

SHERINGHAM AND CROMER CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Society held in St Andrews Methodist Church

on **Monday 26th September 2022** at 19.00

1. **Present.** Committee: Jonathan Anderson, Stephen Green, Jo Hurrell **Chair**, and Pam Thompson

Music Director David Ballard. Accompanist Philip Adams. 37 members of the choir.

Mike Bossingham was welcomed to the meeting

2. **Apologies** had been received from our President, Sir Norman Lamb, and Jane Blackman, Denise Evans, Ann Kirby, Karen Sims, and Peter and Elaine Twigg.
3. **Last AGM.**

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 20th September 2021 had been circulated and were agreed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

4. **Chairman's Report.**

Jo had circulated her report and said:

I like to think of myself as a glass half full person, so let's concentrate on the positives. In spite of Covid continuing we did perform 5 successful concerts, hold a very enjoyable Come and Sing, and the postponed Open rehearsals for Sing North Norfolk.

Gradually the audiences built as the season progressed and we met the challenge of 2 new ventures –a carol concert in Sheringham Little Theatre and a double bill summer concert. We are repeating the first of these, but putting the second into the 'hard lessons learned file', although the Salthouse concert did serve as a very useful dress rehearsal for the wonderful final concert in Sheringham. And that was sublime, certainly up there in the top performances I've heard in my time with the choir.

In the spring we were delighted to hear that Sir Norman Lamb had agreed to be our new President and it was a great boost for us to be able to welcome him to the July concert in St. Peter's. He sends his apologies for tonight, Mondays are difficult for him as he has a regular meeting in London then. That could prompt us to think of changing the format of the AGM; we have had them as a social event in the past.

At this AGM we formally say goodbye to 2 members of the Committee.

Peter Hickling has served the Society in many roles on the Committee as well as a singing member for I don't know how many years. Huge thanks go out to him for his loyalty and dedication to keeping the Committee afloat in difficult times.

Diana Sallon has been our Treasurer and Fund Raiser for the past four years, 2 roles which she has performed with huge dedication and attention to detail. Treasurer and Fund Raiser were just her formal titles; behind the scenes she has been an invaluable support to me personally and has worked continually on updating policies and making sure that our house was kept in order. Huge thanks go to both of them.

(Jo then presented Diana and Peter with a small gift and the members gave a warm round of applause.)

Later on in the meeting we can formally welcome the new recruits.

There are many other people to thank. Firstly, thank you to all the members of the Committee for your hard work and dedication over the past year. You have been there through the difficult times, to cope with the unforeseen hitches, to take on a job outside your brief, to ensure that rehearsals and performances were a success.

Thank you to all those members, who helped out when needed behind the scenes, with publicity, with raffles and most importantly with stepping up when needed and of course bringing in the audiences.

To David and Philip, who are always there to encourage and inspire us, so that we can put on a good performance. They remain undaunted and never impatient, so thank you both for making Monday evenings fun.

Together we are a team and a good team is always greater than the sum of its parts.

In conclusion - this will be my last year as a Trustee. In this, the 90th Anniversary year of the founding of Sheringham and Cromer Choral Society I would like to build a strong and cohesive organisation, which can continue long into the future, bringing the joy of choral music to North Norfolk.

Questions to Jo led to a discussion about safety at rehearsals and Jackie Sonsino said she has a current First-Aid certificate, and Diane Collier agreed to make a list of people's emergency contact numbers. They were both thanked for coming forward.

5. Treasurer's report:

Diana Sallon had prepared and circulated the

Trustees Annual Report for the year ended 31st July 2022

Receipts and Payments Account – Charity Commission format

Management Accounts 2021-22

Independent Examiners Report on the Accounts

Treasurer's report to the AGM.

She said, "This was bound to be a year of many challenges, not least financial ones. In the event, it was remarkable that we managed to offer a full programme of rehearsals, a Come & Sing workshop (a paid event for the first time) and five concerts: three on our traditional basis, organised by the Society and two others, new ventures on a joint basis where we ceded a degree of organisation to other parties with contrasting results. One was the Christmas concert with Sheringham Little Theatre which almost broke even. The other was at Salthouse with the Friends of Salthouse Church. This concert was a financial disappointment to both sides. A second concert at St. Peter's, Sheringham, repeated the same programme as for Salthouse and benefitted from economies arising. This second concert nearly broke even. The Come & Sing, and the two Cromer concerts all made significant losses.

