

Nantwich Choral Society AGM

Wed 28th Sept 2022 at 7pm in Nantwich Methodist Church

1. Present – 10 members of the Committee, Music Director & 41 members of the society
2. Apologies – Adrian & Steph Percy, David & Grace Johnson, Ian & Ros Wells, Patrick Hay, Eileen Robertson & Tracy Robertson, Glenda Colemere, Rosemary & David Jones, Sarah Worth, Jan Brown
3. Minutes of last year's AGM had been distributed via e-mail to the membership, and were accepted. There were no matters arising.
4. 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 Tony Powell, 2nd by Wal Kaye
5. Election of Officers

Chairman - Graham Harbage	proposed by Bob Pugh, seconded by Martin Jones
Vice-Chair – Adrian Percy	proposed by Uel Jamison, seconded by Tony Powell
Treasurer – Frances Durkin	proposed by Graham Harbage, seconded by Martin Jones
Secretary – Anne Harwood	proposed by Carol Seed, seconded by Graham Harbage

All of the above were elected unopposed

6. Election of Committee members

The following members were Re-elected en bloc

proposed by Graham Harbage, seconded by Frances Durkin

Ester Harries
Martin Jones
Rachel Pentecost
Tony Powell
Bob Pugh
Eileen Robertson
Carol Seed
Diane Wheatley

7. AOB

Herbert Rowsell.

I must pass on the sad news that Herbert Rowsell, who was our president for many years, has died. His funeral will be at 11.30 on 14th October at St Mary's Church, Nantwich.

Herbert was Headmaster at The Malbank School where we rehearsed for a number of years. Some of us will also remember his wife, Jane, who survives him and who sang with us, and also his son-in-law, Stephen Buckman who was also our Musical Director at the same time.

Herbert was well known in Nantwich and very knowledgeable about the history of the town and that of St. Mary's Church. His work on the origins of Holly Holy Day was well recognized in historical circles.

His father was a clergyman in Ely Cathedral and I remember visiting the house, near to the cathedral, where Herbert lived as a boy. It is now a museum, dedicated to the life of that other Ely 'Old Boy', Oliver Cromwell. In the 17th century it was the Cromwell family home.

Herbert always called me 'Professor'; I never knew whether it was a compliment, or whether he had forgotten my name.

Some may remember that Herbert often spoke at full volume, like a headmaster, in a stentorian voice. Over a pint, I once asked why he spoke so loudly. 'I HAD A DEAF NANNY' he replied – and this is one of my fondest memories of Herbert.

May he rest in peace.

28th Sept 2022 – Wal Kaye

NCS Chairman's report 2022-23

The choir's golden jubilee year was another very busy and enjoyable year. As well as the usual full programme of concerts and activities, we had a well-attended social event in March to celebrate the choir's 50th anniversary, and a very successful exchange visit with our friends in Macon. This year has seen a welcome influx of new members, to offset those who have left the society, and membership now stands at 89, slightly up on last year

This year's singing day was held at Acton church, with a large and enthusiastic group of 164 singers tackling John Rutter's Requiem. This was followed in November at St. Mary's church with the Brahms Requiem and the following month saw us once again enjoying our Family Carol Concert, with some splendid contributions from Nantwich Young Voices.

The new year started with our come and sing day in February, where a total of 121 singers from across the area gave a very timely performance of Handel's Coronation Anthems and Parry's I was Glad. Then in early March about 50 members of the society met in the function room of Nantwich Town football club for a very enjoyable evening of food and entertainment. My thanks go to all those who contributed to the success of the evening, especially John and Jenny Naylor and Rachel Pentecost, who between them did the lion's share of the catering, and not forgetting of course all those brave souls who stood up and entertained us so well. As part of the evening we were delighted to be able to award honorary membership of the society to Barbara Shone, one of the founder members of the society, kindly accepted on her behalf by Rita Davies.

This very enjoyable social event was followed later in March by our anniversary concert in Nantwich Civic Hall, where we performed Haydn's Creation, with a professional orchestra and soloists. June saw the first part of our exchange visit with the choir in Macon, delayed from last year because of the pandemic, with about 25 of our members enjoying a very successful visit in France, and a similar number of French singers coming over here to join us at the end of June for our summer concert in St. Mary's. It goes without saying that events like these take a lot of organising, and I would like to thank Adrian and Steph in particular for the enormous amount of work and organising that they did to make both events so successful. My thanks also to everybody else who contributed to the success of the visit, especially to all those who hosted our French visitors, and to Rachel and her husband Peter for hosting the very enjoyable social evening on the Friday of that weekend.

Finally I would like to thank both John and Simon for all their hard work over the year and for their unfailing enthusiasm and support as they guided us through another stimulating repertoire, and my fellow committee members who do so much work behind the scenes to make the society the success that it is.

