

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of AGM held on 28th Sept 2016 at Nantwich Methodist Church.

Present: The Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Music Director & 61 members of the Society.

Apologies: Steph & Adrian Percy, Jenny Brown, Bronwyn Kelly, Tony Powell, Geraldine Leighton, Jenny Seabridge, Margaret Harvey, Barbara Shone, Joan Shaddick, Grace & David Johnson.

Kay Foster took the chair & opened the meeting at 7.02pm

Minutes of the AGM held on 23rd Sept 2015 had been distributed by e-mail/newsletter & adoption of these as an accurate record was proposed by Diane Wheatley & 2nd by Liz Lea, all agreed.

Matters Arising – nil

Chairman's Report: Kay Foster

The choir continues to be very active in contributing to local musical life. In the season under review, we put on our usual four concerts: Duruflé's Requiem plus other French music in November; our Family Carol Concert, featuring the Nantwich Young Voices, in December; Bach's *St John Passion* at Easter; and Will Todd's *Mass in Blue* plus other items in June. We also put on our usual educational activities: a singing day exploring many settings of *Ave Verum Corpus*, and a 'come and sing' performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, both successful and well-attended.

On Christmas Eve 2015 a small group of singers sang carols at Rookery Hall, as has been the custom for many years. The committee has subsequently decided to discontinue this practice as it has become increasingly difficult to recruit people at such a busy family time of year, and we have regretfully informed the hotel that we will not be coming in future. In May a small group of singers also performed at the funeral of Brenda Morris, a former member. This was in response to a wish she had expressed a few days before her death.

As usual, we invited a number of special guests to our concerts, to strengthen our links with the local community. Over the year we entertained 7 people in total, including the Rector of St Mary's (who came to every concert), the Mayor of Nantwich and a member of Nantwich Town Council.

We continue our efforts to manage our financial affairs well and thriftily, with a reserve of at least £8000. In December 2015 we were extremely fortunate to receive a totally unexpected legacy of over £24,000 from the estate of the late Joyce Clegg, a former member, so our finances are currently very healthy. We spent a modest portion of this legacy on a Roland digital harpsichord for our use, and for the use of St Mary's Church and other groups who perform locally.

Our membership numbers remained buoyant at 106. In view of our current good financial situation the committee has decided that the members' subscription will remain at £90 a year for the 2016-17 season.

Looking ahead to the next season, we are currently rehearsing the Lloyd Webber Requiem and Tippett's Spirituals from *A Child of our Time* for performance in November. The usual Christmas concert will be followed in the spring by Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. In the summer there will be an exchange with our twinned choir, L'Ensemble Vocale Arpège de Mâcon, for performances of the Rutter Magnificat in Mâcon in May and Nantwich in July.

I would like to conclude my report by thanking all the members of the committee for their tireless work for the choir. I would also like to thank all the choir members with special responsibilities, and indeed everyone who helps with all the myriad activities that keep us going, from moving chairs to raising funds. Our Music Director and Accompanist continue to make rehearsals a pleasure and inspire us to give our best in performances. My thanks to you all.

Treasurer's Report: Tina Jones

Reports have been circulated

1. Concert |Account
2. Statement of Financial Activities
3. Balance Sheet

1 – The net deficit is less than last year & as in the plan. The area of concern is the volatility in audience numbers –not dissimilar to last year.

2 – The surplus does not include the Legacy received. Grants have been received from The Harding Trust & Nantwich Town Council. New source of funding via Easy Fund Raising has brought in only a small amount so far. Gift Aid continues to provide a considerable income.

In terms of expenditure, it has been a thrifty year – the main additional expense being the shed roof.

3- Our financial state is currently very comfortable & puts us in a great position to begin organizing Verde's Requiem.

Acceptance of the accounts proposed by Tina Jones, 2nd Roger Boulton

Kay Foster thanked Tina for her work through the year & her report.

Music Director's Report: John Naylor

Another excellent year in 2015/16, with performances of a rather eclectic selection of music! As usual when preparing this report I have to think quite hard about what we have actually performed.

Singing Day in the autumn – Ave Verum (composers & their works) was very successful & very much enjoyed by everyone who took part, especially since they got to take home a compendium of most of the music sung during the day. Good attendance – a really rewarding day of singing.

The Autumn concert – Durufle Requiem. A notoriously challenging work, especially for the organist. However we gave a very convincing performance with plenty of dynamic contrast, some lovely quiet singing. We negotiated the white water rapids of the Libera Mea with considerable aplomb & there was some lovely ethereal singing in the In Paradisum – Gregorian chant – Simon organ pieces. Didn't quite overcome all the challenges of the Durufle motets: but we did them!

At our Family Carol Concert in December we had our usual good audience, swelled by the relations of the members of Nantwich Young Voices. We enjoyed singing another new carol by Andrew Mlidihall (The Angel Gabriel), soared through Bach's Wachet Auf! Whilst Simon delivered the well-known accompaniment, & then relaxed with the familiarity of well-known carols. Like as I would to change some of the old favourites, I get howls of protest (especially from the children) if I even suggest dropping the Star Carol or the 12 Days of Christmas.

