



**Minutes of Wycliffe Choral Society Annual General Meeting  
Held at 7.45pm Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
At Wycliffe Junior School**

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

**1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies**

Nigel Baldwin welcomed everyone to the 13th annual general meeting of the Choral Society as an independent charitable society.

Apologies were received Joy Way, Celia and Robin Harris, Jen Thorne and Jane Hoogewerf

**2. Minutes of the twelfth AGM held on 8th December 2020**

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 presented the attached report to the meeting.

**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.

**6.3** 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.

**6.4** John confirmed that we use gift aid but conceded that new members this year had not been signed up. He will rectify this.

**7. Election of Officers and Committee Members**

**7.1** Thanks were expressed to Jenny Lindop and Richard Pryce who have resigned from the committee the remaining committee members are willing to stand

**7.2** Rosemary Robinson took the chair, and it was proposed by Patrick Marks, seconded by Fiona Henderson and agreed by a show of hands that Nigel Baldwin be re-elected Chairman.

**7.3** Nigel Baldwin took the Chair, and it was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by Eve Chandler and agreed by a show of hands that the following officers and committee members be re-elected:

John Cooper (Treasurer)  
Rosemary Robinson (Secretary)  
Katie Poole  
Pam Thorne  
Jennifer Thorne

**7.4** It was proposed by Trish Jones and seconded by Pam Thorne that the following members be elected to the committee:

Jan Hoogewerf – proposed by Rosemary Robinson seconded by Nigel Baldwin  
Geoff Hudson – proposed by Rosemary Robinson seconded by Nigel Baldwin

Gill Chester – Proposed by Pam Swain, seconded by Rosanne Jamieson  
Gill Martin – proposed by Rosemary Robinson seconded by Nigel Baldwin

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

**7.6** Sharon Brown is willing to continue as librarian, with assistance as required.

**7.7** Sectional representatives Eve Chandler (soprano), Pam Thorne (alto), Geoff Hudson (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 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.

This was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by Gill Martin, 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 Fiona Henderson, seconded by Peter Hankins 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 plans are going ahead to sing the Mahler Symphony No 8 'Symphony of a Thousand' in July 2022. A workshop will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2022 at the Crypt School in Gloucester. Details will be circulated to previous singers after Christmas and Rosemary will circulate details to all members with the Newsletter. Clearly these arrangements could fall foul of the Covid pandemic, but we will continue in the hope that this will not be so.

**11.2** Peter Hankins asked for reassurance that letters of thanks will be sent to the accountants, librarian, the headmaster and head of music. Nigel assured the meeting that these letters had either been sent already or would be sent shortly.

**11.3** As 2022 will be the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Choral Society, it is hoped that a celebration will take place, as long as Covid restrictions allow. Peter Hankins kindly offered to help with the preparation of this celebration.

**11.4** In response to a question from Mary Matthews, John Cooper confirmed that the reserves stand at £7,500. If we make the forecast loss predicted this will, of course not last long. It was suggested that the committee investigate Art Council funding

**11.5** in response to a question from Gill Martin, John Cooper confirmed that we use gift aid, but conceded that new members this year had not been signed up. He will rectify this.

**11.6** It was pointed out that not all new starters stay and become members. Reasons given for leaving were the type of music, the skills required and personal circumstances. Nicky and Colin Rudall said that they were made to feel very welcome. It was agreed that all existing members should be prepared to make new singers welcome and help them where necessary, as section reps are not always available. It would perhaps help if we all wear badges at the start of term, and where possible a 'buddy' should take care of new joiners.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.35pm

## Chairman's Report for AGM 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021

What a strange year it has been. Despite not being able to meet physically as a committee, we have managed to keep the idea of the Society alive, and I am particularly grateful to Katie and Rosemary for setting up Zoom meetings and then recording them conventionally.

Chris has covered most of the ground, so I will begin by giving my own thanks to everybody for helping to make the recent concert go so well and not least by drumming up ticket sales. The latter turned out to be more than I feared so well done everybody. 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. Then helping to clean all the music scores last Tuesday afternoon - 10 of us turned up but it still took over 2 hours. I am sorely tempted to give prizes to the best and worst choir member. You would be surprised at what some people scribble over their copies. Our Treasurer John will give us some detail shortly about income for the concert, but I suspect he will say that we have got to look at our finances quite carefully. I must also thank John's wife Ann for yet again constructing the magnificent programme - it really is the best I ever see around the world of concerts. Finally, thank you to Pam and Chris for, I suspect, looking after the soloists.

With the proposed next concert being Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man," recalling the last time we put it on, we should get a good audience for that which should see us in reasonable financial health next year.

