

MINUTES

CHIPPING NORTON CHORAL SOCIETY

Annual General Meeting – held Wednesday 18th October, 2017

Nick Watkins welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies:-

Elisabeth Hawkes, Beth Sinclair, Basil Eastwood, Caroline Doran, Rosemary & Edwin Wilson, Andrew Vaile, Vivian Woodell, William Haddon, Sarah Cobb.

2. Approval and signing of AGM minutes held on 12th October, 2016

A copy of last year's minutes can be found on the website. The minutes were proposed and accepted by members of the choir.

Action: A signed copy to go on file

3. Matters arising

There were three specific areas for action following the 2016 AGM:

- Programmes to be made available for final rehearsal – this is now normal practice, with thanks to Brian.
- An independent examination of the accounts hasn't been done for three years. All three years of accounts are to be examined together. This is only a constitutional, rather than a legal requirement **Action: W and NW**
- It was proposed that the Choir should take part in the 2017 Chippy Festival. This happened and we are planning to take part in 2018 also.

4. Chair's report – Nick Watkins

The Chair thanked everyone for coming/staying on for the AGM. This is required as a registered charity, but also provides the opportunity for people to find out what we do, ask questions about the running of the society. In addition, members of the committee are always happy to talk to anyone at any time.

It is very positive to have such healthy numbers in the choir, keeping us financially stable and enabling us to put on major works. Performing the Haydn & Nelson Masses, Handel's Messiah and Bach B minor Mass in our last three Christmas concerts has been an impressive achievement. Thanks are due to everybody who contributes to this by way of ticket sales, the raffle, refreshments and programmes at concerts and also to those who have made donations and allowed us to collect Gift Aid.

The annual subs have been increased by £10 to enable an increase in pay for Peter and Bernard and in recognition that our general costs are increasing. The subscription is still excellent value for money at £20/£10 less than Banbury Choral society and still using our funds to produce great quality music. The plan will be to increase fees by another £10 from next September.

The Christmas concert ticket price will be £15 both for on the door and pre-paid tickets; under 16's continue to get free entry. Ticket sales remain a major source of income so it is important that choir members sell as many as possible.

Many e-mails have been received from new members saying how much they have enjoyed joining CNCS and that they have been made to feel welcome. That CNCS is considered such a friendly and welcoming choir is very much down to the members.

It is a privilege and joy to have the role of Chair as Peter starts his next 20 years with CNCS. The anniversary was a good excuse to hold a ceilidh as the first social event for a few years. There was a great band, good food and it was a lovely evening. Thanks to members' donations we were able to present Peter with a gift to remind him of all the good times over his first 20 years. We will also present him with a poster providing a historical record of the concerts he has conducted over that time. This is still work in progress.

Thanks very much to the committee for making these celebrations happen and we hope to put on some further social events in future. There is a regular trip to the Chequers pub after rehearsals and anyone is welcome to come along. Finally, thanks must go to everyone else who has helped through the year, concert stewards, programme sellers, clearer-uppers, Rosemary and team for organising refreshments and those who staffed the tables and the door and also to Jenny (and Hilda on occasions) for keeping the raffle going.

Our thanks go to Liz Leffman for her work as secretary and publicity officer. Liz is standing down due to non-CNCS time pressures. The position of secretary has been taken over by Julie Harris. We're also lucky to have volunteers Nicky Smith and Julia Hall who will stand for election as joint publicity officers. All the remaining members of the committee are willing to stand again for another year, subject to being re-elected later of course. Members were invited to thank the committee for their great work and support over the last year.

Finally, a massive 'thank you' went to Bernard and Peter; two maestros without whom this could not keep happening! Thanks to both.

5. 2016-2017 Treasurer's report – Will Stevens

Thanks to all who have supported Will in his new role. Slides of income and expenditure were provided and explained. These showed a slight reduction in income for this year. A **Summary of accounts is available at www.cncs.org**

These were proposed, seconded and approved by members of the choir.

6. Membership Update - Mark Walters

We currently have a total membership of 162. In total 105 existing members signed up this term plus an additional 16 new members including; 5 sopranos, 4 altos, 2 tenors and 2 basses.

7. 2016-2017 Musical Director's report – Peter Hunt

Peter thanked choir members for his gift of the Music Tree and all the kind comments he had received. The last year has been a challenging one but with but great performances of the Mozart Cm Mass and Haydn 'Nelson' Mass in December 2016. With 80 singers this saw a good turnout.