Our annual Come & Sing – this year Haydn's Creation was postponed to the Spring because of the very welcome building works in St. Mary's. We enjoyed the singing of Milly Forrest – soprano, Christopher Barnes – tenor, Jacob Philips – baritone, & marvelled at Simon's stamina in playing the whole of such an extensive work twice in one day. There was a very good turnout & almost all the participant feedback was very good indeed.

Our performance of Bach's St John Passion just before Easter was a real highlight for me. I wanted to perform it in St. Mary's for a long time, & to do so at the right time of year was very special. Dramatic setting (more than St. Matthew) & you conveyed the gripping story very well indeed – middle east crowd scenes?

We were fortunate to have excellent soloists (tenor absent) – the world famous Roger Covey Crump being outstanding as Evangelist. Our own Nantwich Sinfonia was superb, & the fact that we were able to have a full rehearsal the previous Sunday afternoon helped enormously. I listened to the BBC broadcast from Germany during the following week & I honestly thought that our performance compared very favourably indeed – the finish was incredibly moving.

We were able to use our new electronic chamber organ/harpsichord for the very first of what we hope will be many more successful occasions.

When he found out that we proposed to perform Will Todd's Mass in Blue for our summer concert, there was a sharp intake of breath from Simon. Sir Humphrey might have described it as a 'bold decision' & I must admit that by the second rehearsal of the summer term I was beginning to wonder whose bright idea it was to perform it: Answer – mine! Taken out of musical comfort zones, but as we worked at it, we really began to enjoy it. Grateful to the committee for authorising a little more expenditure to have the band with us for a dress rehearsal (without the dress) on the Wednesday before. In the end I'm so pleased we did it – I enjoyed it – audience enjoyed it & most importantly I believe that almost all of you enjoyed it. Fiona Clucas (met whilst singing at a funeral service) was outstanding.

So we ended another great year on a real high.

Sopranos – when all present – seem to have recovered fire power.
Altos – used to be lots, & a few more wouldn't come amiss.
Tenors – blessed with a strong section.
Basses – all good – but could do with more!

Looking forward to our current season – delights of Lloyd Webber Requiem, Christmas Concert (suggestions welcome but not much rehearsal time), & Messiah with full orchestra, Elijah, & the exchange concerts with Macon in the summer. (Not to forget Verdi Requiem next Autumn – orchestra parts already in my music cupboard.)

Audiences – not as many as we deserve, but concerts are often on the same day as other events. Publicity is very important – but the best way of increasing audience numbers is for you to persuade friends, relations etc to come along.

I'm very grateful to the Chairman, Treasurer & all the members of our committee who do such a lot; much done by many – better that too much by too few.

Finances are sound – I'm very grateful for the fundraising by members, the grants we receive (& the work that goes into applying for them), the donations we receive & of course the legacies we have received.

We are fortunate to have this place for rehearsals. Whilst by no means ideal as a performance space, somehow we have to make beautiful St. Mary's work for us. This means some of you having to put up with some discomfort: thank you for your forbearance.

Personally I'm very grateful to Simon for all his support: he is an amazing keyboard player, purveyor of wise & witty remarks (most of which I usually agree with) & a great colleague: he knows almost unerringly which rehearsal point I'm going back to.

Lastly thank you all for your musical talents, your hard work & your cheerful support & friendship. Every choir claims to be friendly, but I genuinely believe that to be especially true in our case. It's remarked on by soloists, professional orchestra members & Come & Sing visitors – that's why they keep coming back to make music with us.

Each year I say that it's a genuine pleasure & privilege to be your music director, & if it is possible to do so, each year I mean it more & more. In the words of the great Abba song, 'what would life be without a song' – what would life be....

So thank you for the music & for the huge enjoyment that we all have in making it together.

Election of Officers:

Chairman – Kay Foster – proposed by Rachel Pentecost, 2nd by Maire Pedder

Vice-Chairman – Elizabeth Lea – proposed by Kay Foster, 2nd by Roger Boulton

Vacancy

Treasurer – Tina Jones – proposed by Wal Kaye, 2nd by Carol Seed

Secretary – Carol Seed – proposed by Ester Harries, 2nd by Tina Jones

Committee members Ester Harries)

Bob Pugh)

Eileen Robertson)

Rachel Pentecost)

Tony Powell)

Reappointed en bloc

- proposed by Cynthia Gorton

2nd by Maire Pedder

All agreed

Diane Wheatley)
Marry Harries)
1 vacancy

AOB – Wal Kaye asked if there are any specific conditions re Joyce Clegg’s legacy –
answer No!

Wal thanked Simon for The mass in Blue!

The meeting closed at 7.45pm
Rachel Pentecost (Minute secretary)