

Nantwich Choral Society

Extraordinary General Meeting

Agenda

29th September 2021 7:15 pm.

St Mary's Church

- 1. To discuss the re-instatement of the rôle of President**
- 2. If rôle is approved, to appoint John Lea to the position.**

Nantwich Choral Society AGM

Wed 29th Sept 2021 7pm in St Mary's Church, Nantwich

1. Present – The Committee, Music Director & 45 members of the society
2. Minutes of last year's AGM had been distributed via e-mail to the membership, and were accepted. There were no matters arising.
3. Reports from the Chairman Adrian Percy, Treasurer Frances Durkin & Music Director John Naylor were circulated via e-mail in advance of the meeting – acceptance of the reports proposed by Martin Jones, 2nd by Anne Harwood
4. Election of Officers

Chairman - Graham Harbage proposed by Adrian Percy, seconded by Diane Wheatley

Vice-Chair – Adrian Percy proposed by Graham Harbage, seconded by Bob Pugh

Treasurer – Frances Durkin proposed by Martin Jones, seconded by Anne Harwood

Secretary – Anne Harwood proposed by Carol Seed, seconded by Eileen Robertson

All of the above were elected unopposed

5. Election of Committee members

The following members were Re-elected en bloc

proposed by Cynthia Gorton, 2nd by Bronwyn Pugh

Ester Harries

Martin Jones

Rachel Pentecost

Tony Powell

Bob Pugh

Eileen Robertson

Diane Wheatley

Carol Seed

6. AOB

Subscriptions will remain at £90 a year and are now due

Nantwich Choral Society

Chairman's Report to the AGM

29th September 2021

Introduction

In normal years this report doubles as a report to the Trustees and as such it gets published on the Charity Commission's website, along with our annual financial results. This is due to the fact that our income exceeds £10,000, for which we need to report to the Charity Commission, and since our income normally exceeds £25,000, a more detailed report is needed.

This year we have obviously not been operating normally and as such this report does not need to be submitted and as a result I will depart from the required structure.

Reporting Period

Throughout the pandemic we have maintained our reporting period based on our financial year. This runs from 1st September to 31st August. Our last AGM took place in January 2021 and was in effect delayed from September 2020. At that meeting we reported on matters up to 31st August 2020 and ignored anything that happened during the last few months of 2020. Now is the time to report on those activities, this AGM covering the period 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021.

Activities

It would be easy to say that nothing has happened during this last financial year, yet nearly every month the committee has met, via Zoom, in order to discuss developments and try to find a safe way out of the lockdown once government restrictions have been lifted.

That was the case last November and December when we were able to operate a few rehearsals in St Mary's Church. Coincidentally, the number of people wishing to return at that time meant that two separate choirs of 16 voices could be fielded on alternate weeks. The church was limiting us to 16 singers at any one time in the chancel. And that was the limit of our singing during this last financial year.

Although it may seem to be a small activity, it gave us much useful experience in developing Risk Assessments and developing policies and procedures as to how we should operate in order to safeguard people. We now have Risk Assessments that we can call up and modify to cover most eventualities in a variety of venues, and these don't just need to be Covid related.

And the committee has still remained active in their own areas of expertise, albeit the amount of work may have been reduced. The society should be for ever indebted to the small band of members who serve on the committee and tirelessly carry out their duties.

Still Frances Durkin, the treasurer, has to maintain the financial position, as there is still money coming in and going out, albeit at reduced levels.

Eileen Robertson has still been booking venues and ensuring people are obeying the rules of lockdown, when we have been allowed to utilise the venues.

Bob Pugh, our librarian, had the unenviable task of getting copies of the Bach B minor back from people we were now no longer able to meet up with, as well as having to ensure we would have had music for any event we would have undertaken should lockdown have been lifted.

Anne Harwood, our publicity manager and latterly secretary, has been undertaking much work on our links with Making Music and extending our Social Media involvement.

Rachel Pentecost has still had all of the committee minutes to prepare.

And Carol Seed has still had to continue planning “Come and Sing” and “Singing Day” events, ever hopeful that one day one of them may actually come to fruition.

Martin Jones has made some monumental applications to grants authorities, seeking funds for forthcoming large scale concerts.

And as for Ester Harries’s workload, I suspect that could have increased in the pandemic with the circulation of newsletters and questionnaires, as well as maintaining registers in order for us to comply with Track and Trace during our few rehearsals.

Thanks to Tony Powell for his continued support at committee meetings although his health necessitates his shielding during the pandemic. I wish him well in the future.

Graham Harbage and Diane Wheatley, as previous officers of the Society, and Simon Russell have always been there to offer advice on various aspects of policy and church procedures as lockdowns lifted. Their comments were always welcomed.

I thank everyone on the committee for all the hard work you do and for making the chairman’s job, under normal circumstances, somewhat undemanding.

My comments

I am now at the end of my three year tenure as chairman. The last three years have passed quickly. I have to say it has not been what I would have expected, or, indeed, what I would have wanted. The Society has effectively been closed down now for 18 months, and it is not inconceivable that a lockdown could happen again in the future. But let us hope not!

When I volunteered to do this job, John Naylor told me that in effect the Society ran itself with everyone on the committee just getting on with their own duties. For the first 18

months that was the case, and I found myself looking round for things to do to make my mark. That went a bit pear-shaped in March 2020, and then there was so much that needed doing which didn't fit into anyone's job description, that I found my role.

Keeping people informed as to what was going on and what the Society was planning resulted in me putting together the Newsletter. Not the most elegant publication the Society has ever seen, but I hope it was informative. It was difficult not to let personal opinions creep into the text. It could certainly have been a bit more controversial but every time I completed an edition, Steph would proof-read it and tell me in no uncertain terms that "You can't say That!"