We do not set out to make a profit. Concert losses were expected, this year more than most. We provided a programme which was as innovative and varied as possible on a tight budget, but low attendance, though better than for some, meant figures came in below expectations. Our average concert audience has fallen from 138 in 2018-19 just before the pandemic to 88 in the current year. What a difference an improvement in audience numbers might make!

Overall, Come & Sing and Concert Income of £6,237 and Concert Expenses of £11,445 produced a deficit of £5,208. Projects previously deferred by the COVID-19 pandemic were brought to fruition and local authority grants of £1,900, which had been held over for those projects, were utilised. In addition, the Society was extremely fortunate to be a recipient of funds raised by Duncan Baker's 2021 London Marathon run which, together with the attaching additional sponsorship of £250 given by The Paul Bassham Charitable Trust, totalled £1,469. Adding in sponsorship-in-kind of £351 for the expensive Rutter orchestral score, external fundraising overall totalled £3,720, leaving a net deficit of £1,488. Choir fundraising for concerts was modest this year, yielding £321. The remaining funding burden of £1,167 therefore fell on

Society funds, normally covered by a combination of Member Surplus and drawdown on General Reserves. However, there was no Member Surplus to put towards Concert Expenses this year.

The recent period of exceptional accommodation in Membership Subscriptions came to an end and Subscriptions were set at £120 for 2021-22, the increase of £20 being in part to cover increased musician costs. An adjustment was offered to the 31 Members who paid £40 last year so that no Member was asked to pay more than £120 across the two years. There were 60 Members by the year end. Membership Subscriptions (£6,209) plus Gift Aid (£931) and an NNDC Grant towards the Sing North Norfolk! Open Rehearsals (£400), did not cover Rehearsal Expenses and Overheads (£7,853). This meant that rather than benefitting from a Member Surplus in the year, the funding gap was increased to £1,480.

This amount would have been met in full from Society Reserves but for one event. In June, Members voted to discontinue the Music Deposit scheme and to give each Member a choice of where their £20 Music Deposit should be repaid. From this exercise alone, the Bursary Fund benefitted by £380 and the Society General Fund by £560.

Coming back to the funding gap, with donations to Society Funds from other sources of £165, this left a residual drawdown, i.e. deficit for the year, of £755.

The General Fund brought forward stood at £8,605, so after the drawdown, the Society ended the year with £7,850. Net payments of £568 for 2022-23 were made in advance (largely for Zoom and website annual charges due in June). Cash General Reserves therefore stood at £7,282 representing a robust amount with which to start the next year.

Regarding Restricted Funds, by the year end there were no Grants to carry forward, and no remaining Music Deposits. The Proctor Bequest Fund was not accessed this year, ending at £8,449. The Bursary Fund benefitted from donations of £580 including those mentioned above. After payment of bursaries of £426, the starting balance of £1,040 had risen to £1,194 by the year end. This fund is ample for the time being, but will need replenishment in due course.

In our ninetieth year we can look back and wonder at the happenstances that have occurred to keep us financially buoyant, different in each year. We cannot be certain that something will turn up, although it often does. Expenditure is fairly predictable, and events can be tailored to a budget, but income is more uncertain. Some sources of income, though much valued, are non-repeating, such as Grants, Bequests and Donations. Others can be nurtured and provide continuing income: subscriptions, audiences and sponsorship. By far the most important resource is our Membership. A strong Membership is the cornerstone of a vibrant Choral Society. This is your Society. Please work with your Committee. We are still recovering and there is much to do to run an efficient and resilient organisation for the benefit of all.

The Annual Accounts have been examined for the third year running by Richard Watson who has kindly agreed to act for one further year. We are most grateful to him for this service which is carried out free of charge.

With some sadness, I am resigning now from my roles as Treasurer and as a Trustee. My thanks go to my fellow Trustees for their support. I shall hand over to Revd Michael Bossingham in full confidence that he will be of great benefit to the Society".

Diana added that Duncan Baker is running the London Marathon again this year and SCCS has again come out of the hat for a share of the sponsorship proceeds.

With regard to the Rutter scores Pam clarified that they had been hired, not bought, and had to be hired from the publisher. Her husband Keith had donated the cost of that. Pam was asked to convey our grateful thanks to Keith for that generous action.

Diana was thanked for her report and for all the work of the last four years.

A motion to accept the annual accounts and Treasurer's report was proposed by Pam

Thompson, seconded by Bob Cumber, and passed without dissent.

