoping to get back to singing as soon as possible, are having a longer wait than we had hoped. I am sure you appreciate however, that Wycliffe, along with all other schools, has had to prioritise the safety of its pupils and staff, and that they concluded, in the best interests of both us and them, we should not rehearse in the PAC for the time being. I remain well in touch, however, and am still going into the Prep School for a short time each week to teach theory, and last week accompanied 4 pupils in ABRSM exams in Stroud. I wear a mask and/or a visor, there's lots of hand sanitizer, staggered lunch times and the pupils are in a year group bubbles, all of which they have taken in their stride, but although things are very different, the

pupils are as happy and enthusiastic as ever. Choir and other music activities are going on, but again in year group bubbles, so spare a thought for the staff – there are 5-year groups in the senior school and Gemma Russell was telling me the other day, that they are about to start recording each year group choir separately, for their online carol service, which I hope Rosemary will be able to forward to you when it becomes available.

Looking ahead to next year, today's start of the vaccination process is great news, but the roll out is clearly going to take several months, and my expectation is that the current rules about social distancing and groups gathering, are unlikely to change significantly until at least April. If the situation has changed sufficiently by Easter (April 4th), and Wycliffe agrees that we can rehearse in the PAC again, it may be possible for those who wish to, to get together again for the sheer pleasure of singing, and perhaps to prepare for an Evensong in a local church? - St Mary's Painswick perhaps? Wycliffe Term begins on 19th April, so we could start on Tuesday 20th, working towards a Sunday in late May. The committee will keep monitoring the situation, and when we have a clearer idea of how things are developing, Rosemary will update you in the newsletter

Hopefully by September, sufficient people will have received one of the vaccines, for a degree of normality to have returned, and that members will be both keen and confident enough to resume singing again, and I'm sure that we are all looking forward to that. Having been starved of choral singing for so long, I hope that you will take very opportunity in the new year, to tell friends, family and acquaintances how much you have missed its delights, and how good singing in a choir is for our mental health and encourage them to come and join us. I see September as an opportunity to revitalise our choir, and to this end, I think we should choose something relatively straightforward and enjoyable, so that we can ease ourselves gently back into singing, and that is likely to attract new members. I'm afraid that this means those who were hoping that we would pick up the *Missa Solemnis* where we left off, will have to wait a while, though hopefully not until Beethoven's 300th anniversary. For now, I would love to have your suggestions of works that you, and you think others would like to sing, so please give it some thought and email me your ideas. As you may remember, one of the things I did during the first lockdown, when I should have been tidying my study, was to make a list of all the concerts WCS has done since we started in 1983. Perhaps Rosemary could send it again please, as it may give you some ideas, but please also do feel free to suggest something new – I'm always pleased to be introduced to new repertoire.

I would now like to give a special word of thanks to Rosemary for all she does to keep us all informed via the weekly newsletters, and to Nigel, John and the whole committee who are continuing to meet regularly via Zoom to digest the latest developments with the virus and decide how best to proceed. Thanks also to Mary Matthews for organizing a super walk around Minch, on a glorious Saturday morning in September – there was a great turn out, and if anyone else would like to offer to organize another walk in the Spring I am sure that it would be much appreciated. I must also officially thank our accompanist, Mary Pan, the Gloucester Cathedral organ scholar, and Adrian Partington, the Director of Music, whose cooperation enables this arrangement to continue to our great benefit, and those who volunteered to drive Mary to and from rehearsals. I have met up with Mary a couple of times since March for a walk and am pleased to report that she has remained remarkably positive and cheerful, and, as those who listened to her brilliant recent recital will have appreciated, she has relished the opportunity to do lots of organ practice. We should also record our thanks to Wycliffe College, who in normal times provide our rehearsal and performance facilities at no charge, and I am looking forward greatly, as I'm sure we all are, to the day when we can meet back in the PAC again to sing, and I can see your smiling faces in the flesh. I think we should also plan on having a purely social event again next Autumn – an evening at the Stroud Brewery perhaps? and in the meantime, don't forget to let me know what you would like to sing.