



South Devon Choir

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 24 January 2019

Registered Charity 800116

7.30pm at St Paul's Church Hall, Preston, Paignton

Present: Sally Laird (Chairperson); John Hobbs (Director of Music); Prim Wood (Treasurer); Lisa Prager (Secretary); Committee members Ann Gardiner, Paul Barton, Stella Currie, Jennie Litt, Mark Saxelby; Simon Dunbavand (Accompanist); and 53 members of the Choir.

1. Apologies were received from Rosie Clapham (Committee Member), and Choir members Enid Brown, Diana George, Rae Gilderthorp, Pauline Smith and Peter White.

2. Minutes of the AGM on 25 January 2018 had been made available to all members prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Mike Beckett and seconded by Charlotte Thompson that the Minutes be signed as a true record.

3. Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

4. Chairperson's Report for 2017–18: Sally Laird commented that the Choir had grown considerably in both strength and numbers in recent years, reaching more than 100 members during 2017, although numbers have fluctuated. The Choir has been singing well and getting very positive audience reaction.

The year began with a stimulating concert of Britten's *St Nicolas* and Bach's *Cantata 140 – Sleepers, Wake!*, at St Matthias' Church, Wellswood, on 25 November. The Choir was joined by three boys from Exeter Cathedral Choir and soloists including Nick Hawker in the tenor role of St Nicolas. The orchestral ensemble was organised by our newly appointed Orchestral Secretary Anna Cockroft, following the retirement of Nicola New. St Matthias' had excellent facilities as well as very good acoustic, and the concert was followed a light finger-buffet in the church's Peter Larkin Hall.

The Choir used staging provided by the church and the Torbay Singers; it was felt that the Choir would benefit from having its own staging for concerts, and newly co-opted Committee member Mark Saxelby was authorised to purchase some similar flexible staging at a greatly reduced price. It was delivered early in December and is stored in Paul Barton's garage.

The Carol Concert on 14 December in St Andrew's Church, Paignton, using our staging for the first time, raised £272 for Rowcroft Hospice. Choir volunteers singing carols at Hooper's department store, Torquay, raised a further £100 for the Hospice – thanks to Mark Saxelby for organising it and Richard Toll for conducting.

During this term our longest serving member, soprano Helen Tregaskes, died on 31 October. Many members accepted the invitation to sing at her funeral in Churston Church.

On 21 April the Choir performed Puccini's *Gloria* and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, with a full professional orchestra and soloists including South African tenor Arthur Swan and Hannah Sawle. Audience reaction to the concert in Central Church, Torquay, was splendid.

On 7 July the summer concert of sea-related music was at St Andrew's Church, Paignton, with soloists including John Hobbs in Stanford's *Songs of the Sea*. John had to miss two rehearsals – almost unheard of in his 12 years with the Choir – due to changes in Duchy Opera's rehearsal schedule, and Ian Curror and Bob Barsby each took one rehearsal in his place. Both were concerned about the difficulty of Andrew Carter's *Horizons*, a challenging but lovely piece, and Bob generously contacted the composer, who sent us a copy of a performance which proved very helpful. Simon Dunbavand and Ekaterina Shetliffe acted as accompanists for the concert, which attracted one of the Choir's largest summer audiences.

Sally thanked the many helpful people who gave so much time to making the Choir function so successfully: firstly, the Committee (a splendid team to work with) including Tricia Turner, Concert Manager for four years, who left the Committee after the summer concert.

Next, the Choir members who volunteer to help with organising weekly rehearsals, and with raising money for Choir funds, including Ros Allen (a literary morning), Prim Wood (quiz and cream tea), Margaret King and her helpers at two coffee mornings in Brixham, Simon Dunbavand (illustrated talk on the glories of Russian Orthodox choral singing), Mary Mackie (weekly stall of various gifts, cards and preserves), John Christian (producing concert tickets, and CDs of practice tapes and Choir performances), Sharron Gibson (organising the setting out and clearing away of chairs at rehearsal), and Stan and Ann Gardiner, and Dean Allison (weekly refreshments). Helpers on concert days included Brian Laird, John Clapham and Dean Allison (front of house and security responsibilities).