Not surprisingly, concert costs are our major expenditure - the best part of £2900 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.

At the moment, your committee's policy remains to try to keep members' annual subscription at £70 and the concert ticket price at £12.50 for as long as we can. The recent experiment of giving a £1 discount if tickets are bought early seems to encourage early bookings. Personally, I am not sure about the ticket price. It has been static for several years. I think we could probably charge more - say £15 - when I think about what we are offering and looking at ticket prices of other somewhat similar organizations. Assuming I am re-elected as Chairman shortly, I will discuss this with colleagues at our next Committee meeting. But I am sure you appreciate the emphasis must always be on overall ticket sales and that is where you all come in.

We continue to take an interest in the South Cotswold Big Sing Group (SCBSG) - now made up of Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale, and ourselves. The next major project for the Group will be taking part in next year's Cheltenham Festival in a performance of Mahler's 8th Symphony in Gloucester Cathedral on Saturday 16 July. The Group is hoping to recruit 200 singers from the various choirs, and I know some of you have already signed up. Chris as usual will be training about 50% of the singers mostly here in Stroud. The first Workshop will be held in The Crypt School in Gloucester on Saturday 23 April.

I am grateful to Rosemary who represents us in Group committee meetings especially when I cannot attend. She will continue to keep us all in the SCBSG picture in her regular Newsletters.

I would like to thank those of you who have taken some of the load from Rosemary and me of collecting and taking back home our Gloucester Cathedral accompanist and organist James. In particular, Eve Chandler's parents are now taking him back to Gloucester regularly which is a great help.

One final request: you will have noticed that our choir numbers have been down this term from about the traditional 80 to roughly 55. Much of that reduction will have been because of Covid concerns of course. Assuming things become more relaxed in the New Year, please do your best to encourage some newcomers to join us next term.

Finally, let me turn to Chris and to all of you on the Committee to thank you for all your conscientious work you do to keep our choir afloat. I've already thanked many of you who help make our concerts so successful. 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 organising the drinks and mince pies we are about to consume.

One final word: We are so fortunate to have Chris as our Musical Director. We would be lost without him, he leads us along paths both traditional and new, and we are all the better for that. Chris: you are very much appreciated.

I thank you for the privilege of being your chairman for the last year. As have been saying for at least 3 years, 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.

## Music Directors Report for AGM 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021

I'd like to begin with a big thank you to those who sang in the concert just over a week ago – it hadn't been the easiest build up to a performance, with social distancing, doors, and windows wide open etc, but I hope you thought that the performance did justice to all your hard work. I'm not sure that everyone knew how this particular programme came about, newcomers certainly won't, but some of you may remember, that deep in one of the lockdowns when it became clear that Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, was off the agenda for the foreseeable future, we conducted a survey asking members what they would like to sing. There were a number of suggestions, including works that we have not yet performed, which all go into the melting pot, but I hope that he won't mind mentioning that, first out of the blocks was Geoff Hudson. He suggested repeating a programme from May 2009, Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine* and *Requiem* and Rutter's *Magnificat*, first performed in the Chapel and then a few weeks later in Spain, during our tour based in Segovia. This was also mentioned by one or two others, and I remembered it well myself, and thought that it was well suited to these challenging times, with a reflective first half and a more optimistic 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The committee were happy with it too, so it was an easy decision, and I went ahead and booked the scores from the library, and provisionally the orchestral parts from OUP. Having done that, I didn't give it a lot more thought, until we had the go ahead from Wycliffe that we could resume rehearsals in September.

Then, as I began to look at the *Magnificat*, I remembered that there are rather more Tuesdays between January and May, than there are between September and November, and that with only 10 or 11 rehearsals in prospect we had taken on quite a challenge. There are lots of good memorable tunes in the *Magnificat*, but there are also lots of really tricky passages. If you think of the *Requiem*, for example, most of the movements are in 2, 3 or 4 time, and they remain in 2, 3 or 4 time throughout for the most part. In contrast, the *Magnificat* is constantly changing from 2 to 3 to 4 to 5/8 to 3/8 and so on, which means that getting the notes right is one thing, but singing them in the right time, is quite another. Hence all that note bashing in sectionals and no Half Term week off, but I hope you agree that in the end it paid off. Most of the time in the performance, we did sing the right notes in the right time, and having put it all together with the orchestra in the afternoon, we sang with real confidence in the evening. There were some lovely quiet moments, as well as some exciting climaxes in all 3 works, and I saw faces in the performance that I hadn't seen a lot off before. Overall, I think we can congratulate ourselves on a job well done. so well done everyone.

