

CNCS

Annual report of Chairman

November 2021 – November 2022

My first year as Chairman was about surviving - the combined shocks of Peter, our MD of 24 years leaving, of our accompanist Chris leaving, of our rehearsal venue leaving...and of Covid not leaving. My second year 2021 – 2022 has been about thriving. Yes, it began with Peter's departure, but let's remember the celebration of his time as our MD, first in the party we threw for him and then in his final Concert performance of Britten's *St Nicolas* in December.

In January Ben took the baton and the transition was seamless as he prepared us for our first performance together, Verdi's *Stabat Mater* and Puccini's *Messe de Gloria*, in the Chipping Norton Music Festival in March. It was a very good start, with some lovely remarks from the Adjudicator and a Certificate of Distinction (which I believe is framed and hanging in Ben's study). We had more good news in March when Rowena agreed to become our Accompanist. Finally in March, we elected our first four Section Reps – **Rachel** for Sops; **Naomi** for Altos; **Peter** for Tenors and **Bill** for Basses.

On 2 April we performed the Verdi and Puccini in Deddington and that too went very well and set us up nicely for our summer concert. We decided to take a chance on the weather and organise our own mini-Glyndebourne. Ben proposed a concert of some of the music from the 1953 Coronation, '*Pomp and Pimm's*'; sure enough, on 11 June the weather was kind, and it was convivial and all rather lovely seeing people picnic in the churchyard. And Zadok was stunning. We agreed we should do it again.

After that we thought we'd take a break until September but Ben had other plans and we were clearly up for them. On Saturday 23 July, we opened the doors of Chippy Town Hall to some 120 people who had signed up (for free, thanks to the generosity of Wise Investments) to sing the Faure *Requiem*, many of us from scratch. They came, they sang, they ate cake and were enthralled....and around 12 stayed with us.

September was too soon for Christmas, so we sang Brahms instead. After four weeks, hoping it would be slightly more seasonal, we started on Vaughan Williams *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, it being his and our 150th, and then we got stuck *into* or *on*, depending on your point of view, Corp's *Christmas Mass*. While all this was happening, we were planning our next move...literally. It was becoming clear from the increase in the numbers of people coming to rehearsal that we needed a bigger boat, and we'd had our telescopes trained on the Town Hall for some time. In November, having deployed a killer combination of tenacity and guile, we secured it.

We rounded off the year with our Family Christmas Concert in St Mary's on 17 December and brought home both RVW and Corp.... our MD in untypically effusive style, describing it as '*absolutely brilliant*'.

During the year we became more FaceBook savvy, and perhaps rather later than we should, we discovered that FB is a route used by people looking to join a local choir, and they did.

In the going we aged fifty years: that is to say, instead of being one hundred years old in 2024 as I had thought, we discovered, thanks to our Bass section rep, the Burford Archive and Chippy Museum, that we were formed in May 1872 and so are 150 *now*. We will be celebrating our 155th in a timely way and doing so with a commissioned piece. Much more on this to follow.

Looking back, it's been a very good year and everything is now in place for us to flourish. We've got to this point by finding an inspirational MD to succeed an inspirational MD, by appointing a hugely talented accompanist, and by having a committee with a capacity for doing a great job of the quotidian business of making things happen. Above all, we did it because the choir is full of unselfish people who understand what it takes to make a community thrive.

So....thank you to the committee for Membership, Minutes, Treasury, Scores, Venues, Publicity and Programmes; to those who have recently stood down from the committee (Nicky, Nick and Kate) and those who joined (Sarah)*, to those who have organised or provided refreshments; those who publicise what we do; those who set up and take down; who sell programmes and organise raffles and make sure our audience feel welcomed and run our website and turn up for Carols and accompany people who turn up for Carols and Friends of CNCS, and our sponsors Wise Investments.

*and to Heather and Sue who joined just after the AGM

Thank you for making it a privilege to chair the 150 year old Chipping Norton Choral Society

Eric

Chair CNCS

January 2023