My final thanks must go to John, firstly for persuading me to undertake the role when no-one else had come forward. It was a chance comment on my part, one evening after rehearsal, that I said I would do it if there really was no other nomination. From that moment on I think it was a fait accompli.

Secondly I am grateful for the fact that there has been a good working relationship between John and myself. John is ever the optimist. Three weeks before the first planned Bach B minor performance and two weeks before the first lockdown, John was still convinced it would happen.

On the other hand, I like to consider myself to be a realist. As a result I think the balance of optimism and realism (some may say pessimism) led to good planning decisions which anticipated the national regulations and lockdowns.

The Finale

After this last financial year, during which there has been almost no NCS activity, it is good that we can get back together at rehearsals with the highest level of personal security that we can offer. People can make their own decision as to whether they feel safe enough to attend.

However, we are not out of the woods yet. Following low covid cases in the early summer, the numbers have recently been rising. There are still questions at a national level as to how high these cases can go before action is needed, whether that be a reinstatement of regulations regarding face masks, social distancing or indeed full lockdown.

For the Society, many questions still remain. Do we have viable numbers and voice distribution? Can we perform concerts, yet still maintain social distancing? From where can we get new members?

These questions, and many more are those issues which will need to be addressed by the new committee and chairman. Never before have so many fundamental matters been posed in NCS.

Best of luck to everyone.

Adrian Percy

Nantwich Choral Society

Treasurers Report 2020-2021

As we all know, this year has been another tough season, with very little choir activity. I became Treasurer at the online AGM in January after Graham Harbage stepped down after his 3 year stint. Firstly I would like to thank Graham for the great job he did as treasurer, and to thank him for all his help in getting me access to the bank accounts and explaining the spreadsheets to me. I would also like to thank Diane Wheatley who is assistant Treasurer and deals with Subscriptions and Gift Aid. From my point of view, the lack of activity has made it much easier to get used to the job!

From a financial point of view, this has been a good year for the society. We had very few outgoings, as we only had a few rehearsals and no concerts. As agreed previously, we did not collect any subscriptions either. Our main expenditure was our membership of Making Music, who gave us a refund due to Covid, and also kept us updated with the latest government guidance for choirs; and the website, run by CSI. The latter is quite an expense, but is important for the Society as a means of advertising to the general public, and people in other choirs, as well as a resource for members. In future we do need to ensure we make the most of this asset. We managed to save money by having our committee meetings on line, and as this was very successful, we are hoping to continue this, which means we don't have to hire a committee room.

Audit

Last year we paid £660 for the audit, but this year our total income is far less than £10,000 and so we are not required by law to employ a professional auditor. I therefore propose that we use two members of the society who must not be committee members or related to any of them. The accounts are much simpler and shorter than normal, so they just need to be good with figures and have a close eye for detail. We will need some volunteers if we decide to do this!

Fundraising and Grants

Despite having virtually no rehearsals, we didn't stop our routine fundraising. David and Grace Johnston continued to run the NCS 200 club and have raised £750 (which has been received since 1st September). Eileen Robertson gave us £155 from drinks and books, (mainly raised the year before). We raised £37.70 from Easy fundraising and £34.60 from Amazon smile and £390 from donations from choir members.

We also received a grant for £1,000 from Nantwich Town Council who continue to support us. We are very grateful for all these contributions.

Gift Aid

In the past we have been able to claim gift aid on our subscriptions, but this has reduced in recent years as our numbers have declined and as more members have retired and some are no longer able to give gift aid. Diane has also experienced problems with the new on-line system, which was not linking up to our previous claims. As there were no subscriptions this year, we have not made a claim for Gift Aid. However, there probably is some Gift Aid waiting to be claimed from 19-20, and from donations, so I have estimated the potential Gift Aid as £750. We will attempt to make a claim this year.

Moving forward, we hope we can get back to rehearsals, singing days and concerts, though we have to be aware that things may change. We will be collecting subscriptions this term, though we have agreed that anyone who does not come back till after January can pay the subs then. Carol Seed is also collecting payments for the Singing Day on Oct 8. Now that we are all so much more "computer-savvy", if anyone wants to use online banking rather than cash or cheques, please ask Diane or me for the bank details.

Frances Durkin

Treasurer

September 2021

Nantwich Choral Society
Music Director's Report: 2020 – 2021

Very sadly, there is very little, if anything to report in terms of musical performance.

Lockdown restrictions resulting from the Covid pandemic meant that we were unable to meet and sing for all but a very short time during the whole season.

For just a few weeks towards the end of 2020 we met in two small groups of 16 each in St Mary's Church. On two evenings we even managed to sing carols for our own amusement, but then came the Christmas lockdown and all fell silent. We were most grateful to the authorities at St Mary's for making the church available to us during this short time.

The effect of all this on the freelance musicians with whom we perform was very severe: for some of them it was truly devastating and we all felt for them.

Nevertheless, our Committee continued to meet cheerfully over Zoom from time to time and although it was very difficult to plan anything ahead at all, it was good to know that the NCS flame kept burning during such dark times. We are so fortunate to have such a committed group of people guiding our affairs.

I would like to pay special tribute to Adrian, our chairman. During such a difficult period he has kept our choir's momentum moving along by convening committee meetings, reporting periodically to choir members, ensuring that risk assessments have been in place and generally guiding our plans for the time when something near normality can be resumed.

I suspect that it will take some time for us to get up to full speed after we have returned to regular rehearsals but, ever optimistic, I am confident that we'll get there eventually!

With best wishes to all,

John Naylor