

# BATH BACH CHOIR

## AGM MINUTES

7.00 pm on Monday 23<sup>th</sup> January 2023  
King Edwards School Bath- Gymnasium

### 1. Apologies for Absence

**Choir members:** Jo Addison, Stephen Hammerton, Ian Anderson, Peter Edwards, Kobie Mills, Alison Paine, Liz Gray.

### 2. Minutes of the last AGM, held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022

No comments or corrections received, therefore signed on 23<sup>th</sup> January 2023 as an accurate account.

### 3. Outgoing MD- Final Thanks – 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph read out by KC during the AGM

*"I would especially like to thank the 'steering group' of Will, Kathrin and Simon, with whom I sat down 18 months ago to discuss my retirement plan. They ran a spectacular campaign, which involved creating a 'farewell tour' through Brahms Requiem, Rossini Petite Messe Solennelle, Monteverdi Vespers and the Bach B minor - what other conductor gets to do all that in one run? The choir rose magnificently to the challenge; and I consider myself incredibly fortunate and blessed to have been allowed to draw my tenure to a close in such a splendid way. Simultaneously they recruited my successor - no mean feat when it involved processing over 30 strong applications. Supported by the current committee, they really have done the choir proud and their loyal and dedicated contribution should be acknowledged. Finally, my sincerest thanks to all those who put together the splendid anniversary / retirement party at the Pump Room, and of course for the gift of the magnificent stained glass window."*

### **Nigel's Sign-Off (5/11/2022)- Sent as addendum for the minutes.**

I have conducted BBC for 33 years, not quite half my life; but a substantial and very significant part of it.

Before 1990 I was always part of a group, a choir, an ensemble. Now it was down to me, I was the boss, the sole designer and architect.

In the KS we spent hours working out how we wanted to sound etc. I sometimes felt I was more of a high-wire trapeze artist, where technical detail was paramount.

Suddenly, I was my own musician and could create music in my style, no compromise – it was powerful stuff! I was quickly hooked on conducting, sculpting beautiful sounds – with the reward of watching singers' faces as they became aware of the magical sounds emerging.

My musical career began when my mother sent me off to choir practice at our local church in Harrogate aged 7. Upon my return she enquired what we had sung. "Something about magnifying a cat," I replied. Upon that sense of potential I won a chorister's scholarship at Ely Cathedral, where I was trained in the basics of choral singing in the life-sculpting ambience of a mediaeval cathedral and my bones and soul became infused with the pure glory of renaissance polyphony.

My singing voice didn't really break when it should have done and I ended up continuing to sing in a high voice, usually called counter-tenor, and won a choral scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where I had the amazing privilege of singing under the strictest discipline of David Willcocks.

When I should have been sorting out how I was going to earn a living, the King's Singers, 18 months out of the blocks, found themselves needing a new top voice and so began my professional career as a singer.

While living out of a suitcase and travelling the world was not quite as glamorous as people tend to imagine, it was an amazing experience for 11 years. Amongst an encyclopaedia of things, I learned that second best was not good enough; that a singer had to communicate, even if, as one critic put it – we were “mere entertainers”!

After I left the King's Singers, I discovered I could teach and started conducting choirs. I felt I was a sculptor, shaping the sound and communicating the message of the music – I loved it! – much less stressful than having to worry whether my voice was going to be ok.

I learned a lot, cutting my teeth with Bath Camerata. When in 1990 I was invited to conduct the then City of Bath Bach Choir, I jumped enthusiastically at the opportunity even though I had never conducted an orchestra in my life – did they know what a risk they were taking?

That's how I got to 1990 and for just on 33 years, I have indulged my musical passions with the choir, learning what it is that makes people want to sing together and the thrill of bringing all these disparate instruments together and creating glorious, homogenous and uplifting music in many inspirational locations.

Of the 200-plus concerts that I have conducted the BBC, there have been so many highlights. Working with Maggie Faultless on many occasions has been hugely inspirational. Conducting the Monteverdi Vespers with the choir's President, Sir David Willcocks, sitting in the front row for the Bach Choir's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1997 was somewhat intimidating. Taking the choir on tour to twin cities Braunschweig, Aix-en-Provence and Kaposvar...

While teaching at Wells Cathedral School for 25 years, founding and directing Bath Camerata for 29, conducting Exeter Festival Chorus for 20, plus all the summer schools abroad and at home, workshops from Beijing to Jakarta: teaching, rehearsing and conducting the Bath Bach Choir has been the central pillar of my wonderful life creating beautiful music.