New this year has been the introduction of online practice resources which have caught on and proved really valuable. The conductor's notes are also being regularly referred to and this is good for learning and planning. A small choir also performed carols in the town on Dec 2 which went well. However, it was interesting how much 'core repertoire' was unfamiliar (e.g. descants and some harmonies). It would nice to do a proper Christmas concert one year.

In the spring term we performed *Let my people go* with a smaller choir. Including the Tippett Spirituals, this provided an interesting and varied programme with gospel and folk arrangements that required singing in different voices. It was great to welcome guest singers (8 in a Bar) and instrumental items from the choir (Ian & Jon)

Thanks to the Committee which was particularly active and enthusiastic last year. Thanks also to the crucial work of the librarians and to Brian for programmes/posters with an interesting diversity of styles. Thanks were given to Bernard and Shauni; and Mike Bardsley for helping on several occasions. Thanks to all the helpers in their various capacities.

As we look forward to the next year our publicity is improving and it is good to see the use of CNCS banners to advertise performances. We might give consideration to a brochure for next year? Some points for consideration in the forthcoming year include:

- Whether we should produce a brochure for the year.
- Future programme planning for the next 3/5 years including special projects that may require funding applications
- Review of attendance and take up of concerts across the year
- Whether we should be more musically active – e.g. Christmas carols, singing for town events; fund-raising (e.g. care home visits etc.)? Other choirs seem to do a lot
- Archiving choir history – launch a 'year of archiving' to 'publish' the history of the choir and give a snapshot of its activity – e.g. singers' recollections; biogs; human stories etc. Could we resurrect Leading Notes as a vehicle for this?

8. 2016-2017 Assistant Musical Director's report – Bernard West

Numbers and attendance are particular issues for the summer concert. This year saw a much better turnout, which made a huge difference.

The summer concert went extremely well, and it was a pleasure to be involved in it. The only disappointment was the size of the audience which was partly due to a clash with the New Wychwood Singers' concert that same evening. It would be helpful to have a look at what we can do to make a difference to our audience sizes.

One thing is making sure we get mentioned in village newsletters and magazines. This could involve work from volunteer choir members as well as committee members. We could also do better at publicity. The banner is a great development but we also need to work on getting posters up and remembering that the most effective method of recruiting audiences is through personal invitation. Another improvement might be in having more volunteers to help with the clearing up at the end of the concert, as this currently seems to fall on a small handful of people.

We were delighted to have James Brown accompany the summer concert which he did sensitively and stylishly. It's always slightly stressful booking soloists we are not so familiar with but all four (plus one) did a splendid job. They each had their own strengths, but delivered the emotion and drama that was required. This was enhanced by the choir's fine singing. The tenor soloist commented on the quality of sound of the choir's singing, particularly the sopranos; and another member of the audience said how the choir sung in the second half, particularly in "Weep, Israel, Weep" – a particularly crucial movement to get right.

Thanks go to everyone involved. There are massive amounts of organisation required for these things, and it was a pleasure to have so much taken on by the committee this time.

9. Election of officers and committee

All the committee (apart from Liz Leffman) stood for re-election in the same posts and, in addition, Nicky Smith and Julia Hall volunteered for publicity.

The following committee members were proposed, seconded, and voted in by members of the choir:

- Nick Watkins - Chairman
- Julie Harris - Secretary
- Will Stevens -Treasurer
- Mark Walters - membership secretary
- Liz Griffiths - Librarian
- Susannah Howe - Assistant librarian
- Keith Ravenhill - Concert manager
- Jon Drake - Assistant concert manager
- John Christie - Assistant concert managers
- Brian Leach - tickets, posters and programmes
- Nicky Smith - publicity
- Julia Hall - publicity

9. AOB

- Vivian Woodell asked whether the increase in subs was based on issues of financial protection. Nick Watkins answered that in years with large concerts we don't make a surplus and this is not sustainable, we are adrift from where we want to be if we want to keep doing large concerts. We also currently pay Peter Hunt and Bernard West below the market rate and this needs to be rectified. In terms of financial protection we need a minimum of £7000 in reserve. This will be a matter for consideration as we develop our financial strategy and plan going forward.

- The potential for making funding applications was discussed. This is time and resource intensive and funders are more likely to sponsor a specific project than ongoing business as usual.
- We need to increase our income from Gift Aid and are get better at doing this and will shortly be submitting next year's claim. In general finances remain stable.
- Peter Hunt reiterated the importance of members attending consistently throughout the year including the summer term so that numbers remain buoyant throughout the year.

The meeting closed at 21:40