

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of AGM held on 26th Sept 2018 at Nantwich Methodist Church.

Present: The Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Music Director & 51 members of the Society.

Apologies: Steph & Adrian Percy, Bronwyn Kelly, Ann Ferguson, Grace Jones, Maire Pedder, Rachael Reeves, Christine English, David Foster, Eileen Robertson

Kay Foster took the chair & opened the meeting at 7.00pm

Minutes of the AGM held on 20th Sept 2017 had been distributed by e-mail/newsletter & were adopted as an accurate record

Matters Arising – nil

Chairman's Report: Kay Foster

2017-8 was another successful year for the Nantwich Choral Society in which we put on our usual four concerts and two educational events.

The first of these concerts was our triumphant performance of the Verdi Requiem in the Victoria Hall, Hanley, in conjunction with the Ceramic City Choir, and with the assistance of a grant of £6000 from the Arts Council. Putting on a concert in a large commercial venue, liaising with another choir and applying for funds from a national organization all require a long lead time in the planning and additional responsibility for members of the committee, but on the day everything went well and performers and audience had a very worthwhile and moving experience.

Our Family Carol Concert, featuring the Nantwich and Sandbach Young Voices, took place in December in our more familiar venue of St Mary's, Nantwich. The winning entries from our carol competition were performed for the first time, and their composers, John Madden and Justin Evans, attended the concert and received their prizes in person.

At Easter we performed Dvorak's Stabat Mater, and our summer concert was a programme of Gilbert and Sullivan extracts, much enlivened by the presence of the internationally renowned Savoyard, Richard Suart, as soloist.

Our educational activities comprised a singing day at Acton in September, in which we explored a variety of choruses from great oratorios, and our annual 'Come and Sing' in February featuring *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

We continue to invite local dignitaries to our concerts in order to maintain links with the local community. This year's guests included Liz Barnes, Vice-Chancellor of Staffordshire University, the new rector of St Mary's, the Rev Mark Hart, and the new Mayor of Nantwich, Councillor David Marren.

Our plans for next year include a commemorative concert for the centenary of the end of World War 1. The programme comprises Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* plus shorter works by John Ireland and CB Rootham, and we will be performing this concert twice, once at Malpas and once in Nantwich. At Easter we will be performing *The Music Makers* by Elgar, with an additional piece or two, and in the summer the main items in our programme will be Constant Lambert's *The Rio Grande* and Brahms' *Liebeslieder Waltzes*. In addition we will be putting on our usual singing day, family carol concert and come and sing event.

We continue our efforts to manage our financial affairs well and thriftily, with a reserve which has now been increased to £12,000. In view of our current good financial situation the committee has decided that the members' subscription will remain at £90 a year for the 2018-19 season. Our membership total at the end of 2017-8 was 102.

As most of you will know, the 2017-18 season has been my last year as chairman of the society. It has been a privilege to be the custodian of such a flourishing society and a source of much satisfaction to me that I can pass it on solvent and in good order to my successor. As chairman, I have been ably supported by a very active committee and individual members with special responsibilities, to all of whom I am extremely grateful. Indeed, the society as a whole owes a great debt of gratitude to all the people who do a wide range of tasks behind the scenes, and without whom things would rapidly descend into chaos.

I would particularly like to single out Elizabeth Lea, who is now standing down from the committee after three years as chairman and three years of being vice-chairman. She took over the chair at a difficult moment for the society, without having previously been on the committee, and very quickly became an effective and committed chairman. Her advice and experience were very useful to me in my early months as chairman, and in addition to being my deputy, when required, she has taken on the publicity coordinator's role for the last eighteen months or so. She has served the choral society diligently for six years and I am sure we would all like to express our appreciation of that.

Finally, I must record my thanks to our Music Director, John Naylor, and accompanist, Simon Russell. John has been an enormous source of support, experience and advice with regard to the running of the society as well as on musical matters, and we have had a very amicable and productive partnership during my years as chairman. Simon's performance of the Poulenc Organ Concerto will long remain in my mind, among the many occasions on which he accompanies us in concerts, and his weekly support for us at rehearsals is invaluable.

It only remains to reiterate my thanks to everyone, including all the members who turn up to rehearsals week in, week out, in all weathers, to make us the successful and well-renowned choir that we undoubtedly are. Long may it continue.