Graham Harbage

Chairman

Nantwich Choral Society

Treasurers Report 2022-2023

This year has been a significant year in our Choir's history, and so we celebrated in style, with a 50th Birthday Party, a very lavish concert in the Civic Hall and a very successful exchange with the Choir in Macon. It has been a great year musically but has again been demanding on our finances. Not as much as last year, but our expenditure exceeded our income by **£6,686.11**

Everyone is aware of the price increases and inflation in most areas. This has of course affected the choir and prices have gone up, notably the hire of St Mary's, the cost of the website, hire of music and postage. We may expect more increases this year.

Subscriptions

In view of the above, the committee proposes that we increase the subscriptions to £105.00 per year. This is mainly to cover inflation. We can accept payments in two installments if people request it. We also propose that when new members join, they can come for 3 weeks, and then if they want to stay, they should pay the full amount, rather than have the first term for free. This is the same as most choirs. We would also appreciate members paying promptly at the start of the year.

Concerts

Last season we put on 2 Come and Sing Days, a carol concert and three other concerts. We had soloists at 4 events and orchestras on 2 occasions, and a guest pianist at another. The Singing Days and the Carol Concert together paid for themselves or made a small profit. However, the Creation Concert celebrating our 50th Anniversary had a full Orchestra with 30 instruments and 3 soloists. It was very extravagant, but all agreed it was one of the best performances we had ever given. Also, our audience numbers have declined since the pandemic, and so we need to work on increasing the audience, through better publicity, member involvement and increasing ticket prices. Last year most of the tickets were £15, apart from the Carol Concert. We are proposing to increase the amounts during the year, making concerts with Orchestras more expensive.

We are planning carefully to keep costs down by having fewer concerts with orchestras, and having Come and Sing Days that will attract lots of participants, such as the Messiah.

Fundraising and Grants

David and Grace Johnston continued to run the NCS 200 club with great enthusiasm and have raised £900 during the last year (which has been received and banked since 1st September). We also received £121.17 from Easy fundraising and £49.73 from Amazon smile. It appears that Amazon smile is no longer running,

but Easy Fundraising now has more popular shops like M & S, so please use it if you can.

We applied to the Harding Trust again, and they sent us a donation of £1,500. 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, and to the people who organize them.

We also had a raffle organized by Eileen and Tracey which raised £869.82 after costs. We are very grateful to them for that and for running the book/drink stall when possible. Please continue to support the 200 club, the online fundraising and raffle if you can.

Social Events

The proceeds from the raffle were used to assist with funding our social events. This included the 50th Party, the French exchange Buffet and some after concert parties (where cash donations were also received). We also had tickets to cover the cost of these events, including food & drink, hire of the Football Ground and the transport for the French choir. We did not use any other income to fund these activities.

Bank Charges

Although the bank charges continue, averaging about £10 per month, I am pleased to report that more people are paying by internet banking which saves us money and is more convenient and secure. Many thanks for your co-operation. We are also using the Sum- up machine for smaller amounts, mainly for tickets. It is convenient and safe to use.

We are happy to still accept cash and cheques but would appreciate it if people included an extra 50p to cover the Bank charges. The good news is that the deposit accounts have started to pay interest again, which helps to offset the Bank charges.

Gift Aid

Diane is currently applying for Gift Aid for the last few years so I have estimated the potential gift aid as £2000. It's a very complicated process, but we hope this will be achieved shortly. Many thanks to Diane for persevering with this. If you have never filled in a form for gift aid, or if you think your circumstances have changed, please see Diane to confirm if you are eligible.

Frances Durkin

Treasurer, September 2023

Nantwich Choral Society

Music Director's Report 2022 –2023

September 2022 saw us emerge into our first full season since the pandemic. As is our usual practice we began with a Singing Day which featured John Rutter's lovely *Requiem*. It was well attended and everyone there (members and visitors alike) enjoyed the chance to blow the cobwebs and tickles from their voices in preparation for the new season.

Our Autumn Concert was *Brahms German Requiem* which we performed in the two piano version with Christopher Symons and Simon Russell. Our soloists were Holly Teague and Peter Edge. This is a challenging work in which everyone performed magnificently. We were inspired by a Brahms piano solo by Chris Symons and solo songs from Holly and Peter. It was one of the best performances of *Brahms' Requiem* which I have conducted; it confirmed that although reduced in numbers, NCS was well and truly back in business.

The major work in our Christmas concert was Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* as an appropriate celebration of the 150th centenary of the composer's birth. We were delighted to welcome as soloist again our friend James Hall who also sang the solo parts in some of the other carols. Nantwich Young Voices were on top form even though reduced in number. The lovely concert was another successful precursor to our Christmas celebrations.