I can't thank the leaders and members of BBC enough for the pleasure, excitement, challenges, fulfilment, inspiration, and moments of sheer heaven, not forgetting stress, they have given me over 33 years.

But - there comes a time when all good things have to come to an end.

If I had to choose two favourite and most memorable concerts, they would probably be the -  
**Rachmaninov: Vespers - with the pianist Peter Donohoe** interspersing Preludes and  
**James MacMillan's St John Passion**

I wish the Bath Bach Choir a great future under the baton of Benedict Collins Rice – full of the joys and excitement of singing together and maintaining the high standard that you and I together have attained. I

will always treasure the wonderful friendships and generosity of spirit I have enjoyed from members of Bath Bach Choir.

**LONG LIVE THE BATH BACH CHOIR!**

#### **4. AGM January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023 – Chair’s report – Simon Ingram Hill**

1. 2022 was a very big year for the choir, dominated by the search for a new Musical Director and the planning and celebration of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We had given our first concert in April 1947 in Bath Abbey with a performance of Bach’s B Minor Mass under Cuthbert Bates, our conductor for the next 33 years. And we would bring our 75<sup>th</sup> to a triumphant close with the last bars of the same work’s *Dona Nobis Pacem* on November 5th, this time under Nigel Perrin also about to complete 33 years as our conductor.
2. Let me roll back through the last year starting with the AGM when Nigel announced he would be standing down after the November concert. A sad announcement but one that at least gave us plenty of time to find a worthy successor, able to start substantively this January. We hoped that November and December would constitute a seamless hand-over period. And so it turned out. Transitions are seldom easy, but in this case we were fortunate that Nigel made everything so much easier, maintaining a respectful distance as the Committee moved through each stage of the planned process. The consummate professional for which we were most grateful.
3. There was one other reason why 2022 was to prove different. The previous year had started in full lockdown and a number of protocols were still in place, including social distancing, masks and lateral flow tests, but restrictions were beginning to lift. The Committee, however, still needed to show an appropriate degree of sensitivity to members concerns. So, it was good to receive a note after our first rehearsal in January which said *“I was very happy with all that you did to help keep us safe yesterday evening. I had been a little anxious about distancing etc with that number of people, but I felt it was all carefully prepared and managed ....”*.

For the end of January workshop we continued to socially distance (now at 1 metre). By the end of March, Government had removed all key restrictions and we followed suit, though for our concert itself at that time, we still kept some social distancing steps in place. Thereafter we accepted that individuals would take their own precautions while the choir itself would return to pre-Covid safety measures albeit with a heightened level of awareness.

4. We weren’t sure whether to go ahead with the January workshop so low was the uptake at the beginning of the year and with a new strain of Covid hovering in the wings. But we did, and with 120 participants worked on Rossini’s *Petite Messe Solennelle* with 4 soloists, 3 of whom we invited back for our own public performance of the work in March. Helen organised everything with her supporting cast. It was an encouraging start to the Anniversary year.
5. The March concert took place at the extraordinary 19<sup>th</sup> century Italianate church of St Mary and St Nicholas in Wilton, near Salisbury. We don’t often travel outside Bath to put on a concert – there is more to do to sell tickets - but when we do, the experience is very often a special one. This was the perfect Rossini venue, a beautiful building, excellent acoustics and we filled much of the church with a largely new audience.