Treasurer's Report: Graham Harbage

1. Concert Accounts

- A total of six events were put on over the year, consisting of two singing days and four concerts
 - In round terms, total concert income was £24,800, of which £14,800, or 60%, came from the Verdi concert in October
 - Concert income was boosted considerably by the Arts Council grant of £6000 for putting on the Verdi Requiem
 - Total concert expenditure was £32,400, resulting in a deficit of £7600 over the year. This is remarkably close to the planned deficit of £7000 (ignoring the carol competition), which is a testament to the very detailed and careful planning of our musical director.
2. Income and Expenditure
- Income for the year was £44,500
 - Over half of this (56%) came from concert income, one fifth (19%) from members subscriptions and a further 10% (over £4500) came from fundraising activities
 - Total expenditure for the year was £48,700
 - As you would expect, the vast majority of this (over 80%) went on preparing for and staging the concerts. Putting on the concerts cost over £32,400 and rehearsal support cost another £7800
 - In addition to the concerts and singing days, this year we ran a carol competition, which cost just over £1000
 - Taking the year as a whole we had a deficit of £4155, which is just £35 more than the committee planned for in last year's budget!
3. Balance Sheet
- The balance sheet shows our assets and liabilities at the end of the financial year
 - We started the year with assets of just over £41,000 and finished with assets of just over £37,000, the difference being accounted for by the deficit of £4155
 - The figure for accrued income is made up of anticipated income of £1110 from the 200 Club and £1600 from gift aid
4. Future Plans
- For the coming year the concert programme is expected to yield a net cost of £4500, an improvement of some £3000 on this year's figure
 - Assuming that other costs and income streams remain similar to this year we should end the current financial year with an overall deficit of about £1000
 - Subscriptions have been held at £90

Acceptance of the reports proposed by Anne Barnard, 2nd Ester Harries, all in favour.

Music Director's Report: John Naylor

Report for 2017/18 Season

We started our 2017/18 year with our usual autumn singing day at Acton where once again we were made welcome by the local church team. The repertoire was choruses from Great Oratorios and we enjoyed singing excerpts from Vivaldi's Gloria, Bach's B minor mass, Haydn's Seasons and the Mozart Requiem.

The extended motet 'Jerusalem' from Monteverdi's vespers proved rather challenging, although we ploughed our way through and ended up on safer ground with extracts from Elijah and the Bach St John passion. All in all it was another satisfying and well attended Singing Day.

Meanwhile we had already begun rehearsals for the Verdi requiem to be performed a little earlier than usual in October in the Victoria Hall in Hanley in conjunction with the Ceramic City Choir. Even earlier, a series of joint planning meetings had been held and those of us involved all enjoyed getting to know our new colleagues. With a bit of 'give & take' on both sides (and one or two lips heavily bitten on occasions) we all developed excellent working relationships with our opposite numbers in Ceramic City Choir.

There is an adage that careful planning is the secret to success in almost any endeavour and so it proved when we came to the Sunday performance on the 22nd October. It was an outstanding success by any measurement: we had excellent soloists, an outstanding orchestra and superlative singing by the combined choirs. On top of that, it was also financially very successful largely thanks to a very helpful grant from the Arts Council negotiated by Martin Jones, our indefatigable Grants Officer.

I shall long remember the sound of all those trumpets scattered around the hall announcing the 'Tuba Mirum'. Any choral society would have been proud to have mounted such a performance. Over the years NCS has achieved many musical successes and I'm confident that our performance of the Verdi requiem must be counted as one of the greatest.

However, it didn't seem very long before the Christmas concert was upon us, at which we performed the three winning entries from our Christmas Carol competition. They took quite a lot of learning, but in the end we were pleased with the result and look forward to the fourth prize winning entry being performed this coming Christmas. Once again we were joined by Nantwich Young Voices under Victoria Palethorpe's direction: they seem to get better & better as the years go by.

Our Come & Sing event in February featured Coleridge's *Hiawatha*. Despite the fact that the choice of music was not one of the mainstream choral works, a good turnout of singers enjoyed repeating or learning for the first time this fascinating work.

At our March concert, the Nantwich Sinfonia got us off to a rousing start with one of Dvorak's Slavonic dances. This was followed by a stunning account by Simon of the Poulenc organ concerto. This is quite one of the most challenging works in the repertoire, made even more difficult by the distance between the orchestra and the organ in St Mary's church. We managed to make little of the logistical challenges and the performance was a great success. Bravo Simon!