Special thanks go to those two people who particularly make the Choir a happy, successful and enjoyable organisation: our talented Accompanist Simon Dunbavand, whose weekly warm-ups have seen the sound quality of the Choir improve, and who has also run some extra rehearsals. And, of course, Music Director John Hobbs, who has continued to lead the Choir strongly, consistently and reliably, always positive, encouraging and good humoured. Once again facing some daunting weather in travelling from North Devon, he only missed one rehearsal, which the Choir had to cancel due to snow that closed the county down for several days. Thank you, John, for all you do for us both musically and as a hugely kind and generous support for the Choir.

5. Hon. Treasurer's Report: Prim Wood presented the Accounts for 2017–18. The Income and Expenditure showed a deficit of £5767.62 for the year, compared to a surplus of £3691.97 the previous year. The closing balance as at 31 August 2018 was £418.42 – this included an outstanding loan of £1000.

Prim commented that the Committee had carefully considered its financial position before purchasing the staging. The outstanding loan was due largely to the Gift Aid return being received late. Prim explained that the Choir could not request all members to Gift Aid their subscriptions, as it was a voluntary arrangement, and in any case, it was only available to members who are taxpayers.

Prim thanked all those who had helped with fund raising over the year, and also Ron Morris who acted as Auditor as well as providing advice on financial matters when needed.

Acceptance of the Annual Accounts was proposed by Pat Wyatt, seconded by Sharron Gibson, and approved.

6. Musical Director's comments: John Hobbs reflected that the past year had been outstanding and the music had been sublime, particularly the Puccini and Rossini concert in April 2018.

In the most recent concert, in December 2018, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* had sparkled. This was despite a different orchestral setting from the one expected being received, meaning that, at the last minute, Simon had to arrange the woodwind parts for him to play on the organ. Chris Williams' *Tsunami Requiem*, new to the Choir, had proved both appropriate and enjoyable.

John was looking forward to the Brahms' *Requiem* performance in April 2019, which will use Brahms' own piano duet version, with Simon Dunbavand and Ian Curror; John felt very fortunate to have two such great accompanists to work with. The remainder of the concert will consist of *Lieder* by the two soloists. This will be followed in the summer by a concert of operatic choruses and solos.

Invited by the Committee to choose the programme for the concert in December 2019, John said he had chosen Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*, something he was amazed to find that the Choir had performed very rarely. Some superb soloists have been engaged, and the performance will be accompanied by an orchestra.

John thanked the Choir for their commitment each week, which made his role so enjoyable. The Choir was now achieving a good balance, and the new staging had made a great improvement to performance.

7. Election of Officer and Committee Members: In accordance with the Constitution, the Secretary and two Committee member posts would fall vacant from September 2019. Lisa Prager (Secretary), Jennie Litt and Paul Barton were all willing to stand again, and no other nominations had been received. They were proposed *en bloc* by Mary Mackie, seconded by Sandra Worrall, and duly elected.

8. Other Posts: The following positions were nominated and accepted:

Hon. Auditor.....	Ron Morris	Concert Manager	Mark Saxelby
Orchestral Secretary	Anna Cockroft	Music Secretary	Paul Barton
100 Club Organiser	Jennie Litt	Librarian/Hire Organiser	Rosie Clapham
Gift Aid Secretary.....	Jennie Litt	Refreshment Organiser.....	Stan Gardiner
Publicity Officer.....	Stella Currie	Sponsorship.....	Mark Saxelby
Member Sec. & Welfare	Ann Gardiner	Data Protection Officer	Lisa Prager
First-Aid	Christine Hinchliffe		

9. Subscription Charges for the 2018–19 Season: Prim Wood commented that the hire of music scores, including orchestral scores, had been increasing. At one time, the Choir subs had been a separate item from a charge for scores, but the two charges had been amalgamated a few years ago. On behalf of the Committee, she now proposed that they be separated again. She reminded the Choir that, at the 2018 AGM, she had indicated that a further increase in subscriptions may be needed. She therefore asked the Choir to approve an increase in full-membership subs from £95 to £100 from September 2019, and a separate charge of about £2 per score be made as scores are issued. There would be no score charge for those who provide their own score, as long as it is the correct version (to be advised to all members in advance).

The motion was proposed by Pat Wyatt, seconded by Chris Hinchliffe, and approved.

Sally commented that there was still a need for further fund-raising, and she encouraged everyone to offer suggestions and also to support any such events. She pointed out that hiring an orchestra for a concert cost thousands of pounds, and the Choir still had to recoup the cost of the staging.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed: Sally Laird, Chairperson, 23 January 2020