6. Meanwhile the search for Nigel's successor had begun. By the end of January we had advertised the post and by closing date two months later, we had received 33 applications, from far and wide; three members of the Committee led on the short listing of seven for interview in mid-May. Selection was not easy as we had such credible candidates, testament to Nigel's achievements with the choir and our reputation. Two non-committee members and the 3 officers, carried out the interviews over one extended weekend, which we did in person, avoiding zoom entirely except with one candidate. For us this face-to-face interaction worked well. In June, three were auditioned with the choir, one of whom was Benedict. This part was crucial – singers need to have the chance to experience for themselves what their potential next MD might be like to sing under. The Committee made the final decision, the end of a carefully planned, transparent process and we were delighted with the result. So far so good!
7. At lunchtime on April 9<sup>th</sup>, a week before Easter and one of the busiest Saturdays of the year for Bath Abbey, about 30 of our members, with Nigel conducting, participated in a fundraising event for the people of Ukraine along with Bath-based Walcott State community choir and the Argyle String Orchestra. I was a co-organiser and the Abbey's leadership team were incredibly supportive. The event was free but more than £9,000 was raised with the aid of buckets and card readers.
8. We pulled out all the stops (financial and musical) for the July concert of Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers. Soloists were from the world class I Fagiolini and members of the English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble and the Musical and Amicable Society provided the instrumental section. As neither of us were singing, Kathrin and I watched from the back and we have rarely seen an Abbey concert so well attended and so enthusiastically applauded. Great playing, great singing.
9. In September, Nigel and Kate hosted the summer party at their lovely new house and garden at Steeple Ashton – it was the Saturday after the Queen had died, and we all stood up to sing a Bach Chorale in her memory.
10. Programming for this 2023 year needed to go ahead. It could not wait for Benedict to join us in person so we did some planning with him in advance, hence our programme for the year.
11. The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert took place on 5<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30pm. The Rotary club shifted their fireworks display to 6pm to accommodate us so everyone was happy. The Souvenir Programme, expertly put together by Ursula and Kate including a section of 75 verses compiled by me from our Archives and a gallery of memories from Nigel's 33 years, went on sale with the tickets. A packed house, the Mayor of Bath, our MP Vera Hobhouse, our patrons and all 3 Vice Presidents (our President David Hill was unable to attend due to his residency at Yale University) were there in force. The soloists were magnificent as was Maggie Faultless with her Baroque orchestra 'Music for Awhile' and the choir in Nigel's last major concert, was in great form. At the end Nigel, the orchestra and ourselves - all 88 of us - received a standing ovation.
12. The Gala Dinner, the result of considerable planning and negotiation with caterers and Pump Room management, was a wonderful climax to the evening, a celebration of both our 75 years as a choir and Nigel's tenure as our MD. Not only was there the cake cutting and speeches by Nigel, by Jonathan Wilcox on behalf of the President and vice-presidents, by myself as Chair, and by Elizabeth Bates as daughter of our founder Cuthbert Bates. But there were also a couple of surprises: An Abba song

adapted by Liz Gray which we had hurriedly rehearsed that afternoon and sang to Nigel. And a very original piece of stained glass designed by Liz and made by Andrew Taylor with motifs from Nigel's years with us, that we as a choir presented to him. (It is currently propped up in their kitchen but will no doubt move into their banqueting hall once renovated). A memorable evening.

13. 2022 was not yet finished with though. Nigel and Benedict agreed to share the rostrum for the three Carols by Candlelight concerts held as is customary in the Pump Room. Each rehearsed their parts of the programme with the singers on a Monday or Friday prior to the concert. When it came to our standard encore, 'the 12 days of Christmas' Nigel started us off and on reaching the 7<sup>th</sup> day, he formally handed over his baton to Benedict who humbly received it on bended knee before rounding off the carol and evening to riotous applause. We raised £1300 for our two nominated charities, Ripple Effect and Voices for Life and had ourselves a new MD.
14. Before closing I must single out a number of people who have made significant contributions over the last year. The following roll call shows how much the Committee relies on those outside its ranks. Many have full time jobs but they make things happen: Marcus Sealey, our accompanist; Caroline Gumbley (Gala Dinner organiser); Kate Perrin (Publicity Manager); Ursula Steinhoff (Design), Niels Steinhoff (Website), Katie Taylor (database and mailings manager); Jane Paton and Priscilla Bishop (the music library); Tony Thornburn (Archivist, resourcing and 3<sup>rd</sup>-party websites); Sue Greetham (Spotify); Janet Read (Secretary to the Patrons and Friends; Sue Murray and Frances Best (workshop managers); Fr Peter Edwards (our St Mary's Bathwick host); Di Shelley and Peter Woodward (the workshop raffle); Mark and Pam Brierley (Refreshments), ); Jacqui Acton (Concert Manager), our unsung heroes the Stewards; John Bandy (non-choir events circulation); Harriet Feilding, our Auditor; Brian Woodford, sponsor of the soloists at our Anniversary concert. As to the MD selection process, I would like to thank Hilary Oliver for sharing her prior experience as chairman of the BBC Symphony Chorus and to Andrew Clark and Janet Read for taking part on the interview panel. A couple of special mentions: Bob Hussey – for lovingly writing the programme notes for our concerts and workshops. He has stepped down from these roles and due to health reasons also resigned from the choir itself. And Kate who is stepping away from the numerous roles that she has devoured over the years with great skill and commitment. I am thankful to those who have already agreed to take these roles on. But if you have skills that the Choir can benefit from and you have already been part of the BBC family for a year or so please don't be shy. We need to spread the load.
15. Now let me acknowledge the work of the Committee: We started the year with a complement of 9, plus Nigel who joined us for a number of our 10 monthly meetings – this year they were almost all face-to-face once again though one or two of us joined by zoom as necessary. Between meetings we had numerous e-mail and telephone discussions. The commitment has been outstanding, the expertise and creativity brought to bear, most impressive. Your titles don't really do you justice, everyone does far more: Victoria Westwood – Tickets Secretary; Abi McGillivray – Artists Liaison Manager; Helen Roberts - Membership Manager and Workshop Organiser; Paul Edwards who took over from Eleanor Parker as Concert Secretary; Richard Hunt, Member Without Portfolio or Lord High Everything Else. Nigel, ex-officio member, led on matters musical and we thank him for his many years of outstanding service. Finally my two fellow officers Kathrin Cockhill Honorary Secretary and Will Acton Honorary Treasurer. We have made a number of key decisions together and have spent possibly more time chatting on WhatsApp than we do with our own family members. I could certainly not have carried out my role in any useful way without them at my side. But they will be standing down this time next year. In their day-time life they