The main work was Dvorak's wonderful Stabat Mater: the choir gave a sensitive and moving account of this lovely work and our soloists were excellent. However, one of the lessons to be learned is that it is very difficult to perform large scale choral works which feature a large brass section unless the choir can be raised in tiered staging in some way behind the orchestra.

The previous year Elijah in the Civic Hall worked well: from a balance point of view, this year's concert was less successful. I very much hope that we will be able to continue to perform the larger choral works but very sadly St. Mary's is not the place to do so when a full romantic orchestra is required.

As they say on the television, our summer concert was something completely different. We very much enjoyed working on Gilbert & Sullivan choruses but to many people's surprise found that they were much more challenging than some of us expected. Sullivan is a fine composer and WS Gilbert was an outstanding wordsmith: performing their works has to be undertaken with considerable care and attention. On top of that, our numbers were somewhat reduced for this last concert of the year especially the tenors, and so after exploring almost the whole of the compendium which we eventually tracked down, we focused on a smaller number of the choruses which we knew we could sing well. The evening was carried by Richard Suart who amused and entertained us all in great style. In the time afterwards I met several people not normally part of our audience who told me how much they enjoyed the event.

So we look back on the last season which was largely very enjoyable, not least because it contained considerable variety of repertoire. Once again we are all indebted to the members of our committee and other choir members with special responsibilities for all their hard work. Perhaps not all members will realise that there is a huge amount of work which goes on behind the scenes, not only by Eileen and Tony, our concert managers who do so much on concert days, but also to our repertoire and publicity committees and all those others too many to mention who all contribute to the smooth running of our wonderful choir.

When people ask me why our choir is so successful, my standard response is that we are fortunate to have many members who contribute time, wisdom and effort in so many differing ways, rather some choirs I know where a small, long established clique does almost everything and the majority of members feel little sense of ownership about what is happening in their choir.

I am personally very grateful to Simon for all his help and support. I don't have eyes in the back of my head, but I generally get the drift of the suggestions and advice which he dispensed from time to time. I should also mention that thanks are due to Tony Metcalfe who has helped out during the last year when Simon has been unavailable.

It has been my privilege and I must emphasize my pleasure to work with five chairmen during my time so far as Music Director. Each of them has approached the task in their own particular way and Kay has been a tower of strength during her time in office. We all owe her a huge amount.

She has always been helpful and supportive with suggestions and advice. In particular she has an eagle eye when we get to the point of producing programmes and I can

assure you that the combination of Ester with her computer layout skills and Kay with her meticulous proof reading are a combination that anybody can reckon with. They keep me on my toes.

We are all grateful and glad that we have been able to persuade Adrian to take over from her: I very much look forward to working with him.

Most of all thanks are due to all of you, our members who sing in our concerts. Whether you are a founder member or have only joined us recently: everyone's musical contribution is equally valuable.

We can look back on a good season with some hard and committed work undertaken in rehearsals which resulted in some splendid performances. There were many highlights and few (if any) lowlights and that's how it should be.

I remain very privileged to continue to be entrusted with the musical direction of this wonderful choir. We have a justifiably well-earned reputation as one of the top choral societies within our region and long may that continue.

I believe that we aim for and achieve high musical standards and our finances are sound and properly controlled. But that's only part of the story. Not only are we friendly, purposeful, welcoming and musically successful, but it is truly heart-warming when members frequently gently look out for each other in times of illness or necessity. That really is something very special.

So ever onwards! It is a real joy and privilege to work with you all and I look forward to more exciting and successful music making in the coming season.

John Naylor

Election of Officers:

Chairman –	Adrian Pecy – proposed by Kay Foster, 2 nd by Elizabeth Lea
Vice-Chairman –	Kay Foster – proposed by Rachel Pentecost, 2 nd by Anne Barnard
Treasurer –	Graham Harbage– proposed by Martin Jones, 2 nd by David Jones
Secretary –	Mary Harris– proposed by Rachel Pentecost, 2 nd by Carol Seed
Committee members	Ester Harries)
	Bob Pugh) Reappointed en bloc
	Eileen Robertson) - proposed by Simon Russell
	Rachel Pentecost) 2 nd by Liz McCrone
	Tony Powell) All agreed
	Diane Wheatley)
	Alison Davies)
	Frances Durkin)

AOB – nil

The meeting closed at 7.32pm

Rachel Pentecost (Minute secretary)