The early selection of Handel's *Coronation Anthems* as the main work in our popular February 'Come and Sing' event proved timely. A good number of singers gathered in St Mary's to get into early coronation mood. *Zadok the Priest* was familiar to almost everyone, but the delights of the other anthems were less familiar. Nevertheless, everybody seemed to enjoy the occasion. We also sang Hubert Parry's '*I was glad*' complete with Carolean 'Vivats': after the afternoon rehearsal somebody remarked to me that they could hear the opening chorus bars of that wonderful anthem out in the Market Square!

Shortly after that we enjoyed a great social evening at Nantwich Football Club's hospitality suite. We had a magnificent meal (thank you Rachel and all the helpers) and some previously unknown talents of singing, recitation, and dancing stepped forward to provide a most enjoyable after dinner entertainment.

At the end of March we moved to Nantwich Civic Hall for our performance of Haydn's *Creation* which was the principal event in our 50th anniversary celebrations. This was a truly magnificent occasion and one of the best if not the best performances NCS have given during my tenure as Music Director. Our soloists Sarah Helsby Hughes, Joseph Buckmaster and Daniel Vening we're all in fine voice. Our own orchestra Nantwich Sinfonia led by Alison Loram rose to the occasion brilliantly. Above all, our singers knew the music well, were in full strength and in full voice and thus gave an exceptional performance of Haydn's great work.

It was a fitting and splendid opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Nantwich Choral Society.

In the summer it was time again for exchange concerts with our French friends in Macon. Amazingly, despite air travel disruptions, those of us travelling showed great devotion to duty and arrived in time for the rehearsal in Macon Cathedral. Previously we had joined our hosts

and renewed long standing friendships or made new ones. Vivaldi's *Gloria* was the main work, and although there were relatively few people from Nantwich, we acquitted ourselves very well in our solo spot. Some of us found it a bit challenging to stand whilst the soloists were rehearsed, but when the performance came. the whole event was enthusiastically received by a packed cathedral in which the audience numbered more than 400 people. We were all greeted most warmly and royally entertained.

At the return performance in St Mary's Nantwich, we performed the Vivaldi *Gloria* again together, but NCS also performed one of the Vivaldi settings of the Magnificat. There was also an inspiring performance by Nantwich Sinfonia of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No 2* in which we were all bowled over by Wendy Jones' stunning trumpet playing.

On the following day visitors from Macon went over to Cheswardine to view the Open Gardens and afterwards sang in St Swithun's church together with NCS members: the church was almost full, and the music was the talk of the village for weeks afterwards. (Our French friends were slightly puzzled by the existence of a female vicar who has a sense of humour; to their surprise she also ensured that the proceedings were not at all too solemn!)

This was the 4th of the lovely exchanges in which I have participated, and it was probably the best so far. These exchanges are very special and there was a general agreement that we should not wait too long before the next one takes place, especially since some of us in both countries are advancing in years!.

Looking back on 2022-23 there were many remarkable issues:

Not such good things:

- After the pandemic the number of our singers reduced markedly, and some took time to return. Some long-standing members retired, and there were (thankfully a very few) who in the interim had sadly died.
- Our audience numbers declined noticeably and remain at a historically low level.
- Our finances which a few years ago had been considerably boosted by significant legacies, donations and grants reverted to previous levels which has meant that the number of concerts with orchestras has had to be reduced.
- Some of our senior members have been unwell and unable to attend
- The costs of everything – venue hire, publicity, professional musicians (soloists and orchestras), music hire etc has gone up considerably.
- One day I'll be confident enough to programme a capella pieces without the fear of the pitch dropping so much early on.

Good things

- The number of NCS members has now gone back up, almost to pre-pandemic levels.
- There are good singers amongst our new recruits
- The standard of singing generally continues to improve. Sight reading is very good indeed.
- During the season all our concerts were musically very successful.
- Despite constraints on our budgets, our finances remain sound.
- Our relationship with our Macon friends remains stronger than ever.

- Our enthusiastic committee continued to meet throughout the pandemic and afterwards to prepare for the subsequent season.
- Our meeting and singing together continues to be fun!

As ever, I am profoundly grateful for the support of all our members and especially those who act as our Officers, those who sit on our Committee, and those who undertake special responsibilities. Simon continues to be an admirable support - his keyboard skills are ever amazing.

For me, it remains a real pleasure and privilege to be your Music Director. Above all, I believe that Nantwich Choral Society combines the ability to perform at very good musical standards and remains ambitious to keep on improving whilst also, despite being quite a large group, remains very friendly and welcoming.

Long may this continue!

John Naylor

September 2023