have both moved into very high energy and responsible new jobs. They simply can't do justice, each feel, to maintaining their current roles on the committee. So we are looking for a new Honorary Secretary and a new Honorary Treasurer. That could be you. The committee would like to see new blood.

16. Finally, I am really pleased to report that our membership has picked up even more over the last year. We have enlisted 14 new singers since the AGM and can now boast 98 singers in all, our largest complement in 14 years. That's impressive -- but we can always welcome more.
17. And on that note let me close my report, thanking you for your support over this last year and your attention. *In April we will be performing a programme entitled Plainchant Reimagined. The second half will open with a chant by Hildegard of Bingen. She was a nun of the **Benedictine** order who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was famous for her extraordinary visions. So what better now than to turn to Benedict and ask him to share his vision for the Bath Bach Choir.*

## **5. New Musical Director vision for the BBC. – Benedict Collins Rice**

My musical vision is going to develop as I start to gather experience with you all over the rest of this year. I have been thinking about Carols and looking at how we streamline events by running 2 x 1hour performances on the two key nights, perhaps bringing in Christmas shopping crowd and maybe with a 'Voices for life' collaboration to increase participation.

I am of course looking forward to our first performance together this term and I am very pleased by the way in you all seem to be taking to it. Hopefully it also starts to give you some idea as to where my musical passions and strengths lie, which is in 20<sup>th</sup> Century exciting music. I hope to develop this theme as we start to plan for future years.

I am also looking forward to our first workshop together this Saturday and seeing how that goes. I think this is an area where we might see the biggest change aimed at keeping the Bach in BBC with a long term Bach Cantata cycle via the workshops- perhaps the Leipzig cycle over a few years with workshop in the morning, soloists coming in for the afternoon to take smaller groups and then developing a relationship with a Baroque orchestra to complete the final performance at the end of the day. I think that this larger scale option with local orchestra will help to build our brand and local appeal. This would be a big change and so I am currently approaching this slowly and with care.

I do of course want to continue to grow the Choirs reputation for vocal excellence and singing in exciting places as well as trying to find ways to put the Choir on other platforms and I will be talking to my mentor Simon Halsey a lot about this and how we can get ourselves in front of other orchestra's and in other countries- He has a long standing relationship with Simon Rattle who still comes back to Simon Halsey when he needs support from Choirs where the one he has to work with is perhaps not up to the required standard. This is of course a very long-term project but I see possibilities here for the future.

Finally, I am very keen to get choir feedback as to what you do and don't like as this will really help to build a strong future program so do please come and talk to me when you have the chance. Thank you.

## 6. Treasurer's Report and presentation of accounts for year ending 31 July 2021 – Will Acton

The accounts are not yet finalised so we will hold a short subsequent meeting to approve these when ready. In the meantime we have the overview below in a visual format.

We noted special thanks to Brian for the very generous donation towards the costs of the November concert.