There's a lot more to putting on a concert than just the music, of course, and I'd like to thank those who helped move furniture before and after our rehearsals in Chapel, and I think that the clear up after the concert was probably the quickest and most efficient ever. Thanks also to those who volunteered to act as car park attendants and tickets 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 indebted to Ann and John for the splendid poster and programme, and to Gill Chester for taking on the selling of tickets to members. Thanks also to Sharon Brown who has taken over as librarian, and had, what can only be described as a baptism of fire, with 3 copies per person to process, rather than the usual one or two. She has done a great job, and thanks also to those who turned up to erase all those markings last Tuesday. You will be pleased to hear that the copies have now been returned to the library with no losses. 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 must also officially thank our accompanist, James Mitchell, Sub Organist of Gloucester Cathedral and Adrian Partington, the Director of Music, whose cooperation enables this arrangement to continue to our great benefit, and those who volunteered to drive James to and from rehearsals. Also of course Julian Elloway who has stepped in for time to time when James has been unavailable, we should also record our thanks to Wycliffe College, who provide our rehearsal and performance facilities at no charge.

I would now like to thank Nigel, John and the whole committee who have continued to meet regularly via Zoom, with some difficult decisions to take over the last year, and especially Rosemary for all she does, not least in keeping us all informed via the weekly newsletters. Please show you appreciation in the usual way.

Looking ahead to next year, we resume rehearsals back in the PAC on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January with just one work to learn or relearn as the case may be – *The Armed Man – a Mass for Peace* by Karl Jenkins, which also garnered quite a bit of support in the survey. We last did it in November 2012, our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season, when parts of Gloucestershire were severely flooded, and people were ringing up on the morning, asking whether the concert was still on and yet we had the biggest audience we have ever had.

I fully appreciate that some are still nervous about choral singing, but do tell friends, family, and acquaintances that we would love them to join us if they feel confident to do so, and that we will do everything we can to keep them safe. I hope to see you in January for what I am sure is going to be another rewarding term, and in the meantime, wish you all the best for Christmas and the New Year, and hope that enjoy our Christmas break. Hopefully it won't be too long before the Covid situation permits us to plan one or two purely social events – an evening at the Stroud Brewery perhaps? and maybe later in the year, a celebration of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

# **Treasurer's Report for AGM 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

## **Introduction**

I usually start my report by mentioning that Nigel and Chris, in their reports, have talked mainly of the calendar year now about to end, while 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. This year, I have little to say about the accounts for 2020-21; after I have done so, I have rather more to say about the current and future situations.

## **The actual figures**

For most of the year the Society was in Covid induced hibernation. As a result, the accounts are much reduced; there were few transactions and most of those were monthly bank interest and fees. We did not charge subscription fees and covered the expenditure from our reserves and a few donations. The result was a loss of under £200.

You may have noticed that in the report I circulated, page two is blank; this is where the Independent Inspector's should be. Unfortunately, over the past couple of years, the inspections have been delayed, mainly by Covid, but also by GCSD. As a result, they have only just [or not quite] completed the inspection for 2019-20 and are only now beginning that for the present accounts. I am hopeful that it will now be possible to catch up, particularly as the present ones are very simple. There should not be any need to change them, so I ask you to approve them now, subject to no later changes being required.

I do not propose to say anything further about them, but will be happy to answer questions, if anyone has any, before going on the current and future situations.

## **Current and future situations**

When planning the current year, 2021-22, your committee assumed that both subscriptions and concert ticket sales, which constitute our main income, would be substantially reduced compared to previous years. We anticipated that this was likely to lead to a substantial deficit, to be met from our reserves, but felt that this was justified in keeping the Society running much as usual and avoiding discouragement of members and audiences. Although we hoped that the outcome might be better than this, the current Profit and Loss that I circulated shows otherwise. Although subscriptions almost met our estimate, concert receipts fell far short. If the results for our next concert in the spring do not improve, the loss will be even greater than that shown, and the very existence of the Society will be called into doubt. It is in the hands of the members; we have sold lots of tickets in the past and with your help, we can do it again.

## **Banking**

We are having problems with banking at the moment. We bank with CAFBank who use HSBC for counter services (paying in cheques and cash). HSBC have recently withdrawn local counter services, with little notice to CAFBank who are now trying to arrange alternatives. Cheques can be paid in through the Post Office, but there is no solution so far for cash. We started using CAFBank because they offer dual authority for on-line payments. Other banks claim to offer dual authority, but my checks so far on Lloyds (who claim it) suggest it is not true dual authority. It appears that there has to be a single person who has full authority to do anything and can also set up dual authority for other people. I will continue investigating, but would appreciate any advice or information that anyone may have.