6. Musical Director's Report.

David Ballard's report had been circulated.

"Good evening everyone. It is so wonderful to be able to start the report by looking back at last year and noting that we achieved musical plan A in its entirety, held every rehearsal and concert we desired, and welcomed new members. After everything we have collectively been through this is a tremendous mark of success. Throughout the year it has been wonderful to see people feeling safe enough to return gradually, just as our audiences have. I offer my personal thanks and gratitude to all of you...

Even as we come out of Covid, we have broken new ground; • The world premiere performance of *Seasons*. • A new style of concert in a new venue with 'Christmas at the Theatre'. • Working with a new established performing group with *Broadland Youth Choir*. • Evolving into new styles – I don't think the Society has ever sung anything close to the *Compline* programme. • And as I said earlier just 'existing' and 'being' is a massive achievement when we consider the trepidation that surrounded returning to rehearsals back in September 2021.

You know I find talking about the future more interesting, and you've learnt over the last six years that my brain rarely stops and there is normally some cunning scheme around the corner and 2022/23 will see us repeat and build and evolve these experiences. • Performing with specialist baroque musicians next summer for Vivaldi's *Gloria*. • Confronting a glaring omission in our programming, by performing some beautiful carols by female composers. • Continuing our commitment to contemporary music by performing premieres of works by myself and Andrew Weekes, alongside music by the Society's first conductor that has lain long forgotten. • Ensuring we also stay true to the Choral Society heritage by performing a true A-list work in Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, with a cast of early-career soloists as fine as any we have used.

None of these achievements or aspirations can happen without the support of the choir, and much hard work on the part of its committee. I have commented many times that I see the committee as something of a swan. But it is a swan that would (and should) desperately like to do a lot less frantic paddling, so anything you can contribute will always be received gratefully. It would be a tremendous shame if the demise of the Choral Society came through lack of management but it is a very real prospect. Many hands make light work, and even if the thought of full trusteeship sounds unappealing, consider where you can help on the sub-groups or if there is a minor task that you could take ownership of.

Something as small as 'being able to pick up the printing from Chevertons' would make a massive difference to the workload of others. There are background jobs, foreground jobs, things that can be carried out from home in your own time, and things that are more structured.

I conducted a music survey towards the end of the year. If anyone wants a full copy of it (around 4 pages long!) then I will send it but there were some very definite themes that came out of it. Some of the ideas were already incorporated into 2022/23, and I am sure the committee will use the trends that are seen as we approach the 2023/24 season. In planning terms, it isn't far away! As I always say, I greatly appreciate your comments, supportive and critical.

It continues to be a pleasure to lead the Society and I look forward to our continued shared experiences throughout the next season and beyond."

David then emphasised his warm thanks to Philip for all his support as accompanist and colleague.

David was thanked for his report.

7. Election of Officers and Trustees (Committee)

Jo Hurrell, Chair and Secretary; Stephen Green, Minutes Secretary; Karen Sims, Membership Secretary; and Pam Thompson, Librarian, were all willing to stand again and were re-elected without dissent.

Mike Bossingham had agreed to join the committee as a Trustee and as Treasurer and was voted in as an associate member and as Treasurer without dissent.

Jonathan Anderson had agreed to become a Trustee. Elaine Twigg had volunteered to be a voice rep for the Sopranos and was voted in in her absence.

Jo explained that the Committee really value having someone who can listen to concerns or suggestions expressed by members and bring those concerns and suggestions to the Committee. The voice reps are invited to all committee meetings although they do not have to attend them all. Jo emphasised that we would welcome reps from the other voice parts.

8. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts.

Richard Watson is willing to carry this out again next year and this offer was accepted with thanks on a motion passed without dissent. Richard has indicated that this will be the last time he will be doing this so the members are asked if they know of anyone else.

9. AOB

David Ballard introduced the Member's Booklet which was then distributed to those attending. He emphasised that this was the last design project he would be able to do for the Society, thanked Peter Twigg for taking over the posters and other publicity and reminded members that someone would need to produce the concert booklet. He can give them the available formats and templates.

Jo said the Committee has set up some sub-committees to spread some of the workload, and this should also make it easier for other choir members to make a contribution.

Brian Teather offered to pick up printing from Chevertons when required and 5 members offered help at the Come and Sing.

The meeting closed at 19.58 and was followed by a choir rehearsal.