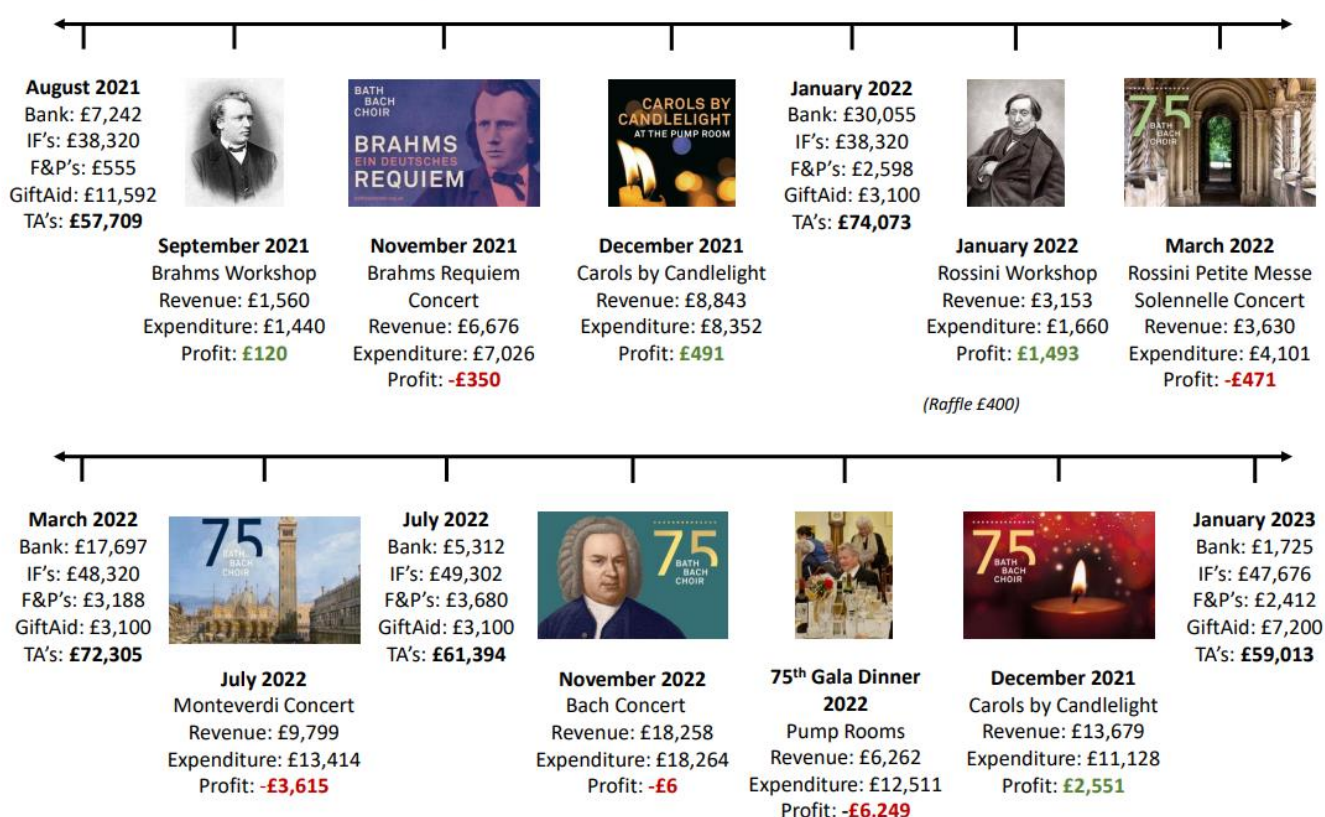
75<sup>th</sup> concert brochure- There are £1200 worth of programs still to sell. Costs for these are separate to the below accounts as we will continue to sell these at the workshop and as part of the Tickets for the April concert.

Excess cost for the Gala dinner came from having to pay room hire and also the costs relating to sponsored drinks and the VIP invited guests.

Investments slightly down due to Government issues stock market etc. But overall slightly stronger position than Aug Total Assets. Considering the expenses of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, this is an overall satisfactory position to be in.

Please remember to use references when paying anything to Choir so that the funds are easily allocated.

### Bath Bach Choir Financial Position August 2021 to December 2022



**Questions arising from the report of the Treasurer:**

-Henrietta Samler asked whether if someone is not singing for a term, was there a refund of relevant Subs? No. The Subscription is annual.

-Kenna Dallaway had a question around the invested funds and how they were managed. CCLA and their portfolio was discussed and followed up on after the AGM with the person in question.

-Sue Cook asked whether the Choir had used any of the Invested funds in 2022 as the donation as given in order to further the activities of the Choir and should not just be sitting there. Will Acton replied to this saying that some funds were used in order to support the Gala Dinner expenses and others relating to our 75<sup>th</sup> Year.

**7. Subscriptions-** The proposal is to increase these £180 from £160 in September. Subscriptions support all of the of the Choir's daily running costs and these costs have risen over the last three years where the Subscription has not. The motion was proposed by Will Acton and approved by 100% of attendees. There were no abstentions or Nay sayers.

One change was agreed in that these can now be paid in 3 instalments from September 2023 . Anyone struggling with payment, as always, please talk to Will.

There was a question about how we can make the cost more affordable to younger singers, Graduates etc to encourage the next generation of musicians. All agreed that this was desirable, and the Committee will discuss this at a future meeting.

**8.To approve and appoint an independent examiner of the BBC accounts.**

A vote was carried out to appoint Harriet for a further year . Will Acton proposed this and it was unanimously agreed (100% of members present) no abstentions or nay sayers. Harriet Feilding is happy to continue as auditor for the next financial year.

**9. Patrons and Friends Report - Janet Read**

Up to the end of the financial year in July 2022 there were 14 Gold Patrons paying a subscription of £150 per annum plus 11 Patrons paying a minimum subscription of £50. We also have two Life Patrons and 3 Honorary Patrons. The benefits for Patrons are that for a £50 subscription Patrons receive regular newsletters from me, priority booking through the choir for all our concerts and also invitations to occasional social events. For instance, a number of Patrons attended the Gala Dinner.

For £150 Gold Patrons receive a free ticket for each concert in addition to the Patrons benefits. And for a one-off payment of £1200 Life Patrons have all the benefits of being a Gold Patron for life. Patrons are considered as non-singing Members of the Choir and can attend the AGM and pay the members rate for the Workshop. Usually the Patrons, through their subscriptions, make a contribution to the choir towards the cost of the July concert– a huge boost towards the cost of mounting the concert. This year the donation was held back and instead £3000 went towards the cost of the November concert



In addition to their subscription Patrons also benefit the choir by buying a significant number of tickets for each concert

The Friends subscription is £15 or £20 if receiving the newsletter by post. There are 4 subscribing Friends who receive my newsletter and booking information for Bath Box Office. I also send newsletters to our President, David Hill and the three Vice Presidents,

**Statement for Financial Year 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022**

The Friends of City of Bath Bach Choir account with the NatWest bank had a balance of £ £3,680.80 on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022

**For the year 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022:**

Starting balance	£505.80
Income from subscriptions and donations	£3,175.00
<u>Final Balance</u>	<u>£3,680.80</u>

**10. AOB**

*There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 20:15 by the Chair.*

## **Bath Bach Choir**

### **Balance sheets**

	Notes	31-Jul-22	31-Jul-21
<b>Assets</b>			
Bank Balance		5,313	7,242
CCLA Investments	1	49,302	38,321
Friends' bank balance	2	3,681	506
Total cash and investments		58,296	46,069
Accrued income	3	4,250	11,592
Total assets		62,546	57,661
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Accounts payable		284	47
Accrued expenditure		1,228	
Net Assets		61,034	57,614
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Friends' account	2	3,681	506
Retained surpluses	4	57,353	57,109
		61,034	57,614

*I hereby certify that the accounts are in accordance with the financial records of the Bath Bach Choir, and that I obtained all the information and explanations required by me as an independent examiner in accordance with the general directions*

*Harriet Feilding MA ACA*

<b>Note 1 (CCLA)</b>	
Opening balance: 31 Jul 2021	38,321
Transfer from bank onto deposit	10,000
Revaluation at year end	981
Closing balance: 31 Jul 2022	49,302
<b>Note 2 (Friends)</b>	
Opening balance: 31 Jul 2021	506
Subs and donations	2,901
Ticket sales	274
Closing balance: 31 Jul 2022	3,681
<b>Note 3 (accrued income)</b>	
Accrued gift aid 2021-22	3,150
Accrued raffle income	400
Accrued programme advertising	700
	4,250
<b>Note 4 (Income &amp; Expenditure)</b>	
Opening balance: 31 Jul 2021	57,109
Total income (over)	55,718
Total expenditure (over)	- 55,474
Closing balance: 31 Jul 2022	57,353

## Bath Bach Choir

## Income and Expenditure - year ended 31 July 2022

[illegible]

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## Bath Bach Choir

## Income and Expenditure - year ended 31 July 2022

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